



FOREST PLANTATIONS

Forest Plantations

The Forest Stewardship Council promotes ten principles of forest stewardship. These principles describe the characteristics of responsible forest management and were developed with the input of many groups and people worldwide.

Principle 10 on plantations was approved and adopted by FSC members and the Board of Directors in 1996. This principle acknowledges the importance of well-managed plantations to socially, environmentally and economically responsible forestry.

This principle has attracted much attention since its introduction. This fact sheet answers some of the frequently asked questions about Principle 10.



How does FSC define a plantation?

FSC defines plantations as “forest areas lacking most of the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems, which result from the human activities of planting, sowing or intensive silvicultural treatments.” The characteristics and elements of native forest ecosystems are defined in FSC-accredited national and sub-national standards of forest stewardship.

In practice, FSC's plantation principle applies mainly to forests that have been established by artificial regeneration (seeds, seedlings or cuttings). However, the definition can include naturally regenerating forests that have been simplified or degraded by silviculture, losing the key elements of the native forest ecosystem.

Why can plantations be FSC certified?

FSC defines a forest as “a tract of land dominated by trees”. This can range from unaltered natural forest to artificially established and highly managed plantations. Plantations are included in the FSC definition of forests.

Tree-planting and plantations are a central part of many forest management systems around the world. FSC believes that plantation managers have an important role to play in the conservation of biodiversity, water and soils at the local level, and that plantations can contribute social and economic benefits to local communities.

Well-managed plantations can help meet the increasing demand for forest products. Demand for forest products such as timber, paper and firewood continues to grow. This demand places considerable pressure on the world's forests. By growing our wood products in plantations, it is possible to preserve other forests, such as old-growth and high biodiversity forests, and still meet our demand for wood.

Plantations that meet the high social, environmental and economic standards of the FSC Principles and Criteria should be recognised for their commitment to responsible forestry.

Principle 10: Plantations

Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1 – 9, and Principle 10 and its Criteria. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.

Refer to FSC's website for a description of all 10 Principles and 56 Criteria (Document 1.2).

Do plantations only have to meet the requirements of Principle 10 to become FSC certified?

No. Plantation forests must meet the requirements of FSC Principles 1 – 10 and their criteria to become FSC certified. FSC-certified plantations must meet the same social, environmental and economic criteria as natural forests.

As for all FSC principles, the indicators for meeting these criteria are agreed upon by national stakeholders representing social, environmental and economic interests.



Plantations and social issues: FSC's Social Strategy

FSC's Social Strategy strengthens how social issues are included in the work FSC does. One activity in this Strategy is to create a special task force on "social issues and plantations" with the purpose of improving FSC's policies on plantations. For more information on this and other Social Strategy activities, refer to the FSC Social Strategy (Version 2.1) available on the FSC website: www.fscoax.org.



Does FSC support the conversion of natural forests into plantations?

FSC does not support the conversion of natural forests into plantations. Criterion 10.9 indicates that, under most circumstances, forests converted to plantations after November 1994 will not be certified. Certification may be granted if the forest manager (for example, a forest company or forest owner)



can demonstrate that they were not responsible for the conversion.

This criterion was introduced so that well-managed plantations growing on land that had been cleared years or centuries ago could still become FSC certified. The cut-off date is intended to discourage further conversion of natural forests. November 1994 was the publication date of the first official FSC Principles and Criteria.

Criterion 10.9

Plantations established in areas converted from natural forests after November 1994 normally shall not qualify for certification. Certification may be allowed in circumstances where sufficient evidence is submitted to the certification body that the manager/owner is not responsible directly or indirectly of such conversion.

Facts and Figures

Planted forests make up 5% of the world's forest cover and produce 35% of all wood harvested.

As of August 2003, FSC has certified over 4 million hectares of plantations and over 17 million hectares of mixed forest. Plantations represent 23% of all FSC forest management certificates, and 12% of the total area certified. For the latest figures, refer to the FSC website.

FSC will continue to clarify and interpret how Principle 10 and its Criteria should be applied. We are always interested in hearing your thoughts and suggestions.