

31 March 2022

Brits believe healthy forests best defence against climate change

Three quarters of Brits agree that healthy forests are of crucial importance in the fight against climate change.

And ensuring that products from forests have been sourced responsibly is important to most, with 63% wanting reassurance about the forest products they buy.

A study of 1,281 adults* found that 6 in 10 people in the UK assume that some, or even all, of the wood-based products they buy are from sustainable sources.

Three quarters recognise that sourcing sustainable wood and paper is good for both forests and the planet in general, but most aren't sure how to tell if these products are sustainable.

There's also uncertainty when it comes to other forest-products, with 87% unaware that viscose and textiles, and 73% unaware that shoe soles (which can be made from natural rubber), can be sourced from trees.

And yet, three quarters say they think natural rubber and materials made from trees, such as viscose, should be responsibly sourced.

6 in 10 also reported becoming more conscious of the sustainability of both products and packaging. And 35% say they keep an eye out for certification labels when shopping for forest-based products.

Environmental charity, FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council®) UK, welcomed the news that 76% of people in the UK now recognise the FSC logo: a tree with a tick that lets shoppers know that the wood, paper and other forest products on which it is found support responsible forestry. Two thirds of respondents who had seen the logo are also confident they understand, at least roughly, what it means.

Tallulah Chapman, Communications Manager for FSC UK said, "It's great that recognition of the FSC logo is continuing to increase, jumping from just 55% to 76% within the last 5 years."

"This is thanks in the main to the hard work and commitment of our licence holders, from the construction, furniture, packaging, fashion and many other industries, who source FSC-certified products and use the FSC trademarks to promote them."

"But we still have a way to go in ensuring not just that people are aware of the logo but also that they really understand what it means and how it can help them to fulfil their want to source sustainable products and ensure healthy forests."

Once the meaning was explained, 7 in 10 people said they would prefer to buy a forest product bearing the FSC logo, as opposed to one without, only 1 in 10 stated that this was unlikely to positively influence their purchasing decision. Half of respondents even said

they would be prepared to pay more for FSC-certified products and 65% said they would have a positive opinion of a brand or retailer if they saw the FSC label on their products.

“FSC-certified forests are managed to strict environmental, social and economic standards; there are three FSC labels allowing shoppers to identify whether forest products, from toilet roll to timber, are 100% from FSC-certified forests, 100% recycled or made from a combination of inputs that support responsible forestry,” said Chapman.

The survey revealed some generational differences, with older people, including the at times maligned Baby Boomers, most concerned about whether forest-based products have been sourced sustainably, and most convinced of the importance of sourcing sustainable wood and paper.

But younger people tend to be more confident in identifying sustainably sourced forest products, with 3 in 10 millennials sure of how to tell.

Millennials are also most clued up about viscose, but still just 15% realise that it could be sourced from trees. When it comes to shoe soles, Gen Z lead the pack, with 3 in 10 identifying that they can be made using materials from trees. Nearly half of those aged 25-34 keep an eye out for certification labels when shopping for forest-based products and 91% of Gen Z recognise the FSC logo.

“Credible certifications, such as FSC, can offer consumers assurances about the sustainability of the products they choose to buy, and those used by the brands and retailers they shop with. Concern about the environment crosses the generations, so let’s work together to make sure our choices reflect our beliefs and aspirations.”

* Survey conducted (24/03/2022 - 28/03/2022) in United Kingdom by Kantar via OnLineBus, a sample of 1281 UK adults aged 16+ were interviewed.