



## **Independent verification of HS Timber Group's operations in Slovakia completed**

*The independent verification was launched in August 2021 to identify and assess any potential supply chain risks in HS Timber Group's operations in Slovakia.*

Bonn Germany (24 September 2021) - The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) confirms the completion of the independent verification of HS Timber Group's supply chain (formerly known as Holzindustrie Schweighofer).

FSC commissioned the accredited certification body Soil Association to conduct a field assessment of HS Timber's operations in Slovakia in order to identify and evaluate any potential supply chain risks associated to the group's operations in the country. The independent verification also included an evaluation of the adequacy and robustness of HS Timber Group's due diligence systems and processes for Slovakia, a follow-up evaluation of the minor non-conformities raised as a result of the independent verification exercise of HS Timber Group conducted by the Consultant from December 2020 to February 2021, as well as a desk assessment of HS Timber Group's due diligence systems in Belarus and Poland.

Soil Association completed the field verification and desk evaluation of the HS Timber operations in Slovakia at the end of August. The sampling of sites audited as part of this exercise included 95% of HS Timber procurement from Slovakia from the commercial purchase of timber back to the sourcing forest management unit. All of the sampled suppliers were visited in person by the Soil Association team and interviews were conducted with employees of the suppliers and the forest managers.

In addition to the field verification and desk assessment conducted by Soil Association, FSC conducted targeted outreach to interested and local stakeholders and invited them to observe the field verification in Slovakia and provide information or raise any concerns to be evaluated as part of the verification exercise.

Soil Association is currently developing the final assessment report, describing the findings of this independent evaluation of HS Timber. The report will be finalized in the next few weeks, of which a public summary will be available in the FSC website.

This independent verification marks the final step in the FSC process for ending dissociation with HS Timber which began in 2017. The Board Complaint Resolution Committee (BCRC) – a committee within the FSC Board of Directors - will review the findings of the report following the conditions it set for HS Timber, and make a decision regarding its association status in the next weeks.

All updates regarding the HS Timber Group case will be shared on [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org).