

Why aren't Thomas Benjamin Floors FSC certified?

We have purposefully avoided pursuing these certifications ever since we made the switch to 100% domestic manufacturing and sourcing some 10 years ago. We feel there is value to FSC certification when sourcing tropical hardwoods, and even non-tropical hardwoods from certain regions; we do not see the necessity for such programs for North American hardwoods.

The Key: Land Ownership

The main difference between domestic forestland and tropical forestland lies in land ownership.

For the most part North American hardwoods are harvested from privately-owned lands, while tropical hardwoods are generally extracted on a land-lease basis.

- More than 58% of America's timberland is owned by non-industrial private landowners.
- 27% of the timberland consists of public lands and national forests (heavily-regulated)
- 14% is owned by the forest industry.

In short, private landowners do not pursue practices that degrade the value of their land (like clear-cutting of hardwood forests). By contrast, a corporation that has paid to lease a plot of land for the purpose of extracting raw materials has little incentive to ensure the long-term viability of the resource. Given, many countries in the developing world have made efforts to require responsible practices, but enforcement is spotty and corruption is widespread.

- The United States has 738 million acres of forestland
- Since the 1940's, the Total Forest Growth has exceeded the annual amount harvested
- Current annual hardwood growth rate surpasses harvest by 70 percent
- Each year 1.7 billion trees are planted in the United States - more than five trees for every man, woman and child in America - an average of 4.8 million seedlings each day.

Conclusion: North American hardwoods are *de facto* "Green":

The United States still has 70% of the forest land it had in pre-colonial times. The decline in U.S. forest land area stabilized shortly after 1900, following the end of widespread agricultural clearing, and has remained relatively constant since. The volume of standing growing stock increases when we harvest less timber than is available for harvest. Thus, for the past 50 years, North America's timber resource has been managed by sustainable methods.

Our opinion of the inherent health of US hardwood forests is supported by the fact that most domestic timber suppliers receive FSC certification for their material *without substantially changing their harvesting methods*. Typically, the changes they make are in adapting to the burdensome bureaucratic requirements of FSC; it is this bureaucracy that adds the bulk of the cost to FSC products.

So, in summary: You want sustainably harvested hardwood? *Buy American.*

