

The Forest Stewardship Council's expansion plan

The FSC aims to increase to 30% the area of the world's production forests under certification to FSC standards and to 15% the share of the global roundwood market held by FSC-certified forests

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THE Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a unique, non-profit, international standards and accreditation organisation committed to promoting the conservation, restoration and protection of the world's production forests. The FSC's forest management standard-setting processes are transparent and inclusive, with the participation of a wide range of stakeholder groups, including those that are traditionally marginalised in forest policy debates. By providing multi-stakeholder fora for the discussion of forest management issues, the FSC has successfully energised policy processes that had been stagnant due to low participation and a lack of trust among stakeholders.

The FSC has more than 400 individual, corporate, institutional and organisational members in 50 countries. Its membership, divided into social, environmental and economic chambers, includes: major environmental organisations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Worldwide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund; social organisations that represent the interests of forest-dependent communities, indigenous peoples and forest workers; and progressive forest management and forest products companies. It has also earned the endorsement of mainstream environmental organisations in the United States such as the World Resources Institute, the Natural Resources Defense Fund, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, and of major timber retailers worldwide, including Home Depot, Lowe's and Nike in the US, IKEA in Sweden, B&Q in the United Kingdom, Intergamma in the Netherlands, and OBI in Germany.

Although the FSC promotes responsible forestry through certification, it does not certify; rather, it accredits certification bodies to conduct the certification and monitoring of good forest management. More than ten certification bodies have been accredited, none of which is based in the tropics. Some accredited certification bodies have agents and partners carrying out FSC audits in tropical countries, notably in Bolivia and Brazil but also in Indonesia and Malaysia. The FSC has endorsed regional standards for these audits in Bolivia, Brazil and Colombia, and FSC members are collaborating to develop standards for FSC endorsement in Argentina, Cameroon, Chile, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam. Not all of these countries have FSC-endorsed national initiatives, but all base their drafts on the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Management.

More than 29 million hectares of forests in 55 countries across five continents have been certified to FSC standards. The certified areas range from small-scale community forests in the Solomon Islands to the entire holdings of the State of Pennsylvania in the US and the lands of the largest commercial timber and paper companies in Europe and North and South America. However, about three-quarters of the FSC-certified area are in temperate and boreal forests. Most of the certified tropical forests are in South America. For example, over one million hectares have been certified in Bolivia, while some 333 000 hectares of natural Amazonian forest have been certified in Brazil; only small areas have

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enlarge their scope of responsibility, yet they have very limited institutional, human and financial resources. Not only do they need to develop credible certification standards and establish national capacity to implement the standard, they have to make extra efforts to achieve international recognition, which their developed-world counterparts need not do.

In the case of LEI, in addition to the development of certification standards and the building of national capacity, we must be actively involved in many non-certification issues. For example, LEI takes part in an Indonesian NGO coalition for natural resource management and land reforms. This coalition successfully convinced Indonesia's highest law-making body, the People's Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat*), to issue a decree on these issues. Moreover, in the face of early lukewarm responses from some European buyers, LEI needs to work harder to convince them that supporting national initiatives—while remaining in support of an international one—can provide huge incentives for FMUs in developing countries to proceed towards SFM certification. With all these challenges, a big-bang approach to certification seems to be unproductive. All certification supporters need to work together to bridge the gap.

Of all other alternatives, a phased approach to certification appears to be the most useful. This can be divided into two phases: legal compliance

and, later, a mutually agreed, gradual progression to SFM certification. In the first stage, forest concessionaires apply for some form of assessment leading to the recognition of legal compliance, including compliance with the terms and conditions of forest management stipulated in the agreement between the state and the forest concessionaire. In the second stage, forest concessionaires, certifiers and other forest stakeholders lay down a (perhaps five-year) plan for achieving SFM in the FMU, with a clear timetable and indicators of achievement. Each year, certifiers and other stakeholders assess the annual improvement against the timetable and indicators. Progress is reported in a verification report, which is accessible to buyers and other stakeholders. In the final year, a full SFM assessment is undertaken to examine if a certificate can be issued to the forest concessionaire.

Such a phased approach will only be attractive to forest stakeholders in developing countries if buyers in the developed world are prepared to recognise the approach. ITTO can play significant roles in stimulating research and debate on the approach.

so far been certified in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, the first FSC-certified particleboards and non-timber forest products (Jungle Gum Chicle, Hand Care Cream, After-Shave Gel) came from the tropics.

In spite of steady growth in the area of certified forest, FSC certification covers only about 6% of the world's production forests, mostly outside the tropics. The current rates of global deforestation, forest degradation and inappropriate forest management, particularly in the tropics, and the declining quality of tropical forest management, do not bode well for the myriad species and communities that are forest-dependent, nor for the balance of the world's people, whose lives are indirectly, though indisputably, linked to the world's forests. Without marked increases in the area under FSC certification and improved systems for getting the certified products to market, the world's forests remain imperilled. However, certification will expand rapidly in the tropics only when there is an increase in the area of well-managed forests and in the demand for independent evidence of good management.

The challenge ahead in improving forest management is both daunting and formidable, not only in the tropics, with its multitude of problems and unfavourable conditions, but also in the temperate and boreal regions where the forests have hitherto been assumed to be well-managed. Meeting such a challenge is beyond the power and capacity of a small non-profit organisation like the FSC, but could be done successfully with help from major international agencies like ITTO, FAO and the World Bank, and by their member governments. However, none of these has made commitments or adopted procurement policies to obtain its wood-based products (paper, furniture, building timber) from well-managed forests (ITTO has, however, committed to promoting a trade based on sustainably managed forests through its Objective 2000). Consequently, the FSC's immediate role is to increase the area of certified forests covered by its standards, not only in the tropics but also worldwide. It has begun implementing a strategic action plan to attain the objectives of bringing 30% of the world's forests under certification to FSC standards and increasing to 15% the share of the global roundwood market held by FSC-certified forests by 2007. The plan, which will accord priority to the tropics, calls for a significant expansion and decentralisation of the FSC's service-delivery mechanisms as follows:

- regional offices will be established in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa. National offices will be added in Russia, China, and throughout Latin America;
- the service-delivery role of these regional and national operations will be expanded with appropriate professional staffing. This will improve the FSC's responsiveness to its clientele and enable it to deliver a higher quality of service in each market area;

- FSC standards-setting, certification and education activities will be stepped up in such critical areas as Africa's Congo Basin, China, Russia and Southeast Asia. In each of these areas, rogue forest operators engage in practices that range from egregious to outright criminal, destroying ecosystems, habitat and human lives in the pursuit of fast profits;
- the FSC Secretariat will be relocated to an international centre of policy. This physical move of the operational centre of the organisation will raise the FSC's international profile, help position it as a credible world leader, and greatly enhance its ability to provide counsel on trade policy;
- accreditation processes will be streamlined without sacrificing integrity. The FSC's network of accredited certification bodies will be expanded to make FSC certification more readily accessible to forest landowners and forest products manufacturers around the world; and
- the FSC will also develop and implement programs to increase market awareness of its trademark logo, thus enhancing its value and revenue-generating potential. In addition to designing measures that foster greater on-product use of the logo by certified manufacturers, the FSC will build awareness and brand value through uniform, high-profile public affairs and communications activities worldwide.

Pan-African certification

Among tropical regions, Africa is particularly lagging behind in forest and timber certification: only the Keurhout Foundation has so far certified forests (in Congo and Gabon) in West and Central Africa. Given the increasing demand of certified tropical timber products, the African forest industry is facing market constraints.

Some initiatives have been taken to make more progress in forest certification in the tropics, including in Africa and particularly in African Timber Organization (ATO) member countries. For instance, in 1999 the Inter-African Association of Forest Industries (IFIA) identified the promotion of forest certification as one of its main strategies. In October 2000 the ATO Ministerial Conference adopted an IFIA-proposed pan-African certification concept as a policy for promoting the development and implementation of a regional approach to forest certification among member countries. The Pan-African Certification Scheme would use as its basis the ATO/ITTO Principles, Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management (PCI), which were developed jointly by ATO and ITTO. The recent ITTO workshop on forest certification recommended that support be provided to regional initiatives of forest certification in the tropical regions.

In a first step towards such support, the International Tropical Timber Council approved and funded a project at its most recent session to establish capacity to implement the ATO/ITTO PCI at the national level in African ITTO member countries (see page 21 for details on this project).