

## NEWS

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### **HARDWOOD INDUSTRY LAUNCHES EFFORT TO ESTABLISH MARKETING PROGRAMS**

**U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC**  
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After months of deliberations and analysis, an ad-hoc group of U.S. hardwood industry leaders operating as the “Blue Ribbon Committee on Hardwood Check-off” (BRC) announced agreement to seek formal approval of a commodity marketing program for a range of hardwood lumber and plywood products.

“The American hardwood industry is comprised of literally thousands of small- to medium-sized operations scattered across all forested regions of the U.S.,” said Ted Rossi of Rossi Lumber Group and Co-Chair of the BRC. “Our diverse industry produces some of the most beautiful and desirable wood products available, but we’ve never mounted a sustained research, education, and promotion program to ensure that consumers are armed with sound information about the many performance, environmental, and economic benefits they provide. A hardwood check-off program will be a game-changer for our future.”

“Commodity research and promotion programs” are better known as “check-offs.” Check-offs are organized by producers of commodities, from cotton to watermelons, who agree to band together to promote their products. These collective marketing efforts have proven to be successful ways to grow the market for many products. Most Americans know the programs by their public faces -- for instance the “Got Milk?” and “Beef; It’s What’s for Dinner,” campaigns run respectively by the milk and beef check-off initiatives.

Currently there are check-off programs for a wide array of traditional agricultural products but none for forest products. Once approved by the participants, the program is administered by the industry in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to ensure that check-off monies go only for authorized research and promotion programs.

Development of the hardwood check-off is being jointly funded by the members of the BRC with matching funds provided by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment).

“Simply stated, the Endowment is about sustaining America’s working forests and advancing family-supporting jobs in forest-reliant rural communities,” says Endowment President Carlton Owen. “We can think of no better way to advance our mission than to ensure that America’s

forest landowners – both public and private – have robust markets for their trees and that we retain and grow a healthy forest products industry that can provide those jobs.”

Jim Howard of Atlanta Hardwood co-chairs the BRC with Rossi. A dozen hardwood representatives from across the country round-out the membership. According to Howard, “The BRC has drafted the details of the proposed check-off and is now entering the discussion phase across potentially affected producers. We look forward to hearing from our industry on the concepts we have developed.”

The hardwood check-off is proposed to include sawmills producing green lumber as well as kiln drying operations with annual sales greater than \$2 million and hardwood plywood manufacturers with greater than 10 million square feet of production.

The entire process is expected to take 18 months and will include opportunity for public comment via the Federal Register and a vote of affected producers.

In early 2008, the Endowment conducted an analysis of the potential for commodity check-offs to help grow the market and therefore the impact of the softwood lumber industry. That work has led to the first-ever forest products check-off under USDA authority advancing to the voting stage. The softwood lumber industry is expected to vote on the initiative in early spring.

The Endowment is now collaborating with the paper & packaging as well as the hardwood sectors to consider the potential of research and promotion programs.

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**The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working collaborative with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative, and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation’s working forests and forest-reliant communities -- [www.usendowment.org](http://www.usendowment.org).

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**The Blue Ribbon Committee on Hardwood Check-off** (BRC) is an ad-hoc committee of hardwood industry leaders empanelled to consider, develop, and promote the potential of a research and promotion program to grow markets for sustainably produced hardwood lumber and plywood products.