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Title: Structure and Content of Forest Stewardship Standards

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Foreword

The *FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship (February 2000)* provides an internationally recognised standard for responsible forest management. However, any international standard for forest management needs to be adapted at the national or sub-national level in order to reflect the diverse legal, social and geographical conditions of forests in different parts of the world. The FSC Principles and Criteria therefore require the addition of indicators that are adapted to national or sub-national conditions in order to be implemented at the forest management unit (FMU) level. The FSC Principles and Criteria together with a set of such indicators accredited by FSC constitute an FSC Forest Stewardship Standard.

There are many different ways in which indicators may be drafted. There are many different ways in which a forest management unit's overall level of compliance with a set of such indicators may determine whether a forest management unit merits certification. However, it is very difficult to compare Forest Stewardship Standards that follow different approaches. This creates serious difficulties for groups drafting national and sub-national standards, for forest managers who need to know that they are being assessed against standards that are comparable to those used by their peers and competitors, and for stakeholders who need to understand how forest certification decisions are being taken.

The objectives of this standard are to improve consistency and transparency in certification decisions between different certification bodies and in different parts of the world, and thereby to enhance the credibility of the FSC certification scheme as a whole.

This standard may be used by any group that wishes to develop national or sub-national forest stewardship standards. However, for a standard to be accredited by FSC the process for development must comply with the requirements of FSC-STD-60-006 'Process for developing FSC Forest Stewardship Standards' (draft available on request from the FSC International Center) in addition to the requirements of this standard. Guidance on the development of forest certification standards is also available in the 'Pathfinder' tool: "Hierarchical framework for the formulation of sustainable forest management standards" available at <http://www.piec.org/pathfinder/>.

This standard defines a hierarchical framework which ensures that all FSC Forest Stewardship Standards can be audited in a consistent manner, providing replicable results.

The hierarchical framework implements the basic principles described in the introduction to the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship (February 2000):

- FSC and FSC-accredited certification bodies will not insist on perfection in satisfying the FSC Principles and Criteria;
- Major failures in any individual FSC Principle will normally disqualify a candidate from certification, or will lead to decertification;
- Certification decisions will be guided by the extent to which each FSC Criterion is satisfied, and by the importance and consequences of failures;

The associated standard FSC-STD-20-003 'Local adaptation of generic forest stewardship standards' specifies the requirements for certification bodies to adapt their generic standards to local conditions in countries where there is not yet an FSC-accredited or preliminary FSC national or sub-national Forest Stewardship Standard.

Note on use of this standard

All aspects of this standard are considered to be normative, including the scope, standard effective date, references, terms and definitions, tables and annexes, unless otherwise stated.

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A Scope

This standard shall apply to all regional, national or sub-national Forest Stewardship Standards, and to all certification body generic certification standards used as the basis for FSC certification.

B Standard effective date

This standard shall be used by FSC for the purpose of accreditation of certification bodies from 1st January 2005. Certification bodies shall bring their generic standards into compliance with this standard by 1st January 2006.

This standard shall be used by FSC for the purpose of accreditation of all FSC national and sub-national standards submitted for accreditation from 1st January 2005. FSC national and sub-national standards submitted prior to 1st January 2005 shall be brought into compliance with this standard no later than 5 years after the date of original accreditation.

C References

FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship (2000)
FSC-STD-01-002 FSC glossary of terms

D Terms and definitions

Terms and definitions are provided in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC glossary of terms*. Key terms necessary for the understanding of this standard are reproduced in Annex 1.

PART 1: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

1 Specification of scope

- 1.1 The Standard shall specify the geographical scope to which it applies. This may be a political designation (e.g. a country or a region (i.e. a number of countries), a province/state (i.e. a sub-national area)), or a combination of political and ecological designations (e.g. a specified forest type or an ecologically-delimited area (eco-region) within a political designation).

NOTE 1: See Annex 2 for the document coding system used by FSC to identify accredited national and regional forest stewardship standards.

- 1.2 In the case of certification body generic standards the specified scope may be international, regional or national. The standard shall clearly identify the certification body and shall include a reference to the requirement for local adaptation (see FSC-STD-20-003 *Local adaptation of certification body generic Forest Stewardship Standards*) prior to its use.

2 FSC Hierarchical framework

- 2.1 The standard shall be structured as a hierarchy of the FSC Principles, FSC Criteria and the associated indicators. Compliance with the standard shall be determined by evaluating observed performance at the Forest Management Unit (FMU) level against each indicator of the standard, and in comparison with any performance threshold(s) specified for the indicator.

3 Content

- 3.1 The standard shall include the wording of each FSC Principle and each FSC Criterion, in the same order as they occur in *FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (February 2000)*.

NOTE 2: The standard should be developed using a translation of the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship in a national language applicable in the area for which it is being developed. However, the official English or Spanish version of the FSC Principles and Criteria should be referred to in case of uncertainty regarding interpretation.

- 3.2 The standard may include additional criteria which are not part of *FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (2000)*.

NOTE 3: The necessity for any such additional criteria shall be clearly justified by the body responsible for development of the standard, and in the case of standards developed in accordance with *FSC-STD-60-006 Process for developing FSC Forest*

Stewardship Standards, shall be approved by a formal consensus of the body responsible for national approval of the standard.

- 3.3 The standard shall specify indicators for every criterion included, unless the criterion is considered to be inapplicable¹ within the specified geographical scope to which the standard applies, or to a specified category of forest land.
- 3.4 An explanation shall be provided in the standard if any FSC Criterion is considered to be inapplicable in a given situation.
- 3.5 The requirements of any FSC Criterion that can be evaluated in the forest without the need for further interpretation shall be restated as an indicator or indicators.

NOTE 4: This is to avoid confusion and emphasise that certification is based on the evaluation, in the forest, of every indicator of the applicable standard.

- 3.6 When an FSC Criterion includes lists of requirements (e.g. FSC Criterion 6.5; FSC Criterion 7.1 a), b), c), etc.) every element of the list shall be referred to within the associated Indicators. Exceptions may be approved by the FSC Board of Directors, on a case by case basis, when it can be shown that the omission will have no significant negative impact on the achievement of the fundamental objective of the Criterion.
- 3.7 Each indicator shall specify outcomes or levels (i.e. thresholds) of performance that are measurable during an evaluation.

NOTE 5: An indicator may specify as a requirement that a particular procedure has been defined and documented, but such a requirement shall then be accompanied by the further requirement for evidence of implementation and an indication of the expected outcome in the forest management unit.

NOTE 6: An indicator may be specified in terms of an aspect to be measured together with a number of different thresholds that are applicable in different geographical, tenure or social situations within the geographical scope of the standard (e.g. different thresholds may be defined depending on the size of the forest management unit, or on the intensity of management being carried out within the unit).

- 3.8 Indicators shall not be defined in terms of design or descriptive characteristics, and shall not favour a particular technology or patented item.
- 3.9 Indicators shall only include elements that contribute to the achievement of the objective of the applicable FSC Criterion.
- 3.10 The meaning of the indicators and the level of performance required to comply with the indicators should be clear to the reader.
- 3.11 Each indicator should refer to a single aspect of performance to be evaluated. An indicator which includes more than one aspect to be evaluated should list these aspects separately as sub-divisions of the indicator (see 5.2, below).

¹ A Criterion may be considered inapplicable if there are no circumstances in which the Criterion can be evaluated in the geographical scope of the standard, or for a particular category of forest land within the scope of the standard. A Criterion may not be designated as 'inapplicable' on the basis that the standards development group would prefer not to apply it.

- 3.12 Indicators should be free from subjective elements. The use of such phrases as “ordinarily”, “substantial”, “proactive”, “appropriate to”, “minimize”, “wherever possible”, “thorough” or “best available” should be avoided.
- 3.13 The standard shall be written using a clear and consistent vocabulary which uses or permits unambiguous translation of the following English/Spanish words in accordance with the specific meanings given below:
- the words ‘shall’ / ‘debe’ to indicate a requirement of the standard, and the words ‘shall not’/‘no debe’ to indicate a prohibition.
 - the words ‘should’/‘debería’ or ‘should not’/‘no debería’ to indicate a recommendation, rather than a requirement or prohibition, of the standard.
 - the words ‘may’/‘ puede’ to indicate a permitted course of action, within the limits of the standard.
 - the words ‘need not’/‘ no necesita’ to indicate that a specified course of action is not a requirement.
- 3.14 The standard should include examples of means of verification for every indicator.

NOTE 7: Means of verification are not normative. They do not define thresholds for compliance, but indicate potential sources of information or evidence that an auditor may find useful in evaluating compliance.

EXAMPLE:

Indicator: Timber sales documentation shall enable all timber sold to be traced back to the forest of origin.

Means of verification: contract documents; despatch or delivery notes; hauliers' invoices.

- 3.15 The standard shall comply with the latest versions of all approved FSC international policies, standards, guidelines and advice notes that apply to the interpretation of the FSC Principles and Criteria, as published on the official FSC website, and subject to relevant guidance from FSC in relation to standards effective dates.
- 3.16 The standard shall include as annexes:
- a) a list of the national and local forest laws and administrative requirements which apply in the country or region in which the standard is to be used,
 - b) a list of the multilateral environmental agreements and ILO Conventions that the country has ratified,
 - c) a list of, or reference to official lists of, endangered species in the country or region in which the standard is to be used.

NOTE 8: In the case of certification body generic standards these lists shall be added as part of the process of local adaptation.

- 3.17 The standard shall include clear supplementary information as necessary to identify any categories of users to whom special provisions are applicable, e.g. ' smallscale' , ' low intensity' or ' community' forest management units (see paragraph 4.2, below).
- 3.18 The standard may include guidance notes to help auditors, forest managers or others in using the standard. Such guidance notes or applicability notes may be included as annexes to the standard, or be published as separate documents. In all cases the standard shall state that guidance or applicability notes shall not be normative.
- 3.19 The standard may include references to supplementary standards or documents (e.g. best practice guidelines) developed by third parties that provide additional guidance on implementation. Such references shall specify clearly whether compliance with any additional requirements is normative.

4 Scale and intensity of forest management²

- 4.1 The standard shall be cost effective and practical for use in small-scale and low intensity forest management units.
- 4.2 Small and/or low intensity managed forests may be made exempt from some indicators which are applicable to other forests, and/or alternative indicators may be developed for application to small and/or low intensity managed forests. In such cases this shall be clearly indicated in the standard.

EXAMPLE:

Criterion

Indicator 4.1.1a (applicable to FMUs more than 200ha in area):

Means of verification:

Indicator 4.1.1b (applicable to FMUs less than 200ha in area):

Means of verification:

- 4.3 Alternative indicators and associated means of verification (as described in paragraph 4.2 above) may be developed for any criterion, but shall be developed for at least the following FSC Criteria which require special provision when applied to small and/or low intensity managed forests: FSC Criteria 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 9.1, 10.5 and 10.8.
- 4.4 The standard shall include clear guidance as to the category of forest management units to which any exemptions or alternative indicators apply.

NOTE 9: Standards may identify the forest management units that are eligible for modified indicators or means of verification by simple size classifications (e.g. ' applicable to FMUs less than 200 ha') or by proxies for size or intensity (e.g. ' applicable to woodlot licensees' , ' applicable to operations harvesting less than x cubic metres per year).

² Additional guidance is being prepared by the FSC International Center to facilitate the development of standards applicable to small and low intensity managed forests.

NOTE 10: the defined categories of small and/or low intensity managed forests to which special indicators apply may be different to the categories of SLIMFS that are eligible for streamlined certification procedures (see *FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF Eligibility Criteria*).

- 4.5 Indicators shall apply to all forests covered by the scope of the standard, including smaller or lower intensity managed forests, unless otherwise specified.

5 Numbering

- 5.1 The numbering of Principles and Criteria within the standard shall be the same as for the *FSC Principles & Criteria of Forest Stewardship (2000)*.
- 5.2 Indicators shall be numbered with the initial numbers of the relevant FSC Criterion, followed by numbering for each indicator within the criterion. Indicators may be subdivided when this is considered useful, with the sub-divisions listed , etc..

EXAMPLE:

Criterion 5.3

Indicator 5.3.1:

Indicator 5.3.2:

Indicator 5.3.3

5.3.3.1:

5.3.3.2:

5.3.3.3:

6 Translation

- 6.1 Standards may be developed in one or more of the languages of the country to which they apply. However, for accreditation by FSC the standard shall be submitted in one of the official languages of FSC (i.e. in English or in Spanish). The version in the official language of FSC, as evaluated and accredited by FSC, shall be considered definitive in the case of any dispute.

NOTE 10: The certification body is not required to translate its locally adapted generic standards into an official language of FSC.

- 6.2 The meaning of English words should follow those given in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary or the Concise Oxford Dictionary, unless the intended meaning is provided in a glossary.
- 6.3 The meaning of Spanish words should follow those given in the Diccionario de la Lengua Española (Real Academia Española) or the Diccionario de uso del español (María Moliner), unless the intended meaning is provided in a glossary.

7 FSC accreditation date and standard effective date

- 7.1 Each FSC accredited regional, national or sub-national Forest Stewardship Standards shall state clearly:

- a) the date on which it is accredited by FSC,
- b) the ' standard effective' date, which shall be 12 months after the date on which the standard is accredited by FSC.

NOTE 11: The standard shall be used by certification bodies for all evaluations after the date of its accreditation. Existing certificate holders shall be required to be in compliance with the standard by the ' standard effective' date, in order to continue to hold an FSC certificate. This allows for a period of up to 12 months from the date of standard accreditation for existing certificate holders to come into compliance with the new requirements.

NOTE 12: After the standards effective date the certification body shall require any non-compliances that are identified to be corrected in accordance with the normal requirements for major or minor non-compliances, as applicable.

PART 2: USE

8 Certification decision making

- 8.1 Certification bodies shall make certification decisions based on their evaluation of the forest management enterprise' s compliance with each indicator specified in the applicable standard.
- 8.2 All non-compliances of all indicators that are identified by the certification body during an evaluation shall be recorded in the evaluation report or associated checklists.
- 8.3 Each non-compliance shall be evaluated to determine whether it constitutes a minor or major non-compliance at the level of the associated FSC Criterion.
 - 8.3.1 A non-compliance may be considered minor if:
 - it is a temporary lapse, *or*
 - it is unusual/ non-systematic, *or*
 - the impacts of the non-compliance are limited in their temporal and spatial scale, *and*
 - prompt corrective action has been taken to ensure that it will not be repeated, *and*
 - it does not result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant FSC Criterion.
 - 8.3.2 A non-compliance shall be considered major if, either alone or in combination with further non-compliances of other indicators, it results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objectives of the relevant FSC Criterion in the Forest Management Unit(s) within the scope of the evaluation.
 - 8.3.3 Such fundamental failure shall be indicated by non-compliance(s) which:
 - continue over a long period of time, *or*

- are repeated or systematic³, *or*
- affect a wide area, *or*
- are not corrected or adequately responded to by the forest managers once they have been identified.

NOTE 13: Action(s) taken to correct a non-compliance may continue over a period of time (normally up to one (1) year, but in exceptional circumstances up to two (2) years). The certification body shall determine whether such action is considered adequate.

- 8.4 The certification body shall consider the impact of a non-compliance, taking account of the fragility and uniqueness of the forest resource, when evaluating whether a non-compliance results in or is likely to result in fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant FSC Criterion.
- 8.5 The certification body shall not issue or re-issue a certificate to a supplier if there is a major non-compliance with the requirements of the standard.

NOTE 14: If corrective action is taken in respect of a major non-compliance, such that the non-compliance no longer fundamentally prejudices achievement of the objective of the relevant FSC Criterion, the major non-compliance may be down-graded to a 'minor non-compliance' and a certificate may then be issued or reissued.

- 8.6 The certification body shall suspend or withdraw a certificate if a major non-compliance is identified after the certificate has been issued, and the certificate holder does not correct the non-compliance within three (3) months (or, in exceptional circumstances, six (6) months) of the non-compliance being identified.

NOTE 15: Action(s) taken to correct a major non-compliance may continue over a period of time which is longer than 3 months. However, action must be taken within the specified period which is sufficient to prevent new instances of non-compliance within the scope of the certification.

EXAMPLE

Main evaluation

During a main evaluation the auditor identifies a non-compliance. The certification body decides whether this is a 'minor' or a 'major' non-compliance.

If it is a 'minor' non-compliance a certificate may be issued, and action must be taken within 12 months (or, in exceptional circumstances within two (2) years) to correct the non-compliance. The action taken will be evaluated at subsequent surveillance evaluation(s).

If it is a 'major' non-compliance a certificate may not be issued. Corrective action must be taken and confirmed before a certificate is issued.

Surveillance evaluation

³ The certification body shall determine whether the number and impact of a series of minor non-compliances identified during sampling is sufficient to demonstrate 'systematic' failure (i.e. failure of management systems). If this is the case then the repeated instances of minor non-compliances shall constitute a major non-compliance.

During the surveillance evaluation the action taken to correct the previously identified minor non-compliance is evaluated. If the action taken is sufficient to fully correct the non-compliance, the non-compliance is closed out. If the action taken is not considered adequate, then the non-compliance becomes a 'major' non-compliance, and must now be corrected within a maximum period of three (3) (or in exceptional circumstances six (6)) months.

Evaluation of a major non-compliance

The certification body evaluates the action taken to correct a major non-compliance. If the action taken is sufficient to fully correct the non-compliance, the non-compliance is closed out. If the action taken is not sufficient to fully correct the non-compliance then the certification body must decide whether the non-compliance may be downgraded to a 'minor' non-compliance, or whether the certificate must be suspended or withdrawn.

The non-compliance may be down-graded to a minor non-compliance if the nature of the non-compliance now has the characteristics specified in paragraph 8.3.1.

If the nature of the non-compliance still has the characteristics specified in paragraph 8.3.2 or 8.3.3 then the certificate shall be suspended or withdrawn.

Repeated failure to take adequate action to correct a minor non-compliance would therefore result in the suspension or withdrawal of the certificate.

9 Re-structuring a standard for use in the forest

9.1 FSC-accredited standards may be re-structured by the certification body or FSC national initiative in order to facilitate implementation in the forest, or to make a standard easier for stakeholders to understand.

EXAMPLES:

FSC Criteria and the associated indicators may be re-organised for use in the forest to reflect better the operational focus of forest managers, or inspection teams.

Standards may be prepared that include only those indicators and means of verification applicable to small or low intensity forest management units e.g. by removing the wording of the Principles and Criteria (which are not themselves directly evaluated in the field), or by deleting the indicators and means of verification that are applicable only to larger forest management units.

9.2 Restructuring shall have no effect on the requirements for compliance or decision making, and in the event of a complaint or appeal the complete standard, as approved by the FSC Board, shall be considered definitive.

Annex 1: Extract from *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC glossary of terms*

The following definitions are reproduced from the *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC glossary of terms*. They are reproduced here to facilitate understanding of *FSC-STD-20-002 Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards*.

Definitions should be checked against those given in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC glossary of terms* which is updated periodically and which shall be considered definitive.

FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (P&C)

The 10 Principles and 56 associated Criteria specified in the document 'FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (February 2000).

Forest Stewardship Standard (referred to as 'standard' in this document)

The normative document which specifies the requirements with which a forest management enterprise must conform in order to obtain FSC certification. Such a standard must include the exact language of the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship, together with the additional indicators necessary to permit implementation at the level of the forest management unit.

Principle

An essential rule or element; in FSC's case, of forest stewardship (glossary to FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (February 2000).

Criterion (pl. criteria)

A means of judging whether or not a Principle (of Forest Management) has been fulfilled (glossary to FSC Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship (February 2000).

Indicator

a quantitative or qualitative variable which can be measured or described, and which provides a means of judging whether a forest management unit complies with the requirements of an FSC Criterion. Indicators and the associated thresholds thereby define the requirements for responsible forest management at the level of the forest management unit and are the primary basis of forest evaluation.

Means of verification

A potential source of information or evidence that allows an auditor to evaluate compliance with an indicator (qv).

Non-compliance

Any failure to meet the threshold requirement(s) of an indicator. Such non-compliance may be considered 'minor' or 'major' :

Minor non-compliance

A non-compliance may be considered minor if:

- it is a temporary lapse, or
- it is unusual/ non-systematic, or
- the impacts of the non-compliance are limited in their temporal and spatial scale, and
- prompt corrective action has been taken to ensure that it will not be repeated, and

- it does not result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant FSC Criterion.

Major non-compliance

SEE 8.3.2, 8.3.3

Major failure in an FSC Principle

Non-compliance(s) with the requirements of a Forest Stewardship Standard sufficient to disqualify a candidate from certification, or lead to decertification.

Annex 2: Document coding system for accredited FSC national and sub-national forest stewardship standards

All standards will be assigned a document code when accredited by FSC, following the format:

<FSC-STD-XXX-## ####-## description LAN>

Where:

XXX: is a three letter code for the country concerned (e.g. BRA for Brazil, USA for the United States of America)

##: is a number from 01 to 99, depending on the order of accreditation, e.g. 01

####-##: is the date of accreditation, giving the year and month e.g. 2004-01

description: is a short description of the scope of the standard, e.g. Brazil plantations standard;

LAN: is the code for the language, which will always be ENG (English) or ESP (Spanish).

So, for example:

<FSC-STD-BRZ-01 2000-05 Brazil plantations standard ESP> would be the reference code and name for the Brazilian plantation standard, version in Spanish, accredited in May 2000.