



A Preliminary exploration of a role for the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) in the context of REDD+ Safeguards and non-carbon benefits.

June, 2014 – v2

1. Summary:

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a global, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of responsible forest management worldwide. FSC certification ensures that products come from well-managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefits.

FSC is exploring the role that it could play in the development, implementation and assessment of compliance with REDD+ safeguards and the delivery of non-carbon benefits at the project and program level.

As the world's most respected forest certification scheme, FSC is a global system with certificates issued in all forest types around the world. After twenty years of operation, over 180,000,000 hectares are currently FSC-certified.

Three elements of FSC's system may be of particular interest in the case of REDD+ safeguards and the verification of non-carbon benefits:

1. International principles and criteria for economically viable, socially beneficial and environmentally appropriate forest management. These principles and criteria are elaborated at a national level to create forest management standards with detailed forest management indicators.
2. Compliance with our forest management standards is assessed by a third-party 'certification body,' or auditor.
3. To make sure the certification bodies operate in line with our rules, they are checked or accredited. FSC is the only global forest certification system to have an integrated accreditation program that systematically checks its certification bodies.

FSC has a governance structure that confers an important credibility on the organization in the context of REDD+ safeguards: To make sure no one viewpoint dominates the others, our membership has three chambers – environmental, social and economic – that have equal rights in decision-making. Also, to ensure that we have globally fair representation, members represent either North or South sub-chambers.



A benchmark of FSC Principles and Criteria relative to the Cancun safeguards demonstrates the relevance of FSC in this area (see Annex 1).

2. Background:

2.1 A system used around the world

FSC certification can positively impact workers and communities, shift governance processes globally and change economic and environmental conditions in the forest. This impact can improve conditions such as conflict over land tenure and use, workers' health and safety, biodiversity conservation, protection of endangered species and participatory forest policy.

By working to promote environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial forest management, FSC helps both local communities and society at large to enjoy long-term benefits of managing forests in a responsible way. As the world's most respected forest certification scheme, FSC is a global system with certificates issued in all forest types around the world.

The FSC is now used in 81 countries around the globe promoting sustainable forest management of 182,173,631 ha¹ in boreal (52.25%), temperate (37.37%) and tropical/subtropical (10.37%) forests.

The number of Forest management/Chain of Custody certificates have reached 1,278.²

2.2 Certification at forest level

The international FSC Principles and Criteria (P&C) set out best practices for forest management:

Principle 1: Compliance with laws and FSC Principles – to comply with all laws, regulations, treaties, conventions and agreements, together with all FSC Principles and Criteria.

Principle 2: Tenure and use rights and responsibilities – to define, document and legally establish long-term tenure and use rights.

Principle 3: Indigenous peoples' rights – to identify and uphold indigenous peoples' rights of ownership and use of land and resources.

Principle 4: Community relations and worker's rights – to maintain or enhance forest workers' and local communities' social and economic well-being.

¹ Information as of May 2014

² [FSC Chain of Custody](#) certification verifies that FSC certified material is identified or kept segregated from non-certified or non-controlled material through this chain.



Principle 5: Benefits from the forest – to maintain or enhance long term economic, social and environmental benefits from the forest.

Principle 6: Environmental impact – to maintain or restore the ecosystem, its biodiversity, resources and landscapes.

Principle 7: Management plan – to have a management plan, implemented, monitored and documented.

Principle 8: Monitoring and assessment – to demonstrate progress towards management objectives.

Principle 9: Maintenance of high conservation value forests – to maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests.

Principle 10: Plantations – to plan and manage plantations in accordance with FSC Principles and Criteria.

In many countries, FSC regional or national standards are developed. Regional and national standards transfer the P&C to the specific conditions and context found in each country or region.

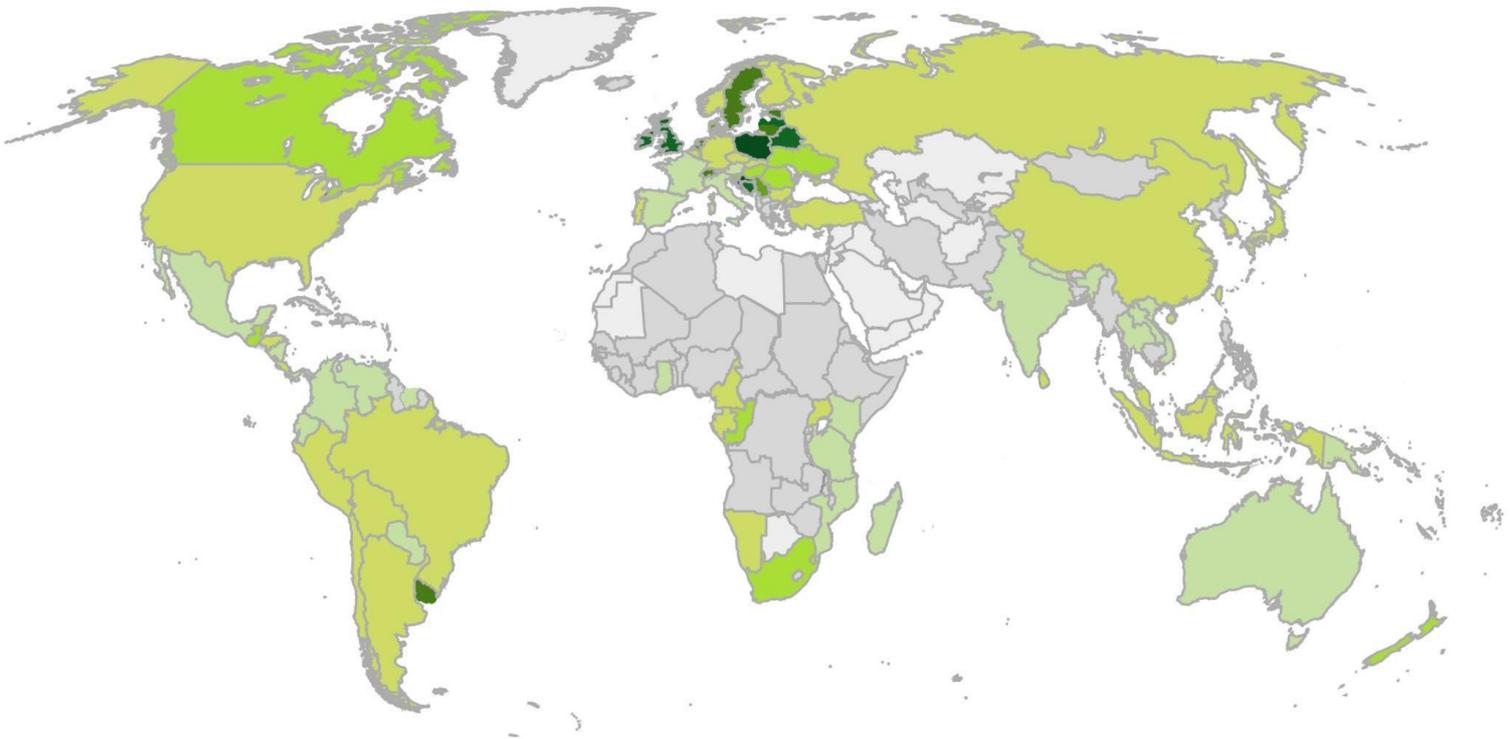
Forest managers who want to achieve FSC forest management certification contract an FSC-accredited certification body to carry out an assessment. The certification body checks that the operation complies with all relevant FSC requirements. If it does, they issue a FSC forest management certificate, which is valid for five years and monitored annually to make sure the organization continues to meet FSC standards.

2.3 Risk-based assessments at regional level

The controlled wood program develops, reviews and maintains FSC standards for non-FSC-certified material used in FSC Mix products.

The non-certified portion must comply with the FSC controlled wood standards, which enable manufacturers and traders to avoid timber and timber products from unacceptable sources.

A controlled wood risk assessment is a broad scale (regional) assessment of the areas from where material is sourced (e.g. at national, regional and eco-regional levels), to ensure low risk for each of the five controlled wood categories: wood that is illegally harvested, harvested in violation of traditional and civil rights, harvested in forests in which high conservation values are threatened by management activities, harvested in forests being converted to plantations or non-forest use or harvested from forests in which genetically modified trees are planted.



Percentage of total FSC certified forest area



EXPLANATION
 Country name
 Hectare certified forest
 (= % of total forest cover / % of production forest cover)
 % increase or decrease since August 2012

Based on numbers from FSC International and FAO Forestry Paper
 February 2013

2.4 FSC assurance system

FSC does not issue certificates itself. Independent certification bodies carry out the forest management and chain of custody assessments that lead to FSC certification.

FSC sets the standards for forest management and chain of custody certification, and defines the procedures that certification bodies should follow in their certification assessments.



To make sure the certification bodies operate in line with our rules, they are checked, or accredited. FSC is the only global forest certification system to have an integrated accreditation program that systematically checks its certification bodies.

3. Considerations

FSC's Climate Engagement Strategy includes a goal of playing an active role in the design and implementation of REDD+ programs (goal 2.5). REDD+ safeguards and non-carbon benefits may be the most relevant area for FSC within the design and implementation of REDD+ programs.

FSC forest management certification could be used at the project level as an implementation vehicle for REDD+ safeguards within national REDD+ programs. FSC certification would assess compliance with REDD+ safeguards and assess the delivery of co-benefits at project level.

FSC is considering whether its systems of assessment and assurance could also be adapted to demonstrate compliance with REDD+ safeguards and the delivery of non-carbon benefits at the jurisdictional level.

Finally, we would like to explore whether countries, Indigenous People and stakeholders are interested in FSC supporting the development of safeguards within REDD+ programs at the jurisdictional level.

We are seeking feedback on the following questions:

1. How do you envision design of REDD+ safeguards at jurisdictional level?
 - How would you view the possibility of using FSC forest management standards as a guide for the design of REDD+ programs?
 - How would you view the opportunity to collaborate with FSC and rely on its systems including national standards development groups to develop REDD+ programs?
2. How do you envision implementation of REDD+ Safeguards at project level?
 - How do you view the possibility of relying on FSC-certification of forests at project level to stimulate implementation?
3. How do you envision verification of compliance with REDD+ safeguards and the delivery of non-carbon benefits?
 - How would you view the use of FSC-certification to verify compliance with REDD+ safeguards and the delivery of non-carbon benefits at the project level?
 - How would you view the possibility of an adapted approach to FSC verification that could be applied at the jurisdictional level to verify the compliance of REDD+ safeguards and the delivery of non-carbon benefits?



Annex I: Gap analysis FSC and Cancun Safeguards

Cancun safeguard	FSC Principle and Criteria (v5)	Degree of Convergence (project level)	Comment
(a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programs and relevant international conventions and agreements;	Principle 1	Full	FSC assesses compliance with national laws and international agreements at the project level.
(b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;	Principle 1 Principle 2 Principle 3 Principle 4 Principle 7 Principle 8 Public database of certificate holders	Full	Transparency is guaranteed as the management and monitoring plans are publicly available. Also FSC promotes collaboration with authorities to prevent corruption and obliges certificates to provide anti-corruption policies.
c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;	Principle 3	Full	FSC requires respect of Indigenous rights according to international conventions. FSC also requires effective management and mechanisms to resolve disputes with indigenous peoples and local communities. Gender equality is guaranteed by the standard.



<p>(d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision;</p>	<p>Principle 3 Governance System</p>	<p>Full</p>	<p>FSC refers to the use of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC). Also FSC is a three- chamber – balanced system (social, economic, environmental) with: a chamber balanced Board of Directors, membership and working groups.</p>
<p>(e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;</p>	<p>Principle 3 Principle 4 Principle 5 Principle 6 Principle 9 Principle 10</p>	<p>Full</p>	<p>FSC has criteria to protect biodiversity and to avoid conversion of natural forests.</p>
<p>(f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;</p>	<p>Principle 1 Principle 6</p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>FSC provides: Requirements for long – term commitment and Requirements to avoid conversion Forest management certificates are valid for a period of five years.</p>
<p>(g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.</p>	<p>Principle 6</p>	<p>Partial</p>	<p>Criterion 6.1 mentions values affected by FM activities outside the Forest Management unit, but this criterion is not specific to emissions. This safeguard would be covered by a leakage assessment, which is outside the scope of FSC.</p>