

Green Information

The Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association (MFMA) is dedicated to preserving and protecting America's forestlands, while providing the forest products critical to the nation's well-being. MFMA and its members are committed to providing the highest standards of quality available from America's forests.

Are we running out of hardwoods?

- There are 737 million acres of forests in the U.S., **one-third** of the nation.
- Every day the forest industry, together with federal and state forest agencies, plants more than 1.5 billion more trees.
- *Forest Statistics of the United States, 2002*, shows that the U.S. grows six times more hardwoods than are harvested each year.
- Hardwoods have increased in every region of the U.S.
- Wood is the only natural resource on Earth that is at once renewable, recyclable, biodegradable and re-usable. The energy required to grow our timber supply is free. It comes from the sun.
- More than 1,750,000 Americans are employed in the forest products industry. Many millions more employed in the home construction, home furnishing, transportation and heavy equipment industries owe their jobs to this one basic industry that converts harvested timber to finished products.

* This information was provided by the *Evergreen Magazine* and NHLA's *Forest Resource Fact Book*.

NORTHERN HARD MAPLE VS. BAMBOO - WHO IS *REALLY* SUSTAINABLE?

“Right now if we had to choose between bamboo and, say, locally cut FSC certified maple flooring, a strong case could be made that the maple is environmentally a better choice.”

- *Bamboo Flooring - Is It Really Treehugger Green?*

By Lloyd Alter, Treehugger.com

Northern Hard Maple

- Forest Statistics of the United States show that the U.S. grows far more hardwoods than are harvested each year. There is 82% more hardwood growing today than in 1952. And, approximately 9.5 billion cubic feet of timber is added each year to the hardwood forest industry.

- Typical cutting practices that make northern hard maple stands continuously sustainable are often confused with images of clear cutting associated with harvesting stands of species such as Aspen or Pine, which regenerate best in full sunlight. Since northern hard maple stands are seldom clear cut and also not tilled to remove undergrowth, erosion is seldom a concern as it with bamboo growing practices.
- Although wood consumption accounts for almost half of the total annual industrial raw material tonnage, lumber and wood products manufacturing processes account for only about 4% of energy consumed by industrial raw material manufacturers.
- More than 200 million acres of forestland in the U.S. are certified as sustainable, attributable to forest certification programs, including The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) . an international organization which requires chain-of-custody documentation and product labeling.
- Solid maple flooring does not require or incorporate the use of any resins, such as urea-formaldehyde.
- Northern hard maple stands are not enhanced by chemicals such as pesticides, weed killers and fertilizers.
- More than one million Americans are employed in the forest products industry and owe their jobs to this one basic industry that converts harvested timber to finished products.
- Remaining wood material, which cannot be manufactured into present products, are recycled and used in numerous manners after a chipping process. This includes use as fuel for boilers, which in turn heats the facilities as well as dry kilns.
- Wood is one of the few natural resources on Earth that is at once renewable, recyclable, biodegradable and re-useable.

Bamboo

- Bamboo is often planted and grown at the expense of other diversified species, even to the extent of clear cutting rain forests to expand growing areas. Recently, bamboo expansion has come at the expense of natural forests, shrubs, and low-yield mixed plantations. It is common practice to cut down existing trees and replace them with bamboo. Natural forests in the vicinity of bamboo plantations have given way to bamboo as a result of deliberate efforts to replace them or because of the vigorous natural expansion of bamboo in logged over forests. This process has also had a negative impact on biodiversity.
- Processing of bamboo flooring is typically done in coal fired plants, which emit significant pollution.

- Bamboo is presented as being as hard as red oak; however the hardness depends directly on the maturity of the stalk. Hardness can vary substantially since there are no governing controls over harvesting practices of bamboo.
- Nearly all bamboo flooring sold in North America is produced in the southern Chinese province of Hunan, in an area known as "the bamboo sea" for its extensive bamboo forests. These forests are owned by the government, and individuals or companies can obtain contracts to harvest from them with little control over environmental and worker safety issues. There is no Fair Trade Certification, ensuring that the workers have appropriate working conditions and wages.
- Manufacturers of bamboo flooring and plywood handle potentially toxic chemicals, including binders and finishes; produce a lot of solid waste; and run equipment that emits combustion gases. The manufacturers' responsibility in dealing with these potential environmental and health hazards is unclear.
- The fossil fuels required to move bamboo products halfway around the world constitute an environmental strike against the product, leaving a significant carbon footprint. No North American companies are currently growing bamboo for building uses, and, due primarily to the high cost of labor in North America relative to the parts of the world where bamboo is currently grown for building uses, this situation is unlikely to change.
- The bamboo industry has nothing comparable to FSC Certification, ensuring that the forest has been harvested in a sustainable fashion.

Summary

Industry leaders need to create a system that backs bamboo's claims regarding resource management and manufacturing practices with the credibility of an independently verified, third-party certification program similar to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for northern hard maple. Given bamboo's dependence on questionable urea-formaldehyde binders, they need to start participating in North America's existing testing and certification programs for chemical emissions from their products. Don't believe everything you hear about green products. Some aren't as environmentally friendly as they would like you to believe.

Disclaimer

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SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY AND FSC CERTIFICATION

The MFMA was established in 1897 to be the authoritative source for the milling of hard maple, birch and beech flooring. The association members are highly aware of how important sustainable yield forestry practices are to protect this valuable resource.

Hardwood timber removals, harvests, growth and inventory in the United States in the North Region, where the MFMA mills procure the resource, have the following historical and projected levels of inventory from 1952 to 2050 (million cubic feet) * Source: For historical data: Powell et al, 1993, 1997 data from Smith et al. For more information go to: <http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/gtr560>.

<u>1952</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2050</u>
76,695	119,158	164,905	212,565	247,573

This data shows a projected 222 percent increase (C.A.G.R. 2.3 percent) of hardwood timber in the North Region of the United States. The data clearly indicates that the public and private forestlands are being well managed to meet current and future needs.

MFMA has been able to identify a growing trend in the lack of support of FSC Certification in the North Region. Menominee Tribal Enterprises, the largest lumber provider in the North Region, has suspended its FSC Certification initiatives. North Country Lumber has suspended its FSC Certification for 18 months as of 12/20/02. Keeweenaw Land Associates and Seven Islands Land Company are closely examining the need for continuing their FSC Certification. This lack of support has resulted in an extremely limited supply of FSC Certified lumber.

The lumber that MFMA mills use to produce flooring is typically No. 2 Common or No. 3 Common. These grades of lumber are used predominately for wood flooring, while a small amount is used as components in furniture and cabinets. In fact, these grades of lumber make up 33 percent of the utilization of the log that is harvested.

MFMA's belief is the majority of lumber used in its flooring comes from sustainable, managed forests, and that certification as such by the FSC is not only unnecessary, it adds an additional layer of cost to the product with no real benefit to the consumer. MFMA has been a supportive partner in the success of sustainable forestry for more than 100 years and feels that this kind of success speaks for itself.
