



FSC-US Questions and Answers for Family Forest Owners

Forestry Pesticides

The Forest Stewardship Council policy on use of pesticides includes three core elements:

- a) Avoidance of ‘highly hazardous’ pesticides
- b) Promotion of non-chemical methods of pest management as part an integrated pest management strategy
- c) Safe and proper application of the pesticides that are used

Most states’ Best Management Practices take a similar approach, with one distinct exception. They rely on U.S. and state Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules for identifying prohibited and restricted use chemicals. FSC, however, maintains its own list of chemicals it considers to be highly hazardous. While there is considerable overlap between EPA and FSC precautions, FSC discourages use of some products that are available for purchase under EPA rules. That results in some confusion for family forest owners about which products they can or cannot use of FSC-certified land. Some of the more frequently asked questions include:

Question 1: Can landowners with FSC-certified forest management operations use chemicals to control unwanted competition in plantations, invasive plants, insects, diseases and other pests?

Answer: Yes, but take the following measures:

1. Use pesticides safely. Follow product label directions, use appropriate personal protective equipment, or hire a professional applicator.
2. Look into non-chemical alternatives and use them first if practical. Otherwise, use the least toxic product you can find for the purpose. Use no more than necessary.
3. Do not use any chemical pesticides on the FSC ‘highly hazardous list’ unless your forest management organization has an FSC-approved derogation (variance).
4. Keep records of pesticides you use. They can be valuable if problems develop later.

Question 2: Are family forest owners likely to find the FSC ‘highly hazardous list’ too restrictive?

Answer: No. Most FSC-certified forestry organizations in the United States are able to find alternative pesticides that work well for a wide range of needs and are not banned by FSC. Difficulties for family forest owners commonly arise in association with only few products such as hexazinone (trade name Velpar®), used to kill hardwoods in pine plantations; and triazine products (including atrazine and simazine or Princep®), used to control broadleaf weeds and grasses in plantations. FSC’s concern about these chemicals is that they do not breakdown quickly and so can infiltrate groundwater. In situations where forest management organizations have been unable to find effective alternatives to products like hexazinone, they have successfully petitioned FSC for derogations and received authorization to use the products under controlled conditions.

Question 3: Where can I find a list of FSC ‘highly hazardous’ pesticides, and how can I tell whether the brand name products that are available to me are on the list?

Answer: You could begin by simply asking your local forester. If you'd like to check for yourself, a full list of pesticides designated as 'highly hazardous' by FSC is published in Annex II of [FSC GUI 30 001 V2 0 EN FSC Pesticides Policy Guidance 2007.pdf](#) (click the link or Google the name).

Knowing which commercial products contain the listed chemicals can be accomplished using online tools. The Pesticide Action Network of North America offers a look-up service based on trade names: http://www.pesticideinfo.org/Search_Products.jsp

You can also search on the chemical component of a product and get a list of the registered trade names:

http://www.pesticideinfo.org/Search_Chemicals.jsp#ChemSearch

Question 4: Where can I find alternatives to using chemical pesticides?

Answer: Begin by asking your forester, county extension service or other resource manager. In many cases, particularly where insect pest and fungal diseases are concerned, the best approach may be to make a conscious and informed decision to take no further action other than monitoring the situation. Given a good understanding of the nature of the pest, disease or weed agent, it may also be possible to take actions to avoid pests or to prevent a problem reoccurring in the future.

If it is not practical to take no action or avoid the problem, it may be necessary to consider remedial control measures. For many pest, weed and disease problems non-chemical approaches exist. These should always be considered first, before resorting to the use of pesticides. Examples of non-chemical remedial control measures include the use of cultivation, mulches or hand weeding for vegetation control, the use of sanitation felling to prevent the spread of newly introduced pests, or the use of natural enemies such as predators, parasites or pathogens for the biological control of damaging pests.

Question 5: Does FSC certification require that I eradicate invasive species if they are found on my property?

Answer: No. Complete elimination of invasive species may not be feasible or practical. The FSC standard does, however, expect landowners to take the following actions:

1. Limit and if possible prevent the spread of pests and invasive species from one forest area or plantation to another. Your state has probably identified Best Management Practices to prevent the spread of invasive species that you can follow.
2. Survey and monitor your woodland for early detection of pests and invasive alien species whether fungi, insects, plants or others. Early detection will allow you to deal with the pest prior to it becoming a much larger problem that could demand significant pesticide intervention to protect your timber.
3. Select plantation species, ground cover plantings or shrubs that are known not to be invasive plants so as to reduce the need for pesticide use outside of the managed forest areas.

