

## Materials: Responsible Sourcing

Responsible sourcing concerns where materials and products come from, how workers in the supply chain are treated, and the environmental impact of materials and associated components, coatings and by products.

The demand for responsible sourcing is driven by factors like increasing corporate and social responsibility and assurance of security of supply. In addition, sustainable procurement initiatives and projects supported by Government assessment tools, such as BREEAM, award credits for responsibly sourced materials.

The current BRE responsible sourcing standard, BES 6001 *Framework Standard for the Responsible Sourcing of Construction Products*, published in 2008, provides a common benchmark for construction products to gain credit under both BREEAM and the Code for Sustainable Homes schemes. BES 6001 considers the activities associated with responsible sourcing together with their delivery mechanism using certified management systems.

The British Standards Institution has produced a standard for responsible sourcing of construction products (BS 8902). The standard provides the basis for the development of individual sector schemes. The sector schemes can potentially have the same scope as BES 6001; however, the threshold performance requirements of BES 6001 are more prescriptive than BS 8902. As a consequence certification to BS 8902 does not ensure equivalence between different materials. The BES 6001 framework also supports sector schemes and could be developed to gain accreditation under BS 8902. Both standards can be used to help support responsible sourcing in supply chain management.

The reinforcement sector has two responsible sourcing schemes: Eco-reinforcement and CARES. Both schemes are established in accordance with BS8902 and enable certification to BES6001.

Timber certification schemes dealing with responsible forest management have been in existence since the 1990s and were the early drivers for the responsible sourcing standards. These schemes concentrate on resource stewardship and traceability, rather than on the subsequent activities along the supply chain, which is the focus of BES 6001 and BS 8902. BREEAM recognises the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) as responsible sourcing schemes.

### Examples of responsible sourcing are treatment of workers and material traceability:

- The EU's legislative framework contains a Social Charter which provides legal protection against ethical and social exploitation. Such legislation is not common outside of the EU and organisations need to ensure their supply chain operates to the minimum standards recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in order to demonstrate responsible sourcing.
- The specifier/purchaser should be able to identify the source of key components and therefore the conditions under which the material was extracted or harvested. This requires a raw material inventory management system, which is also known as the 'chain of custody'.

While it is important to know the origins of the components it is equally important to know that any 'added value' steps in the supply chain are equally committed to improve their sustainable performance. Certification to recognised management systems and performance reporting helps ensure that consistent values are present along the supply chain.

# Find Out More

## Eco-reinforcement

<http://www.eco-reinforcement.org/>

## Certification Authority for Reinforcing Steels (CARES)

<http://www.ukcares.com/>

## Related (web links)

<http://www.bre.co.uk/page.jsp?id=1514>

<http://www.fsc-uk.org/en-uk>

<http://www.pefc.org/>

<http://www.sfiprogram.org/>

<http://www.ilo.org/>