

# Forest certification, a stakeholder vision

FERN

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# What is FERN

- FERN works to achieve greater environmental and social justice, focusing on forests and forest peoples' rights in the policies and practices of the European Union.
- Key words: networking, building bridges, political analysis, constructive solutions, provoke discussions.

# Stakeholders in forest certification

- Standards
- Certification
- Accreditation

If the scheme is to be used as a basis for making product claims:

- Labelling rules
- Chain of Custody

# Stakeholder consultation

Important for all aspects but specifically for standard setting.

What is sustainable forest management?

Who decides?

# Setting standards is a political process

A certification standard defining 'sustainable' forest management will vary greatly according to the interests, the background, values and experience of the people who define the standard.



*”The crux of the international debate centres on credibility for certification schemes and more deeply about who should define forest management standards and how this takes place.”*

Marku Simula and Ewald Rametsteiner

# Certification in a wider context

The first and foremost principle of sustainable forest management must be the development of a vision of what can be considered sustainable forest management. This vision needs to be developed with the full participation of all stakeholders, and particularly the local people who own, or use the forest area.

# What certification should be

- Participatory;
- Transparent;
- Performance based;
- Independent.



# Participatory

- “[the panel] *urged countries to support the application to certification schemes of such concepts as: ....participation that seeks to involve all interested parties including local communities; sustainable forest management and transparency.*” (IPF)
- Similar texts in CTE, IRT, NGO positions etc

# Transparent

- *“voluntary, participatory, market-based and transparent environmental labelling schemes are potentially efficient, economic instruments in order to inform consumers about environmentally friendly products”.* (CTE)
- Similar texts in IPF, CoFO, IRT, NGO positions

# Performance based

*“ The development of criteria and indicators [through governmental processes such as the Helsinki and Montreal processes] is primarily intended for promoting and monitoring sustainable forest management, and not for imposing certification schemes for forest products. [These] criteria and indicators are not performance standards for certifying management at any level”. (IPF)*

*CTE, World Bank, CoFo, EU*

# Independent

- *The decision-making procedures of the certification system must be fair, transparent, independent, and designed to avoid conflicts of interest” (World Bank)*
- NGO statements, IFIR.

# Agreement?

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- Most operational certification schemes do not meet all these criteria;
- Not all certification schemes are credible.

# Illegal logging

- Russia (Far-East): 50%
- Estonia : 50%
  - Latvia 20%
- Bulgaria 45%
- Cameroon 50%
- Ghana 60-90%
- Indonesia 70-99%
- Philippines 46%
  - Brazil 80%
- Ecuador 70%

# The linkages

- Underlying causes of illegal logging are similar to causes of unsustainable forest management practices;
- Addressing illegal logging will only be effective if governance issue will be addressed: who decides what to do with the forests on whose behalf and who implements and controls;
- Forest laws developed in many countries with undue influence of industry.

# Different procedures

- Legality is in most certification schemes the first step/first principle;
- Certification is not verification of legality;
- By addressing underlying causes of illegal logging sustainability will be addressed as well.



# Addressing legality: Yes

- In context of sustainable forest management;
- Using wide definition of legality, including social and human rights legislation;
- Start with fully inclusive process of re-defining legality.

# Step-wise approach

- What does it mean? Legality first?
- Continuous improvement is important;
- Recognition of different starting levels is important;
- Much is possible.

## But, only if.....

- There are mechanisms in place to progress;
- Consumer label should only be linked to clearly described performance based standards.

# Impact of certification

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- Certification of status quo is not progress;
- Many certifications we see are certifications of status quo with very slight improvements:  
Sweden to Malaysia;
- More research needed on the impact.

# Concluding

- Fully participatory processes are basis for any credible certification scheme;
- Fully participatory process is basis for addressing legality issues;
- Participatory processes take time and require skills. Certification is no quick fix;
- Process is as important as the outcome;
- Verification of legality is not certification of SFM;
- Step wise approach needs conditions to ensure progress;
- Impact of certification needs to be shown more clearly.

**Thank you!**

