

TO: FSC Community Interested in Plantation Certification
FROM: Richard Z. Donovan
RE: Personal Reflections on Plantation Certification and Related Topic of Stakeholder Consultation
DATE: November 2005

I have been reading the lively debate on FSC certification of plantations on the plantations list serve and background documents submitted by various parties. It is healthy that the issues are being brought forth from various perspectives. I would like to contribute the following short perspective to the discussion. These are personal perspectives and do not represent official Rainforest Alliance/SmartWood policy. These perspectives are based on approximately 15 years of forest certification experience around the globe, in all forest types, and some 15 previous years of international experience in community forestry, primarily working in Latin America and the USA. I will focus on 4 issues:

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Before going into plantation-specific issues, I would like to clarify the practical and philosophical foundation upon which these observations are based.

- I was one of the co-founders of FSC, including co-chair of the FSC P&C Working Group. Based on hard work by the Working Group over a couple of years, and approximately 7 different drafts, I presented the P&C for formal approval at the FSC Founding Assembly in Toronto in 1993. Prior to that I co-facilitated the March 1992 meeting in Washington, D.C., with participants from multiple countries that decided to implement a global consultation process leading to the formal establishment of the FSC. This same meeting elected an “Interim FSC Board of Directors”. I believed then, and believe now, that FSC certification should be used as a tool for improving the environmental, social & silvicultural performance for all forests **and** all of forestry (natural forests, plantations, agro-forestry, agro-silvi-pastoral systems, non-timber forest products in forest settings, etc.). I believe FSC needs to remain engaged in improving plantation management. Initially we did not approve a plantation principle; that came later. I am very comfortable with how that worked out.
- Though FSC has **always** attempted to focus on **all** types of forest systems, many if not most forests around the world are still unaffected by FSC certification. Given the tremendous opportunity that FSC presents for addressing problems related to forests, plantations and local communities, I hope that FSC will continue to concentrate on improving all forest systems.
- I am an FSC certifier/auditor, having implemented plantation certification audits in Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Indonesia, New Zealand, USA and Canada (among others) and natural forest management certification audits in over 25 countries. Prior to my experience with FSC I worked in community development (watershed protection and water and sanitation), community forestry, agro-forestry and natural forest management in the Americas, East Africa and Southeast Asia. I have been a direct observer of forest

practices in approximately 40 countries, in all forest types, with approximately eight years living in Paraguay, Mexico and Costa Rica. I am the second director of SmartWood, in my post since April 1992, except for a 2 year hiatus in 2001 - 2002 as the Rainforest Alliance Chief of Forestry.

- Given the rapid expansion of plantations over the past 40 years, and the continuing growth of plantations today, I do not believe it is efficient to debate **whether** FSC should certify plantations. The FSC has limited resources. I would suggest that we should debate **how** to certify plantations. This requires an examination of what mistakes we have made, how we can improve our performance, and what needs to change given our learning over the past 15 years.
- At the same time that we improve the rigor of our plantation certification activities, I think we need to examine, after a plantation becomes FSC-certified, how the FSC community can more effectively get benefits to certified operations – market benefits, public relations benefits, etc. This is not a minor detail; it is crucial to the health of the overall FSC system and the FSC family (all of us) has “underperformed” in this regard. Unfortunately those who often criticize FSC certifications don’t realize that the financial or other benefits of FSC certification are tenuous or minimal for FSC certified operations. Too often there is an imbalance between high expectations and low benefits surrounding FSC certification. If FSC is to increase the rigor of its plantation certification requirements, as I think it should in some respects, the FSC must also work as hard as possible to increase the benefits stream to certified operations.
- Perhaps the single most important change that the FSC has provoked is to open up the dialogue about forests and forestry issues to multiple stakeholder groups. It has **led** historically opposing stakeholder groups into dialogue, **engaged** the various parties to focus not just on words but actions or field-based evidence, and **elevated** stakeholder interaction and management to a new level of importance in commercial forestry around the globe. This is historic change – it means that the FSC impact is not just about auditing, it is about changing the dynamics of management, values and related processes through results-based attention to stakeholder input and interactions.

The question of a plantation as a forest

When referring to a plantation as a forest, it means a forest management unit (FMU) plantation system that should include a matrix of plantation and natural ecosystem components. Not all plantations have natural forest components and/or other natural ecosystems. They should. In this context, every FSC plantation certification should be a forest system, and thus, a forest.

FSC plantation certifications must ensure that natural ecosystems are conserved, and where economically and socially viable (based on local/national context), natural ecosystem elements restored (e.g. riparian zones, corridors between natural forest protection areas, etc.). Every plantation that I have audited and/or certified has included natural forest components and/or other natural ecosystems (e.g. wetlands, non-tree vegetation, lower density tree vegetation, etc.) afforded protection or in need of restoration. Typically such areas are not in the production forest areas, though in some cases employees or the forest operation itself may be harvesting non-timber forest products (e.g. case of medicinal plant collections with the Klabin operation in Brazil). In some cases the natural ecosystem zones have represented as much as 40% (or more) of the certified forest management unit, in other cases as low as 10%. If FSC is certifying plantations that have no natural forests or natural ecosystems, and it is not fostering restoration of riparian zones, natural ecosystems, or wildlife habitat, then we are making a mistake. To the best of my knowledge, SmartWood has always attempted to foster such actions. In my

experience, when we have confronted plantations with no natural forest or natural ecosystem conservation (e.g. riparian forests, wetland conservation zones, protection of natural vegetation), we have required that the candidate operation address these shortcomings.

I think we need to examine **each** case in detail. Where an FSC member indicates that there is either forest conversion being done, and/or where an FSC member believes that no natural forest or natural ecosystems are being conserved or restored in relation to a certified operation, we need to examine the evidence and take action. I am extremely frustrated when I hear members complain that we are not doing this. But I am also frustrated when the same FSC members, or other stakeholders, provide no hard data or specifics on the operation, location or examples of their concern or the real problem. I do not get frustrated when FSC members point out problems that are real. Real problems can and should be fixed.

Generalizations on this topic do **not** work very well for me. For example, I see where some might prefer the FSC to establish quantitative **global** thresholds on the percent of a plantation which is native versus exotic species, or that “in the north” X should occur, or “in the south” Y should occur. These generalizations don’t work well. Experience indicates that national context is of critical importance, and what works in one country may not work in the other, even if they are neighboring countries. **Where possible and viable**, consistency in the FSC plantation certification approach should be sought, but I would suggest that comparing plantation dynamics in Ireland to Canada, or Brasil to South Africa, or Indonesia to Thailand, can be valuable, but blind allegiance to global thresholds or strict equivalency of the certification indicators or expectations at a global level is not appropriate.

Suggestions

1. FSC should consider establishing clearer language to foster the conservation or restoration of natural ecosystems within plantation certifications. However such language must be regionally/nationally adjusted and established in indicators that are clearly commercially viable given national context.
2. FSC should consider incorporating mechanisms at the indicator level for ecological compensation for medium and small-scale, post-1994 conversions of natural ecosystems (e.g. purchase/protection of separate natural ecosystem conservation areas, investments in conservation, etc.). A framework for credible “trade-offs” between past sins of forest conversion and new conservation actions should be established.

Stakeholder consultation & the certification process

Stakeholder consultation is extremely challenging and a conflictive topic. I recently had a conversation with an FSC member who said the “FSC system for stakeholder consultation is awful”. When I asked for specific examples and cases, I couldn’t get a straight answer.

For some perspectives on the challenges in terms of plantation certification and managing stakeholder inputs, I would point readers to two different perspectives and useful documents:

1. Anthony Amis’ piece, available through the FSC plantation website, on the challenges associated with the Hancock Victorian Plantations (HVP) certification process in Australia; and,
2. A paper that lays out SmartWood’s approach to stakeholder consultation - can be found at <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/forestry/perspectives/index.html>.

Despite honest efforts to address stakeholder concerns, in many cases we as auditors have managed to upset both clients and stakeholders. Some auditors or other parties would say that if we, as auditors, have done equal amounts of upsetting stakeholders and clients, we are probably in the right position as auditors. I don't necessarily agree.

I can remember, in various plantation certification processes, being alternately condemned or praised, depending on the stage of the certification process, whether the stakeholder or client agreed or disagreed with our findings, and how well our findings coalesced with their broader goals, campaigns or targets. I remember multiple certification assessments, e.g in Indonesia, Australia and South America, where vocal stakeholders, despite saying that they would provide input and contribute to the process, did not – in fact, despite clear prior statements that they would provide input, they refused to participate even in a one-on-one private stakeholder meeting between our auditor(s) and them (with complete confidentiality). Not surprisingly, in some of these cases, whatever the results of the certification assessment, they were also then quick to criticize the certification result and/or the certification process.

There currently appears to be a “disconnect” between stakeholder concerns manifest to FSC staff and those delivered to certifiers. SmartWood, which has worked particularly hard on seeking stakeholder input, experiences this fairly consistently. I understand that the Plantation Working Group may get an analysis of stakeholder concerns on plantation certifications, drawing upon information from FSC staff. I think a careful analysis of this is important, and frankly would like to participate in such an analysis.

I think it is crucial that a better system of stakeholder consultation and feedback be developed within the FSC. In another section later in this paper, I talk a bit about my experiences with Flor y Fauna, Perum Perhutani, FIO in Thailand, etc. – all of these had complicated stakeholder interaction experiences which are worth learning from.

In my experience, if bluntly or carefully spoken to, stakeholders appear to know when they have been consulted effectively and their issues taken seriously. That does not mean that they agree with the results of a certification assessment or audit after their input was provided. Often, as an auditor, we must clearly understand the FSC indicator being used to evaluate the issue, weigh the depth of the concern or issue, assess how “real” the concern is based on facts (i.e. evidence), and then reach a compliance or conformance conclusion. Sometimes this takes us to a different conclusion than what a specific stakeholder expects. That is not unusual. But when it happens, it consistently creates tension and “bad blood” with the specific stakeholder.

In response to concerns that certifiers are not sufficiently consulting stakeholders, or taking stakeholder concerns into consideration, the FSC is increasing system requirements related to documenting each individual stakeholder's concerns and the CB response to each concern. I am not aware of analysis of these issues to better understand the nature of the issues. Due to FSC member pressure, the FSC is increasingly holding certifiers responsible for documenting all concerns and responses to each and every concern for all stakeholders. New documentation procedures and policies are being established at a cost and with little or no change in performance. The FSC also seems to be fostering the expectation that CBs be responsible for activities that should either be done by the candidate operation, or by something like an FSC initiative. New solutions have to be explored and developed. And poor CB performance has to be effectively acted upon by the FSC.

In general, there are three situations which have caused the greatest problems in terms of plantation certification and stakeholder consultation (some of these happen in combination, which makes the situation even more difficult):

1. *When we (any member of the FSC community) are starting to do plantation certification work in a country where there is little to no FSC history, no FSC Contact Person or National Initiative, and little to no resources devoted to educating the general public and concerned stakeholders about the FSC certification process.* In essence a specific certification assessment is expected to bear the complete stakeholder education and consultation burden.
2. *When a plantation company with a very difficult past history applies for FSC certification.* Some stakeholders have very long memories and sins of the past are not easily forgiven, even if current performance has changed to being more positive.
3. *When there are extremely divided stakeholder perspectives on the role of plantations or natural forests and timber harvesting in general (as has been the case in New Zealand and Australia) – some stakeholders “love” plantations because plantations, in theory, reduce the pressure or need to harvest in natural forests; other stakeholders “hate” plantations because they may be monocultures, they can displace natural forests, etc.*

I think we need to develop specific strategies and tools now in order to deal with each of these situations because they are no longer exceptions; they are becoming common dynamics.

Based on the concerns raised about stakeholder consultation and plantation certifications (some of which I have not been informed about), my guess is that the Plantation Working Group will make suggestions as to how to raise the rigor of FSC forest certifications and probably impose new requirements on CBs. In other forums I have objected to FSC standards development processes that have not involved Working Groups. In this particular case, I would suggest that any revision of FSC requirements for stakeholder consultation and plantation certification must not only deal with related issues in the FSC Principles and Criteria (or region-specific indicators), but also with the FSC standards for forest management accreditation. I believe that the accreditation standards development process for approving FSC certifiers should have been implemented using a Working Group (it was not), and that improvements in stakeholder consultation suggested during this Plantation review should have impact on FSC requirements for forest management accreditation, through a Working Group process. If the Plantation Working Group just recommends new requirements, and the FSC Board of Directors adds them, and no review of all the other forest management certification accreditation requirements occurs, we will just be creating more problems, and probably more frustration.

Suggestions

1. Any increased requirements in stakeholder consultation should be the result of Working Group deliberations related to forest management certification accreditation requirements and **not** just imposed by the FSC board of directors or FSC staff.
2. The FSC should take a step back and broadly consider how the whole FSC stakeholder consultation system could be improved. It should open to new ideas. For example, perhaps the FSC should consider establishing coordinated regional or national forest certification stakeholder consultation forums. Most importantly, FSC should more effectively leverage the resources of certified or candidate operations, Certification Bodies (CBs), National Initiatives, and FSC International, to increase consultation efficiency and effectiveness.

3. As part of the above, FSC should consider developing a well-designed, structured, online system for confidentially registering concerns on specific forest operations. This should allow for concerns to be shared between both FSC and the relevant Certification Body, and should have a data entry format that requires a stakeholder to provide clear, concrete data or “evidence” as to specific issues, highly specific geographic location of problems, and that also allows for sensitive, confidential (and if necessary anonymous) input and follow-up with the concerned stakeholder.
4. All FSC Certification Bodies should be required to have a list of all ongoing forest assessments and re-assessments publicly available on their website. These CB websites should be clearly linked to the central FSC website.
5. Given that FSC certification is increasingly being sought by plantation operations that historically have questionable reputations with numerous stakeholders, the FSC should develop a specific team of people or specialists that can be called upon to work with FSC members in a country, the company applicant, and the relevant CB, to design a certification assessment process that will foster the best conditions possible for a “successful” certification process. By successful I don’t necessarily mean a process that ensures a certificate is granted; rather a process that is considered fair, well-structured, and is robust in terms of stakeholder interaction and the technical results of the certification process.

Impact of plantations on natural ecosystems

Expectations of plantations in terms of natural ecosystem conservation vary widely. Some stakeholders want natives species plantations only; some are fine with exotic species because in theory plantations can supplant the need for harvesting in natural forest, but they want natural ecosystems retained within the plantation operation (e.g. riparian zones, wildlife areas, wetlands); and, others want plantations to serve only as a step towards restoration of natural forests in areas where either the agricultural or forest sectors have previously converted forest to other uses (with riparian zones, and other natural features destroyed through such clearing).

There is a perception that plantations with native species have a higher ecological value than those with exotic species. However, from a management perspective, at this time this means monoculture native species plantations; the experience with mixed species plantations of any type (exotic or native) has not shown consistent economic returns. At the same time, I am not aware of solid research that explicitly indicates that native species monocultures have any higher ecological value than exotic species monocultures (except in locations where natural forest is naturally mono-typical, i.e. naturally composed of one species). Thus, when we argue for native species plantations, we should be clear that we are pushing for exploration and research, and fostering conditions in which native species have more of a chance to compete with exotic species; not that economically viable native species are realistic today, particularly in the tropics. On a global level, most reforestation research has focused largely on 10-15 genera of trees (e.g. *eucalyptus spp.*, *pinus spp.* or pine, *tectona spp.* or teak, *acacia spp.*, etc.). In many countries, with some exceptions, the emphasis on native species reforestation trials and commercial establishment has only occurred over the past 20 years, whereas research on the other major species has been going on for over 50 years. So whilst it is easy to criticize wide-scale exotic trees species monocultures, we must also recognize that from an economic standpoint, there is far less near-term financial risk in such plantations; as production systems, they are more proven at all scales – community or corporate.

Suggestions

1. FSC plantation standards have to be realistic from a financial perspective in terms of expectations on native species composition, whether in mixed blocks or monocultures.
2. FSC certification should foster increased research by other organizations on the ecological value of native versus exotic species in a plantation setting, including mixed species blocks, mixed blocks of monoculture species (native and/or exotic), etc.

Observations on conflictive, certified plantations

Since starting to do forest certification in 1989, SmartWood has been involved in various controversial certifications, including Flor y Fauna in Costa Rica, Perum Perhutani in Indonesia and Forest Industry Organization (FIO) of Thailand. When I started as SmartWood director in April of 1992, Perum Perhutani was already certified, and later in 1992 the first contacts with Flor y Fauna occurred. FIO didn't happen until much later, in 2000-01

All three of these certifications provoked criticisms inside and outside the FSC community. For the record, some of the external criticisms, e.g. those described in various Rainforest Foundation documents, were delivered to SmartWood at the last minute prior to their publication. From my perspective, these documents do not provide either a balanced or fair assessment of the issues. And unfortunately their authors also did not give any time for credible or fair commentary on the drafts by SmartWood. They do not provide either an accurate or fair assessment of the challenges faced.

Under my direction, SmartWood has chosen to address any new or real issues that such documents have raised through subsequent certification processes. In part, this is based on the experience with Flor y Fauna, where SmartWood staff literally spent hundreds of hours responding or clarifying, with frankly little to no benefit that I can point to today. Perhaps the fact that our client, Flor y Fauna, saw that we were not just agreeing with the criticisms, but taking the stakeholder concerns seriously and incorporating them into our audit process, was of value and brought begrudging support from the company and respect for our integrity. But it also created high levels of tension with Flor y Fauna, with FSC, and with stakeholders – some productive, most not (again, from my perspective).

Today Flor y Fauna continues as FSC-certified, Perum Perhutani apparently is working towards recertification of some forest units with the assistance of the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT), and FIO is not currently working towards FSC recertification (according to recent information received directly from FIO). The latter situation may change; I hope it does.

The story behind the original certifications and subsequent suspensions of Perum Perhutani and FIO may be of value, as well as the continuing certification of Flor y Fauna. Following are some brief observations, based on personal experience.

Perum Perhutani - I was not director at the time of Perum Perhutani's original SmartWood certification (in November of 1990). However, I did interact significantly with SmartWood's first director (Ivan Ussach) after I took over the position, to understand how he made the decision to certify, issues to consider, pivotal stakeholders, etc. I agreed with the fundamental approach. The logic behind the decision to initially certify Perum Perhutani was as follows.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, Perum Perhutani was involved in a fairly radical approach to restructure its system of plantation management through a community forestry initiative supported by the company and members of the international donor community. Already being implemented in some Perum Perhutani forest districts, the idea was to imbed a new, more aggressive social forestry program throughout its forest operations on the island of Java. The certification was intended to recognize the changes already taken in some districts and to support a full switch to the new social forestry approach throughout the company's operations. In annual audits that I supervised, and a subsequent re-certification I approved, we sought the input of some of Perum Perhutani's strongest critics and, though many questions and issues were brought up, there was support for our approach.

It is my understanding that many of the above dynamics are still playing out with Perum Perhutani. In retrospect, I would make the following observations:

- Only some of the Perum Perhutani district managers and districts should have received SmartWood certification from the very start. My error, and perhaps the error made during the initial certification in 1990, was to give full certification to Perum Perhutani for all its forest holdings on Java. Subsequently we arrived at a district-by-district certification approach. That is the approach that apparently is being followed today as Perum Perhutani works towards recertification. I endorse that approach, and I also believe it argues quite favorably for keeping open the option of "partial certification" in the FSC system.
- Some stakeholders have pointed to shootings, where fatalities occurred on the Perum Perhutani forest holdings, as a rationale for "never" certifying the operation or any of its districts. This is an extremely complex situation. Some of the violence occurred when armed gangs, organized behind the scenes by timber buyers or other financial interests, would attack a specific forest block and attack a local Perum Perhutani forest guard (a local villager in most cases) who would act to protect themselves, or do the job they were hired to do - protect the forest. This is what can happen when only a few teak trees or logs, at 80 years maturity, represent more income than the annual per capita income of a forest worker or local villager. The social forestry approach that supporters sought to implement at the time of the original SmartWood certification in 1990, if adopted, would have fundamentally changed the approach to "guarding the forest", by more meaningfully incorporating local villagers into the planting, harvesting, protection of the forest, and most importantly, increased sharing of the benefits from timber sales. It is unfortunate that such a system has not developed quicker. In my estimation it is extremely important to understand the details of a local situation and dynamic. If changes made to meet FSC requirements can fundamentally alter such a negative dynamic and result in positive benefits for local villages, FSC certification should remain an option. In fact, the positive aspect is that by Perum Perhutani still being engaged with FSC certification, the likelihood of such changes appears to be improved.
- The actual forest management system on the ground at Perum Perhutani, from a silviculture and/or ecological perspective, is something that has received far too little attention. The system, at its best (i.e. when certifiable), can combine social, economic and silvicultural values in an extremely positive way by providing space for long-term forest management with teak, and short- to medium-term space for perennial and annual agricultural crops, all implemented through a locally designed, labor intensive agro-forestry approach in one of the most highly populated, complex, rural settings anywhere in the world. If Perum Perhutani is able to put in place a more proactive system that more effectively shares the financial and other benefits from the plantations with local villages and villagers, it should make FSC certification more likely.

FIO - The case of FIO is similarly complex, though for somewhat different reasons. The stakeholder interaction process is particularly constructive. This was an FSC certification that was able to produce direct positive benefits in income levels for local workers and more positive dynamics with local communities. This has been documented. However, the certification was under attack soon after beginning for basically three reasons:

1. FIO's past history was not particularly positive with communities, environmental organizations or other interests.
2. The FSC basically had zero history in Thailand at the time of the certification process and the full burden of education and stakeholder consultation about the FSC fell on SmartWood; and all this occurring in a country which has faced, over the years, challenging issues related to illegal harvested or trade of teak (both internally in Thailand and also from Myanmar/Burma), and related negative impacts on watersheds or other environmental values from poor management of natural forest.
3. There is a wide gulf between local stakeholders, who were seeing benefits and improvements from FIO's changes as a forest management organization, and national stakeholders who were fighting to see FIO broken up and a new model of forest management or industrial development occur. In particular some national stakeholders would in some cases indicate that they had important input, but would vehemently reject being in anyway part of the process, so that they could attack it later.

Ultimately SmartWood suspended the certificate due to lack of compliance with Corrective Action Requests (CARs) due at least in part to the fact that FIO was being so strongly criticized that they questioned the value of even being involved in FSC. Today it is my perception that the issues that stakeholders are concerned about with FIO continue and that the lack of engagement with FSC means progress on these issues is, by and large, not occurring. I am not aware of what the other current negative or positive impacts from disengagement are.

Flor y Fauna - Finally there is the case of Flor y Fauna, which remains FSC certified. The criticisms of Flor and Fauna have been documented and SmartWood spent hundreds of hours responding, in writing, to concerns. FSC was put in an awkward situation of seeing the auditing being done, the issues being raised, and while concerned, also clear that the primary issue being raised – that of financial investment returns and projections for the plantation investors – was and is outside the scope of FSC certification. Today, though there remain concerns that FSC-certified plantation operations may be making, in some cases, very aggressive claims of financial return on investment, the FSC system has put in place financial disclaimer controls that try to make clear to investors and other parties are clear the FSC is not addressing and does not certify financial return on investment.

Flor y Fauna was also accused of using illegal migrant labor, poor working conditions, conversion of wetlands or natural forest, etc. Though CARs have been put in place to improve protection of wetlands near new forest roads, by and large the claims of illegal labor or poor working conditions were found not to be true.

On a technical level, the Flor y Fauna operations are primarily established on old agricultural fields and the operation has put in place local processing and log sales. The operation continues with FSC certification, and though the management of teak (or any) plantation is always a challenge (Flor y Fauna continues to receive CARs from SmartWood requiring improvements on various issues), I am not aware of major external issues with Flor y Fauna. This can always change of course, but that is the reality we face today.

Suggestions

1. When the Plantation Working Group forwards recommendations, they must be based on examination of site-specific factual evidence, not just impressions from a distance. Members of the Working Group must ensure that the changes they propose reflect a balanced, realistic assessment of what has actually happened with a specific operation or certification (not based on theoretical information or according to a second-hand perspective) and the scope/mandates of FSC plantation certification. In some cases this will argue for Plantation Working Group members, or respected representatives thereof, to actually visit problem certification sites on-the-ground. I strongly endorse such an approach.
2. In general, FSC members should consider the full costs of NOT engaging operations like FIO or Perum Perhutani in FSC certification...is that really a good option? I would suggest we need to develop more robust systems for addressing these types of complicated situations, and the FSC should not retreat from engagement. In fact I believe the new Controlled Wood standards (once improved through the current Working Group process) and the discussion regarding modular certification can provide answers.

Closing Comment

The comments above are provided with a perspective that we can and should learn from our experience, and we should use that to improve the FSC system for certifying plantations. Given the increasing role that such plantations have in wood supply around the globe, the FSC system has a lot to offer in terms of improving the social and environmental performance of such operations.