

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK

FOREST MANAGEMENT

7/11/2022

FSC FORESTS FOR ALL FOREVER™

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POLICIES

FSC-POL-01-001 (2004) FSC POLICY FOR PILOT TESTS OF DRAFT FSC STANDARDS

Code	INT-POL-01-001_01
Requirement (s)	Section 8
Publication date	10. July 2019

A certificate holder (CH) is formally participating in a pilot test authorized by FSC to test draft requirements or a draft standard. During the annual audit, the CB identifies that the certificate holder (CH) is not in conformance with requirements (linked or overlapping with the draft test requirements) in the regular approved standard. In such a situation, shall the CB issue a non-conformity?

No, during an authorized pilot test, the draft requirements or draft standard being tested temporarily replace the requirements in the approved standard the CH would normally be audited against. For the time of the pilot test, the participating CH shall be evaluated against the draft requirements or draft standard being tested. A certificate may be issued or maintained following the rules and regulations in Section 8 of FSC-POL-01-001 FSC Policy for pilot tests of draft FSC standards.

FSC-POL-20-003 (2004) THE EXCISION OF AREAS FROM THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Code	INT-POL-20-003_06
Requirement (s)	Scope of the Policy
Publication date	06. October 2015

Are sales of land considered "excision" and covered by the Policy on Excision; or is this outside of the scope the Policy and instead considered a change in scope?

The Policy on Excision does not apply to land sales. Land sales would constitute a change in scope of a certificate.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_08
Requirement (s)	Scope of the Policy
Publication date	03. June 2016

Can we excise nurseries from the scope of certification, even if it is located within the FMU?

Nurseries can be excised if the conditions for excision are met.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_10
Requirement (s)	Scope of the Policy, FSC- POL-20-003 Clause 1.1; 1.2; 2.1 and 2.2
Publication date	19. June 2019 Revised in December 2019 to clarify situations where the Policy of Excision could apply to CW/FM certification

Does the Policy of Excision apply to Controlled Wood Forest Management certification?

This depends on the situation.

The Policy of Excision can be applied to Controlled Wood Forest Management certification in situations where conformance with the applicable requirements are not met for reasons beyond the control of the forest manager (Clause 1.1, 2.1).

The Policy of Excision cannot be applied to Controlled Wood Forest Management certification in situations where the forest manager maintains management control over the area where conformance cannot be demonstrated (clause 1.2, 2.2). Rationale: INT-POL-20-003_02; clause 2.2.c requires that in situations where forest manager retains management control of excised area the CAB shall verify that management of the excised area conforms to requirements of FSC-STD-30-010.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_04
Requirement (s)	Section 1
Publication date	24. April 2015

Where 'highly hazardous' pesticides (HHPs) are used, either by certificate holder (CH) or a 3rd party, in order to comply with national laws,
a) Must the CH apply for a derogation (even if applied by legal authorities)?
b) Can the CH excise the area (e.g. workers' camps, waterbodies) from the scope if it is a legal obligation (e.g. outside the control of the forest manager)?
c) In this scenario, is this a conflict between national laws and FSC rules as per Criterion 1.4, and if so, what should happen next?

a) The use of a HHP to comply with national laws (eg. worker health protection) requires the submission of a derogation application, unless a public authority has ordered the use of that specific HHP or is directly applying it. In that case at a first stage the CH only needs to notify it according to the FSC-PRO-01-004 (V2-2) (revised with the code FSC-PRO-30-001). Later the Pesticides Committee might request the submission of a standard derogation application.
b) The applicability of FSC-POL-20-003 (Policy on the excision of areas from the scope of certification) has to be evaluated by the certification body (CB) on a case by case basis.
c) FSC has developed a special rule in the Pesticides Procedure that is applicable for such situation (see FSC-PRO-01-004 Section 8). The use of HHPs mandated or carried out by public authorities will be further clarified in the revised version (FSC-PRO-30-001).

Code	INT-POL-20-003_11
Requirement (s)	FSC-POL-20-003 Clause 1.1, 2.1, 3.1
Publication date	10. July 2019

Do the FSC-POL-20-003 Clauses 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 apply to a situation where the forest owner/manager voluntarily relinquishes management control to a third party through a lease arrangement?

No, if the forest owner/manager voluntary relinquishes management control through a lease arrangement, the management activities implemented by the lessee cannot be considered beyond the control of the forest owner/manager when evaluating the requirements of FSC-POL-20-003. In this situation the certificate holder would need to comply with sections 1.2, 2.2 and 3.2 of the Excision Policy.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_13
Requirement (s)	Section 2
Publication date	05.October 2020.

Where the Organization allows third parties (e.g. local community members or small private agricultural entrepreneurs) to temporarily use its management unit for intercropping (e.g. to diversify the local economy or to provide additional income sources for rural livelihoods):

a) **Does the third party have to comply with all FSC requirements?**
Yes, it does. Responsibility for ensuring compliance with the FSC Principles and Criteria lies with The Organization. The Organization is responsible for decisions, policies and management activities related to the Management Unit (MU). The Organization is also responsible for demonstrating that other persons or entities that are permitted or contracted by The Organization to operate in, or for the benefit of the Management Unit, comply with the requirements of the FSC Principles and Criteria (see FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2, Preamble Chapter 5).

b) What are the obligations of the forest owner?
The Organization shall ensure that the intercropping is in conformity with the National Forest Stewardship Standard or Interim National Standard.

c) Is excision mandatory if compliance with all indicators cannot be guaranteed?
It is not mandatory to excise an area from the scope of certification where the indicators cannot be met, but it is advisable to do so for the intercropping area in order to maintain certification. In those cases, The Organization shall comply with the criteria for acceptable excision laid out in FSC-POL-20-003, Clause 2.2

d) Are there situations in which minor deviations from the standard on a very limited portion of the MU are acceptable?
No

Code	INT-POL-20-003_09
Requirement (s)	3.1.d
Publication date	07. November 2018. Updated on 03.December 2018 to align language with FSC-POL-20-003.

What happen when the requirements of FSC standards cannot not be met for reasons beyond the control of the managers in an area of the certificate that exceeds the 5% threshold provided in clause 3.1.d ?

Forest areas where all FSC requirements are not met for reasons beyond the control of the forest manager shall not exceed 5% of the area of the FMU.
Factors beyond the control of the forest managers that prevent conformance with FSC requirements may have significant impact.
If an organization does not meet this threshold, the certification body shall issue a major nonconformity and the correspondent corrective action request in line with *FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies*. If the corrective action requests is not appropriately implemented within its timeframe, a major nonconformity shall lead to immediate suspension of certification.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_01
Requirement (s)	Clauses, 2.2.
Publication date	10. April 2012. Update on 20. May 2020 to remove reference to ‘very limited portion’.

A company has an agreement with the University to perform forestry research on specified sites of the company’s FMU.

The company wants to excise these areas as there is a loss of control of the forest management practices that may not meet the FSC FM requirements due to the research activities.

During the stakeholder consultation to prepare the excision, a complaint from an indigenous community was raised: one of the research areas is part of their winter grazing areas, and research activities are likely to impact them negatively. Is it possible to excise such area if a stakeholder still disagrees?

If not, what could be the solution to continue meeting the FSC FM requirements and, if possible, continue also their research partnership with the University?

No, it´s not possible to excise the area where there is a conflict. According to FSC-POL-20-003, if management of the excised area remains in the control of the owners or managers of the remaining FMU, it shall be verified that there is no violation of traditional or civil rights. In addition to this, High Conservation Values shall be maintained, what includes forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities and/or critical to local communities’ traditional cultural identity.

Areas where the University develops its research and there is no conflict with local communities can be excised as long as they comply with Policy on Excision.
As for the area where there is this conflict/complaint, a solution would be to keep it within the FSC-certified area of the FMU and rescind the contract withthe University for this area. Compliance with FSC P&C shall be demonstrated.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_07
Requirement (s)	Clauses 2.2.c , 2.2.e.iii
Publication date	14. December 2015

a) Does FSC require obligatory on-site evaluation of excised areas as only mean of verification to determine compliance with Principle 1 (long term commitment to the FSC Principles and Criteria)?

b) Should on-site visits be required, are certification bodies (CBs) obliged to perform verification as required by the Policy using relevant requirements of the standards FSC-STD-30-010 and FSC-STD-20-012.

a) No, FSC-POL-20-003 does not require on-site evaluations of excised areas to assess compliance with Criterion 1.6. However, if the certification body (CB) considers necessary on-site evaluations to assess compliance with Criterion 1.6 or verify that controversial activities are not carried out, they may be conducted.

b) On-site visits are not required, but if the CB considers necessary to conduct on-site evaluation to verify that controversial activities are not carried out, the CB shall use relevant requirements of the standards FSC-STD-30-010 and FSC-STD-20-012.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_03
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.2.c
Publication date	21. April 2015

A certified forest owner wants to start a quarry in an area covered by natural forest included in the scope of their certificate. The land area for the quarry remains in the ownership of the certified landowner and there is an agreement between the landowner and the quarry company saying that the company has right to start and operate the quarry. This kind of conversion is not permitted in the national FM-standard, indicators for 6.10. Is this kind of forest conversion/excision permitted at all according FSC-POL-20-003?

No, as the forest owner retains control of the activities on the land through the agreement, this kind of conversion is not permitted, unless the requirements in criterion 6.10 of Principles and Criteria V4-0 are met.
Note: Read also FSC-POL-20-003 Clause 2.2.c, the interpretation of this clause published on the 13th March 2014 and FSC-STD-30-010 FSC Controlled Wood Standard for forest management enterprises.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.2 c
Publication date	13. May 2014

Shall '*controversial sources*' as referenced in *FSC-POL-20-003 The excision of areas from the scope of certification* be interpreted as unacceptable sources according to controlled wood requirements?

Yes, the 'controversial sources' referenced in the FSC-POL-20-003 (the Policy) shall be interpreted as unacceptable sources according to controlled wood requirements.

The certification body shall verify the management of the excised area according to requirements for controlled wood categories applicable at the Forest Management Unit level. Thus, the certification body shall perform verification as required by the Policy using relevant requirements of the standards FSC-STD-30-010 and FSC-STD-20-012.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_05
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.2.d)
Publication date	05. October 2015

An area of land, that falls within all the parameters set by the Excision Policy (FSC-POL-20-003) is being cleared and excised from the certified area of the forest management unit by government authorities for the purposes of building a public road. Can this timber be sold as certified?

No, according to Clause 2.2.d, wood harvested from excised areas has to be identified and treated as 'non-FSC-certified' source.

Code	INT-POL-20-003_12
Requirement (s)	FSC-POL-20-003 Clause: 2.2.e.vii
Publication date	24.September 2019

The FSC Policy on excision of areas from the scope of certification requires certification bodies (CBs) to inform FSC IC when areas have been excised from certified management units. Which is the mechanism established by FSC to report this information?

CBs shall report this information through the certification report (see FSC-STD-20-007a Clauses 1.4 in Box 1 and FSC-STD-20-007b Clauses 1.4 in Box 1).

FSC-POL-30-001 V3-0 FSC PESTICIDES POLICY

Code	INT-POL-30-001_08
Requirement (s)	FSC-POL-30-001 V3.0 Scope
Publication date	24. February 2021

Does the scope and application of the Pesticides Policy apply to chemical pesticide treatment of Varroa mite inside beehives, when they are located inside a Management Unit?

Yes, chemical pesticide treatment of Varroa mite inside beehives located inside a Management Unit is in the scope of the Pesticides Policy and the treatment shall conform with the requirements of the Pesticides Policy, considering the scale, intensity and risk of the Organization and the pesticide use.

Note: National Standards may include specific requirements for the treatment of Varroa mite. If so, certificate holders shall conform with them too.

Code	INT-POL-30-001_07
Requirement (s)	Transition process to revised FSC Pesticides Policy
Publication date	22. May 2019; Update on 19.June 2019 to add note under FSC highly restricted HHP and FSC restricted HHPs, scenario 2. Update on 03. April 2020 to clarify the role of draft HHP-IGI in the transition period within Scenario 2; Update on 20. May 2020 to update the link to the previous list of highly hazardous pesticides. Update on 25. June 2020 to extend transition period due to the pandemic of novel coronavirus COVID-19 and to provide additional clarification on the role of the draft HHP-IGI.

The mechanism for an interim implementation of the FSC Pesticides Policy will become effective on 1st August 2019 and will be valid until the international generic indicators (IGIs) have been developed and incorporated into the respective national context. According to the revised FSC Pesticides Policy, which are the requirements for certificate holders to use chemical pesticides in this interim period?

On 1st August 2019 the revised FSC Pesticides Policy becomes effective and FSC-PRO-30-001 V1-0 EN *Pesticides Derogation Procedure* will be phased out.

From this date, FSC will no longer accept any derogation applications, and certificate holders (CHs) shall instead conform with the following requirements when using (or intending to use) chemical pesticides:

NOTE: Derogations expiring between 31st March 2019 and 1st August 2020 have been extended until the end of this period, to allow a smooth transition for CHs to the Environmental and Social Risk Assessment (ESRA) system.

June 2020 update: Due to the pandemic of novel coronavirus COVID-19, derogations due to expire before 31st December 2020 are extended until this date.

Type of chemical pesticide	Requirements for use according to the revised FSC Pesticides Policy
FSC prohibited highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs)	**Scenario 1. The CH has an approved derogation:** Existing approved derogations and their conditions remain valid until the 1st August 2020. Until that date, the CH may continue using the FSC prohibited HHP, provided that the derogation conditions are fulfiled. After 1st August 2020 the prohibited pesticides can only be used in emergency situations, or by government order.
	Scenario 2. The CH has no approved derogation: FSC prohibited HHPs shall not be used unless in emergency situations or by governmental orders. In case of emergency situations or governmental orders, the CH shall: • conform with Annex 3 of the revised Policy 'Procedure for the exceptional use of FSC prohibited HHPs', and • incorporate to the ESRA the requirements from the most recent published draft of the HHP-IGI. NOTE: In this context, 'incorporate' means that the CH shall review the most recent draft of the IGIs for the use of HHPs published by FSC International, specifically the draft IGIs for all HHPs and draft IGIs applicable to specific hazard groups, to identify aspects applicable to the HHP they intend to use, and, if relevant, bring these aspects into their ESRA. It is not mandatory for the CH to conform with these draft indicators or the associated instructions for standard developers. However, the CH is required to review the draft IGIs and use them as guidance for their ESRA. For example, in some contexts the CH may find that the draft IGIs on biomonitoring provide useful guidance on how they could approach monitoring of exposure and any human health impacts, but in other contexts, particularly where there are already robust systems in place to mitigate risks of pesticide use, the CH may be able to identify equally or more effective approaches to monitoring.
FSC highly restricted HHP and FSC restricted HHPs	**Scenario 1. The CH has an approved derogation:** Existing approved derogations and their conditions will remain valid until the expiry date of the derogation. Until that date, the CH may continue using the FSC highly restricted HHP and FSC restricted HHPs, provided that the derogation conditions are fulfiled. After the expiry date of the derogation, the CH shall conform with Scenario 2 below.
	Scenario 2. The CH has no approved derogation: Before using a FSC highly restricted HHP or FSC restricted HHPs, the CH shall: • conduct an environmental and social risk assessment (ESRA) conforming with the requirememts of the ESRA framework for Organizations in the revised Policy (clause 4.12).

	• incorporate to their ESRA the conditions from the most recent derogation approved in the country for that chemical pesticide, if there is one. • incorporate to the ESRA, the requirements from the most recent published draft of the IGI. NOTE: In this context, 'incorporate' means that the CH shall review the most recent draft of the IGIs for the use of HHPs published by FSC International, specifically the draft IGIs for all HHPs and draft IGIs applicable to specific hazard groups, to identify aspects applicable to the HHP they intend to use, and, if relevant, bring these aspects into their ESRA. It is not mandatory for the CH to conform with these draft indicators or the associated instructions for standard developers. However, the CH is required to review the draft IGIs and use them as guidance for their ESRA. For example, in some contexts the CH may find that the draft IGIs on biomonitoring provide useful guidance on how they could approach monitoring of exposure and any human health impacts, but in other contexts, particularly where there are already robust systems in place to mitigate risks of pesticide use, the CH may be able to identify equally or more effective approaches to monitoring. NOTE: For newly listed HHPs in this category and HHPs in this category, which were previously listed but that did not require a derogation (marked in green in FSC-STD-30-001A (https://fsc.org/en/document-centre/documents/resource/315.2) these requirements become effective on 1st August 2020 and will be audited by the respective CB at the next scheduled audit after this date. CHs using these HHPs are however encouraged to implement these requirements before this date. **June 2020 update**: Due to the pandemic of novel coronavirus COVID-19, the effective date of the requirements for a) newly listed HHPs in this category, and b) HHPs in this category, which were previously listed but that did not require a derogation is extended until 31st December 2020.
Other chemical pesticides (non – HHP)	From 1st August 2020, before using other chemical pesticides, the CH shall: • conduct an environmental and social risk assessment (ESRA) conforming with the requirements of the ESRA framework for Organizations in the revised Policy (clause 4.12). **June 2020 update**: Due to the pandemic of novel coronavirus COVID-19, the 1st August 2020 deadline is extended until 31st December 2020.

Code	INT-POL-30-001_09
Requirement (s)	FSC-POL-30-001 V3-0 Transition process to revised FSC Pesticides Policy INT-POL-30-001_07
Publication date	24. February 2021

Some certificate holders (CHs) wish to conduct Environmental and Social Risk Assessments (ESRAs) for FSC highly restricted highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) and FSC restricted HHPs for which derogation applications have previously been rejected in that country.

INT-POL-30-001_07 clarifies that for FSC highly restricted HHP and FSC restricted HHPs CHs shall "incorporate to their ESRA the conditions from the most recent derogation approved in the country for that chemical pesticide, if there is one".

INT-POL-30-001_07 does not specify that CHs shall incorporate to their ESRAs information from derogation processes where a derogation application for the pesticide in question has previously been rejected.

a) **When conducting ESRA for FSC highly restricted HHPs and FSC restricted HHPs, for which derogation applications have previously been rejected in that country, shall the information from the previous derogation process be considered in the ESRA?**

Yes, the information from the previous derogation rejections shall be considered in the ESRA by the certificate holders whose derogation request was rejected. The reasons for rejecting the application shall be addressed in the ESRA process.

b) **If so, where can certificate holders and certification bodies access this information?**

FSC International communicated the rejection decisions to the applicants through their certification bodies, together with the reasons for a rejection.

Code	INT-POL-30-001_10
Requirement (s)	Clauses 4.12.12 and 4.12.13
Publication date	24. June 2021

The FSC Pesticides Policy requests to inform third-party processing plants located in the spatial area of the management unit and third-party nursery suppliers of the list of FSC prohibited chemical pesticides, encouraging them to avoid these pesticides in their processes and in the production of seedlings and other materials entering the management unit, and request that they submit the list of FSC prohibited chemical pesticides used.
If the third-party processing plants or the third-party nursery suppliers does not submit the list of prohibited pesticides used, does it constitute a non-conformity of the certificate holder with the policy requirements?

No. It does not constitute a breach of the policy if the nursery or processing plant does not respond to these requests.

FSC-POL-30-401 (2002) FSC CERTIFICATION AND THE ILO CONVENTIONS

Code	INT-POL-30-401_01
Requirement (s)	Section 2
Publication date	11. March 2015

Is it mandatory for all forest managers to comply with the eight core (fundamental) ILO conventions and with all the ILO conventions that have an impact on forestry operations and practices (as listed in FSC-POL-30-401:2002) when the Policy reads that 'FSC expects forest managers to comply'?

Yes, it is mandatory for all forest managers to comply with the eight core (fundamental) ILO conventions and with all the ILO conventions that have an impact on forestry operations and practices (as listed in FSC-POL-30-401:2002).

Rationale:

FSC-STD-20-001 V3-0 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FSC ACCREDITED CERTIFICATION BODIES: THE APPLICATION OF ISO/IEC GUIDE 65:1996, Clause 4.1
4.1 FSC specification to ISO/IEC Guide 65: 1996 (E) Clause 4.3
In carrying out certification within the scope of its FSC accreditation the certification body shall comply with the requirements of all applicable FSC policies, standards, directives, guidance documents and advice notes as published on the FSC International Center website (www.fsc.org).

FSC-STD-20-002 (V3-0) STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND LOCAL ADAPTATION OF GENERIC FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS, Clause 9.3
9.3 The locally adapted standard shall comply with all applicable approved FSC international policies, standards, directives, guidelines and advice notes.

FSC-STD-60-002 (V1-0) STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF NATIONAL FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS, Clause 3.5 b)
3.5 The standard shall include as annexes:
b) a list of the multilateral environmental agreements and conventions that the country has ratified and the ILO Conventions listed in FSC-POL-30-401 FSC and the ILO Conventions which must be complied within all FSC certified forests.

STANDARDS

FSC-STD-01-001 (V4-0) FSC PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Code	INT-STD-01-001_06 (also published under FSC-DIR-20-007 with code INT-DIR-20-007_05)
Requirement (s)	Criteria 1.6, 2.1
Publication date	26. August 2013

We have two clients, which are certified under single certificates.
These two companies are owners of a part of their lands and concessionaires of the second part, comprised of small owners' concessions.
The small owners have contractually given full operational, administrative and responsibilities to these companies to manage the forest for 30 years, there is no ambiguity about the concession status of their lands.
Now these two companies want to enter into an FSC certification group that will be managed by a third company (Type I group, shared responsibilities). This third company is the mother company of these 2 forest companies.
We think that they can be considered as classical group members managing their own lands and concessions.

Shall each small owner be considered/become a group member?

No, owners don´t have to become group members, as long as the manager has explicit authorization from the owner to manage the forest in compliance with the FSC P&C.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_05
Requirement (s)	Principle 9: Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests; Criterion 1.6
Publication date	08. May 2013

Should the precautionary approach be applied to a decision concerning the sale of HCVF forest land which falls within the scope of an FSC FM/COC certificate to a different non-FSC certified legal entity?

FSC does not intend to regulate the sale of land containing HCVs by certified organizations or applicants, but it is expected that the organization will make every reasonable effort to safeguard the values and/or the area containing the values, including making the buyer aware of the values and measures to protect them.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_02
Requirement (s)	Criteria 1.6, 2.1.
Publication date	31. January 2012

Under what circumstances can Canadian Non Renewable Forest License (with a 5 year term) be certified?

According to FSC Principles and Criteria, a 5 year license wouldn´t be an impediment itself to achieve a Forest Management certificate. Nevertheless, long-term commitment to adhere to the FSC P&C in the Management Unit has to be guaranteed, together with clear evidence of long-term forest use rights to the land.

A statement of this long-term commitment shall be contained in a publicly available document made freely available. This document will also contain the commitments listed for the self-declaration statement required by FSC-POL-01-004 Policy for the Association of Organizations with FSC, for non-involvement in unacceptable activities.

The key factor is whether there is convincing evidence of management for the long-term stewardship of the forest. In evaluating long-term commitment to the FSC Principles and Criteria, FSC is looking for evidence of resources invested in long term management - for example in research, inventory, management planning, roading, controlled harvesting, post-harvest inventory and forest protection.

In evaluating long-term forest use rights to the land, FSC is looking for clear long-term use rights of the owner. These may be partially delegated to a responsible authority, such as a concessionaire, for a shorter or longer period. FSC is then looking for clear evidence of this delegation of authority, together with the owner's commitment that the delegated authority has the right to manage the land in compliance with the FSC P&C.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_01
Requirement (s)	Criterion 2.1
Publication date	04. July 2008

Can land possession rights be considered as sufficient evidence to demonstrate long-term forest use rights to the land in the context of Brazil?

Land possession rights can be considered as sufficient evidence to demonstrate long-term forest use rights to the land in the context of Brazil, provided that:

- the certificate holder (or applicant) can demonstrate to be in the process of obtaining formally registered land titles;
- the certificate holder can demonstrate the progress in obtaining formally registered land titles in each surveillance audit;
- there are no unresolved disputes of substantial magnitude over land tenure or use under possession rights (see Criterion 2.3);
- the land possession rights shall be transferred to formally registered land titles within a period of max. 5 years of including the land into the certificate.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_04
Requirement (s)	Criterion 5.6.
Publication date	07. September 2012

How is "permanently sustained" interpreted for Criterion 5.6 in relation to calculated AAC? Based on experience working with a number of approved FSC national FM standards, it is our understanding that "permanently sustained" does not preclude harvesting levels that in any one year or perhaps even multiple years exceed what would be classified as maximum average AAC.

Or in other words it is possible to be in conformance with Criterion 5.6 when short term annual harvest volumes exceed calculated AAC if it can be justified based on long term management objectives (e.g. shifting age class distribution to a normalized state)?

Yes, it is possible, if the AAC that has been calculated based on recognized methods for a period of years, usually ten years, is complied with. Or if in case of unforeseen circumstances, e.g. calamities or storms, the AAC is adjusted.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_09 (See also INT-STD-20-007_45)
Requirement (s)	Criterion 6.4 (in P&C V4), Criterion 6.5 (in P&C V5)
Publication date	03. June 2015; amended on 14. March 2016; update on 14. July 2017 to add clarification note; update on 24. January 2018 to modify wording in question a), replacing 'Management Unit' by 'the group' to clarify the original intent of the interpretation; Update on 23. July 2020 to add the question and answer on forest landscape and to remove the reference to P&C V4.

a) Can a SLIMF owner or group scheme meet set-aside requirements outside the group?
b) If so, does a SLIMF owner or group scheme providing financial and other assistance to existing conservation areas within the forest landscape, constitute compliance with criterion 6.4?
C) How is the forest landscape defined?

a) Yes, if there are insufficient or no representative samples areas within the Management Unit (MU), and under the following conditions:
• The MU is smaller than 50 ha;
• The Organization shall identify rare and threatened species and their habitats in the MU. When they exist although are insufficient in size, measures for their survival and viability shall be identified and put in place.
• The outside area is in the same forest landscape. • Sites to be conserved outside of the MU are representative samples of existing ecosystems.
• The outside area is not commercially harvested and is under a legal protection status, OR there is a binding contract between the Organization and the owner of the outside area to:
o Protect the area in its natural stage;
o Mark the boundaries of the area in the field and on maps;
o Allow certification bodies to access area for inspection.

b) Financial assistance alone does not constitute compliance with the requirements of criterion 6.5. Some conservation efforts have to be demonstrated within the MU. Other examples of conservation efforts may be presented to PSU for evaluation on a case by case basis.

c) For the purpose of this interpretation, the forest landscape is defined as the quaternary water catchment area. If defining the boundaries of a quaternary water catchment area is not feasible, other delineations for defining the forest landscape may be used, based on vegetation zones or other biophysical characteristics reflecting the natural conditions in the country.

Note: This interpretation does not eliminate the option for SLIMF owners to meet the requirement of min. 10% Conservation Area Network at the level of the group entity within a group certification (see: FSC-STD-20-007, clause 5.3.6).

Code	INT-STD-01-001_12
Requirement (s)	Criterion 6.4 (in P&C V4), Criterion 6.5 (in P&C V5)
Publication date	22. August 2016

In relation to the term "protected", please clarify:
a) How long-term are set-aside areas intended to be? Is a shift to new areas in short term appropriate and justifiable?
b) Can protection also include areas which are managed? If this is the case, to what extend is this acceptable?

a) The duration of "long-term" shall be related to the length of management plans defined by the national legislation of each country (usually 10-20 years, but not less than 10 years). A shift to new areas is acceptable only if it is justified to the CBs and shall be approved by them.
b) The protected areas can be managed only in relation to conservation objectives or health and safety measures due to regulatory obligations. The areas shall not be managed for commercial purposes.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_10
Requirement (s)	Criterion 6.10
Publication date	05. October 2015

An applicant for FM certification manages HCV 2 forests in Germany and operates sand mining areas. During the operation, standing stock is removed, sand is mined and after 5-10 years all forests are reforested with a higher ecological value.

a) What is the definition of conversion?
b) Is temporary conversion accepted??
c) Under which circumstances can a temporary conversion in HCVF be acceptable if the temporary change of land use is considered conversion in the context of FSC?

a) There is a definition for conversion in FSC-POL-01-004 (Policy for the association of organizations with FSC) and several references to this term in FSC normative documents. Currently the working group addressing Motion 12 (GA 2014) is working on a system-wide definition for conversion.
b) Conversion is only accepted if it complies with the criterion 6.10 (P&C V4) regardless of its temporality.
c) In Germany, according to an interpretation of the German NFSS approved by PSU, limited and beneficial conversion in areas containing HCV´s is possible if:
• The value is maintained or enhanced (this needs to be demonstrated through impact assessment) and
• Only a very limited portion of the area of the HCV is affected and
• Conversion produce benefits for the FMU (This needs to be agreed in a process by the stakeholders as to what constitute beneficial values).
This interpretation only applies within the scope of the German NFSS, with which this interpretation is associated.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_07
Requirement (s)	Criterion 6.10
Publication date	11. September 2013

If conversion in circumstances other than compliance with FSC Criterion 6.10 cannot take place within an FSC-certified area, is the conversion of plantations to natural forest not permitted?

Criterion 6.10 refers to 'Forest conversion to plantations or non-forest land uses'. The formation of more natural conditions is not covered by this criterion.

There are no requirements for the formation of more natural conditions (e.g. from plantations to natural forest). This is OK as long as HCVs are maintained and not threatened.

Please, check the definition of 'conversion' in the Policy for Association (FSC-POL-01-004 V2-0).

Code	INT-STD-01-001_03
Requirement (s)	Criteria 10.8, 6.9.
Publication date	03. February 2012

Can a certificate holder continue to plant invasive species, such as black wattle (a highly invasive species) on a large scale in plantations established in 1930's?

No, these plantations are not allowed unless invasive impacts can be controlled and effective mitigation measures are in place.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_08
Requirement (s)	Criterion 10.9
Publication date	11. September 2013

Can areas converted from natural forests after 1994 become certified if the forest manager is actively restoring these sites toward natural conditions? Would it be possible to invoke FSC-ADV-31-001?

In general no, but there are 2 exceptional cases where certification in these areas may be allowed:

- Plantations established in areas converted from natural forest after November 1994 where sufficient evidence is submitted to the certification body that the manager/owner is not responsible directly or indirectly of such conversion (Criterion 10.9)
- If a restoration option has been approved and included in the National Standard.

Invoking FSC-ADV-31-001 is not possible. The Motion 18 from the GA 2011 requires the FSC to complete the Plantations Review.

FSC-STD-01-001 (V5-2) FSC PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Code	INT-STD-01-001_15
Requirement (s)	Criteria 1.2 and 1.8
Publication date	02. August 2018

A potential certificate holder (CH) includes several management units (MUs) owned by different smallholders that don't have any responsibility on the forest management, as they have a long term agreement with a manager responsible for this.
The owners don't want to be included as group members in the certificate as adds administrative cost for them while they don't have any responsibility.
Based on interpretation INT-STD-01-001_06, if the smallholders can skip being group members, could this be a multiple MU?

As per INT-STD-01-001_06, the smallholders are not required to become group members, as long as the manager has explicit authorization from them to manage the forest in conformance with the FSC Principles and Criteria and all other applicable FSC requirements. In this case, multiple FM certification would applied.
Note. In the absence of such authorization, the FSC Standard for group entities in forest management groups (FSC-STD-30-005) would apply.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_11
Requirement (s)	Criterion 2.4 (in P&C V5)
Publication date	11. May 2016

Please give guidance regarding the applicability (to whom it applies) and the ways to proceed on different possible scenarios regarding Criterion 2.4 on FSC P&Cv5.

1. Applicability
• Applies to employees of The Organisation? Yes
• Applies to contractors working for The Organization? Yes.
• Applies to workers who are employed by harvesting company when timber is sold standing? Yes.
• Applies to community forests where community itself does work for less than minimum wage? Yes, this applies to the community forests as well. However, if workers are members of the community which manages the forest, they may agree on different wage levels as per FSC-STD-60-004 Clause 2.4.3.
• This Criterion does not apply for persons that are owners or part owners, or belong to the group of owners of the Management Unit. Examples could be family members in the case of small scale family owned Management Units or community members whose income in part or in total depends on the profits generated from the Management Unit.

NOTE:
Workers are defined in the P&C as: All employed persons including public employees as well as 'self-employed' persons. This includes part-time and seasonal employees, of all ranks and categories, including laborers, administrators, supervisors, executives, contractor employees as well as self-employed contractors and sub-contractors (Source: ILO Convention C155 Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981).

2. Scenarios
• As a minimum, the legal minimum wages need to be paid.

• If other types of wages (minimum forest industry standards, other recognized forest industry wage agreements, OR living wages) exist AND they are higher than the legal minimum, that higher wage type needs to be paid.
• If the legal minimum is higher than any of the other types of wages, the legal minimum wages need to be paid.
• Where no legal minimum wages exist, but industry minimum standards OR wage agreements OR living wages, the highest of these must be paid.
• Where none of these types of wages already exists, The Organization is required to establish the level of living wages through engagement with workers and pay these.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_13
Requirement (s)	Clause D.3
Publication date	30. January 2017

Can the Certification Bodies exclude non-productive forest (i.e. low productive forest, peatlands, rock outcrops, etc) from registering in the data base despite they are part of a Management Unit submitted for certification?

No, Certification Bodies can not exclude non- productive forest from registering in the database as all land cover types within the scope of the certificate shall count towards the 'ha' to be entered in the database. As stipulated in the preamble of P&C V5: "In terms of geographical space, the FSC Principles and Criteria apply generally to the entire geographic space inside the boundary of the Management Unit which is being submitted for (re)certification.''

Code	INT-STD-01-001_16
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2 Section D Preamble, Paragraph 3 Scope ADVICE-20-007-01 Clause 7
Publication date	17. December 2019

FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2 requires that in order to certify 'other vegetation types', a case by case judgement needs to be taken.

a) **To which vegetation types does this requirement apply?**
b) **Who is supposed to take this case by case judgement?**

Re a: This requirement applies to silvo-pastoral production systems, agroforestry, medium to long rotation coppice systems, oil palm plantations, as well as to cacao, coffee, tea and olives (this list is not fully inclusive).

Re b: Vegetation types as listed under item a) shall only be included in the scope of certification after prior formal approval by FSC International.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_14
Requirement (s)	F Glossary of Terms. Definition of Management Unit
Publication date	24. January 2018

Regarding the eligibility for multiple FMU certification, we understand that the holding company can either have ownership or management control.
With regards to management control, is it required to have a full management control or a partial management control with ability to influence decision making of the respective Management Units through a contractual relationship or a seat at the board?

The holding company (certificate holder) shall have full management control of the MUs to guarantee that decisions that lead the holding company to comply with the requirements of FSC certification are taken.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_17
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-01-001 V5 Criterion 1.8 FSC-STD-01-001 V4 Criterion 1.6 FSC-POL-01-004 Policy for the Association of Organizations with FSC FSC-POL-20-002 FSC Policy on Partial Certification of Large Ownerships
Publication date	28.October 2020

a) Is a certification body (CB) expected to evaluate conformance with the Policy for Association (PfA)?

No, CBs are not required to evaluate conformance with the PfA, neither within nor outside of the MU. This is done by FSC International.
However, unacceptable activities are also reflected in the FSC Principles and Criteria and are evaluated by CBs through the national standards.
Indicators in national standards referring to the PfA – or to conflicts with the Principles and Criteria on areas outside the MU – such as indicator 1.6.2 in FSC-STD-IDN-01-01-2013 for Indonesia, are not applicable for conformity assessments by CBs.

b) Does a CB have to evaluate the FSC Policy on Partial Certification of Large Ownerships or relevant references to it in national standards?

No. FSC is not requiring CBs to evaluate conformance with the Policy on Partial Certification of Large Ownerships. Conceptually this policy has been replaced by the PfA. Relevant references in national standards, such as indicator 1.6.3 in FSC-STD-IDN-01-01-2013 for Indonesia, are not applicable for conformity assessments by CBs.

Code	INT-STD-01-001_18
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2. Criterion 10.8 FSC-POL-30-001 V3.0. FSC Pesticides Policy. A Objective
Publication date	24. February 2021

Is the use of biological control agents expected to be minimized even when they are replacing chemical pesticides?

No. Biological control agents shall be prioritized over chemical pesticides. The overall use of biological control agents may increase when they replace the use of chemical pesticides. When biological control agents are used, the doses shall be managed according to the Integrated Pest Management plan to reduce the economic costs and the potential negative impacts to the environment and human health.

FSC-STD-01-003 (V1-0) SLIMF ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA

Code	INT-STD-01-003_01
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.1
Publication date	04. July 2008

What is the "area" referred to in this clause?

The area of a small forest shall be defined in relation to the production forest area. This means that permanent protection areas and areas with other uses within the forest management unit that are clearly indicated in the Management Plan and on the ground will not be considered when calculating the size of the unit that is applying to be classified as a SLIMF.

Code	INT-STD-01-003_05
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-01-003 Clause 2.1 FSC-STD-01-001 Management Unit' definition
Publication date	24. September 2019

We are facing a situation where we are asked to quote for a group scheme and where they want the entire group to be considered as SLIMF. Some of the members however own more than one property and whereas each individual property is below 100 ha, the total area of all properties owned by such a member would exceed the 100ha limit. Would it be possible to enter each property individually into the scheme, which means we will have a member in the scheme with more than one property, but it will remain SLIMF since each individual property does not exceed the SLIMF limit?

Yes, if each 'property' qualifies as a 'Management Unit' (MU) according to FSC's definition and does not exceed the SLIMF limit.

FSC certification does not operate on the concept of 'properties', but on 'Management Units'. If in the above example all properties are equal to MUs, then all MUs below 100ha qualify as SLIMF, even if owned by one person or company. If properties in the above example are just sub-units of a MU, this is not possible. The MU as per FSC definition is what counts.

Code	INT-STD-01-003 _03
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1
Publication date	14. March 2016

Where fuelwood is harvested in a multi-use production system and calculation of the mean annual increment (MAI) is irrelevant to the sustainable harvest of branch wood, can an alternative method be used to confirm low intensity management?

Yes, it is recognized that MAI may not be appropriate for all silvicultural systems. Justification for an alternative SLIMF definition may be submitted to the closest FSC entity (e.g. National Office) for consideration.

Code	INT-STD-01-003_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1.a
Publication date	05. September 2014

One of the requirements to be eligible to be a SLIMF is that the rate of harvesting is less than 20% of the mean annual increment (MAI) within the total production forest area of the unit.
Can the rate of harvesting be considered as an average? A potential client does not harvest every year, so the yearly harvested volume can vary greatly, but on average, he qualifies as low intensity.

Yes, it can be considered an average. The harvesting rate has to be less than 20% of the MAI during the period of validity of the certificate.

Code	INT-STD-01-003_04
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1
Publication date	30. January 2017

In community forestry, when timber is used for subsistence (e.g. building houses, firewood) but not sold externally,

a) For this specific case, is it possible to consider the MUs as SLIMF for low intensity, harvesting less than 5000 m3/year but with the harvest up to 60% of the MAI? Background information: due to the earthquake, there is a high demand for timber for construction, but actually the MPs allowed for this rate of harvest from before this happened. Having entered in a conservation area the requirements is that the % of harvesting is reduced but it will still be more than 20% of MAI.
b) In general, do we have to consider at all the harvesting rate (both m3 and MAI) for this cases (timber not sold but for communities/local people use)?

a) No, it is not possible to consider the MU as SLIMF even if the total harvesting is less than 5.000m3/year because the standard FSC-STD-01-003 for SLIMF eligibility requires that the harvesting intensity remain below 20 % of the MAI.
b) Yes, you have to consider the harvesting rate (both m3 and MAI) despite the timber is not sold but used by communities/local people use, because the certificate holder is responsible for all harvesting in management unit.

FSC-STD-20-002 (V3-0) STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND LOCAL ADAPTATION OF GENERIC FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS

Code	INT-STD-20-002_05
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3
Publication date	20. April 2015

Is it necessary to conduct a stakeholder consultation when Accreditation Services International (ASI) requires a certification body (CB) to make modifications in the CB generic certification standard in order to comply with FSC Principles and Criteria (conversion rule or indigenous people rights)?

No, we consider this a correction and not a revision. Compliance with the FSC Principles and Criteria is mandatory and in this case additional stakeholder consultation is not required.

Code	INT-STD-20-002_04
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3
Publication date	06. June 2014

a) Can certification bodies (CBs) test a new generic Forest Stewardship Standard before the 60-days consultation period has ended?
b) Can CBs acknowledge the results of this evaluation later on, under the pre-condition that no changes to the version submitted to public consultation and/or submitted to Accreditation Services International (ASI) for approval had to be made due to comments from stakeholder or ASI?

a) Yes, a draft standard can be field-tested during the consultation period.
b) No, according to FSC-STD-20-002 clause 6.4 CBs shall complete the process of local adaptation of its generic standard prior to the main evaluation site visits.

Code	INT-STD-20-002_03
Requirement (s)	Clauses 6.3, 6.4.
Publication date	04. May 2012

In a CB national standard, a new section has been included, regarding NTFP. Point 4 of ADVICE-20-007-05 states that "The certification body shall use standards prepared or adapted in the region for that NTFP, or it shall prepare its own NTFP standards by a process of national or regional consultation similar to the process currently used for the local adaptation of certification body generic standards (see FSC-STD-20-002). …"

1: Does "or" here mean that in this case the CB must undertake the consultation process as referred to in this norm, for the inclusion of this NTFP section to be in compliance?

2: If this is the case, must ASI not approve the standard (NTFP part) until this has been done, or would a minor NC with a timeline (1 year) for implementation be in line with the intent of the norm?

3: What does "similar" mean in point 4 of ADVICE-20-007-05? Which parts of the standards adaptation and stakeholder consultation process described in 6 and 7 of FSC-STD-20-002 could be excluded?

1. According to FSC-STD-20-002, clause 6.3, the revised standard shall be submitted to a public consultation for at least sixty days.

2. According to FSC-STD-20-002, clause 6.4, the CB shall complete the process of local adaptation of its generic standard, including the public consultation, prior to the main evaluation site visits.

3. The inclusion of NTFP requirements shall be considered as a revision of a CB Generic Standard, and shall follow all applicable requirements in FSC-STD-20-002

Code	INT-STD-20-002_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3
Publication date	10. April 2012

1. We are currently in the revision process of our generic standard. Can we interpret the fact that we are in the revision process, therefore this is a repeated consultation, and so we only need a 30 day public consultation?

2. For repeated consultations in the same country (for different clients), does this mean we need to submit our generic standard for a 30 day public consultation before each audit? Why do we need to do a repeated consultation for different clients?

1. No, it is not possible to do a 30 day public consultation, because it´s the first time that the revised standard will be submitted to a public consultation. This consultation shall last for at least sixty days.

2. Yes, the generic standard has to be submitted for a formal consultation period of at least thirty days for repeated consultations in the same country (for different clients).

The reason is found in the Standard: NOTE: the consultation period is defined to ensure conformity of the certification body's process with consultation requirements as specified in the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

Code	INT-STD-20-002_01
Requirement (s)	Clauses 9.1, 6.1.
Publication date	31. January 2012

Is it possible for a Certification Body (CB) to use an existing adapted generic standard produced by another CB? What is the situation once the CB has checked for non-conformities? Which are the consultation requirements?

Yes, but only under the following conditions: the existing adapted generic standard shall have the same scope (it shall be applied to the same area (in terms of a country or part of a country) and be limited to the same specific forest type); in addition to this, the CB that produced this generic standard shall agree with this use by providing a written approval.

If these conditions are not met, the CB would need to complete a new consultation process.

FSC-STD-20-006 (V3-0) STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION FOR FOREST EVALUATIONS

Code	INT-STD-20-006_03
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.3 h
Publication date	03. April 2020

Is it mandatory to consult, at least for main audit process, the international NGOs that are involved or have interest in respect of social or environmental aspects at national or regional level?

Yes, if the international NGO has requested to be contacted in respect of evaluations in a particular region or country even if this NGO is not based in the country of evaluation.

Code	INT-STD-20-006_01
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.6
Publication date	08. October 2014

Does clause 2.6 apply to re-evaluations for a new five years certification? The language in the clause only includes reference to main evaluations.

Yes, it applies. Clause 7.2 in FSC-STD-20-007 states that the re-evaluation shall follow the same procedures as for the main evaluation (except for some exceptions which does not include public consultation). Then clause 5.4.5 states that in the main evaluation the certification body procedures for the consultation shall comply with the requirements of FSC-STD-20-006 Stakeholder Consultation for Forest Evaluation. Therefore, it applies to both main evaluation and re-evaluation.

Code	INT-STD-20-006_04
Requirement (s)	Clauses 2.6 and 2.9
Publication date	20. May 2020

What shall the Certification Body do to meet the requirement in clause 2.9 of FSC-STD-20-006 and what are the requested timelines?

The certification body shall ensure that stakeholders have access to the information listed in FSC-STD-20-006 Clause 2.6, at least six (6) weeks prior to the main evaluation taking place. The certification body shall ensure that there is adequate opportunity for stakeholders to comment directly to the certification body. In areas where tensions with stakeholders are known to exist certification bodies shall carry out direct consultation with local and, where appropriate, national stakeholders.

Code	INT-STD-20-006_05
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.9 and 5.1
Publication date	24. February 2021

It is stated in clause 2.9 that '*The certification body may delegate some or all of the implementation of this communication to the applicant, but shall ensure that stakeholders have access to the information listed in the Clause 2.6, above, prior to the main evaluation taking place'*.

Shall the certification body keep records of stakeholder consultation (as per Clause 5.1) when the consultation has been delegated to the applicant managing SLIMF eligible Management Units (MUs) (as per clause 2.9)?

Yes, the certification body shall keep records of stakeholder consultation listed in FSC-STD-20-006 Clause 5.1, including consultations delegated to the applicant according to FSC-STD-20-006 Clause 2.9.

Code	INT-STD-20-006_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.2
Publication date	13. February 2015

FSC-STD-20-006, clause 3.2 reads: "Consultation and interviews with stakeholders (including workers, staff or subcontractors) shall be carried out in confidence if requested. Consultation and interviews shall therefore, necessarily, be carried out without the presence of the forest manager(s) and/or their representatives or any supervisors".
a) Does it mean that if the confidence is not requested by a stakeholder, the interview can be conducted with presence of company representatives and supervisors?
b) Is it sufficient that the auditor asks the interviewee, if he/she wants to stay in confidence or not?

a) The interview can be conducted with the presence of company representatives and supervisors if general issues are discussed, but as soon as sensitive or confidential information is subject of the conversation the interview shall be conducted without their presence, even if the interviewee did not request it.
b) The auditor shall always offer the opportunity that the interview is carried out in confidence and this offer should be done when the supervisor is not present. Confidence refers not only to the content of the interview but also to the fact that the worker is providing feedback.

Code	INT-STD-20-006_06
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.1 INT-STD-20-007a_02
Publication date	24. June 2021

Is it always required to record the names and contact details of individuals and organisations consulted on the applicant's conformity with the requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, even in situations where it is not considered culturally appropriate to formally record this information?

No, not always. In cases where individuals, organizations or communities have chosen not to have their names and contact details recorded when responding to FSC consultations, it is only required to record the type of stakeholder consulted (see Annex 1 of FSC-STD-20-006 for reference). The certification bodies shall respect all applicable data protection legislation when applying FSC-STD-20-006.

FSC-STD-20-007 (V3-0) FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS

Code	INT-STD-20-007_30
Requirement (s)	Definition of group member
Publication date	16. June 2014

Is group certification applicable for large ownerships, which are divided into several management units? (E.g. a State forest)

Yes, according to the definition of group member in FSC-STD-20-007, the members of a group may be forest owners or forest managers. Therefore, the forest managers of the several management units may form a group.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_47 (also published under FSC-STD-40-004 with code INT-STD-40-004_37)
Requirement (s)	Definition 'Joint certification' of FSC-STD-20-007; Clause 2.4 of FSC-STD-40-004
Publication date	07 February 2018

Can wood be considered as FSC-certified in cases where an organization (e.g. a logger) buys non-certified standing wood that is afterwards included in the scope of a FM/CoC certification?

Yes, the wood may be considered as FSC-certified under the following conditions:

- the Forest Management Unit has to be FM/CoC certified at the time of harvesting
- the seller (FM/CoC organization) provides the buyer (CoC organization) with supplementary documentation in accordance with Clause 5.7 of FSC-STD-40-004 V3-0.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_17 (also published under FSC-STD-30-005 with code INT-STD-30-005_04)
Requirement (s)	Section D
Publication date	28. November 2013

Regarding to special or adapted requirements for Type II groups:

1. Can CBs certify RMUs as single FMU certificate?
2. If 30-005 is applicable, which are the requirements for RMUs (group entity but also group members) if group members have almost no rights and responsibilities?

1. No, the RMU can be used as the basis for sampling as if it were a single FMU certificate, but it has to comply with the rest of requirements for groups and be certified as a group.

2. RMUs shall comply with all the applicable requirements in FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0).

Code	INT-STD-20-007_18
Requirement (s)	Section D, Clause 1.5
Publication date	28. November 2013

A large remote plantation in Tanzania includes extensive infrastructure (housing, hospital, sawmill, processing plant).

1. What aspects of these operations should be assessed within the scope of the FM/CoC operation (as distinct from a separate CoC certificate)?
2. What if the sawmill fails to get the CoC certification?

1. The scope of FM/CoC certification includes the assessment of forest management and the tracking and tracing system of forest products (incl. NTFPs) within the forest management unit up to the forest gate.
If the housing and hospital are within the FMU and linked to the forest management activities and the Organization has directly or indirectly responsibility, they have to be assessed according to the FM standards.

Primary or secondary processing facilities associated with the forest management enterprise shall be assessed according to the CoC standards, with the exception of log cutting or de-barking units and small portable sawmills associated with the forest management enterprise. The sawmill and the processing plant shall be assessed according to the CoC standards.

2. If the sawmill is eligible to be included in the scope of FM/CoC certificate and fails to comply with CoC requirements, the products coming out of the sawmill are not eligible to carry the FSC Logo.
If the sawmill is not within the scope of FM/CoC certificate, it requires its own CoC certification. Failure to comply with the applicable CoC requirements would not allow issuing a CoC certificate.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_11
Requirement (s)	Section D
Publication date	06. February 2012. Updated on 06. May 2022 to remove references to CoC

Can any standing stock that is felled in the period between the main evaluation and the date the certificate is issued, may then be sold as certified after the certificate had been issued?

Yes, with the conditions specified in FSC-STD-20-007:

In the case of joint Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification, timber that had been felled prior to the issue of a certificate, but which has not yet been sold by the forest management enterprise may be sold as certified if it was felled in the same calendar year or harvesting period and if the main evaluation did not reveal any major nonconformity.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_09 (also published under FSC-DIR-20-007 with code INT-DIR-20-007_01)
Requirement (s)	Section D.
Publication date	31. January 2012

Can a Certification Body (CB) certify a young plantation as Forest Management (FM) only (instead of FM/CoC (Chain of Custody))?

No, plantations must have an FM/CoC certificate. They are considered as commercial operations and the aim of the forest management is to sell timber. According to FSC-STD-20-007, "...Forest products must be covered by a valid Chain of Custody certificate, or by a joint Forest Management/Chain of Custody certificate, in order to be eligible to carry the FSC Logo and to enter into further chains of custody".

In accordance with Advice-20-007-05 in FSC-DIR-20-007, whenever the aim of the forest management is to sell timber, non timber forest products or ecosystem services, there is need to have a CoC certificate or a joint FM/CoC certificate issued by an FSC-accredited certification body which includes the specified product(s) within its scope.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_62
Requirement (s)	Section D and Clause 5.3.2
Publication date	02. September 2021

According to the the definition a Resource Management Unit (RMU) is a "set of FMUs managed by the same managerial body (e.g. the same resource manager). In the case of small operations, RMUs may be used as the basis for sampling."
Can RMUs also be used as the basis for sampling calculated according to clause 5.3.2 in case of multiple FMU certificates?

No, the RMU concept has its origin in the FSC-STD-30-005 *Forest Management Groups* standard and is only applicable for FM, FM/CoC and CW/FM group certificates.
It allows that some management units are included under an RMU, where the resource manager has assumed responsibility for ensuring conformity with all applicable FSC normative requirements on behalf of the forest owner.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_55
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Section 1 and Clause 5.4.3 FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 1.4.6 and Clause 4.8.3
Publication date	19.June. 2019

Is it possible to add new forest lands (either complete management units (MUs) or individual sites) to the scope of a single or multiple FM/CoC certificate before the next on-site surveillance audit?

Yes, in principle they can be added to the scope of the certificate before the next on-site surveillance audit. This is considered a change in scope and needs to be in line with FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 1.4.6 and Clause 4.8.3.

Thus, it's the responsibility of the CB to decide whether an on-site audit is required before approving the change in scope, based on a risk-based analysis that takes into account the following:

- FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Section 1: a forest management certificate provides assurance that there is no major failure in the conformity with the requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard within the scope of the certificate; and

- FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 5.4.3: sites for inspection shall be selected based on an evaluation of the critical points of risk in the management system.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_34
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5
Publication date	21. April 2015

In joint FM/CoC certificates including primary or secondary processing facilities,
a) Shall the number of major non-conformities for FM evaluation and COC evaluation be considered cumulative or will they be handled separately within the same certificate?
b) In the main evaluation and re-evaluation, will a major non-conformity at processing unit result in a precondition for joint FM/COC certificate or only a pre-condition for COC part of the scope?
c) In a surveillance evaluation, will four major non-conformities for FM evaluation and one major non-conformity for COC evaluation constitute a suspension of the entire FM/COC certificate?

a) This is a single certificate and therefore major non-conformities for FM evaluation and CoC evaluation shall be considered cumulative.
However, suspension is defined as a temporary invalidation of the FSC certification for all or part of the specified scope of attestation. Consequently suspension of a part of the scope would be possible if all major non-conformities relate only to one part of the scope (FM or CoC).
b) A major non-conformity at any part of the scope will result in a precondition for the certificate.
c) Yes, if the five major non-conformities relate to both FM and CoC evaluation, partial suspension of the scope is not possible.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_26
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5
Publication date	06. June 2014

For situations where it is allowed to include processing facilities in the scope of joint FM/CoC certificates, can FSC CoC multisite also be applied (if all other conditions are met)?

Yes, in situations where primary or secondary processing facilities can be included in the scope of an FM/CoC certificate and it is required auditing them against the applicable CoC standard(s), FSC-STD-40-003 may also be applied.
(Note: See all conditions in previous interpretation on clause 1.5 from 28th November 2013).

Code	INT-STD-20-007_20
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5.
Publication date	28. November 2013

According to FSC-STD-20-007, primary or secondary processing facilities associated with the forest management enterprise shall be inspected for conformity with the applicable CoC standard(s), and a separate report which meets the requirements of FSC-STD-20-011 Annex 1 shall be prepared.

Are there any further definitions or criteria (concerning size, number of workers, quantity of processed material, permanent vs. mobile facilities, permanent or occasional workers in charge of processing) to define the "processing facility"? If so, please specify.

No, there is no further definition or criteria in FM or CoC standards. Log cutting or de-barking units and small portable sawmills associated with the forest management enterprise are an exception to this clause and they can be evaluated as part of the 'normal' forest evaluation procedures. Small sawmills which are only in use temporarily or log chipping units also do not require a separate CoC evaluation and report.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_19
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5
Publication date	28. November 2013

Can a FM/CoC certificate include primary or secondary processing facilities?

No, primary or secondary processing facilities associated with the forest management enterprise shall be inspected for conformity with the applicable CoC standard(s), a separate report which meets the requirements of FSC-STD-20- 011 Annex 1 shall be prepared and a separate CoC certificate shall be issued.

This does not apply to log cutting or de-barking units and small portable sawmills associated with the forest management enterprise. They can be evaluated as part of the 'normal' forest evaluation procedures.

Exception: It's possible to exceptionally include processing facilities in the FM/CoC certificate scope, if all of the following conditions are met:

- it is owned or managed by the Organization holding the joint certificate;
- the processing plant procures all its supplies from a certified Management Unit within the scope of the certificate, i.e. it does not buy in certified timber from other certificates;
- the processing plant is audited against the applicable CoC standard(s);
- a separate CoC report is prepared meeting CoC reporting requirements;
- the AAF is calculated separately for the forest area and the processing plant.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_04
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5 NOTE
Publication date	19. July 2010

Would a separate CoC evaluation and report be required for mobile wood chippers, where the chips are produced in the FMU?

No. This would not be required. FSC-STD-20-007 V3 does not include woodchips specifically. This should be treated the same as for 'small portable sawmills.'

Code	INT-STD-20-007_61
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.5
Publication date	28.October 2020

Would a separate CoC evaluation and report be required for small portable charcoal kilns located within the management unit?

No, this is not required for small portable charcoal kilns processing wood from the same certified Management Unit (MU). This should be treated the same as for small portable sawmills (see note to Clause 1.5).

Code	INT-STD-20-007_35
Requirement (s)	Sections 3, 5, 7
Publication date	24. July 2015; 07.Nov 2018 updated to clarify that the the interpretation applies also to multiple FM.

An Organization will leave an existing FM group or multiple FM valid certificate and switch to a single certificate. Shall the upcoming assessment be made according to a pre-evaluation, a main evaluation or a re-evaluation?

Former members of groups are considered applicants for certification if they leave the group and apply for a single certificate.
A pre-evaluation may be waived, even if required by 20-007 section 3, if the upcoming assessment is done no later than 12 months of the Organization leaving the group.
In that case, the assessment shall be conducted following the requirements of a main evaluation.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_29
Requirement (s)	Section 3
Publication date	06. June 2014

Is there a time limit beyond which a pre-evaluation expires and another one is required?

The results of the pre-evaluation are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of finishing the on-site audit of the pre-evaluation. After this period, a new pre-evaluation shall be carried out.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_28
Requirement (s)	Section 3
Publication date	06. June 2014

Is it accepted to have a pre-evaluation from a certification body (CB) and then a main evaluation from a different CB?

Yes, but the second CB needs to have access to the results of the pre-evaluation and the results must still be valid (i.e. not older than 24 months). Otherwise, a new pre-evaluation is required.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_02
Requirement (s)	Section 3
Publication date	04. July 2008

Do Pre-Evaluations require on-site visits?

The implementation of the requirements listed in FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Section 3 (Pre-Evaluation) requires an on-site audit to credible conduct the evaluation of the management system and the gap analysis.

Code	INT-STD-20-007 _43
Requirement (s)	Section 3
Publication date	08. June 2017

Is it allowed to use the draft of a National Forest Stewardship Standard (P&C V-5) at the pre-assessment, and the National Forest Stewardship Standard (P&C V-4) at the main evaluation (without having to repeat the pre-assessment with the old standard)? Note. This is in case the National Forest Stewardship Standard according to V5 is not approved and effective by the time a main evaluation is needed.

Yes, in this case it is allowed to use the draft National Forest Stewardship Standard (P&C V-5) at pre-assessment, and then the National Forest Stewardship Standard (P&C V-4) at main assessment.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_31
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1.1
Publication date	08. October 2014

A certificate holder certified to the Controlled Wood standard for Forest Management Enterprises (FSC-STD-30-010) is seeking to upgrade to a Forest Management certificate. The certificate meets the requirements in Clause 3.1.1 for a mandatory pre-evaluation. Would it be possible to waive the pre-evaluation based on the level of preparedness from the Controlled Wood certificate and proceed directly to the Forest Management main evaluation?

Yes, we consider the Controlled Wood certificate as a sufficient guaranty that the major gaps or likely problems regarding the requirements of the standard(s) have been identified and that there is a familiarity between the certification body, forest management enterprise and the requirements of the standard to be used in the main evaluation. Therefore, it may replace it. However, this is optional and pre-evaluations may still be conducted at the discretion of the certification body or the company.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_08
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1.1
Publication date	08. December 2011

What is the definition of 'Large' (enterprises) in FM Certification?

Clause 3.1.1 refers to the following as 'large':

a) Plantations larger than 10,000 ha;
b) All non-plantation forest types larger than 50,000 hectares, unless the whole area meets the requirements for classification as a "low intensity managed forest".

Code	INT-STD-20-007_15
Requirement (s)	Annex 1. Clause 3.4.
Publication date	11. September 2013

In an FM Group comprised of SLIMF FMUs grouped in a Resource Management Unit (RMU), what is the basis for sampling: the FMUs or the RMU?

The RMU concept applies to sets of SLIMFs managed by the same managerial body applying the same forest management concept. The RMU may be used as the basis for sampling. Sampling within an RMU shall be conducted in accordance to Clause 5.4.2 in a main- and re-evaluation and in accordance to Clause 6.3 in a surveillance evaluation. Consequently, it is up to the auditor(s) to select the sites for evaluation, provided that a sufficient variety and number of sites within the RMU are visited.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_46 (also published with code INT-STD-20-001_24)
Requirement (s)	Sections 3, 5 and 7
Publication date	24. January 2018

FM group members (sub-group A) will leave an existing FM group (B) with a valid certificate and switch to / re-establish a separate group certificate for A, staying with the same certification body. A hold a group certificate in the past before merging with B.

a) Shall the upcoming assessment be made according to a pre-evaluation, a main evaluation or a re-evaluation?
b) Are peer reviews required for A, who have been certified since 15 years and who were peer-reviewed 15 years ago?

a) Former members of groups are considered applicants for certification if they leave the group and apply for a new certificate.
As the pre-evaluation is conducted to determine the applicant's readiness for their main evaluation, in this scenario a pre-evaluation may be waived, even if required by FSC-STD-20-007 Section 3, if the upcoming assessment is done no later than 12 months of the group members leaving the group.
In that case, the assessment shall be conducted following the requirements of a main evaluation.
b) Yes, the certification body is required to submit the evaluation report for peer review following the requirements in FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 EN Section 4.4 Audit review.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_07
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.3.1
Publication date	08. December 2011

Forest types (natural/ semi-natural vs. plantation) – are these the only forest types to be used for 'like' FMUs?

Yes. These are the only forest types. However, there are other categories to consider as 'like' FMUs.
The categories are those mentioned in FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 5.3.1:

- Natural/semi-natural
- Plantation
- Those defined by the national standards
- Size of FMUs

Code	INT-STD-20-007_50
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.2.1 Note
Publication date	15.June.2018

According the note in clause 5.2.1, a fully documented management system is expected for large enterprises while a system based on verbal descriptions and simple documentation may be sufficient to implement the requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard for small scale or low intensity enterprises.
Does 5.2.1 impose additional documentation requirements for certificate holders beyond the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard?

No, the requirements the certificate holders (CH) have to comply with have to be included in the standards and procedures targeted to the CH, such as the Forest Stewardship Standard, the Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups (FSC-STD-30-005) or the Pesticides Derogation Procedure (FSC-PRO-30-001).
FSC-STD-20-007 is not targeted to CHs. The objective of this standard is to clarify the principles to be followed by certification bodies when sampling management units and sites, and integrating the observations to come to a reliable certification decision.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_40
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.3.1
Publication date	03. June 2016

Are there any possible exemptions of the requirement 5.3.1 of FSC-STD-20-007? Especially if the formation of additional set of like FMUs will lead to a concentration of resources on one FMU and thus not leading to representative sampling.

Can we put an FMU into another (higher) size class unless the total sample is not reduced?

CBs are allowed to group FMU to another higher size class provided the total sample is not reduced.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_36
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.3.2
Publication date	24. July 2015

In regard to FSC-STD-20-007, 5.3.2, why do certification bodies (CBs) need to calculate the sampling based on the whole number of forest management units (FMU) in the scope of certificate, instead of on the number of FMUs within the set of 'like" FMUs? It increases a lot the sampling in each set and it is not clear why the number of FMUs from one set should influence the sampling number in another set.

We accept that for multiples FMUs the calculation can be done considering "y" as being the number of FMUs within the set of 'like" FMUs.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_44 (also published with code INT-STD-30-005_08)
Requirement (s)	Clause 5.3.5 Note
Publication date	24. January 2018. Updated on 20.March 2018.

FSC-STD-30-005 introduce concept 'landscape level requirements' (*requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard that are implemented at the level of the group entity in a forest management group (e.g. protection of representative samples of ecosystems, protection of high conservation values)*), and a note in FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 5.3.5 says: '*Responsibilities for meeting the applicable criteria shall not be 'traded' between different members*'
These two standard clauses seem to be contradictory.

a) Can set-aside areas be shared between members in a group?

b) What happen if a member decides to leave the group and join another group if that member constitute a large part of the common set-aside area?

c) What happens if the member is a member in several groups?

a) As a general rule, each group member shall comply with the requirement of maintaining set-aside areas, in each Management Unit.
Only in the case of SLIMF groups, set-aside requirements can be met at the entity level provided that the group has established such division of responsibilities in the management system between the group entity and the group members.
SLIMFs below 50 ha can meet set-aside requirements outside the group, provided that the requirements in INT-STD-01-001_09 are met.

b) The group has to constitute new set-aside area(s) to remain in conformity with the set-aside area requirements. A shift to new areas needs to be evaluated and approved by the certification body.

c) A group member (forest owner or forest manager who participates in a group scheme) can belong to different Group entities).However, not with the same Management Unit (as per Clause 4.1.10 in 20-001 FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0). Therefore, in this context this scenario would be irrelevant.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_45
Requirement (s)	Clauses 5.3.5 and 5.3.6
Publication date	24. January 2018. Updated on 20.March 2018.

We understand that the evaluation of FSC FM standards is as per management unit not at group level. However there is a note* under INT-STD-01-001_09 giving the feeling that it can be at the group level.
Could you clarify whether aggregating the 10% Conservation Area Network at the group level is possible?
***Note: This interpretation does not eliminate the option for SLIMF operations (according to FSC-STD-01-003) to meet the requirement of min. 10% Conservation Area Network at the level of the group entity within a group certification scheme (see: FSC-STD-20-007, clause 5.3.6).**

As a general rule, each group member shall comply with the requirement of maintaining a minimum 10% Conservation Area Network, in each Management Unit..

Only in the case of SLIMF groups, this requirement can be met at the group entity level, if the group has established such division of responsibilities in the management system between the group entity and group members.

Moreover, SLIMFs below 50 ha can meet set-aside requirements outside the group, provided that the requirements in INT-STD-01-001_09 are met.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_37
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.1.1
Publication date	14. December 2015

Can an on-site audit exceptionally be replaced by a desk audit if the organization is located in a country or region with an actual demonstrated security risk for the life or health of auditors?

In the case of a demonstrated security risk for the life or health of auditors, the Certification Body may apply for derogation from PSU to replace an on-site audit by a desk audit. The application shall include:

a) Certificate code of the company;
b) Copy of open non-conformities to be checked in the audit;
c) Evidences of security risks confirmed through verifiable public sources (e.g. an official travel warning);
d) Other additional information, as required by FSC.

Derogation applications will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_05
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.1
Publication date	08. December 2011

Can a CB claim the same field period for a surveillance and a re-evaluation and write two reports? Does it make a difference if it is a SLIMF?

No. A surveillance visit and a re-evaluation visit cannot take place at the same time, firstly as they have a different scope and secondly since surveillance needs to occur annually (meaning once a year) between the main audit and the re-evaluation. The main audit take place in year zero and the re-evaluation takes place in year five. A certificate can only be extended through a re-evaluation.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_23 (also published under FSC-STD-30-005 with code INT-STD-30-005_05)
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.3
Publication date	19. February 2014

a) There are contradictory definitions for stratification of group members according to size:
FSC-STD-30-005 Clause 8.3 requests the group entity to separate between large members above 1000 ha and small members below 1000 ha.
At the same time, according to Clause 8.4, the group entity shall use the same stratification the certification body (CB) but FSC-STD-20-007 identifies four different size classes for stratification.

b) There is a problem with indicator 8.4 and 8.5 of FSC-STD-30-005: they request the group entity to do an internal monitoring of members different to the external monitoring. If there is only one member in one size class this is not possible and a sampling does not result in a sample, but in one member every year.

c) In addition for FMU < 100 ha, which consequently have the lowest risk, the audit intensity would be significantly higher than for larger forests.

a) There is no contradiction. Clause 8.4 states that for monitoring purposes the group entity should use the same stratification into sets of 'like' FMUs as defined by the CB in their evaluation. Should indicates advice, it is not mandatory.
However, compliance with the requirements in FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007 is possible following these steps:

1. Separating the members above and below 1000 ha.

2. Doing a further division of each group between <100 ha and 100 – 1000 ha (for members below 1000 ha) and between 1000 – 10000 ha and >10000 ha (for members >1000 ha.)

b) Clause 8.5 states that the group entity should visit different members in their annual monitoring than the ones selected for evaluation by the CB (…). Should is a recommended way, not a requirement if it is not possible because there is one member per class. If there are alternatives the group entity should not visit the same members.
c) FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.3 provides with specific sampling rules for groups or sub-groups of SLIMFs with less than 100 members that comply with the clause.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_14
Requirement (s)	Annex 1; Clause 6.3.3
Publication date	26. August 2013

How are the two step approach and the definition of levels to be implemented? If size sets within the group are obligatory, there will be one set for each size class, then how can I do a two step approach in this situation? Am I allowed to do a sample only in one size class?

Or does this apply only for different sets within the same size class, e.g. group members managing plantations and group members managing natural forest?

If a sample within each size class is required, another problem occurs: If 20 members are within the size class 1.000-10.000 ha and only 1 member is smaller, the sampling intensity will become much higher in the lower size class. I have to visit the one member every year.

The same applies the other way round: 20 members between 100 and 1.000 ha, one member 1.100 ha. The sample of 0'2 SRT one member will result in one, I have to audit this member every year instead of every five years.

When evaluating FM Groups made up of small size FMUs (≤ 1,000 ha), the minimum number of units to be sampled must be calculated using the 2-step approach. All FMUs shall be divided into groups, according to their size, obtaining size-sets. The 2-step approach will then be applied to each of these size-sets, obtaining the minimum number of FMUs (or set of 'like' FMUs) to be sampled within each of the size-sets. Therefore, it is not allowed to do a sample only in one of the size-sets.

The 2-step approach shall be applied to each size-set, whether there are other sets of 'like' FMUs within these size-sets or not (see examples here).

The CB shall carry out one or more FMU level site visits annually, except for groups or sub-groups of SLIMFs with less than 100 members that comply with the requirements specified in clause 6.3.3 of the FSC-STD-20-007. In these cases, the certification body shall carry out at least one FMU level site visit at the end of the first year in which the certificate was issued, and at least one additional FMU level site visit during the period of validity of the certificate. If there are no outstanding corrective actions to be evaluated and no unresolved complaints requiring evaluation the remaining surveillance evaluations may be based on review of documentation and records specified in 6.2, and do not require FMU level site visits.

Clause 6.3.3 shall be applied at the level of sets of 'like' FMUs, once all the FMUs have been classified according to size, forest type and applicable national or regional standard.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_22
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5
Publication date	19. February 2014

a) According to 6.3.5 in the surveillance evaluation, if new FMUs have been added to the scope of the certificate since the main evaluation, the new FMUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation.
Then, if a new member has been added to a group consisting of 5 members in the size class 100-1000 ha, a sampling within the new members will result in a sample of one. This is rather a full evaluation than a sample.
In this case, would it be necessary to calculate the sample separately for old and new members or, if the number of members is below 5 per stratum, is possible to group them together in one stratum to allow sampling?
b) How long will this separate calculation be maintained after the new members joined the group? Will they remain in the new stratum until the next main evaluation? Or will they be assigned to the strata of the old members after being sampled at the rate of a main evaluation in the first year?

a) The new FMUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation, regardless of the number of members per stratum. The sampling rule can only been changed in the revision of the standard.
b) Members added to the certificate since the last main evaluation can be assigned to the strata of old members after they have been sampled at the rate of a main evaluation once.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_16
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5
Publication date	28. November 2013

FSC-STD-20-007 requires that new FMUs (e.g. group members or newly acquired FMUs) added to the scope of the certificate since the main evaluation shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation.
Shall they also be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation, if they have previously been certified under another group scheme or an individual certificate?

New FMUs added to the scope of an existing certificate that have been previously certified (within the last 6 months) may be sampled at the rate as for annual surveillance, instead of the rate of the main evaluation.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_48
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5
Publication date	20.March 2018

Existing certified groups have decided to merge to form one common group under the head of one former group.
FSC-STD-20-007, clause 6.3.5 mention "new members", without precisely mentioning their former status (certified/uncertified). Furthermore, the critical points of risk in the management system at management unit (MU) level are expected to be low as they were already part of groups with a similar structure before.
What is the correct method to calculate the sampling rate in case two or more long-time FSC FM certified groups merge to form a new FSC FM group?

If the new management units (MUs) are added to the scope of an existing group certificate (with a certified group entity and group management system) and they have been certified within the last 6 months, they may be sampled at the rate as for annual surveillance, instead of at the rate of the main evaluation.

If merging results in a new group (with a new group management system), the new MUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation, since former group members are considered applicants for certification when leaving a group to apply for a new certificate.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_52 (also published with code INT-STD-30-005_09)
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5
Publication date	02. August 2018

According to the sampling rules for new Management Units (MU) which have been added to the scope of certificate since the last evaluation, new MUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation (see also interpretations INT-STD-20-007_16, INT-STD-20-007_22 and INT-STD-20-007_48).
Shall certification bodies evaluate the new MUs against all applicable requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard?

In the case of group certification, the certification body or the group entity shall evaluate every applicant for membership of the group and ensure that there are no major nonconformities with applicable requirements of the Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the group, prior to being granted membership of the group.
NOTE: for applicants complying with SLIMF eligibility criteria for size, the initial evaluation may be done through a desk audit.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_54
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5, Annex 1 Clause 2.4
Publication date	12. 02. 2019

FSC-STD-20-007 Annex 1 Clause 6.3.5 requires that new management units (MUs) added to the scope of the certificate since the main evaluation are sampled at the rate of a main evaluation.
Annex 1, Clause 2.4 requires that large and medium size management units (MU) within the group are visited on-site by the certification body at least once in a 5 years certificate period.

If new large or medium size members are added to the scope of the certificate prior to the last surveillance audit, does the sampling at the rate of a main evaluation apply or shall each of them be visited on-site in the last surveillance audit in conformance with Annex 1, Clause 2.4?

Both clauses are applicable but Clause 2.4 in Annex 1 has the higher demand that needs to be fulfilled. Therefore, large or medium size members added to the group before the last surveillance audit shall be visited on site by the certification body in the audit.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_60
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.5 and Clause 6.3.6
Publication date	05.October 2020

In relation with the publication of updated list of small and low intensity managed forests (SLIMF) group members, would it be acceptable that a list of SLIMF group members is published after the annual audit (alternatively to on a quarterly basis)?

Yes, it is acceptable to publish a list of SLIMF group members after the annual audit, or alternatively on a quarterly basis. However, national and international data protection regulations shall be observed and they shall not be violated.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_32
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.7
Publication date	08. October 2014

a) In clause 6.3.7, what is the interpretation of "during the period of validity of the certificate"?

b) Is it necessary to monitor all aspects of the Forest Stewardship Standard in the surveillance audits from year one to four or could we also consider the re-evaluation audit as a part of this period?

a) The period of the validity of a certificate includes main evaluation plus at least four annual surveillance evaluations. This clause refers to the surveillance evaluations.
b) Yes, it is necessary. The re-evaluation is not part of the period of validity of a certificate. It is the start of a new cycle, equivalent to the main evaluation. Therefore, all indicators have to be evaluated during the surveillance evaluations within one cycle.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_10 (also published under FSC-STD-30-005 with code INT-STD-30-005_01)
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.7.
Publication date	31. January 2012

Regarding the internal monitoring of Forest Management Groups, defined in the FSC-STD-30-005, clause 8.1.ii requires that compliance with all requirements of the FSC standard has to be confirmed during the annual internal audit. Clause 8.2 is not clear to me and seems to contradict 8.1. Does the word criteria in 8.2 apply to the criteria of the FSC P&C?

The FSC-STD-30-005 states:

8.1 The Group entity shall implement a documented monitoring and control system that includes at least the following:
i. Written description of the monitoring and control system;
ii. Regular (at least annual) monitoring visits to a sample of Group members to confirm continued compliance with all the requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the Group.

8.2 The Group entity shall define criteria to be monitored at each internal audit and according to the group characteristics, risk factors and local circumstances.

The Group members shall comply with all FSC applicable requirements, but there is no need to audit all these requirements annually during an internal monitoring or an annual surveillance.

The Group entity may focus its surveillance during a particular annual surveillance evaluation on specific elements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, with the provision that all aspects of the Forest Stewardship Standard are monitored during the period of validity of the certificate.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_53
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.7
Publication date	03. December 2018

With the implementation of the National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) based on version 5 of the FSC-STD-01-001 *FSC Principles and Criteria*, the number of criteria to be monitored during the period of validity of the certificate as required by FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.7 has increased significantly. For a certificate that has one or two surveillances left, it will be difficult to monitor all of them in the remaining period. How should certification bodies proceed in this situation?

The certification bodies shall make a best attempt to cover the remaining criteria in the remaining period of validity of the certificate.
If this is not feasible and there are just one or two surveillance evaluations left, a risk-based approach shall be taken focusing on the most relevant issues in the management unit. The approach taken shall be justified in the certification report.
In the next certification cycle, the certification body shall monitor all aspects of the Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) according to FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.7.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_58
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.3.7 INT-STD-20-007_49, INT-STD-20-007_53 FSC-PRO-60-006 V2-0, Clause 8.3 FSC-PRO-60-007 V1-1 Clause 12.2 FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 4.8.2
Publication date	20. May 2020

a) In a case where there is not a specified transition period indicated in the National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) or Interim National Standard (INS), what should be the deadline to audit against the requirements of the new revised standard?

The default length of the transition period is one-year after the effective date, as indicated in FSC-PRO-60-006 V2-0, Clause 8.3 and FSC-PRO-60-007 V1-1 Clause 12.2.
The transition period and deadlines to audit against new standards are communicated by FSC International together with the publication and effective date of new national standards. If in doubt, please contact forestmanagement@fsc.org

b) In case of surveillance audit is performed against the new revised NFSS or INS, shall all the new indicators be assessed before the end of the validity period of the certificate or only the indicators of the mandatory surveillance criteria as per INT-STD-20-007_49?

The indicators under the mandatory surveillance criteria listed in INT-STD-20-007_49 shall be assessed at each surveillance.

Certification bodies are not required to prioritize the new indicators when conducting surveillance audits against the new revised NFSS or INS, but have to audit them before the end of the certification cycle (see FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.7). See INT-STD-20-007_ 53 for cases where this is not feasible.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_49
Requirement (s)	Clauses 6.3.8.
Publication date	15. June 2018

FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.8 provides the minimum criteria according to FSC Principles and Criteria V4 whose indicators shall be evaluated at each surveillance evaluation.
Which are the equivalent criteria according FSC Principles and Criteria V5-2?

For the following types of operations, the certification body shall at minimum evaluate at each surveillance all indicators of the following sets of criteria from the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard (according to FSC Principles and Criteria V5-2) in addition to the elements as defined in Clause 6.3.7:

a) Plantations larger than 10 000 ha:
Criteria 1.6; 2.3; 4.4; 4.5; 7.6; 10.2; 10.3; 10.6; 10.7 and 10.12.

b) All non-plantation forest types larger than 50,000 hectares, unless the whole area meets the requirements for classification as a “low intensity managed forest” (see FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF eligibility criteria)
Criteria 1.4; 1.6; 2.3; 3.2; 3.4; 4.4; 4.5; 5.2; 6.4; 6.6; 7.6; 8.2 and 9.4.

c) FMUs containing high conservation value attributes, unless the whole area meets the requirements for classification as a “small forest” (see FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF eligibility criteria)
Criteria 6.4; 6.6; 9.4 and 10.3

Code	INT-STD-20-007_51
Requirement (s)	Clauses 6.3.8.a
Publication date	15. June 2018

For group certification must all the mandatory criteria (2.3, 4.2, 4.4, 6.7, 6.9, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8) be audited at every surveillance if the total area in the set is >10000 ha, if the set is only comprised of small SLIMF members spread throughout a wide geographical area?
Background: we have a large mixed SLIMF / non-SLIMF group. There are only 5 non-SLIMF members, but the plantation SLIMF set comprises 965 members with 13410 ha. The total area of group is 17900 ha.

Yes. According to Clause 5.3.1: “*The CB shall classify the FMUs included in the scope of the evaluation as sets of ‘like’ FMUs for the purpose of sampling.(...)*”. Once classified in sets of ‘like’ FMUs, the sampling and procedure rules are to be applied.
Therefore, Clause 6.3.8.a is to be applied at the set of ‘like’ FMUs level. In the case described, there would be two sets of ‘like’ FMUs according to the size:
1) 965 SLIMF MU plantation with a total of 13410 ha
2) 5 non-SLIMF MU with a total of 4490 ha
The first set of ‘like’ FMUs would have to be evaluated to be in compliance with the criteria specified in Clause 6.3.8.a.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_13
Requirement (s)	Clauses 6.3.8.b, 5.3.1, 5.3.4
Publication date	27. June 2013

For group certification, does the 50,000 hectare threshold (6.3.8.b) apply at the FMU level or the total area included in the certificate scope?

As an example there is a group certificate that contains both SLIMF and non-SLIMF FMUs. The certificate includes 35 FMUs, 20 FMUs are medium sized (1,000-10,000 ha) and 15 are small SLIMF FMUs. The total area in the scope is 50,786 ha and the largest FMU is 8,345 ha. In this case all of the FMUs in the scope of the certificate are small to medium sized. Is the intent of 6.3.8.b really to place the additional cost burden on small and medium enterprises in group certificates associated with the annual evaluation of the specified mandatory criteria?

According to Clause 5.3.1: "The CB shall classify the FMUs included in the scope of the evaluation as sets of 'like' FMUs for the purpose of sampling.(...)". Once classified in sets of 'like' FMUs, the sampling and procedure rules are to be applied.

Therefore, Clause 6.3.8.b is to be applied at the set of 'like' FMUs level.

In the case described, there would be two sets of 'like' FMUs according to the size:

1) 20 FMUs of medium size (1,000-10,000 ha)
2) 15 small SLMIF FMUs

None of these sets of 'like' FMUs would have to be evaluated to be in compliance with the criteria specified in Clause 6.3.8.b.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_12
Requirement (s)	Sections 7, 5
Publication date	15. May 2012, amended 14. March 2016, amended 12.February 2019

Regarding the change of ownership of a certified Organization to another proprietary under the same certification body, what should the new owner do to keep the certificate?

If the new owner wants to keep the same certificate, an audit according to the requirements of a surveillance evaluation shall be carried out by the Certification Body. As a precautionary measure this audit shall take place no later than 3 months after the change. The new owner shall be responsible for all pending conditions issued before the change.
In this case, the original expiry date of the certificate is maintained.

If the new owner wants a new certificate with a new five year timeline, a main evaluation according to Clause 5 in FSC-STD-20-007 shall be carried out by the Certification Body.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_56
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-20-007 sections 7 and 5 INT-STD-20-007_12 FSC-PRO-20-003 Sections 2 and 3 FSC-STD-20-001 Clause 1.4.6
Publication date	19. June 2019,

Is it possible to perform a transfer of certificate from one to several new certificates (and possibly several CBs) without a gap in certification status, in the case when existing certified forest is parted and sold?

This question combines 2 aspects:

a) A change in scope (ownership and management unit allocation), and
b) A potential transfer of certification to new CBs.

Scenario A: Change in scope (CB remains the same)

This case does not constitute a 'transfer' in the sense of FSC-PRO-20-003 V1-0, but a change in scope according to FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 1.4.6. Any change in scope needs to be evaluated by the CB and a new certification decision needs to be taken to grant the change.

The requirements regarding the 'change in ownership' are established in INT-STD-20-007_12.

Regarding the changes of the management units (reduced area) it's the prerogative of the CB to decide the measures needed to evaluate this change on a case by case basis.

Based on the results of the change of scope evaluation, a seamless continuation of the certification status may be possible.

Scenario B: Change in scope and in CB

This case combines a 'transfer' in the sense of FSC-PRO-20-003 V1-0 AND a change in scope according to FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 Clause 1.4.6.

The succeeding CB therefore needs to conduct a transfer audit according to FSC-PRO-20-003 V1-0 Clause 3.2.f) in combination with a change in scope evaluation according to requirements outlined in Scenario A (above).

Based on the results of the transfer audit and the change of scope evaluation, a seamless continuation of the certification status may be possible.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_06
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.2
Publication date	08. December 2011

In the introduction to the P&C FSC-STD-01-001 V4-0 it states 'FSC is not about perfection'. Can this be used as justification for auditors not raising Non Conformities?

No. An imperfection is a non conformity. The rules are set out in FSC-STD-20-007 for issuing certificates whilst there are non conformities and the closing out of such 'imperfections' is part of the certification process. Such imperfections then cannot be ignored.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_57
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 2.2 FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 8.1 FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 8.3
Publication date	24 September 2019

National Forest Stewardship Standards and Interim National Standards may contain indicators that impose conformity requirements related to separate Annexes, such as laws and regulations, list of rare and threatened species, High Conservation Value frameworks etc.

1) **How shall Certification Bodies (CBs) evaluate these Annexes?**

   All aspects of National Forest Stewardship Standards and Interim National Standards are normative, including the scope, effective date, references, terms and definitions, notes, and the annexes, unless otherwise stated in the NFSS. When an indicator refers to an Annex, the conformity assessment shall cover both the indicator and the corresponding requirements in the Annex, unless the Annex is explicitly categorized as 'informative'.

2) **At what level shall corrective action requests be issued?**

   Sub-indicators in an Annex contribute to the conformity assessment at criterion level in the same way as sub-indicators listed in an indicator within the main body of the standard. Any corrective action request shall be issued in line with FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Clause 8.3.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_27
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.7
Publication date	06. June 2014

Clause 8.7 reads in part, "A non-conformity shall be considered major if, either alone or in combination with further non-conformities, it results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objectives of the relevant FSC Criterion."
In an FM standard where a criterion only contains one indicator, if a non-conformance is issued against the indicator, should this automatically be graded as a major?

Non-conformities at the indicator level have to be analyzed and classified as minor or major. A major non-conformity with the one indicator leads to a major non-conformity at the criterion level. A minor non-conformity with the one indicator leads to a minor non-conformity at the criterion level.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_25 (also published under FSC-STD-20-011 with code INT-STD-20-011_09)
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.8
Publication date	19. May 2014

When a nonconformity is to be graded by the Certification Body, shall the attribute 'repeated' ('recurring') be applied at the level of a 5-year certification cycle or at the level of the full lifetime of a certificate?

'Repeated' means that the same root cause that already resulted in a minor nonconformity in a previous audit has been re-detected as a reason for a nonconformity in a following audit within the same 5-year certification period/cycle. This is usually indicated by a nonconformity with the same indicator / requirement than in a previous audit.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_38
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.10
Publication date	14. March 2016. Updated in 05. October 2020 to align with INT-STD-20-001

What can be considered "beyond the control" of the responsible forest manager?

The following situations are considered typical as being beyond the control of the Certificate Body and/ or certificate holder:
- Natural disaster;
- Epidemic;
- Armed conflict;
- Other cases of force majeure at the certificate holder;

New or significantly changed requirements in revised normative document (see Clause 12.3 of FSC-PRO-01-001).
In these situations, the decision whether to extend a Minor CAR for a maximum period of one year lies with the CB. Furthermore, in line with FSC Global Strategy's new approach to community forestry (FSC Global Strategy point 1.1.2), in the case of community managed operations /smallholders, additional exceptional situations (e.g., economic circumstances) may be considered "beyond the control" of the responsible forest manager. In these situations, the decision whether to extend a Minor CAR for one year has to be approved by FSC on a case by case basis.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_03
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.10, 8.11
Publication date	04. July 2008

When does the given timeline commence for correction of non-conformities?

The given timeline commences from the moment when the corrective action request is either formally accepted by or formally presented to the certificate holder (whichever happens first).

Code	INT-STD-20-007_24 (also published under FSC-STD-20-011 with code INT-STD-20-011_05)
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.10.1
Publication date	20. February 2014

According to a PSU interpretation, surveillance evaluations shall take place at least once per calendar year for FM audits and at least once per calendar year, but not later than 15 months after the last audit for CoC audits.
However, FSC-STD-20-007 and FSC-STD-20-011 require minor non-conformities in FM and CoC to be fully corrected within one year (under exceptional circumstances within two years in CoC).
If there are outstanding minor non-conformities to be evaluated, shall a surveillance evaluation take place within the next 12 months to have the CAR closed?

If an onsite surveillance evaluation is required to confirm the correction of the outstanding minor non –conformity, the audit shall take place within the 12 month period.
If an outstanding minor non-conformity can be closed by evidence not requiring an onsite evaluation, the normal audit timelines can be followed.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_33
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.11
Publication date	14. November 2014

If a field evaluation is needed to evaluate whether an FM major non-conformity has been corrected, what is be the timeline to perform this evaluation?

The certification body shall determine whether the corrective action has been appropriately and fully implemented within its designated timeline. In this case, three months.
This may be extended once for a maximum of another three months if full implementation of the corrective action was not possible due to circumstances beyond the control of the responsible forest manager

Code	INT-STD-20-007_39
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.15
Publication date	11. May 2016

a) Is there a threshold number of minor CARs which prevent a certificate from being issued?
b) If not, how is Clause 8.15 interpreted?
c) Does PSU have any opinion on what approach should be used to ensure consistency?
d) What is a "large number"?

a) No, there is no generic threshold number of minor CARs which prevent a certificate from being issued. The number of minor CARs constituting a major failure need to be assessed based on the extent to which different elements of the criterion have been complied with.
b) See above our response to point a.
c) PSU is not restricting the operations of the CBs. They may have different means for assessing the conformity with the criterion.
d) See above our response to point a.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_21
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.13
Publication date	18. February 2014

Is it allowed to reclassify the grade of a non-conformity from major to minor prior to the issuance of an initial FSC FM certificate?
Example: During the pre-evaluation of a forest organization a major non-conformity is identified. During the subsequent main assessment the audit finds that the major non-conformity is still present. During follow-up non-conformance evaluation audit prior to certificate issuance, the audit finds that the organization has implemented sufficient corrective actions such that the non-conformity is no longer considered a major non- conformity, but rather minor gaps are still present that meet the criteria of a minor non-conformity. In this situation, can the initial major non-conformity identified in the assessment be reclassified to a minor and a certificate issued?

As long as a major CAR has not been established by formal decision making process, non-conformities that are addressed in the audit process can be regraded, either to minor to major as major to minor. This does not qualify as a downgrading in the sense of our requirements.
Once a major CAR has been formally established, downgrading is no longer possible.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_59
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.19
Publication date	2. June 2021

How to distinguish between "member failure" and "group failure" connected to the forestry contractor's performance in a forest management group?

The non-conformity related to a forestry contractor's performance is considered to be a "member failure", if the group entity has fulfilled all related responsibilities regarding administration, management planning, training, monitoring, quality control etc. as specified in FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 *Forest Management Groups*. If the group entity has failed to conform with FSC-STD-30-005, it constitutes a "group failure".

Examples:

1. The certification body identifies during an evaluation that there is a non-conformity related to the lack of use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by a forestry contractor in the group. Two of the possible scenarios that could happen are:
    a. The forestry contractor knows about the requirement to wear PPE but has intentionally not conformed with the requirement. In this case, the non-conformity would be issued to the forestry contractor and it would be a 'member/contractor failure'.
    b. The group entity has not informed the forestry contractor about the requirement to use the PPE. In this case, the non-conformity would be issued to the group entity and would be a 'group failure'.
2. The certification body identifies during an evaluation that there is a non-conformity related to the lack of preservation of an endangered species´ habitat within a management unit during the harvesting operations, which are being implemented by a forestry contractor in the group. Two of the possible scenarios that could happen are:
    a. The forestry contractor knows about the requirement to preserve the endangered species´ habitat when harvesting; the forestry contractor also knows about the presence of such habitat. However, the forestry contractor has intentionally not conformed with the requirement. In this case, the non-conformity would be issued to the forestry contractor and it would be a 'member/contractor failure'.
    b. The forestry contractor knows about the requirement to preserve the endangered species´ habitat when harvesting; the forestry contractor has not been informed about the presence of such habitat in the management unit. In this case, the root cause for the non-conformity is the lack of planning and information to the forestry contractor, so it would be issued to the group entity and it would be a 'group failure'.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_01
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.20
Publication date	04. July 2008

Does Clause 8.20 cover situations where a forest owner/manager claims that compliance with FSC requirements is not possible because of allegedly dysfunctional legislation?

Yes, but in this case the forest owner/manager shall support the evaluation by the certification body with a written legal opinion by an independent legally recognized attorney-at-law. This evaluation shall further include the FSC International Center and the FSC National/Regional Office. If a legal opinion cannot be provided, the non-compliance shall be treated as usual; see FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0 Section 8.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_41
Requirement (s)	Clause 8.20
Publication date	01. July 2016

Should certification bodies (CB) issue a major Corrective Action Request (CAR) to certificate holders (CH) when the irresolvable conflict between the applicable standard and national legislation causes a nonconformity with one or more requirements in the standard?

When a conflict is established between FSC certification requirements and national legislation that prevents the CH from fulfilling one or more requirements of the applicable standard, CBs shall attempt to resolve the conflict between the affected parties and including National Offices or Standards Development Groups, where they exist. CBs should involve the FSC Policy and Standards Unit as deemed appropriate. If the conflict cannot be resolved, and the nonconformity with the requirement(s) results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure, then CBs shall issue a major CAR.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_42
Requirement (s)	Annex 1.
Publication date	16. November 2016

Do we need to use Annex 1 of FSC-STD-20-007 v3 for auditing multiple FMUs?

No, Clause 5.3.2 states that Annex 1 shall be used for sampling of groups. Sampling of multiple FMUs at Main Assessment shall be based on formula X= 0.8 * □y (y= all FMUs in the scope of certification). Surveillance evaluation of multiple FMUs must be conducted according to clause 6.3.6.

Code	INT-STD-20-007_43
Requirement (s)	Annex 1. Section 3
Publication date	24.January 2018

What is the sampling requirement for low intensity managed Management Units (MU) in group certification?

The intensity of the forest operations does not affect sampling requirements. Certification bodies shall classify the MUs as sets of like MUs as described in clause 5.3.1 and the sampling formulas in Annex 1 for the corresponding sizes will be applied.

FSC-STD-20-007a (V1-0) FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS ADDENDUM – FOREST CERTIFICATION REPORTS

Code	INT-STD-20-007a_03
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-20-007a (V1-0) Box 1, Clause 1.1.0; Also relevant for FSC-STD-20-007b (V1-0) Box 1, Clause 1.3.9.
Publication date	03. April 2020

Are rights-of-ways that are located on a certified Management Unit (MU) subject to FSC pesticide reporting requirements? Does the situation change if the easement areas are excised from the scope of the certificate?

Yes, a right-of-way or other easement that is located within the boundaries of a certified MU is subject to FSC pesticide reporting. The names and quantities of pesticides applied, and size of area treated must be included in the certificate holder's certification report summary of quantitative pesticides data. If the areas are excised from the scope of the certificate following FSC-POL-20-003, then the certificate holder is not required to report pesticide application in these areas.

NOTE: An easement is the right to use another person's land for a stated purpose. It can involve a general area of the property or a specific portion. A right-of-way is a type of easement that gives someone the right to travel across property owned by someone else.

Code	INT-STD-20-007a_02
Requirement (s)	Box 1 Clause 3.3.5; Box 2 Clause 1.2.6
Publication date	22. May 2019

FSC-STD-20-007a Box 1 Clause 3.3.5 states that the certification report shall contain ‘*’Consultation with stakeholders including a list of institutions/individuals informed about the evaluation and a list of individuals who were interviewed by auditors or who contributed information in writing*”

Does this mean that the certification report has to contain the names of individuals?

No, personal data (including names of individuals) are not required to be stated in the certification report (nor in the public summary report) and would in any case require prior and informed consent of the stakeholder.

It is only required to include a general description of the stakeholder who was interviewed or who shared information with the auditors in writing, such as “forest worker”; “employee of a contractor”; “inhabitant of a community adjacent to the FMU”; “representative from the local administration”.

Where the identification of individuals is deemed necessary to follow up on communication with the stakeholder, the certification body may record personal data for internal use, but only upon prior and informed consent of the stakeholder.

Certification reports and public summary reports shall not violate applicable data protection legislation.

Code	INT-STD-20-007a_01
Requirement (s)	Clause 6.4
Publication date	11. May 2016

Does EVERY sampled group member (non-SLIMF) HAVE to be assessed in surveillance for compliance with EVERY Criterion/Indicator audited during an annual assessment?

Not every sampled group member (non-SLIMF) has to be assessed in surveillance for compliance with EVERY Criterion/Indicator audited during an annual assessment with the exception of those Criteria/Indicators mentioned in Clause 6.3.8 of FSC-STD-20-007 V3-0.

FSC-STD-20-007b (V1-0) FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS ADDENDUM – FOREST CERTIFICATION PUBLIC SUMMARY REPORTS

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_05
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.1 and 3.2
Publication date	03. April 2020

Shall the forest certification public summary reports and their annual updates remain in FSC data base and not be removed at next certification cycle, or in case of suspension of certificate holder?

Yes. The forest certification public summary reports and their annual updates shall remain in FSC data base and shall not be removed at next certification cycle, or in case of suspension of the certificate holder.

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_03
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.2
Publication date	14. March 2016

Is the deadline of ninety (90) days also valid for required translations into an official FSC language?

Translations shall be published no later than thirty (30) days after the publication of the annual updates.

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_04
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.2 and clause 8.1
Publication date	8. June 2017

We do on-site closing meeting usually two weeks after the last day in field. Shall updates of the public summary report be made publicly available on the FSC database of registered certificates (www.fsc-info.org) ninety (90) days after the on-site closing meeting as per FSC-STD-20-007b Clause 3.2 or ninety (90) days after the last field day as per Clause 8.1?

The intention and requirements in both clauses are the same: the closing meeting is part of the audit process and usually takes place on the last field day. In this regard, given the intent of both requirements, the ninety (90) days timeline commences on the last field day of the audit, regardless of when the certification body holds the closing meeting.

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 7.3
Publication date	07. October 2014

Entering SLIMF members in the FSC database is optional and in some countries national legal restrictions do not allow publication of contact data or geographical data.
However, any buyer of certified products will have to verify, that the invoicing group member is currently certified under the group scheme. This can only be done if respective reference is given in the database entry of the group.
How shall buyers verify the certified status of a SLIMF group member to accept the timber as verified (ref. to FSC-STD-40-004) if the name of the supplier is not published in the FSC database?

The buyer shall contact the Group entity to confirm that the supplier is a member of the group and has not been suspended or withdrawn. The contact details of the Group entity can be found in the FSC Certificate Database.

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_01
Requirement (s)	Clause 7.3
Publication date	06. June 2014

a) SLIMFs group members are excluded from the requirement to provide an up-to-date list of group members in the public summary report. Are certification bodies (CBs) required to enter group member information for SLIMF FMUs into the FSC database for group members that only have SLIMF FMUs?
b) Is it acceptable to upload an attachment to the database for very long lists of group members vs. making entry of each individual?

a) Entering SLIMF members in the FSC database is optional. However, we encourage including this information for transparency, to inform which forests are certified and to allow stakeholders to provide comments, unless national legal restrictions do not allow publication of this kind of information
b) Yes, it is acceptable to provide the information on FM group members as an attachment to the database entry.

Code	INT-STD-20-007b_06
Requirement(s)	Clause 7.3 FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 Chapter 19 INT-STD-20-007b_02
Publication date	24. June 2021, updated on 14 July 2021

Entering the names of forestry contractors that are included into the scope of FM/CoC group certificate is not explicitly required in the FSC-STD-20-007b. How shall buyers verify the certified status of a forestry contractor to accept the material as certified, if the name of the supplier is not published in the FSC database?

Certification bodies shall include an up-to-date list of all forestry contractors included in the scope of the certificate in the public summary report, including, for each contractor: Name and contact details.

Certification bodies shall record contractors' details in the FSC database in the same way they record member information.

FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-1) FSC STANDARD FOR GROUP ENTITIES IN FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Code	INT-STD-30-005_10
Requirement (s)	A. Scope
Publication date	22 May 2019

Under FSC-STD-30-005, is it possible to have a group entity that manages both, units managed under FSC-STD-30-010 (CW for FM enterprises) and units managed under a full FSC FM standard?

Scenario 1: General considerations of CW in group management

Is it possible to manage CW groups under the requirements of FSC-STD-30-005 V1.1 and under FSC-STD-30-010 V2.0 (FSC Controlled Wood Standard for Forest Management Enterprises)?

Yes, in general, the management of CW groups under FSC-STD 30-005 V1.1 is possible, as it is not explicitly excluded from the scope of group management and there is no other normative document addressing this issue.

Scenario 2: One group management system (group entity) managing a CW group and a FM group separately

Is it possible that one group management system ("group entity") manages a pure CW group and a pure FM group separately?

No, it may be the same legal entity but it cannot be the same group entity (one group entity would be for the CW group and another group entity for the full FM group). This is to say, it can be the same legal entity but formally they operate as two group entities.

Scenario 3: Managing a mixed FM-CW group under one group entity

Is it possible that a group entity manages a mixed FM-CW group?
No, the group members have to be organized in two separated groups and have separate management systems, separate certificates and conform with the respective standard requirements in the applicable CW and FM standards

Code	INT-STD-30-005_08 (also published with code INT-STD-20-007_44)
Requirement (s)	D. Terms and definitions
Publication date	22. January 2018

FSC-STD-30-005 introduce concept 'landscape level requirements' (*requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard that are implemented at the level of the group entity in a forest management group (e.g. protection of representative samples of ecosystems, protection of high conservation values)*), and a note in FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 5.3.5 says: '*Responsibilities for meeting the applicable criteria shall not be 'traded' between different members*'
These two standard clauses seem to be contradictory.

a) Can set-aside areas be shared between members in a group?

b) What happen if a member decides to leave the group and join another group if that member constitute a large part of the common set-aside area?

c) What happens if the member is a member in several groups?

a) As a general rule, each group member shall comply with the requirement of maintaining set-aside areas, in each Management Unit.
Only in the case of SLIMF groups, set-aside requirements can be met at the entity level provided that the group has established such division of responsibilities in the management system between the group entity and the group members.
SLIMFs below 50 ha can meet set-aside requirements outside the group, provided that the requirements in INT-STD-01-001_09 are met.

b) The group has to constitute new set-aside area(s) to remain in conformity with the set-aside area requirements. A shift to new areas needs to be evaluated and approved by the certification body.

c) A group member (forest owner or forest manager who participates in a group scheme) can belong to different Group entities). However, not with the same Management Unit (as per Clause 4.1.10 in 20-001 FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0). Therefore, in this context this scenario would be irrelevant.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_04 (also published under FSC-STD-20-007 with code INT-STD-20-007_17)
Requirement (s)	Part 1
Publication date	28. November 2013

Regarding to special or adapted requirements for Type II groups:

1. Can CBs certify RMUs as single FMU certificate?
2. If 30-005 is applicable, which are the requirements for RMUs (group entity but also group members) if group members have almost no rights and responsibilities?

1. No, the RMU can be used as the basis for sampling as if it were a single FMU certificate, but it has to comply with the rest of requirements for groups and be certified as a group.

2. RMUs shall comply with all the applicable requirements in FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0).

Code	INT-STD-30-005_06
Requirement (s)	Clause 1.1
Publication date	06. October 2014

Is it possible that two independent legal entities serve as Group entity (having equal rights, having signed the contract for certification jointly and both having signed a Trademark License Agreement)?

No, the Group entity shall be one independent legal entity or an individual acting as a legal entity.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_03
Requirement (s)	Clause 2.1
Publication date	26. August 2013

Can CBs evaluate quantitative requirements related to landscape level requirements (i.e. requirement to maintain certain percentage of forest area as strict reserves) at the level of sets of like FMUs in the case of SLIMF groups comprised of very small FMUs?

Yes, as long as the group has established such division of responsibilities in the management system between the group entity and the group members.

The evaluation shall be carried out by the certification body according to the management system of the group. In this case, if the group has agreed that complying with the requirement of maintaining set-aside areas will be the responsibility of the group entity, it shall be evaluated accordingly, this is, at the group entity level (or level of sets of like FMUs).

Code	INT-STD-30-005_15
Requirement (s)	Clauses 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 9.1.a)
Publication date	6 May 2022

Can a Village Committee in China be treated as a Forest management group member - instead of individual farmers, villagers or households, for the evaluation against the applicable requirements of FSC-STD-30-005?

Yes, a Village Committee in China can be treated as a Forest management group member instead of individual farmers, villagers or households, if the Village Committee has been formally registered by Group Entity to represent individual farmers or villagers in accordance with the Group rules.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_07
Requirement (s)	Clauses 3.1, 3.4
Publication date	05. October 2015

a) A FM Group member does conversion of forest to non-forest land and the membership is correctly terminated by the Group entity because this kind of conversion is not allowed in FSC. After some time the forest owner seeks FSC-certification in another Group. The previously converted area is now a quarry area and non-forest land in their forestry plan. Is it acceptable to rejoin certification after this kind of land conversion?

b) If a Group certification agreement is terminated by the Group entity by whatever reason, and the forest owner wants to join another Group. Is it totally up to the new group entity to evaluate the forest owner or are there some time limits or other requirements that makes it impossible to rejoin a new group?

a) If the converted area was larger than 10% or 10.000 ha of the forest areas under the Organization's responsibility in the past 5 years or affecting HCVFs, this would be considered a violation of the Policy for Association.
The described situation suggest a lack of commitment of this forest owner with the FSC Principles and Criteria. According to criterion 1.6 (P&C V4), the CB shall ensure that Forest managers demonstrate a long-term commitment to adhere to the FSC Principles and Criteria.

b) According to FSC-STD-30-005, clause 3.4, the Group entity or the certification body shall evaluate every applicant for membership of the Group and ensure that there are no major nonconformities with applicable requirements of the Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the Group, prior to being granted membership of the Group. There are no further restrictions or timelines to be considered.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_09 (also published with code INT-STD-20-007_52)
Requirement (s)	Clause 3.4
Publication date	02. August 2018

According to the sampling rules for new Management Units (MU) which have been added to the scope of certificate since the last evaluation, new MUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation (see also interpretations INT-STD-20-007_16, INT-STD-20-007_22 and INT-STD-20-007_48).
Shall certification bodies evaluate the new MUs against all applicable requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard?

In the case of group certification, the certification body or the group entity shall evaluate every applicant for membership of the group and ensure that there are no major nonconformities with applicable requirements of the Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the group, prior to being granted membership of the group.
NOTE: for applicants complying with SLIMF eligibility criteria for size, the initial evaluation may be done through a desk audit.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 4.2
Publication date	10. April 2012

In FM Groups, where a Resource Manager is managing part or one of several properties owned by an owner, is the owner (group member) required to make a commitment to adhere to the FSC P&C or comply with the Policy for Association on land which is outside the Resource Manager's management and outside the scope of the certificate? Note the Resource Manager signs the TLA, not the owners.

Yes, the owner (group member) is required to make a commitment to comply with all applicable certification requirements.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_11
Requirement (s)	Clause 4.2
Publication date	10. July 2019

Can different management units (MUs) with different ownership form a group member?

No, each individual forest owner is considered a group member, but different MUs with different ownership can be represented by the same resource manager.

Note: sampling and auditing of groups including different size classes and Resource Management Units (RMUs) is prescribed in FSC-STD-20-007 (V3-0) Annex 1.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_01 (also published under FSC-STD-20-007 with code INT-STD-20-007_10)
Requirement (s)	Clauses 8.1, 8.2, 6.3.7
Publication date	31. January 2012

Regarding the internal monitoring of Forest Management Groups, defined in the FSC-STD-30-005, clause 8.1.ii requires that compliance with all requirements of the FSC standard has to be confirmed during the annual internal audit. Clause 8.2 is not clear to me and seems to contradict 8.1. Does the word criteria in 8.2 apply to the criteria of the FSC P&C?

The FSC-STD-30-005 states:

8.1 The Group entity shall implement a documented monitoring and control system that includes at least the following:
i. Written description of the monitoring and control system;
ii. Regular (at least annual) monitoring visits to a sample of Group members to confirm continued compliance with all the requirements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the Group.

8.2 The Group entity shall define criteria to be monitored at each internal audit and according to the group characteristics, risk factors and local circumstances.

The Group members shall comply with all FSC applicable requirements, but there is no need to audit all these requirements annually during an internal monitoring or an annual surveillance.

The Group entity may focus its surveillance during a particular annual surveillance evaluation on specific elements of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, with the provision that all aspects of the Forest Stewardship Standard are monitored during the period of validity of the certificate.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_12
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-30-005 V1-1, Section D definitions, Clause 8.3
Publication date	10. July 2019

Can a group scheme, where responsibilities for conformance to standard requirements are differentiated depending on who performs the forestry activity, be considered a type II group?

No, a group with a differentiation of responsibilities is considered a Type I group. Only when a Resource Manager has the overall responsibility for ensuring conformity with the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, a group can be considered Type II.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_05 (also published in FSC-STD-30-005 with code INT-STD-20-007_23)
Requirement (s)	Clauses 8.4, 8.5
Publication date	19. February 2014

a) There are contradictory definitions for stratification of group members according to size:
FSC-STD-30-005 Clause 8.3 requests the group entity to separate between large members above 1000 ha and small members below 1000 ha.
At the same time, according to Clause 8.4, the group entity shall use the same stratification the certification body (CB) but FSC-STD-20-007 identifies four different size classes for stratification.

b) There is a problem with indicator 8.4 and 8.5 of FSC-STD-30-005: they request the group entity to do an internal monitoring of members different to the external monitoring. If there is only one member in one size class this is not possible and a sampling does not result in a sample, but in one member every year.

c) In addition for FMU < 100 ha, which consequently have the lowest risk, the audit intensity would be significantly higher than for larger forests.

a) There is no contradiction. Clause 8.4 states that for monitoring purposes the group entity should use the same stratification into sets of 'like' FMUs as defined by the CB in their evaluation. Should indicates advice, it is not mandatory.
However, compliance with the requirements in FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007 is possible following these steps:

1. Separating the members above and below 1000 ha.

2. Doing a further division of each group between <100 ha and 100 – 1000 ha (for members below 1000 ha) and between 1000 – 10000 ha and >10000 ha (for members >1000 ha.)

b) Clause 8.5 states that the group entity should visit different members in their annual monitoring than the ones selected for evaluation by the CB (…). Should is a recommended way, not a requirement if it is not possible because there is one member per class. If there are alternatives the group entity should not visit the same members.
c) FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.3 provides with specific sampling rules for groups or sub-groups of SLIMFs with less than 100 members that comply with the clause.

FSC-STD-30-005 (V2-0) FSC STANDARD FOR GROUP ENTITIES IN FOREST MANAGEMENT GROUPS

Code	INT-STD-30-005_16
Requirement (s)	B Scope
Publication date	07. November 2022

The Forest Management Groups Standard does not specify the minimum number of members required to constitute a group. Is a forest management group, which constitutes of only one group member, eligible for FSC certification according to FSC-STD-30-005? For example, in the event of a client wishing to establish a group, they may commence with only one group member with the intention of adding further members once certification has been obtained.

Yes, a forest management group, which constitutes of only one group member, is eligible for FSC group certification as long as the requirements in FSC-STD-30-005 are met by the group entity
This should usually be a temporary situation and the group should intend to add further members.

Code	INT-STD-30-005_17
Requirement (s)	Clauses 4.2 and 4.2.1
Publication date	07. November 2022

Clauses 4.2 and 4.2.1 of FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 *Forest Management Groups* refer to Criterion 6.5 of the FSC Principles and Criteria V5-2. Are these clauses 4.2 and 4.2.1 applicable in countries where the Forest Stewardship Standard (FSS) is based on the FSC Principles and Criteria V4-0?

Yes. Criterion 6.5 in the FSC Principles and Criteria V5-2 combines Criteria 6.4 and 10.5 of the FSC Principles and Criteria V4-0.
Therefore, Clauses 4.2 and 4.2.1 in FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 apply to C6.4 and C10.5 in countries where the FSS is based on the FSC Principles and Criteria V4-0.

FSC-STD-60-002 (V1-0) STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF NATIONAL FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS

Code	INT-STD-60-002_01
Requirement (s)	Sections 1, 9
Publication date	10. April 2012

A potential client has 7 FMUs. Six of them are in the region where the Great Lakes St-Lawrence Standard would apply. One FMU is in the same region but because of the altitude the forest type changes and it falls into the Boreal forest type where the Boreal Standard would normally apply.

The client wants to have only one certificate. Since 90% (6 FMUs) fall under the Great Lakes St-Lawrence Standard, would it be OK to include the remaining FMU under the same standard since it represents only 10 % of the whole territory?

No, it is not possible to audit the remaining FMU against the same standard as the rest of FMUs. Each FMU shall be evaluated according to the applicable standards. There can still be one certificate provided it is clear which standard has been used to evaluate every FMU.

FSC-STD-60-004 (V1-0) INTERNATIONAL GENERIC INDICATORS

Code	INT-STD-60-004_01
Requirement (s)	Clauses 6.5.5, 6.7.1
Publication date	06. October 2015

Are riparian zones eligible to be counted in the minimum of 10% Conservation Area Network (IGI 6.5.5)?

By default, riparian zones do not qualify to be included in the Conservation Area Network. Riparian zones may however be included, if those areas fully meet the definitions of representative sample areas, conservation zones, protection areas, connectivity as exemplified by wildlife corridors, providing the riparian zones are not disproportionately represented in the Conservation Area Network.
Riparian zones "created" or planted for purely functional roles, e.g. erosion control should be excluded.

Code	INT-STD-60-004_02
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators (IGI) 7.5.1 and 8.4.1 FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2 Definition of Interested stakeholder
Publication date	23. July 2020

FSC-STD-60-004 IGI 7.5.1 states that a summary of the management plan in a format comprehensible to stakeholders including maps and excluding confidential information is made publicly available at no cost. FSC-STD-60-004 IGI 8.4.1 states that a summary of the monitoring results in a format comprehensible to stakeholders including maps and excluding confidential information is made publicly available at no cost.

a) Shall The Organization provide the information of all the MUs located across the country to an individual based on the definition of "Interested stakeholders" in the FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2?

Yes, the concept of stakeholder used in FSC-STD-60-004 Clauses 7.5.1 and 8.4.1 includes ´´interested stakeholders´´. The Organization shall make the information of all the MUs in the scope of the certificate across the country available to the interested stakeholders.

b) What is the extent and scope of the definition of "Interested stakeholder"?

An ''Interested stakeholder'' can be any individual, group of individuals, or entity that has shown an interest, or is known to have an interest, in the activities of a Management Unit. See the full definition in FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2

Code	INT-STD-60-004_03 (Also published in Ecosystem Interpretations under code INT-PRO-30-006_04)
Requirement (s)	FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0. Principle 5, Annex C. List of national standards that include Annex C FSC-PRO-30-006
Publication date	05. October 2020

When a National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) includes an Annex C for the verification of Ecosystem Services (ES) claims, should this annex be used for relevant certification activities or should the FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure be used instead?

FSC-PRO-30-006 prevails in all cases.
In the revision of FSC-STD-60-004 *International Generic Indicators* from V1-0 to V2-0, the ecosystem services requirements in Annex C were transferred into Part II of FSC-PRO-30-006. Organizations shall comply with the applicable requirements of Parts I, II, III, and IV of FSC-PRO-30-006 when they want to demonstrate the positive impact of their forest management on ecosystem services and use FSC ecosystem services claims.

FSC-STD-60-006 (V1-2) PROCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF NATIONAL FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS

Code	INT-STD-60-006_02
Requirement (s)	Clause 10.5.f
Publication date	15.June 2018

Are Standard Development Groups required to conform to Clause 10.5 f) if the 'pre-approval' draft has been developed in one of the official languages of FSC?

No, in such cases, the 'pre-approval' draft can be submitted to PSU without the need for translation (also see FSC-STD-60-002 V1-0 Clause 7.1).

Code	INT-STD-60-006_01 (also published under FSC-PRO-01-001 with code INT-PRO-01-001_01)
Requirement (s)	Clause 13.1 NOTE: This interpretation will be added as a new section to FSC-STD-60-006 in the next revision.
Publication date	14. March 2016

Which body is responsible to give formal and binding interpretations of National Forest Stewardship Standards?

Interpretation of National Forest Stewardship Standards:

- Requests for interpretation of National Forest Stewardship Standards may originate from accredited Certification Bodies (CBs), Certificate Holders (CHs) or interested stakeholders in the country (or region) covered by the scope of the Forest Stewardship Standard.
- The Interpretation request(s) shall be made on specific issues in the Forest Stewardship standard. It should include clear and correct reference to the indicator(s) for which the interpretation is requested, some background information and suggested response.
- Interpretation request(s) shall be sent to FSC National Office (NO) or registered Standards Development Groups (SDG) for processing where these bodies exist. Where they do not exist, interpretation requests shall be sent to the FSC Policy and Standards Unit (PSU).
- NOs or registered SDGs shall be responsible for developing interpretation(s) to their Forest Stewardship Standards.
- Before addressing the interpretation request, the NO or registered SDG shall first seek if there is an existing interpretation(s) addressing the issue in the Forest Stewardship Standards interpretation database available in the FSC IC website.
- If there is already an approved interpretation(s) on the issue it shall be adopted as appropriate.

- All Interpretation(s) developed by NOs or registered SDGs shall be sent to the FSC PSU for formal approval and publishing in the FSC IC website.

NOTE: Interpretation(s) are only valid after the review and approval of the FSC PSU. It is the responsibility of the NO or the registered SDG to analyze any requests or need for interpretation of Forest Stewardship Standards.

- Interpretation(s) developed by NOs or registered SDGs shall be presented to the FSC PSU as illustrated in Box1.

Box 1.

FORMAT FOR INTERPRETATIONS

Keyword(s): [*name a few key words that define/classify the enquiry]*

Enquiry: [*formulate the interpretation request as a question; background may be included]*

Proposed Interpretation: [*propose a response]*

Normative Reference: [*the FSC Forest Stewardship Standard and indicator the enquiry refers to]*

- NO or registered SDGs, shall decide on the process to develop and consult on interpretation(s) prior to submitting it to the FSC PSU.

NOTE: The process shall be designed in relation to the scale and controversy of the issue, considering the requirements set out in this standard and shall uphold FSC values of stakeholders' engagement.

- FSC PSU shall process interpretation requests from NO or registered SDG in line with its internal procedure (section 3 of the *PSU Enquiry Procedure; PSU-PRO-10-201 V1-1EN*).

- The FSC PSU shall evaluate the proposed interpretation(s) and respond within thirty (30) days

- If interpretation(s) are approved they shall be registered in the PSU interpretation database and the NO or SDG shall be informed accordingly.

- All approved interpretation(s) shall be published by the NO or SDG and national stakeholders informed accordingly.

DIRECTIVES

FSC-DIR-20-007 FSC DIRECTIVE ON FSC FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_05 (also published under FSC-STD-01-001 with code INT-STD-01-001_06)
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-03
Publication date	26. August 2013

We have two clients, which are certified under single certificates.
These two companies are owners of a part of their lands and concessionaires of the second part, comprised of small owners' concessions.
The small owners have contractually given full operational, administrative and responsibilities to these companies to manage the forest for 30 years, there is no ambiguity about the concession status of their lands.
Now these two companies want to enter into an FSC certification group that will be managed by a third company (Type I group, shared responsibilities). This third company is the mother company of these 2 forest companies.
We think that they can be considered as classical group members managing their own lands and concessions.

Shall each small owner be considered/become a group member?

No, owners don´t have to become group members, as long as the manager has explicit authorization from the owner to manage the forest in compliance with the FSC P&C.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_10
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007_05
Publication date	15. June 2018

When can the scope of a forest management certificate include Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)?

The certification body may include Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) into the scope of certificate only when NTFP were evaluated against an approved National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) with relevant NTFP indicators or a NTFP interim CB standard, which meets the requirements specified in ADVICE-20-007-05.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_11
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007_05
Publication date	15. June 2018

When is a FSC-approved National Forest Stewardship Standard qualified for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) evaluations where the purpose is to get certified status for NTFP?

A FSC-approved National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) is qualified for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) evaluations when its scope explicitly mentions the possibility to apply the standard for certification of a particular NTFP and includes specific indicators for those NTFPs.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_12
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007_05
Publication date	15. June 2018

When is an Interim National Standard (Principles and Criteria V5-2) qualified for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) evaluations where the purpose is to get certified status for NTFP?

An approved Interim National Standard is qualified for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) evaluations in case when its scope explicitly mentions the possibility to apply the standard for certification of a particular NTFP and includes specific indicators for those NTFPs.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_09
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007_05
Publication date	24. July 2015

a) Is it possible to promote Christmas tree seeds from FSC certified forests with the FSC trademarks?
b) Can any FSC claim be made to Christmas trees grown from FSC certified seeds in a non-FSC certified plantation?

a) Yes, provided that this non-timber forest product (NTFP) has been evaluated against a standard prepared or adapted in the country for this NTFP or a NTFP interim CB standard, which meets the requirements specified in ADVICE-20-007-05.
b) No, because the plantation has not been evaluated against FSC requirements.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_06
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-05, Advice 4
Publication date	06. June 2014

According to ADVICE-20-007-05, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) shall be subject to evaluation against a standard prepared or adapted in the region for that NTFP or a NTFP interim CB standard, which meets the requirements specified in the advice note.
Christmas trees are defined as NTFP by FSC-STD-40-004a (N6.3.1).
However, there are approved National Forest Stewardship Standard that explicitly allow the certification of Christmas trees although no NTFP specific indicators have been defined. Can Christmas trees be evaluated against this National Standards?

If the Christmas trees come from natural forests (eg. natural regeneration, tree tops) , they can be evaluated against the applicable National Forest Stewardship Standard.
If they come from short rotation plantations, Advice-20-007-05 shall be applied.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_02
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-05
Publication date	04. May 2012

Can FSC claim be applied to seedlings produced from seeds originating from FSC certified FMUs and grown in nurseries included in the scope of a valid FSC certified FM certificate.

Yes, seedlings produced from seeds originating from FSC certified FMUs and grown in nurseries within FSC certified FMUs that comply with FSC P&C may be claimed as 'FSC certified' following the normal guidance for certification and labelling of non-timber forest products.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_01 (also published under FSC-STD-20-007 with code INT-STD-20-007_09)
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-05
Publication date	31. January 2012

Can a Certification Body (CB) certify a young plantation as Forest Management (FM) only (instead of FM/CoC (Chain of Custody))?

No, plantations must have an FM/CoC certificate. They are considered as commercial operations and the aim of the forest management is to sell timber. According to FSC-STD-20-007, "...Forest products must be covered by a valid Chain of Custody certificate, or by a joint Forest Management/Chain of Custody certificate, in order to be eligible to carry the FSC Logo and to enter into further chains of custody".

In accordance with Advice-20-007-05 in FSC-DIR-20-007, whenever the aim of the forest management is to sell timber, non timber forest products or ecosystem services, there is need to have a CoC certificate or a joint FM/CoC certificate issued by an FSC-accredited certification body which includes the specified product(s) within its scope.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_13
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-05
Publication date	03. December 2018

Where a company is interested in certifying a non-timber forest product (NTFP) but the National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) does not include specific indicators for the certification of this particular NTFP and there is no specific standard for NTFP certification in the country, how shall the certification body (CB) proceed to be able to issue a certificate for this product?

The certification body shall proceed according to the following scenarios:

Scenarios	Based on Principles & Criteria V4	Based on Principles &Criteria V5
Country with National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) or Interim National Standard (INS) in V5	The certification body cannot develop or adapt a NTFP standard based on P&C V4.	The certification body shall develop an INS for NTFP based on the NTFP indicators in Generic Forest Stewardship Standard (GFSS) in conformance with clause 2.4.1 of FSC-PRO-60-007 *Structure, Content and Development of Interim National Standards*. In countries with NFSS this may only occur with the prior approval of the SDG, FSC National Board or PSU (in order of priority). The NTFP Standard shall be submitted to PSC (via PSU) for decision making. The NTFP standard shall be integrated into the INS or NFSS, in the next regular revision.
Country with National Forest Stewardship	OPTION 1 a) If the CB has a generic NTFP standard based on FSC Principles & Criteria V4	OPTION 2 The certification body shall develop an INS for NTFP based on the NTFP indicators in

Standard (NFSS) or CB Standard in V4. There are two options in this scenario. Option 2 should be the priority option for CBs.	approved by ASI, the certification body shall make the local adaptation to the particular NTFP. If there is a SDG registered by PSU in the country, the approval of the SDG to make this local adaptation is not required but recommended. PSU will conduct a quality check, but no formal approval from FSC or the PSC is required. *b)* If the CB has no generic NTFP standard based on FSC Principles & Criteria V4 approved by ASI, the certification body shall develop a generic NTFP standard in conformance with FSC-STD-20-002 (V3-0) EN *Structure, Content and Local Adaptation of Generic Forest Stewardship Standards.* The generic NTFP standard shall be submitted to PSU for decision making. Once approved, the certification body shall make the local adaptation to the particular NTFP.	Generic Forest Stewardship Standard (GFSS) in conformance with clause 2.4.1 of FSC-PRO-60-007 *Structure, Content and Development of Interim National Standards.* The NTFP Standard shall be submitted to PSC (via PSU) for decision making.	
Country with no National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) or CB Standard	The certification body cannot develop or adapt a NTFP standard based on P&C V4.	The certification body shall develop a complete INS in conformance with FSC-PRO-60-007 *Structure, Content and Development of Interim National Standards* which incorporates also NTFP indicators for the NTFP. The INS shall be submitted to PSC (via PSU) for decision making.	

Code	INT- DIR-20-007_08
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-10
Publication date	18. January 2015

According to Advice-20-007-10, plantations under an FM certificate can not be converted to non-forest use, unless the requirements in Criterion 6.10 (P&C V4-0) are met.
At the 2014 General Assembly, Motion 2014#7 changed the P&C V5-0 to allow conversion of plantations to non-forest use, if the plantations were not established on sites directly converted from natural forest.
As this is the intent of FSC membership, can the changes resulting from Motion 2014#7 be applied before the P&C V5 comes into effect?

No, changes resulting from Motion 2014#7 shall only be applied once the IGIs are approved and the version 5 of P&C comes into effect. Until then, if a plantation site was previously in non-forest use, it may not be converted back to non-forest use unless the requirements in Criterion 6.10 (P&C V4-0) are met.
Note. This interpretation has been reconfirmed by the FSC Board of Directors in August 2015

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_03
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-15, Advice 1
Publication date	19. July 2013

The title of the Advice Note FSC-ADV-20-007-15 refers to "*...areas converted from natural forest to plantations between 01 November 1994 and 01 April 2013*".

However, Advice 1 of the Advice Note states: "*In order to certify MUs in situations as described above, the Organization shall split the existing MU containing post-1994 conversion plantations into 2 or more subunits to separate the post-1994 plantation areas from the potentially certifiable areas*."

Does this mean that the Advice can also be applied to post 01 April 2013 conversions?

No, the Advice cannot be applied for conversions after 01 April 2013.

The Advice Note is to be applied to MUs with areas converted between 01 November 1994 and 01 April 2013 only.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_07
Requirement (s)	ADVICE- 20-007-016
Publication date	13. November 2014

Can the existing Advice-20-007-016 *Wind turbines establishment within FSC certified areas* be extended to hydroelectric power stations?

No, the Advice-20-007-016 is targeted to the wind turbines only and cannot be extended to hydroelectric power stations.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_14
Requirement (s)	ADVICE- 20-007-016
Publication date	13. November 2014, Updated on 10 July 2019 to clarify the scope

Can the existing Advice-20-007-016 Wind turbines establishment within FSC certified areas be extended to other clean/renewable energy infrastructure development, such as hydroelectric power stations, transmission line corridors for hydro power and solar farms?

No, the Advice-20-007-016 is targeted to the wind turbines only and cannot be extended to other clean/renewable energy infrastructure development

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_04
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-016
Publication date	20. August 2013

Where an approved National Standard allows conversion not in the circumstances permitted by Advice-20-007-016, does the Advice Note prevail over an FSC approved National Standard or vice versa?

The Advice Note FSC-ADV-20-007-16 on wind turbines prevails over any FSC National Standard.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_15
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0, FSC-STD-20-007 Clause 6.3.8
Publication date	10. July 2019

Are certification bodies (CBs) required to evaluate the whole of Principle 9 in order to assess Advice Note 20-007-18 at every surveillance audit for countries with Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs)?

No. Only the Advice Note 20-007-18 itself and the Criterion 9.4 must be evaluated in every surveillance audit. In addition to that, CBs are expected to apply a risk-based approach in targeting the evaluations to ensure certificate holder's full conformity with applicable FSC requirements.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_16
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0, FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2; Criterion 5.2, FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0 Criterion 5.2 Instructions for standard developers National standards based on FSC Principles and Criteria V4 and V5
Publication date	3. April 2020. Update on 20. May 2020 to update reference to requirements

ADV-20-007-18 v1-0 requires FSC Forest Management (FM) certificate holders with Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) to protect 80% of IFLs on their certified Management Units(MU) from forestry activities (harvesting is prohibited). As harvesting is prohibited within this area, are certificate holders required to exclude this area when calculating AAC for their MU(s) under FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2; criterion 5.2?

Yes, the IFL area required to be protected by ADV-20-007-18 v1-0 shall be excluded from total area used to calculate AAC for FSC certified MUs.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_17
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0 Clause 1.3 FSC-GUI-30-010 Intact Forest Landscapes Guidance for Forest Managers, Chapter 3.2 Steps to Assess Intact Forest Landscapes FSC-STD-20-007b Forest management evaluations addendum – Forest certification public summary reports
Publication date	20. May 2020

ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0 Clause 1.3 states that , **''***Global Forest Watch IFL maps…or a more recent IFL inventory using the same methodology, … shall be used in all regions as a baseline***''**

a) Can certificate holders conduct ''a more recent Intact Forest Landscape (IFL) inventory'' within the Management Unit?

Yes, they can, if they are subject to the requirements of the Advice Note. This interpretation does not apply to certificate holders subject to requirements of an approved national standard that includes national IFL indicators.

b) What does ''using the same methodology'' mean in this context?

Certificate holders are expected to use the best available remote sensing data validated by ground truthing, when they have technical and financial resources to do so. However, certificate holders may update the IFL boundaries using also other forms of best available information, such as historical harvesting doucumentation combined with sales invoices, maps and external data provided by independent organizations, scientists and experts. Presence of IFL can be assessed based on Section 3.2 in FSC-GUI-30-010, which states:

"*Areas with evidence of certain types of human influence are considered disturbed and consequently not eligible for inclusion in an IFL, including:*

- *Timber production areas, agricultural lands and human settlements with a buffer zone of 1 km;*
- *Primary and secondary forest roads and skid trails, with a buffer zone of 1 km on either side;*
- *Areas, where industrial activities occurred during the last 30-70 years, such as logging, mining, oil and gas exploration and extraction, peat extraction, etc.*

Areas with evidence of low-intensity and old disturbances are treated as subject to "background" influence and are eligible for inclusion in an IFL. Sources of background influence include local shifting cultivation activities, diffuse grazing by domestic animals, low-intensity selective logging for non-commercial purposes, and hunting.''

NOTE: The definition for IFL given in http://www.intactforests.org/concept.html differs from the FSC IFL guide. The difference originates from the terms " low-intensity selective logging'' and "unpaved trails'' which needed further clarification to be understood correctly. These two terms were discussed in a Workshop in Brazil in Nov 2017 and thereafter between FSC High Conservation Value Technical Working Group, World Resource Institute and Global Forest Watch, which resulted the wording above.

NOTE: "*Timber production areas*" refer to areas impacted by forestry operations, rather than areas zoned or intended for timber production - which may still remain an IFL. "*Human settlements*" of low intensity traditional habitation by Indigenous Peoples that maintains forest intactness are eligible for inclusion in an IFL.

c) Who validates the updated IFL maps and when can the certificate holder start using them ?

Updated IFL maps shall be validated by the certification body and added to the forest management plan using geoprocessing tools, or manually. The maps shall be incorporated into the next forest certification public summary report, together with the map showing the overlap with GFW defined IFL (www.globalforestwatch.org) and the Management Unit. The certificate holder can start using the updated IFL maps once the Certification Body has validated them and recorded their validation.

Code	INT-DIR-20-007_18
Requirement (s)	ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0, Clause 1.3
Publication date	07. November 2022

Clause 1.3. states that "*Global Forest Watch IFL maps http://www.globalforestwatch.org, or a more recent IFL inventory using the same methodology, such as Global Forest Watch Canada, shall be used in all regions as a baseline*".

a) Global Forest Watch (GFW) is repeatedly updating the IFL maps in its website, and usually in 3-year cycles for the tropical areas. Which of those maps shall The Organization use as a baseline for identifying the IFL area within the management unit?
b) If there is evidence that an area classified as IFL was already impacted by industrial activities during the last 30 -70 years and should not have been considered as IFL in the first place, is The Organization required to wait for new versions of the GFW maps to update their IFL baseline?
c) Does The Organization have to recalculate the IFL area impacted by their forest management operations when a new GFW IFL map is published?

a) The Organizations, which were certified before 1st January 2017, shall use the map which was available on 1st January 2017.
The Organizations, which were certified after 31st December 2016, shall use the latest updated maps available at the date of the first main evaluation.
b) No, if new evidence shows that areas classified as impacted by forest management operations should not have been considered IFL areas in the first place, The Organization may update their IFL baseline map accordingly and it is not required to manage those areas as IFLs.
c) No, the baseline map established according to section a) (above) applies.

PROCEDURES

FSC-PRO-60-006 DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER OF NATIONAL FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARDS TO THE FSC PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA (5-1)

Code	INT-PRO-60-006_01
Requirement (s)	FSC-PRO-60-006 V2-0 Clause 8.4.
Publication date	23. July 2020

Does this clause require certificate holders (CH) to be evaluated against the new national forest stewardship standard (NFSS) in the first audit that follows the effective date, especially when the transition period is not aligned with the calendar year which forms the basis for FM audits?

No, a CH can choose whether the first audit following the effective date should be conducted against the old or new version of the NFSS, as long as they have been evaluated against the new version before the end of the transition. Therefore, if a CH decides to have the first audit against the old standard, a second audit within the transition period shall be conducted against the new version in order to maintain the certificate.



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