

SETTING THE CONTEXT: FORESTS FOR THE FUTURE

The global sustainability agenda is evolving, and the spotlight is on forests more than ever. Forests all over the world are experiencing increased frequency and severity of drought and fire, pest outbreaks and disease, extreme precipitation events, and species decline—all of which negatively impact forest and community health and resiliency. The forest sector is adjusting to evolving legal and regulatory compliance, social license considerations, and investor and customer expectations, while attempting to recruit and retain a diversified workforce. Actions are needed to sustainably manage our forests, address societal challenges such as human health, water security, and disaster risk reduction, and create a forest literate society. People care very deeply for forests, but with a general lack of understanding, we have an enormous opportunity to raise public awareness about the many benefits of well-managed forests and to provide practical solutions that elevate forests and forest products as nature-based solutions.

SFI'S ROLE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

At the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), we believe that sustainable forests are critical to our collective future. SFI is a sustainability leader through collaboration in standards, conservation, community, and education, with an emphasis on practical solutions demonstrated by progress on the ground. We have the scale to make a meaningful difference and contribute to a positive change through our networks. This is because the SFI footprint includes 360 million acres/150 million hectares of certified forests and influences over 11 billion cubic feet of wood fiber procured through mills certified to the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard.

The opportunity for us to contribute during this time of change is tremendous due to our scale, and our action focused network, which collaborates on the acquisition of credible data and research, as well as training and the implementation of best management practices. We continue to reach educators and young people through Project Learning Tree, which increases awareness of the importance of trees and forests in addressing environmental challenges.

SFI's strategic direction is grounded in:

- Promoting responsible forestry and sourcing
- Providing nature-based solutions from the SFI footprint
- Fostering a lifetime of learning
- Creating positive change with a diversity of communities

SFI VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION: A world that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests.

MISSION: Advance sustainability through forest-focused collaboration.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

SFI engaged in a participatory process to develop its 2025-2030 strategic direction, which includes a “Theory of Change” framework.

Those that contributed to shaping the direction and theory of change include SFI-certified organizations, conservation groups, academics, customers, educators, and career pathways partners, and many more through workshops and surveys that reached over 400 thought leaders from these networks. Their contributions have shaped, improved, and clarified SFI's strategy and desired outcomes. The SFI Board of Directors approved the strategic direction in 2024.

SFI's theory of change “outcome map” presented as a tree cookie is critical to understanding the change we want to see. It is comprised of near-term outcomes (1-2 years) and long-term outcomes (5+ years). While success with long-term outcomes, such as greater forest and community health and resiliency, will necessitate building on the accomplishments of our short-term outcomes, it is not perfectly linear – we will be working towards our long-term outcomes immediately, even before completing work on near-term outcomes.



PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE FORESTRY & SOURCING

STRATEGY:

SFI will develop and promote standards that provide an assurance of sustainable forestry and responsible sourcing of forest products.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Consumers, customers, government regulators, conservation groups, and investors increasingly want more information and greater transparency about how our forests are managed and how forest products are sourced. They want assurances that forest-based products are avoiding negative impacts, such as deforestation and forest degradation, and contributing to positive conservation and social outcomes. SFI forest certification standards play an important role in providing this assurance to the marketplace, supporting government priorities, and creating thriving communities.

THEORY OF CHANGE OUTCOMES:

To support the understanding of those connections, SFI will focus on the following outcomes:

- Increased market recognition, trust, and demand for the value of SFI Standards, products, and labels
- Increased number and diversity of organizations and area certified to the SFI Standards

Which will lead to

- Greater appreciation that sustainably managed forests, urban to rural, maintain nature and benefit communities
- Increased recognition of the value and benefits of responsibly sourced forest products
- Increased recognition by government and decision makers of the value of SFI Standards' contributions to conservation, societal, and economic priorities

SUMMARY:

Through these actions and in collaboration with our network of certified organizations and partners, SFI aims to increase demand, recognition, appreciation, and trust for the assurances provided by SFI standards in maintaining nature and reducing risk, while providing responsibly sourced forest products.

SFI STANDARDS

SFI has multiple certification standards that raise the bar for responsible forestry and fiber sourcing:

- The SFI Forest Management Standard is for landowners and land managers to advance sustainable forest management and meet sustainability outcomes.
- The SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard is for manufacturers of forest products to responsibly source fiber across their procurement landscape and avoid controversial sources.
- The SFI Chain of Custody Standard is for organizations in the forest supply chain to track certified forest content, non-certified forest content, and recycled forest content to the end-product. It also avoids controversial sources.
- The SFI Indigenous Peoples and Families Module is tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples and smaller scale forest operations.
- The SFI Urban and Community Forest Sustainability Standard is for municipalities, universities, corporations, and diverse communities to advance the sustainability of urban forests and communities.



PROVIDE NATURE BASED SOLUTIONS ON THE SFI FOOTPRINT

STRATEGY:

SFI will support and advance forest management and fiber sourcing practices that deliver positive outcomes for climate, fire resilience, biodiversity, and water.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Some of our most pressing issues include catastrophic wildfires, water security, and loss of species and ecosystem functions. Increasingly, these issues are recognized as material risks to financial and economic systems and are being prioritized in government, corporate, and investor policies. Well-managed forests offer nature-based solutions to these challenges and many other conservation benefits. However, there is a growing emphasis on the evaluation of conservation claims, with greater transparency demanded on how to measure, monitor, and report on natural resource status and trends. This is an area of interest to SFI so that we can advance relevant data, metrics, tools, and best practices that deliver conservation solutions while raising public awareness about the connection of SFI certification to nature-based solutions.

THEORY OF CHANGE OUTCOMES:

To fulfill this opportunity, SFI will collaborate broadly to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased use of data, research, and reporting that quantifies, communicates, and expands the delivery of nature-based solutions by SFI-certified organizations

Which will ultimately lead to

- Greater forest health and enhanced climate adaptation and mitigation
- Increased fire resilience for forests and communities
- Maintained delivery of water benefits for nature and people
- Increased species and ecosystem conservation

SUMMARY:

Through expanded use of credible data, metrics, research, and reporting, and through partner collaborations that deliver data and tools to improve management practices, SFI seeks to contribute to long-term forest health and resiliency through climate adaptation and mitigation, fire resilience, water benefits, and species and ecosystem conservation.



CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE WITH A DIVERSITY OF COMMUNITIES

STRATEGY:

SFI is committed to delivering its strategic direction with a diversity of communities that leads to genuine progress in the forest and makes a positive difference in people's lives.

SFI has a policy to address underrepresentation within the forest and conservation sector, including that of Indigenous, Black American, Francophone, Latino, and urban communities. Read more about [SFI's DEI Policy](#)

WHY IT MATTERS:

The links between communities and forests are even more relevant in an increasingly connected and changing world. Lasting solutions to pressing sustainability challenges require diverse and inclusive collaborations that make a positive difference from the local to global levels. SFI's networks, including our SFI Implementation Committees and Project Learning Tree network, are key to reaching a diversity of communities, practitioners, and professionals. By fostering forest-focused relationships throughout our network and through our programs and services, SFI has an opportunity to contribute to the resiliency and self-determination of the communities in which we live, work, and serve.e.

THEORY OF CHANGE OUTCOMES:

To support meaningful and effective collaborations, SFI will focus on the following outcomes:

- Increased collaboration with Indigenous Peoples
- Increased uptake of best management practices, including for climate, fire resiliency, biodiversity, water, and Indigenous rights recognition, in collaboration with SFI-certified organizations, SICs and diverse partners
- Greater utilization of SFI programs by a diversity of communities to advance their priorities

Together this will contribute to

- Increased integration of Indigenous Peoples' rights, traditional knowledge, and self-determined priorities into forest management practices
- Greater community health, well-being and resiliency

SUMMARY:

Through greater utilization of SFI programs and practices, including those related to Indigenous rights recognition, environmental education, forest literacy, and career pathways, SFI will foster an environment of respect and inclusion across our footprint that contributes to diverse collaborations that advance local community health and resiliency, self-determination, and forest-based solutions.

SFI'S INDIGENOUS RELATIONS COMMITMENT

SFI is committed to building and promoting forest-focused collaborations rooted in recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge. We firmly believe that inclusive, collaborative approaches to policy, program and relationship development lead to real progress on the ground and a positive difference in people's lives. Read more about [SFI's Indigenous Relations Commitment](#).



FOSTER A LIFETIME OF LEARNING

STRATEGY:

SFI will advance environmental education, forest literacy, and career pathways, using trees and forests as a window on the world.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Addressing sustainability begins with environmental education, forest literacy, and building a greater understanding of the role of forests in addressing local, national, and global environmental challenges. By teaching students how to think, not what to think about complex environmental issues, we are helping young people learn the problem-solving skills they need to make informed choices as citizens and employees. We need to ensure young people learn about the diversity of green jobs available to them and that employers provide a welcoming work environment for young adults to contribute and succeed. The multifaceted challenge of sustainability requires representation at the decision-making table that reflects diverse communities – best accomplished with a workforce that is diverse in thought, perspectives, and experiences.

THEORY OF CHANGE OUTCOMES:

To advance these priorities, SFI will focus on the following outcomes:

- Increased utilization of PLT resources/ curriculum among formal and non-formal educators and employers
- Increased access and utilization of PLT professional development among educators and employers
- Increased readiness, access to, and appreciation for careers in the forest sector across a diversity of communities

Which will lead to

- Environmental education and forest literacy is an integral part of what students learn
- The forest and conservation workforce is more representative of society

SUMMARY:

Through increased awareness of, access to, and utilization of resources, professional development, and career opportunities, SFI seeks to contribute to greater forest literacy, increased employment, and overall community connections to the benefits of sustainable forest management.

