

FSC ANNOUNCEMENT
CALL FOR TECHNICAL EXPERTS FOR PLANTATIONS REVIEW
April 11, 2007

Background

In September 2004 FSC embarked on a formal review of its policies and procedures for the certification of plantations. A 12-member Policy Working Group, endorsed by the FSC Board of Directors in March 2005, worked together for 18 months, meeting five times and consulting with a full diversity of FSC stakeholders from around the world to develop recommended solutions to the issues and concerns of plantation certification. In October 2006 they released their final report, including seven sets of final recommendations which were approved by the FSC Board of Directors at their 44th meeting held in Bonn, Germany in March.

The final recommendations highlight the need for further clarification and guidance on FSC requirements regarding stakeholder consultation, social issues, chemical use and, ecosystem integrity, and further investigation into the issue of plantations established in areas converted after November 1994. They also highlight the need for an overall review of the FSC system in order to reduce unnecessary complexities, increase revenue, strengthen the role and support for national initiatives, ensure high quality and transparent certification assessments and auditing of certification bodies, and to develop a clear strategy and vision for FSC.

Technical Expert Teams

FSC is now looking for individuals who are interested to actively participate in the technical phase of the FSC Plantations Review. Selected individuals will work in teams of Technical Experts to further develop the policy recommendations of the first phase of the Plantations Review into practical handbooks, models, best practice guidelines and online tools and resources for forest and plantation managers. Technical Experts will also support the upcoming review of the FSC Principles and Criteria, providing input to the discussions of the Working Group that will be set up for this purpose.

To guarantee practical solutions to the issues and concerns identified in the Policy Review, Technical Experts should have in-depth knowledge and experience in one or more of the following areas in relation to different scales of forest and plantation management in the North and South: community and indigenous peoples rights; forest workers issues; corporate-community relations; integrated pest management; ecosystem conservation; and conversion of natural ecosystems to plantation.

Four technical expert teams will be set up in the next months to address five of the seven sets of final recommendations of the Policy Working Group¹:

- Expert Team A – Raising the Bar of Social Responsibility
- Expert Team B – Maintaining Ecosystem Integrity
- Expert Team C – Continuous Improvement Approach to Chemicals
- Expert Team D – Investigation of the impacts of the FSC Criterion 10.9

¹ Further recommendations of the Policy Working Group will be developed and implemented through separate programs and projects. To read the full report of the Policy Working Group, including the complete final recommendations and rationales, please visit the Plantations Review website www.fsc.org/plantations.

The work areas and tasks of each team are provided in the text below. Specific terms of reference will be developed in the next months.

Selection of Technical Experts

Four to six individuals will be selected for each expert team, based on their expertise in the subject area, and practical knowledge of FSC certification. FSC will strive for balance of the working group members, in terms of gender and North/South representation as far as possible. Long-standing members of FSC are preferred but other highly qualified stakeholders may also be considered.

Technical Experts are expected to meet in Bonn (in June, July or August 2007) and once or twice again in the second half of 2007; participate in email discussion groups to help further develop the final outcomes with the other Experts, FSC IC and FSC stakeholders; and may need to travel for follow-up meetings and field trials of outcomes-in-development. FSC will pay for direct costs of each individual (incl. travel costs to attend meetings and other approved expenses) and offer an honorarium in appreciation of their dedicated time to the project. The working language of the group will be English.

Applications to join a Technical Expert Team should be sent to Sarah McKay at plantations@fsc.org before June 1, 2007. Please include your *curriculum vitae* outlining your educational and professional history, and a cover letter highlighting your knowledge/experience of FSC certification and critical qualifications for the team you would like to join.

Work Areas and Tasks of Technical Expert Teams

A. Raising the Bar of Social Responsibility

Conclusions of Policy Working Group:

It is the opinion of the Group that social issues have not received enough attention in the past. The Group agreed that the social components of the FSC system must be up-graded so that the legitimate agenda of the Social Chamber has the same level of priority as the other two Chambers. While of particular importance for certification of plantations, the Group considers the need to upgrade the social aspects to hold true also for certification of forest operations.

Consultation is inherent in several of the Principles and Criteria, promising improved community relations through social dialogue. The Group interprets consultation as being one aspect within a broader context of participation, recognising that 'engaging' implies a level of involvement between the plantation or forest managers and affected communities. Current guidance on stakeholder involvement and consultation in all aspects of FSC certification is inadequate and needs to be addressed. Improved consultation and dialogue should provide the foundation for a stronger and more engaged relationship between the operation and the community. It is an integral part of the shift to a preventive management approach recommended by the Group.

Recommendations:

In order to upgrade the emphasis placed on the social elements of forest and plantation management, and to bring the focus on social issues to an equivalent level to that of the other elements of FSC certification, managers shall adopt a systematic approach to addressing the social aspects of certification, implemented through a Social Management System tailored to the scale and intensity of the operation and to the local socio-economic context, which certification bodies would then be able to audit. To assist implementation,

FSC shall produce a handbook for forest and plantation managers that can also be used by certification bodies for auditing purposes.

The technical phase shall develop a document which supports the implementation of the stakeholder consultation process proposed here for future FSC plantations certifications.

The Group recommends that FSC synthesises the final guidelines into a handbook that provides practical guidance on improving managers' consultation and conflict resolution processes, as well as guidance to affected and interested stakeholders on how to get involved and participate in these processes. The handbook needs to be applicable to a wide range of geographical contexts and include considerations of Small and Low Impact Managed Unit operations. The Group recommends that certification bodies evaluate certification applicants according to whether they are fulfilling the requirements for the consultation / conflict resolution processes they have adopted. The evaluation evidence will go a long way to ensure that the manager retains the confidence of everyone involved in those processes.

Tasks of Experts Team:

- i) Develop guidelines to assist forest / plantation managers in the development and implementation of a best practice Social Management System (SMS), relative to the scale and intensity of the management unit and to the local socio-economic context. Such an SMS would help managers to comply with the social requirements of the Principles and Criteria, including stakeholder consultation;
- ii) Provide input to the Working Group for the review of the FSC Principles and Criteria, making any necessary recommendations specifically for Principles 2, 3, and 4, as well as providing input on the other Principles where appropriate.

B. Maintaining Ecosystem Integrity

Conclusions of Policy Working Group:

In the absence of agreed national standards, the interpretation of P&C 6.3² in relation to plantations has been unclear and inconsistent. The inconsistency of interpretation has been a source for FSC stakeholder concern.

Recommendations:

In the absence of national standards that outline how to ensure ecosystem integrity, the Group recommends that Criterion 6.3 should be interpreted as follows, with the intention of clearly distinguishing FSC certified operations from those that are not:

The management of an FSC certified plantation shall take an active approach to prevent, mitigate and if needed, remedy / restore for any environmental effects of its management on ecosystem integrity. Consequently, a higher level of impact shall correspond with higher conservation efforts to maintain ecosystem integrity. The focus of maintaining ecosystem integrity is at the management unit level, bearing in mind the impact of the plantation management at the landscape level.

The management of an FSC certified plantation shall adopt a proactive conservation strategy within its management unit, characterised by identifying,

² Ecological functions and values shall be maintained intact, enhanced, or restored, including: a) Forest regeneration and succession, b) Genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity, c) Natural cycles that affect the productivity of the forest ecosystem (*FSC-STD-01-001 Version 4-0 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship*, Criterion 6.3).

safeguarding and optimising the design and implementation of areas and features of high conservation value; areas of representative ecosystems, rare ecosystems and habitats for rare species; and riparian zones of native vegetation, conservation corridors and other elements of landscape connectivity.

The Group recommends a technical phase to develop procedures and criteria for managers to assess the environmental impact of a given management practice and the corresponding prevention, mitigation and remediation measures at the management unit level.

In order to optimise its conservation strategy, a certified operation or a cluster of operations shall undertake field trials - appropriate to size, scale and knowledge. The field trials shall be continuously assessed, monitored and, where relevant, the knowledge gained shall be integrated into the management of the plantation. The group expects the technical phase to develop further guidance on conducting and assessing field trials, as well as on systems for monitoring and integrating the results into plantation management.

Tasks of Experts Team:

- i) Develop a model and best practice guide, based on the recommendations of the Policy Working Group, to allow managers and certification bodies to assess the environmental impact of specific management practices and corresponding prevention, mitigation and remediation measures which should be made at the management unit level;
- ii) Provide input to the Working Group for the review of the FSC Principles and Criteria, making any necessary recommendations specifically for Principle 6, as well as providing input on other Principles where appropriate.

C. Continuous Improvement Approach to Chemicals

Conclusions of Policy Working Group:

The Group believes that the current FSC policy on chemicals fails to adequately address important specific issues such as systems for integrated pest management and monitoring of long term health and environmental effects.

The Group also believes that openly acknowledging the reality of chemical use within certified plantations, rather than simply expressing a desire for minimal usage, would go some way to ensuring their better management and control, as well as adding to the overall credibility of FSC.

Recommendations:

While the Group finds it hard to envisage the phase out of chemical usage in certified plantations within in the next ten years, it believes there are many proactive steps the FSC can and should take to significantly reduce usage and the negative impacts on people and the environment, and that managers shall demonstrate the improvements made. The improvements shall provide a foundation for considering practical solutions for the phase out of regular, broad scale pesticide use over time.

Certified operators shall adopt a consistent best practice integrated chemicals management approach. The Group recommends that FSC develops guidelines for integrated chemicals management in the context of the Pesticides Review based on the recommendations above, taking into account the limited capacity of Small and Low Impact Managed Units to investigate and evaluate alternative measures.

Tasks of Experts Team:

- i) Provide input to the development of an online resource center for forest and plantation managers to learn and share information about best practice chemical use and non-chemical alternatives to pest and nutrient management;
- ii) Provide input to the Working Group for the review of the FSC Principles and Criteria, proposing recommended revisions pertaining to chemicals wherever necessary.

D. Investigation of the impacts of the FSC Criterion 10.9³

Conclusions of Policy Working Group:

The Group recognised that Conversion is one of the most sensitive issues within the FSC. There are varying interpretations amongst stakeholders of the intent of FSC's Criterion 10.9, whether it is only intended to halt deforestation, or rather to prevent perverse outcomes on both natural forest and High Conservation Value non-forest ecosystems. The Principles and Criteria are also unclear in terms of potentially conflicting requirements of different Principles. In addition, some stakeholders have perceived that the current cut-off date is arbitrary and suggest that systems other than cut-off dates may be better suited to achieve overall objectives.

Recommendation:

The Group recommends maintaining the cut-off date of 1994 until it can be demonstrated that the new plantation policy is implemented and working and for the technical phase to provide a document preparing a future decision to retain or change the cut off date outlining the rational and the assumptions for and against a change.

The Group also recommends that FSC and a technical phase clarify what the term "normally" in P10.9 means and which exceptions are already permissible under the current arrangement. Regarding conflicts between indigenous peoples' rights in P3 and requirements of P10.9, the group recommends that indigenous peoples' right to control forest management on their lands and territories should be accorded higher priority (subject to NI approval, or in the absence of an NI, subject to approval by FSC IC).

The Group noted that stakeholders are discussing expansion of the term High Conservation Value Forest in Principle 6.10 to include other ecosystems of High Conservation Value, and expects FSC to clarify how such ecosystems should be dealt with in relation to conversion.

Tasks of Experts Team:

- i) Carryout a thorough analysis of FSC's current approach to plantations established in converted areas, outlining the possible impacts and implications of keeping or changing the current cut-off date (November 1994), and expanding the concept to include non-forest high conservation value ecosystems for future discussion and decision by the FSC membership;
- ii) Provide input to the Working Group for the review of the FSC Principles and Criteria, on the implications related to revising the current criterion regarding plantations and conversion.

³ 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 (*FSC-STD-01-001 Version 4-0 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship, Criterion 10.9*).