

Forestry in Sweden is not sustainable

The Swedish forestry model has been claimed across Europe as an example of a sustainable way to cultivate forests; in particular through the certification system FSC. In reality though, the Swedish forestry has caused a devastating impact on forest diversity since the 1950's when the clear cutting period started.

Today, more than 2000 forest dwelling species are endangered, vulnerable or threatened, mainly due to the modern forestry methods. Between 2007 and 2009, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) has conducted field documentation of close to 500 threatened and unprotected old-growth boreal forests with high conservation values owned by large forestry companies as well as smallholders.

"The natural forests of Sweden are about to disappear. It is time that consumers and procurers all over Europe become aware that present forestry methods biodiversity in unique ecosystems in Sweden," says Mikael Karlsson, President of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, the largest environmental organization in Sweden.

The largest forest companies in Sweden are FSC-certified. Numerous field studies carried out by SSNC during the past three years show that a remarkable number of logged areas do not live up to the FSC-standard's key criteria. However, these violations of the FSC-regulations have not altered the companies' possibilities to continue with using the FSC label. In as much as one third of the cases, forestry logging is also violating Swedish laws on nature protection, according to the Swedish Forestry Agency.

The SSNC has now released the report "Cutting the Edge – the Loss of Natural Forests in Sweden" in order to make buyers, traders and consumers in Europe aware of the downside of the Swedish forestry model.

"A new Swedish forestry model is needed, with regulations that safeguard the biodiversity and the forest ecosystems in Sweden. In a short-term perspective, new and strict sanctions are needed to force the forestry industry to follow present legislation. In addition, a new environmental law is needed, with the aim to protect the nature values in Swedish forests," says Mikael Karlsson.

During SSNC's field studies, hundreds of old-growth forests with high conservation values and woodland key habitats have been found slated for logging or logged. The forest companies have been contacted, but follow-up reviews shows that very little has changed in the companies' procedures.

"The results of our field visits are very discouraging. More than 2,000 forest dwelling species are red-listed, and hundreds are critically endangered or endangered. Despite this, we are constantly seeing habitats for these species that have been clear felled or are reported for final felling," says Malin Sahlin, forest campaigner, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.

The Swedish forestry model has enabled a shift from species-rich, valuable natural forests to homogenous, plantations with trees of the same age and few species. Attempts to improve the

situation somewhat with, for example, certification have only had a marginal effect. The report shows that the depletion of the forests eco-systems is continuing and is being released to a large number of environmental organizations as well as buyers of Swedish forestry products in Europe.

Download and read the report

<http://www.naturskyddsforeningen.se/upload/press/rapport-cutting-the-edge.pdf>

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