

FORWORKNET UPDATE

ILO SECTORAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME - JOINT FAO/ECE/ILO EXPERTS NETWORK

Focus on: Forest certification

Part I. FSC forest certification - An overview

by
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The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, non-profit, membership-based organization that brings people together to find solutions that promote stewardship of the world's forests.

Established in 1993, FSC has created a system that develops internationally recognized standards for responsible forest management and an international accreditation program for independent third-party certification bodies, which certify forest managers and forest product producers to FSC standards.



To close the responsible circle of production, FSC has a logo and product label that help consumers worldwide choose forest products that support responsible forest management. These features allow companies and

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governments to incorporate FSC approaches in their procurement policies, in order to ensure that their purchases of forest products do not contribute to forest degradation and deforestation, nor violate workers' and local communities' rights.

FSC started as a simple idea, but with support from a broad range of stakeholders, including environmental non-governmental organizations, workers' representatives, indigenous peoples and businesses, it has grown significantly. Currently, FSC-certified forests cover more than 84 million hectares worldwide, which is more than twice the size of Germany. The table opposite presents an overview of this global distribution.

FSC's mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

Today, FSC certification affects more than 5,400 forest product companies in 77 countries all over the world, with an estimated annual trade value in FSC-certified products of approximately US\$5 billion. Throughout the production chain, several hundred thousand workers are estimated to be working in FSC-certified operations.

FSC certification is carried out by accredited *certification bodies*. FSC itself does not certify forest operations or manufacturers, in order to maintain independence between its standards and requirements, and those operations seeking certification.

There are two types of certificates in the FSC system necessary for the certification of forests areas and for FSC-certified products to be traded and reach the consumer: Forest Management (FM) certification and

EDITORIAL

The Institute for Forest and Agricultural Management and Certification (Imaflora) of Brazil has for over a decade contributed to the sustainable development of forest and agricultural lands in that country, using internationally recognized socio-environmental standards as its major tool.

We believe that socio-environmental certification combines assessment elements that reconcile the need for conservation with the concerns of workers and local communities in forest and agricultural lands. This is why, in order to carry out certification of forest areas, we follow Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards.

As the representative of the Rainforest Alliance's Smartwood Program in Brazil, Imaflora has contributed to the certification of almost 3 million hectares of forests, including natural forests (for timber and non-timber production) and planted forests.

Our experience with FSC forest certification in Brazil has shown the many challenges to be overcome with respect to social issues of the forest sector. There is still much to be done to improve health and safety aspects, working conditions and social dialogue.

When we audit – as an independent third party – management activities in certified areas to verify their compliance with the principles and criteria required by FSC standards, we are accomplishing our mission of helping improve workers' and local communities' living conditions. In addition – as players in the political arena – we strive to make forest certification and FSC effective agents of change. To achieve this objective, we invest in training and capacity-building programs, support the development of public policies and promote markets for certified products.

As shown in this newsletter, FSC certification expects workers and their representatives, local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to be informed, to be consulted and to closely follow the social and environmental practices of certified companies and local communities. Being a certification body, we must consult the largest possible number of stakeholders, and mobilize their cooperation.

We firmly believe that well-informed social players can positively influence the process of certification. Such participation enriches the dynamics of the monitoring activities carried out by certification bodies. It is important therefore that stakeholders learn both how the FSC system works, and the opportunities and limitations of this mechanism. This is the contribution we would like to make as the "guest editor" of this issue of the *Forworknet Update*.*

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Guest Editor

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chain of custody. FM certification involves an inspection of forest management operations by an independent FSC-accredited certification body to check that the forest is being managed in accordance with FSC's international standard for responsible forest management.

What is responsible forest management?

Responsible forest management means that the forest is managed in a way that protects water, soil and wildlife. It also means that communities, indigenous peoples, forest workers, industry players, forest owners – anyone who is affected by what happens to forests – agree on how the forest is managed. And it means that people continue to work, live and earn an income from the forest.

of custody certification are eligible to put the FSC logo on their products.

Benefits of FSC certification

FSC is recognized as an international organization that provides a system for different stakeholders interested in forest issues to

work towards responsible forest management.

Through the FSC system, forest workers, managers, forest product manufacturers, local communities, non-governmental organizations and other interest groups are given equal access to, voice in and voting rights in a mechanism that is participatory, inclusive and transparent.

This makes it possible to achieve the following benefits:

- International recognition that the forest is managed in a socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate, and economically feasible way
- Opportunity for interaction and cooperation among the various players involved in responsible forest management – forest owners, workers and environmental organizations – to solve the problems that forests face
- Assurance that the rights of workers and indigenous communities are respected

This standard is applicable to any forest or plantation on the planet and covers social, environmental and economic issues, divided into 10 principles and 56 criteria, which constitute the cornerstone of the FSC system.

The 10 principles relate to:

1. Compliance with laws and the FSC principles
2. Tenure and use rights and responsibilities
3. Indigenous peoples' rights
4. Community relations and workers' rights
5. Multiple benefits from the forest
6. Minimization of environmental impact
7. Management planning
8. Monitoring and assessment of management impact
9. Maintenance of high conservation value forests
10. Responsible management of plantations

If the forest operation complies with the FSC international standard, then the accredited certification body issues a certificate. The operation can then claim that its forest products are from a responsibly managed forest.

The second type of certification – chain of custody – is necessary throughout the production chain for products coming from FSC-certified forests to be traded, to be processed and eventually to reach the final consumer, carrying the FSC logo. Such certification provides a guarantee of the production of FSC-certified products. Chain of custody is the path taken by raw materials from the forest to the consumer, including all successive stages of processing, transformation, manufacturing and distribution.

From a customer's perspective, the FSC label represents a promise. Chain of custody standards are the mechanism that FSC has to ensure that the promise is kept.

Operations that have been independently verified for FSC chain

Table. Global distribution of forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, December 2006

| Region | Area of FSC certified forests (hectares) | Percentage of FSC certified area | Number of Forest Management certificates | Percentage of certificates |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Africa | 2,494,357 | 2.96 | 39 | 4.45 |
| Asia | 1,642,965 | 1.95 | 49 | 5.59 |
| Europe | 41,923,374 | 49.74 | 378 | 43.15 |
| North America | 26,568,015 | 31.52 | 143 | 16.32 |
| Oceania | 1,282,908 | 1.52 | 27 | 3.08 |
| South America and Caribbean | 10,379,845 | 12.31 | 240 | 27.40 |
| Total | 84,291,464 | 100.00 | 876 | 100.00 |



- Assurance for future generations that they will enjoy the benefits of the forest
- Assurance that ownership and land-use rights are respected
- Assurance that wood harvesting is legal
- Assurance that areas of crucial social and ecological value are not being negatively affected
- Possibility of new markets for goods produced as FSC

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Part II. The FSC certification contribution to promoting decent work in the forest sector

by
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More than 13 extraordinarily successful years have passed since the founding assembly of FSC in October 1993 in Toronto, Canada. Since then, FSC has certified more than 84 million hectares of forests in 76 countries across the globe and has awarded almost 1,000 forest certificates and 5,400 certificates for many thousands of products in the processing chain.

The handling of critical situations over these 13 years has also shown that the basic concept behind FSC works. Any problems that have arisen between stakeholder groups, companies, environmentalists and employees have been amicably resolved. The balance of power between work, the environment and profit has occasionally led to heated discussions and delays, but solutions that all parties could live with have always been found.

However, this does not mean that everything is going perfectly at the moment. The proportion of certified forests in the areas of the globe that are most threatened with destruction (e.g. the Amazon and the Congo

basins) is still too low. The people living in and from the forests who can ultimately ensure that they are used sustainably are not yet being satisfactorily involved. Finally, FSC has certified and protected many millions of hectares of forests, but illegal logging and the unchecked destruction of valuable forest stocks are still a reality.

It is all the more important that the “jewel of the FSC” – its credibility – should be preserved. Dividing the power between capital, work and the environment will bring the solutions necessary for the 21st century. Never before has our blue planet had to face up to such challenges – that is, climate change and globalization.

Things will only go well if stakeholders can cooperate. Everyone needs to accept the interests of others and look for solutions that can work for all interests. FSC has decided that its three chambers (economic, environmental and social) enjoy completely equal footing and that no chamber may dominate the others.

An entrepreneur’s wish to operate in a profit-making manner is to be as respected as an environmentalist’s

desire to maintain the flora and fauna and an employee’s right to humane working and living conditions.

Even though the social chamber accounts for only “one third of the power” of FSC, working conditions particularly require our mutual attention. More people are still dying through work-related incidents rather than wars – approximately 6,000 per day, or one every 15 seconds. In Sub-Saharan Africa, almost 60,000 workers are killed in accidents at work every year.

ILO standards have been ratified by 170 nations. They govern fundamental minimum standards for working people. The ban on child labour, the right to form unions, minimum wages, safety and health, working conditions for migrant and temporary workers, the right of indigenous people to use their regions as they have traditionally done so and the right of the employee to information and participation in decision-making processes are just some examples.

Unfortunately, a nation’s ratification of ILO standards does not necessarily mean that they are implemented. Otherwise it would no longer be

possible for there to be millions of child workers, or many people working with heavy chain saws with little or no training, or contracting and sub-contracting workers having to labour in inhumane conditions, or for poverty to persist because full-time earnings are US\$1 per day.

Overall, an estimated 300 million people (direct employees or direct family members) owe their livelihoods to the forest and its products. It is estimated that a further 200 million people earn their livelihoods from non-wood products (rubber trees, nuts, medicinal plants, etc.). Of these approximately 500 million people, 90% are in poor countries, and 10% in rich countries.

Social factors must be given general consideration to ensure the future of the forest and timber industry. This is meant in a comprehensive sense. The rights of workers and indigenous people are tied in with this, as is the sustainable development of regions and countries. FSC does not claim to be able to solve all problems. Governments of these countries must also make their own significant contributions as, for example, in matters of land rights or the issue of whether a region will become deforested.

What FSC can achieve is the promotion of “good practices” and examples that contribute to changing the culture, such as the involvement of minorities in the decision-making process or the inclusion of communal forestry. FSC has had positive experiences with good practices and has been able to accumulate examples worth emulating. These have a “contagious” quality and give people in other regions the chance to imitate them and revise their opinions.

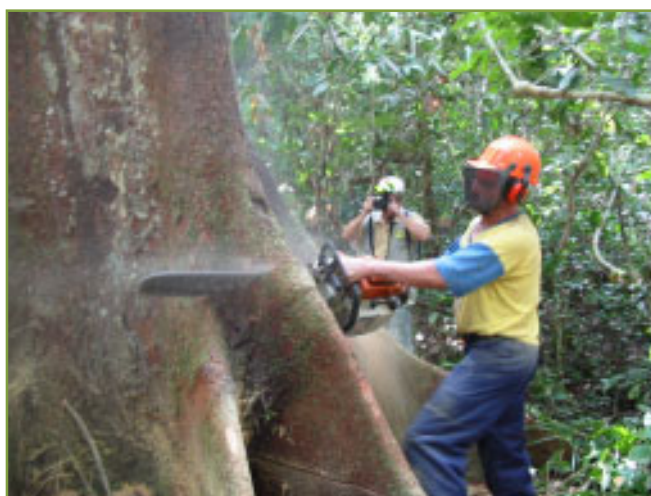
Such good practices are needed. Nowadays, there is a 1 in 10 risk that a lumberjack in the tropics will be killed as a result of an accident at work. Along with mine workers, lumberjacks in developing countries have the highest risk of having a fatal accident. Sawmills are also dangerous workplaces. In addition, conditions for

contract workers are often miserable, offering insufficient training, no job security and extremely low pay.

Unfortunately, in the 21st century, we are still finding the worst forms of child labour (as defined in ILO Convention No. 182 – about 8.4 million children from 7 years of age are affected) and forced labour (about 5.7 million children).

The rights to organize and to join a union are not always safeguarded: 223 cases of murdered or disappeared union workers were documented in 2004; 4,000 were put in prison, 1,000 were injured and over 10,000 lost their jobs as a result of union activities. In addition, 24,000 people die every day from the consequences of hunger and malnutrition.

FSC, through its certification system, has the possibility to develop locally adaptable models and concepts worldwide for the use and optimization of ILO standards.



contract workers are often miserable, offering insufficient training, no job security and extremely low pay. These facts speak for themselves and therefore the fight against poverty is of central importance. Governments from industrial and developed countries decided at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 to halve poverty by 2015. FSC should be in a position to make a concrete contribution to this.

Each certification assuring that ILO conventions will be adhered to directly

contributes to reducing poverty and misery. If FSC strengthens the social aspects of certification, and if adherence to ILO standards as they stand can be assured, the employees concerned and their families will be in a position to earn a livelihood through working.

Humane working and living conditions all around the world will pay off for all involved. This applies equally along the whole processing chain – the sawmill, the window factory or the furniture manufacturers.

Only those employees who receive proper training and who can afford to feed their families on their wages will be ready and able to operate sustainably and economically. This is good for the protection and maintenance of our forests. It also provides companies with security and profits and guarantees the “infinite raw material wood” for us, our children and our grandchildren.

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Part III. Transparency and participation: The importance of stakeholders in FSC certification

by
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Introduction

FSC certification is an important instrument for the promotion of sustainable development.

This statement, marked by the optimism and enthusiasm of those who are already involved in applying this instrument, makes several assumptions that must be analysed from various points of view.

One of these assumptions, discussed in this section, is that the participation of stakeholders is of fundamental importance to ensure the transparency and legitimacy of the FSC certification process.

However, the main thesis suggested here is intended to go a bit further: it proposes that the involvement of stakeholders during evaluation for certification purposes may (and must) go beyond the limits of this participation as a tool for peer control.

This section also defends the hypothesis that the strengthening of stakeholder participation is a promising way for securing agreements and consensus on the future of those areas where forest management operations are located, thus contributing to their development.

Participation and social control

The profusion of “institutions of decentralized collaborative governance” observed lately, with ample participation of civil society, is one of the main characteristics of the recent strengthening of democracy in developing countries (Culpepper, 2005). Some of the main assessments of such institutions indicate that they contribute, among other aspects, to increasing transparency in the administration of public funds, to minimizing capture by better positioned interest groups, and to

empowering and giving voice to communities and social players.

However, these assessments also indicate that this participation is geared much more towards increasing social control of actions taken by the public and private sectors, rather than towards the construction of an endogenous development process. It is in this wider discussion framework on the role of participation that the involvement of stakeholders in forest certification processes is considered.

There is no doubt that a good public consultation process during the assessment phase of certification is a condition of fundamental importance to assure society that the certified company complies with the minimum requirements to merit the FSC label. This implies that relevant stakeholders have been identified and informed about the certification process, that public spaces for them to voice their points of view have been provided and used, and that mechanisms for monitoring and receiving grievances have been made available. The legitimacy of the FSC certification process is based, to a large extent, on this social participation.

Therefore, the challenge consists in improving the mechanisms for public consultation with stakeholders and for identifying them, thus increasing representation of society and promoting public interest in order to ensure greater transparency and peer control of the process.² In addition, these steps will act as a catalyst for obtaining consensus and agreements with respect to the utilization of natural resources and the alternatives for the development of a given area.



Beyond social control: Interaction and social learning

The interaction among social players during discussions in public spaces is increasingly recognized as a promising way for identifying new opportunities for cooperation and that may bring positive impacts to the development of a given location (Sabel, 2005).

In this regard, by encouraging the active participation of stakeholders, public consultations represent an opportunity to stimulate dialogue and interaction that will result in changes in the behaviour of social players in areas where FSC-certified forest management operations are located.

This hypothesis is based on a firm belief that social players, when challenged to think collectively on the future of their territories, may learn, through interaction, to structure new ways of cooperation that shorten the distances between the public sector, private sector and civil society. Evidence that the construction of more promising ways for sustainable development depends on the complementarities among these various components of the social world is becoming clearer.

Participation, therefore, is not only useful to ensure transparency of the certification process: it can encourage stakeholders to make use of their “social skills” (Fligstein, 2001), to structure collective actions towards the promotion of sustainable development.

Participation, FSC certification and sustainable local development

One cannot dispute the positive role played by forest-based industries in the economy of their environment, such as job opportunities, tax generation and income into local markets. In this respect, FSC certification contributes to expanding the positive impacts that forest activities bring to local communities. Among other relevant aspects, it helps the introduction of forest products in high-end markets, contributes to stabilizing or improving the financial health of certified companies, encourages the maintenance of jobs and improves their quality, and ensures a more appropriate use of natural resources.

However, as stated earlier, FSC certification can go a bit further: it may encourage certified companies to function as true catalysts of wider development processes, taken here to follow Amartya Sen's definition: "a process of expansion of the freedom and capabilities of individuals and social groups to make better choices" (Sen, 2000).

With this objective in mind, we make three recommendations that may help increase the effects of participation, within the scope of FSC certification, encouraging the identification and implementation of collective actions aiming at sustainable local development:

The identification of stakeholders should go beyond the social limits of a forest company.

Encouraging the participation of employees and their representatives in public consultation is not enough. One must identify and encourage the participation of other players, such as social movements, local businesspeople and their organizations, the public sector (executive, legislative and judiciary), schools, universities, and non-governmental organizations;

The identification of stakeholders should go beyond the municipal boundaries of company activities.

Very often, a company's forestry activities involve a larger set of efforts in promoting regional

sustainable development. Therefore, social players and initiatives from other municipalities should be identified in order to establish partnerships and synergies with the forest company and with local social players;

The public consultation should establish synergies and, whenever possible, use public spaces that are already available in municipalities and regions for discussion and deliberation. The existence of numerous administration councils, with ample participation of civil society in municipalities and regions, represents an excellent opportunity to disseminate information and encourage participation of stakeholders in the public consultation process. The identification of such spaces in due time and their use to discuss the certification process may help increase participation in and transparency of the process.



In conclusion, we would also like to suggest concrete actions that may help systematize, encourage and evaluate innovative experiences of social participation as carried out by certified companies in their area of influence. This would increase the visibility and the legitimacy of FSC certification as an instrument for promoting sustainable local development.

We propose the following actions:

establish an annual award for social innovation in FSC-certified companies, with the objective of systematizing, analysing and making available lessons of innovative experiences in social participation;

organize an annual national meeting, with the participation of FSC-certified companies, as well as social, public and private players, with the objective of establishing and maintaining an institutional space for the exchange of experiences and the identification of opportunities for cooperation among multiple players; and

support an independent national study of impact assessment – social, economic and environmental – resulting from FSC certification on regional and local development dynamics.

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² A good discussion on the issue of representation in deliberative spaces can be found in Pinto (2004), pp. 97-113.

The development of forest certification in the Brazilian Amazon region and its benefits to communities and forest workers

by
Marcelo Sampaio Carneiro¹

FSC certification of forest operations in Brazil started in the 1990s, focusing initially in the southern and south-eastern regions. The first certification of Amazon natural forests was carried out in 1997, in the forest management unit of the Amazon Precious Woods company. It gained momentum in the following decade.

After a slow start, mainly focusing on traditional timber companies in the states of Pará and Amazonas, forest certification expanded and diversified. Today it includes forest companies in the states of Rondônia, Acre and Mato Grosso, areas that were responsible for most of the expansion of forest activities in the 1990s.

Data on forest certification in the Amazon region (Carneiro, 2005) show that this process is concentrated in medium and large forest companies, which can mobilize vast areas for their forest management projects and are usually geared towards international markets. This finding confirms the thesis presented by Thornber et al. (2000, p. 25) that forest certification is not carried out on even terms, that is, it favours larger companies, which have better access to information on certification and on markets for certified products.

For this reason, although certification of forest companies in the Amazon region is increasing, its impact on the forest sector as a whole is limited due to the large number of small and very small companies that make up the sector. This brings up the issue of how much can be expected from companies that have opted for certification in reversing the organizational and operational standards that characterize

the market of tropical woods in the Amazon region.

Some studies have been carried out that try to identify the costs to forest industries adopting certification. In addition to the direct costs, such as the fees charged by the certifier, these studies point to indirect costs related to the upgrading necessary to reach the technical standards required by



certification, difficulty in securing areas with proper legal documentation for carrying out logging activities, and the costs associated with improving the relationship of the forest company with local communities to levels required by certification.

May and Veiga Neto (2000) looked at the indirect costs of a certified company relating to the social requirements of certification with respect to its relationship with local communities or with those who have rights to gather non-timber forest products in the area under management. They found that the main problem is the cost that certified companies would have to bear when assuming functions that are the responsibility of the Brazilian Government.

For those defending certification, this issue would be one of its strong points since “it promotes the creation of communication channels between a

forest operation and local communities and indigenous peoples” (Azevedo, 2000, p. 5). In turn, according to Laschefsky (2003, p. 93), critics of certification state that forest companies are direct competitors of the “land-use systems of indigenous peoples and people living on river banks”, thus negatively affecting the social reproduction of these groups.

Although the relationship of local communities with certified companies will probably remain for some time as a disputed issue on the effects of certification, the establishment of public forests designated for timber production has been suggested as a solution to the problem of lack of areas with legal documentation for companies aspiring to certification. This suggestion is being implemented by the federal government in Brazil and by some state governments of the region (Acre, Amazonas and Pará). It should promote the expansion of areas controlled by companies already certified and the entry of new companies aiming for certification.

One subject that has received less attention in the discussions about certification, but that is being cited as quite important by representatives of workers’ organizations, is salary levels and working relations within certified companies. Advocates of certification stress its positive results for forest workers, such as: (i) pay increases for workers involved in logging operations, as a result of the adoption of “reduced-impact logging” technology; and (ii) improvement in working conditions, due to the introduction of the so-called “time compensation” mechanism, which is an agreement between forest companies and labour unions that allows workers of logging operations to keep their jobs between production seasons.

The benefits of the time compensation mechanism to workers are clearly recognized, since it guarantees employment throughout the year, and promotes formal working relations. However, it also benefits the company, since it reduces staff turnover, with consequent lower costs associated with contract interruptions and with investment in training programs on, for example, reduced-impact logging.

Another aspect that should be mentioned, and that aids the case for certification, is the marked reduction in the number of accidents in certified companies in the state of Amazonas, as compared to companies without certification (Soares, 1999).

Although there are some indications that the average salary of some workers' categories in certified companies is higher than the industry average, we do not have specific studies that clearly establish this trend. At any rate, this salary increase cannot be directly associated with certification, since the assessment criteria simply state that the company must only guarantee that a salary that is "at least equal to the industry average in the region" (Indicator 25, Criterion 2, Principle 4; FSC-Brazil [Conselho Brasileiro de Manejo Florestal], 2002, p. 14). Therefore, a company with an FSC label will have little motivation to invest in better salaries for its workers, thus providing no significant contribution to implementing any change in the regional salary standard for the industry, which, for most workers, is in the range of one to two minimum wages.

Another area to be considered, and that lessens the potential for positive changes resulting from certification in work relations within the forest industry, relates to the fact that certification standards may not necessarily apply to all a forest company's operations. For example, when processing facilities (sawmill and/or secondary processing) are not at the same site as the forest management unit, auditing for certification purposes is limited to the workers involved in logging operations.

For this reason, we may face an apparent paradox: at a given company, certification may improve employees' working conditions if they are involved in logging operations, but worsen them in other sectors, such as the sawmill (Cruz, 2002; Vieira, 2003).

With this in mind, we would like to stress the need to strengthen workers' organizations in certified companies, so that they may access benefits arising from the certification process.

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The FSC forest certification system in Cameroon: Opportunities and challenges to the implementation of its standards and social strategy

by

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Although everywhere else the FSC certification system has become a standard or is no longer an ambiguous concept, it is still at the embryonic stage in Africa in general, and in the Congo basin countries in particular. This is unfortunate considering (i) the importance of the Congo basin in world climate regulation and in the economy of its countries, (ii) the commercial value of certified timber on the international market and (iii) the various benefits accruing to countries that have so far adopted forest certification.

The situation in Congo basin countries: The impact of the forest sector on socio-economic development

Estimated at nearly 230 million hectares, the Congo basin forest² is the largest tropical rain forest in the world after the Amazon; as such, it plays a major role in regulating the world's climate and in maintaining the ecological balance. Yet the forest, together with its resources, is almost entirely the official property of the region's countries, and constitutes one of the pillars of their economic policy, namely the extraction of natural resources.

Indeed, in some of these countries (for example Gabon), the forest belt covers up to 80% of the national territory, while in others (Equatorial Guinea, for example) up to 20% of the forest area is gazetted and protected. The forest sector in Gabon employs some 28% of the working population although it constitutes only 2.8% of gross domestic product (GDP). In Cameroon, logging alone accounts for 9% of GDP and accounts for up to 25,000 jobs, thus representing one of the main sources of employment in the private sector and a considerable

vector of informal economic activities. Rural populations depend directly on forest resources for their survival and cultural rites, while urban populations rely on forest products to meet their construction, food (in particular, bush meat), pharmaceutical and cultural needs.

These facts underline the role of the forest sector in the socio-economic development of Congo basin countries, whose forest resources are increasingly coveted. They also highlight the potential positive impact of FSC certification-led sustainable and equitable forest management, as seen in experiences elsewhere in the world.

The reality in Cameroon: The first steps to forest certification

Although the concept of forest certification was introduced a few years earlier in Cameroon, implementation really began in 2005 when a forest company from the Netherlands (WIJMA) obtained certification for one of the forest management units entrusted to it by the Government of Cameroon. WIJMA was the first company to obtain an FSC certificate of good forest management not only in Cameroon, but also in the whole Congo basin. So far, it is still the only FSC-certified forest company in Cameroon – though it is in dispute with national and international organizations.³ Only four others are undergoing the certification process. This is a very low rate and a cause for concern, considering the 105 forest management units already allotted in 2005, of which 57 had forest management plans approved by the Government at the end of April that year.⁴

Two main questions arise: Why are logging companies in Cameroon slow to obtain FSC certification, since it is increasingly becoming a precondition for accessing most big international

timber markets? Also, is the Government of Cameroon prepared to accommodate the FSC certification system and its principles and criteria?

Many legal and regulatory instruments are favourable to the FSC certification process, but they contain some ambiguities. For example, the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro saw the adoption of three essential components, namely economic development, environmental protection and social justice. Future government policies in general, and forest policies in particular, should focus on these if forest management is to be sustainable. These components are driven by fundamental principles and international conventions, the ratification and implementation of which by a given country are a precondition of eligibility to the FSC certification system.

Indeed, many reforms have been carried out in the forest sector in Cameroon since the Rio summit. Having ratified many of these conventions, one of the first applications by the Government of Cameroon was the adoption of the forest law of 1994 (No. 94/01) followed by its decree of application in 1995 (No. 95/531). After that, sustainable development became the guiding principle in exploitation of forests, and more precisely of production forests. Such exploitation was standardized by the preliminary land-use plan for forests in the southern part of Cameroon developed at the same time. It defines land use in the southernmost forest belt and serves as a natural resource planning, orientation and exploitation tool (Article 1 of Decree No. 95/531).

The forest landscape is thus divided into two distinct parts as defined by the land-use plan. There are permanent forests on lands used solely for

forestry, also called permanent forest estates. Permanent forests comprise forest areas belonging to the State and to local councils. There are also forests that may be used for other purposes than forestry, also known as non-permanent forest estates, on national forest lands that may be set aside for human occupation (housing, agro-forestry, agro-industrial zones) or for other uses. The latter lands include protected areas where human activities

achievements relating to the sharing of revenue/benefits accruing from natural/forest resource management (annual forest royalties and other taxes payable by taxpayers – logging companies – in any form) and to work (remuneration, safety, health, insurance, etc; and (ii) inadequate information and fictitious involvement of various stakeholders in the processes of drafting regulatory instruments, decision making and

and articles or third parties. But of course, one might wonder how dependable these sources of information are, especially as only a few staff of support structures and organizations are trained on such issues. One could even go so far as to ask: “Does FSC make real practical efforts at the local level to fill the information vacuum on its certification system?”



Indeed, it is not very easy to use a tool effectively without full knowledge of how it works, no matter one's educational level. It is even dangerous when one's desire for knowledge on a subject is not satisfied quickly because that could cause people to give up. This is the threat looming over the FSC certification system in Cameroon and in the Congo basin countries – the possibility of logging companies hesitating to engage in FSC forest certification because they can use other eco-certification systems that are less demanding – and less effective.

So, we need to wake up!

are temporally prohibited, fragile ecological areas, private forests, and community forests. According to the law, permanent forests should cover at least 30% of the total area of the national territory and reflect the country's ecological diversity. “Any activity likely to interfere with the defined priority use of each forest area shall be prohibited” (Article 7 of Decree No. 95/531).

The implementation of the land-use plan, the definition of standards for the attribution and management of forests, the terms for the involvement of local populations in forest management, the benefits they receive during the sharing of forest revenue, and the principles of their use are undoubtedly some of the major preconditions for Cameroon's eligibility to FSC certification. But unfortunately, the manner of putting them into practice appears to be unsatisfactory and even incompatible with some FSC certification requirements.

The most heated argument in this context relates to: (i) the low/poor rating of the social and economic

conflict management. All this is against a background of profit maximization, impunity and corruption. These elements help us understand the rather slow adoption of the FSC certification system in Cameroon.

Inadequate knowledge about FSC forest certification

In addition to technical and financial problems, one of the major obstacles to the adoption of the FSC certification system is inadequate knowledge about the FSC certification system.

In spite of the paucity of real statistical data on this situation in Cameroon, the little information at our disposal reflects the relatively low level of knowledge of the various parties (the administration, local communities, forest companies and forest product users, support organizations, etc.) about the concept of forest certification, in general, and FSC certification (its process, its importance, its stakes, etc.), in particular. Those who are most enlightened on the subject get their information from publications, reports

The FSC certification process is stagnant in Cameroon and the Congo basin countries, which is helpful neither to the FSC certification system itself, given its current international credibility, nor to the sustainable and equitable management of forest resources in these heavily indebted poor countries. This situation is all the more deplorable as FSC developed and put at the disposal of the public⁵ a rich strategy with a view to increasing access to the FSC certification system for all social groups.

To come out of this state of lethargy, all stakeholders – people operating in the forest sector, legal and administrative services, communities living in or around forests, non-governmental organizations, funding bodies and FSC itself – should each take responsibility and pay closer attention to the current lack of concerted action, which is both endangering the rich forest biological diversity of Cameroon, and curtailing development opportunities to the communities in or near to forests.

¹ Director and Sociologist of the Centre Internationale d'Etudes Forestières et Environnementales (Ciefe), Yaoundé, Cameroon.

² The forest is unequally distributed over nine countries. The largest areas are in the Democratic Republic of Congo (54%), the Central African

Republic (17%), Cameroon and Gabon (9% each).

³ The Centre for Environment and Development, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth published controversial articles condemning the non-respect of logging standards, referring to possible litigation

between WIJMA and neighbouring communities.

⁴ Statistics published in April 2006 by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife.

⁵ See the website of the Forest Stewardship Council: www.fsc.org.

The experience of BWI with forest certification: Challenges and opportunities for trade unions

by
Bob Ramsay¹

What is BWI ?

Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) is the global trade union federation for around 350 trade unions in the construction, building materials and forest and wood-processing industries in 135 countries. Together, these trade unions represent 12 million workers.

The organization's primary goal is to defend and promote the interests of working people. It serves as a network that can promote solidarity between workers and their trade unions on all continents. Its aim is to promote decent work in the sector, defining decent work as work that provides a decent standard of living, in fair and safe conditions in which workers can freely form trade unions and bargain collectively to protect and advance their interests. In order to enjoy decent work, it is essential that employers and governments respect the ILO core labour standards.

Based on these objectives, BWI has, throughout its recent history (and of its predecessor organization, the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers) promoted the inclusion of the ILO's core labour standards in all certification systems, both national and international. It has always campaigned for the inclusion of social standards in all efforts to promote sustainable forestry, along with economic and environmental sustainability.

A response to globalization

BWI's affiliated unions in the wood and forestry industries bear witness to globalization that increasingly affects their members, as former small and local industries come under the growing influence of multinational enterprises and changing demands for wood. BWI-affiliated trade unions have reported on the changing and increasing demand for round wood as a raw material, particularly from China. This country has rapidly become the world's largest importer of round wood and the largest exporter of furniture products. This fact, together with expected increased demand for wood as a renewable energy resource, is having effects on almost all wood-producing regions, as demand increases on the global market.

One of BWI's responses to globalization has been establishing its Global Wood and Forestry Network, which consists of its affiliated unions, and enabling them to exchange information and ideas on issues – including those related to certification – that have direct and indirect effects on workers in the industry.

The benefits of trade union involvement in certification

As is generally known, there are two major global certification systems for forestry and the chain of custody, FSC and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. Both systems include the criterion of the inclusion of ILO core labour

standards in their processes. To varying degrees, BWI's affiliates are involved in the implementation and monitoring of both certification systems nationally. BWI, therefore, has established dialogue and some cooperation with the certification bodies of these two main systems.

As part of this dialogue with these bodies, BWI has organized workshops and seminar activities, bringing together affiliated trade unions in Africa to discuss the importance of certification standards and to involve unions in the certification efforts in their own countries. The latest of these was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2006 in which a representative of FSC played a very active role. Given the importance of the involvement and promotion of dialogue between as broad as possible group of stakeholders, environmental organizations such as WWF and the Greenbelt Movement also took part in this event. This approach was effective in establishing a broader stakeholder dialogue, and at the same time, gave participants the opportunity of improving their own understanding of the issues of particular interest to their respective groups.

The experiences of affiliates show that in the sustainability debate, issues surrounding social sustainability are often the most poorly represented. This stems from several factors, and sometimes occurs because other stakeholders have little contact with trade unions and, as a result, are less aware of these issues. For their part, trade unions may also often lack the

capacity for in-depth involvement in certification bodies and processes. Experiences have further shown that trade unions may lack key information on the concerns of other stakeholders, partly because they have little communication with these organizations.

Trade unions are often unsure on how to become involved in certification, and of what benefits may flow. Historically, they have shown a lack of understanding and knowledge as to why and how to become involved. Our experiences in this regard show that unions have been able to participate best in those regions, such as the Nordic countries of Europe, where they already play a key role in their society and where social standards are generally well observed and well respected.

The key thrust of BWI's future activities in achieving better social standards in certification, therefore, needs to be made in countries and regions where trade unions do not play this key role, and where many are small, and in some cases, poorly represented in their respective industries (and in society in general). This constitutes a major challenge.

Equally, this is a key challenge to the certifying organizations, which may lack detailed experience of social issues and particularly of those affecting trade union rights and adherence to ILO conventions.

It is indeed the forest workers who are the people "on the front line" of the industry, particularly when it comes to sustainable forestry. This can best be achieved if workers and their unions are fully aware of what is at stake and can see their own input as a valuable feature of this.

It is an important opportunity for trade unions to harness this sometimes untapped level of knowledge among their members in order to be able to more actively support certification and efforts to support a forest sector that is sustainable in all senses: socially, environmentally and economically.

BWI has several experiences in this area. For example, in **Ghana**, the local

BWI affiliate has, in recent years, become an active stakeholder in the certification process nationally. This has resulted in increased awareness among other stakeholders of the importance of social aspects, and there is a solid membership base that clearly supports the union's involvement in forest certification. This in turn has enabled the union to increase its membership and general standing among other stakeholders.



In **Latin America**, BWI continues its mutually beneficial cooperation with certain environmental organizations. In one particular case in Brazil, cooperation with an environmentally based organization, Imaflora, has resulted in the joint publication of guidelines on certification designed for trade unions. The guidelines have been used with BWI affiliates in the region and have now been translated into English initially, so that they may be adapted and used by BWI-affiliated unions elsewhere.

In **Kenya**, BWI affiliates are participating more actively in certification processes that are still in the relatively early stages of development. They have reported that their increased visibility, particularly when involved in a tree planting campaign on Workers' Memorial Day (April 28) provided them with many concrete benefits. When planning this activity, the union took part in a major outreach exercise to other stakeholders, such as wood and forestry industry employers and local officials and communities in the region where the event took place, as well as with their own members who are employed both in forestry and in local wood-processing industries. Thus, representatives of the three "chambers

of certification" (economic, environmental and social) were involved in a joint activity which provided a win/win/win situation.

The trade unions involved reported a number of benefits from this activity. Members developed a greater understanding of issues of sustainable forest management, and were able to become increasingly involved in the process on a day-to-day basis. Trade unions improved their profile, and hence promoted the issues affecting their members, among the community by illustrating the positive role that they can play in improving living conditions for the community.

The industrial relations climate with the employers involved in the tree planting activity also improved. They saw the exercise as an example of positive cooperation with the trade union in a project outside the traditional industrial relations sphere. The trade unions themselves reported that they had gained a better understanding of the importance of the provision of raw materials (certified wood) for the industry, thus providing them with improved insight into industrial issues.

The improved industrial relations climate, in the unions' opinion, allowed for more efficient collective bargaining, and an agreement with an employer was renewed without some of the problems seen in earlier negotiations.

What needs to be done ?

Although the Kenyan example of trade union involvement in certification was only on a relatively small scale, it does show that there are positive benefits for all stakeholders when the discussions are undertaken as broadly as possible and with all stakeholder groupings.

Greater exchange and dialogue with employers in the wood and forestry industries on certification can have significant benefits in creating increased mutual understanding, thus benefiting traditional social dialogue areas and collective negotiation. This

can lead to improved physical working conditions through provision of equipment and adaptation of work processes to promote a healthier working environment.

Although less direct, improved understanding of key workers' concerns by environmental organizations can in turn increase understanding of environmental concerns by wood and forestry workers. This can be helpful in avoiding or reducing any areas of dispute between the two groups.

The key conclusion of our experiences is that a certified forest can be one that provides value for all stakeholders, provided that all are open to the encouragement of dialogue and cooperation. For trade unions, the issue may be to "knock on the certification door" a little louder than previously, and for other stakeholders to make sure that the door is open as wide as possible to trade unions.

In short, improved understanding of the concerns and interests by all stakeholders – trade unions, forest owners, certification agents, government departments, environmental groups, wood and forestry employers – can be greatly beneficial to all.

For the benefits to be achieved, BWI will maintain its priority of facilitating training for its affiliated trade unions on certification issues, in order to empower them and improve their involvement in certification efforts. Provided that unions and their members are aware of the potential benefits of obtaining certification of their forest workplaces, and that they continue to comply with these standards, they will be able both to harness the certification process in their struggle to improve the living and working conditions of forest workers, and to contribute to the reduction of poverty in forest regions.

¹ Bob Ramsay, Director, Global Wood and Forestry Program of Building and Wood Workers' International.

African forestry unions consider benefits of forest certification

Several of BWI's African affiliates in forestry came together, along with representatives of the environmental organizations WWF and the Greenbelt Movement, to consider trade union involvement in forest certification initiatives and possible benefits. They met in Nairobi, Kenya, on 2–4 December 2006.

Discussions focused on the important role that trade unions can play in forest certification initiatives in their own countries. Participants heard a number of presentations on experiences gained from ongoing forest projects supported by BWI in Africa. An FSC representative presented the integration of social issues in current FSC standards and urged trade unions to become more involved in FSC bodies to give a stronger voice to workers' interests in the certification process. At present, trade unions are largely unrepresented in FSC activities, or indeed in any certification initiatives in Africa.

Through a series of presentations and discussions, the unions present were generally positive to using forest certification as an organizing tool and committed to becoming more involved in these discussions at their local level.

Many affiliates shared their overwhelmingly positive

experiences gained from their involvement in tree planting schemes sponsored by BWI. This had given the unions a more positive profile with various government departments involved in forestry, and particularly with employers in the wood-processing sector. In one case observed, in Kenya, as a result of cooperation on tree planting with employers, the union noted that collective negotiations in 2005 had been less confrontational.

The longest-running project is that in Ghana, a partnership between BWI and the Timber Workers' Union. At the start of the project, the union leased 240 hectares of government land, which was planted with seedlings from the union-owned nursery. The financial benefits of the scheme were distributed, with 70% going to the union to fund further planting activities and 30% to local communities. The project succeeded in providing increased raw materials to local industries, thus preserving employment – as well as generating many positive environmental aspects.

Participants learned of the international framework agreements signed by BWI and their relevance for unions in terms of using them to strengthen trade union organization in the operations of multinational



companies. However, as many of the existing agreements also included conditions for suppliers and sub-contractors, it was important to carry out follow-up activities in these companies as well.

It was noted that, in many cases, workers' and trade unions' rights in multinational companies were often among the best in any particular industry, but that this did not apply to the many suppliers and sub-contractors.

The current international framework agreements signed by BWI have been with multinational companies that have virtually no African operations. It was therefore proposed that affiliates in Africa carry out a mapping exercise to establish if there were any Africa-based companies that could be considered for such agreements. One company in the plywood sector in Kenya was identified as a possibility for cooperation between unions in Kenya and Uganda. The affiliates concerned agreed to study the matter.

Of particular interest at the seminar was the presence of representatives from WWF and the Greenbelt Movement, both key organizations on the African continent working chiefly on environmental issues. Their contributions focused on their organizations' involvement in tree planting, capacity building in the community, and in the case of WWF, its efforts to achieve certification for a forest area in Kenya that provides raw materials for local carvers. It is hoped that this contact can develop into further alliances nationally between affiliates and appropriate environmental organizations.

The seminar was supported by the BWI Global Wood and Forestry Programme, with further direct support from FES and IG Metall.

Confronting sustainability: Forest certification in developing and transitioning countries



This 16-country, 622-page comparative historical analysis on the emergence of forest certification in developing countries reveals that existing commitments from North American and European markets has not yet been strong enough to influence significantly forest management choices in some of the world's most environmentally sensitive forests. The editors argue that the success of forest certification is conditional upon a heightened level of concern and awareness on the part of the world's wealthiest consumers of forest products – whose consumption habits currently feed tropical forest destruction.

The study represented a significant collaborative endeavour in which a common template was used to assess the historical development of forest certification in 16 countries in four regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. In

order to present a comprehensive and culturally accurate analysis, the editors employed nationally based researchers from the countries themselves. This diverse group of researchers included Ugandan forestry practitioners, who examined forest certification's potential to impact carbon sequestration and ultimately global warming, and a scholar in the Russian Federation who highlighted the ways that forestry operations in the eastern and western parts of her country responded to the differences in market signals sent by Chinese and European buyers. Preliminary results were presented by each case-study author at a symposium held at Yale in 2004 and then revised for the final volume.

The book can be purchased (hardcopy) at The Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Publication Series website or downloaded for free.

Source: <http://www.yale.edu/forestcertification/books>

Confronting Sustainability: Forest Certification in Developing and Transitioning Countries

Editors: Benjamin Cashore, Fred Gale, Errol Meidinger, Deanna Newsom

Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Publication Series, 2006.

JUST PUBLISHED

FSC forest certification guidelines for forest workers and their unions



FSC forest certification guidelines for forest workers and their unions is a useful tool, not only to workers and union representatives, but to anyone interested in learning what FSC certification is – its history, how it works, the different types of certification, how to take part in the process, and the limitations of this tool.

These guidelines were prepared by the Brazilian Institute for Forest and Agricultural Management and Certification (Imaflora), a non-governmental organization that is the representative of the Rainforest Alliance's Smartwood Program in Brazil. They received inputs and were

reviewed by several labour unions and related organizations in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America.

The document also received support from the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers, now Building and Wood Workers' International, for translation into English and Spanish.

Among other topics, the guidelines present a summary of the various phases of the forest management certification process, a short version of FSC principles and criteria, and how to submit grievances or complaints against certified companies.

Information on numerous references that are important to unions and workers to whom forest certification is relevant is also presented.

These guidelines were widely distributed in Brazil to the main union organizations dealing with certified companies. They have also been handed out by Imaflora auditing teams to union representatives during certification assessments or monitoring evaluations.

Electronic versions of these guidelines are available at www.imaflora.org or through the following:

English

http://www.imaflora.org/arquivos/guia_sindicatos_ingles1.pdf


Spanish

http://www.imaflora.org/arquivos/guia_sindicatos_espanhol1.pdf

Portuguese

http://www.imaflora.org/arquivos/Guia_para_sindicatos.pdf

Additional information may be requested from imaflora@imaflora.org.




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