



Standard

FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS

FSC-STD-20-007 V4-0 EN

1/02/2023



Title:	Forest Management Evaluations
Dates:	Approval date: 19 November 2022
Timeframes:	Transition period: 1 February 2023 – 31 December 2024
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Version control

Publication date:	1 February 2023	
Effective date:	1 July 2023	
Version	Description	Date
V1-0	First version of the standard approved by the FSC Board of Directors.	05/03/2004
V2-0	Revision approved by the FSC Board of Directors.	26/11/2004
V2-1	Minor revision approved by the FSC Board of Directors.	30/11/2004
V2-2	Minor revision including additional requirements for evaluation against the FSC Principles and Criteria based on the FSC Modular Approach Program.	01/01/2005
V3-0	Major revision. This version clarifies the principles to be followed by certification bodies when sampling management units and sites for evaluation.	01/01/2010
V4-0	Major revision introducing new requirements on audit methods, reporting, Continuous Improvement Procedure Risk-Based Approaches concept, and alignment with the revised FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0.	01/02/2023

INTRODUCTION

FSC has revised its Forest Management Evaluations Standard as part of streamlining the FSC normative framework.

This revised version aims for the increased transparency, consistency in evaluations by different certification bodies, and efficiency of outcome-oriented and risk-based forest management evaluations. For example, it introduces the possibility for certification bodies to apply or combine different audit methods in forest management evaluations.

This revision also incorporates the concept of active and inactive management units for selecting management units and sites for evaluation, which was introduced in FSC-STD-30-005 *Forest Management Groups*. It also introduces requirements for risk-based evaluations and how to audit against risk based National Forest Stewardship Standards developed according to FSC-PRO-60-010 *Development of a National Forest Stewardship Standard Risk Assessment*, enabling the risk-based approach concept to be implemented across the FSC system.

Additionally, the structure of this standard has been revised to facilitate its implementation and user accessibility. In particular, former addenda with reporting requirements have been incorporated directly into the main standard. Relevant advice notes and interpretations have been incorporated and redundancies with requirements in FSC-STD-20-001 *General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies* have been removed to avoid duplications.

This revision includes aligning the content of the forest management evaluations reports section with new tools being incorporated for digitization. This ensures standardization and relevance of data gathered during evaluation processes

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this standard is to provide the requirements for FSC-accredited certification bodies to assess conformity of The Organization against applicable requirements of the FSC normative framework with regards to forest management certification, as well as reporting and decision making.

SCOPE

This standard applies to forest management-accredited certification bodies assessing conformity with the applicable FSC normative requirements during forest management evaluations including pre-evaluations, main evaluations, surveillance evaluations and re-evaluations of single management units, forest management groups, and single legal entities managing multiple management units.

This standard defines the normative requirements for FSC accreditation for forest management certification.

All aspects of this standard are considered normative, including the scope, effective and validity dates, references, terms and definitions, footnotes, graphics, tables and annexes, unless otherwise stated. Notes, information boxes and examples are not considered normative.

REFERENCES

The FSC normative requirements relevant for the use of this standard are provided in the applicable Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS¹) and in the reference documents listed below. For references without a version number, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

FSC-POL-20-003	<i>The Excision of Areas from the Scope of Certification</i>
FSC-POL-30-001	<i>FSC Pesticides Policy</i>
FSC-STD-01-001	<i>FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship</i>
FSC-STD-01-002	<i>FSC Glossary of Terms</i>
FSC-STD-01-003	<i>SLIMF eligibility criteria</i>
FSC-STD-20-001	<i>General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies</i>
FSC-STD-20-006	<i>Stakeholder consultation for forest evaluations</i>
FSC-STD-20-011	<i>Chain of Custody Evaluations</i>
FSC-STD-30-005	<i>Forest Management Groups</i>
FSC-STD-30-010	<i>FSC Controlled Wood Standard for Forest Management Enterprises</i>
FSC-PRO-30-006	<i>Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>
FSC-PRO-30-011	<i>Continuous Improvement Procedure</i>
FSC-PRO-60-010	<i>Development of a National Forest Stewardship Standard Risk Assessment</i>
FSC-DIR-20-007	<i>FSC Directive on Forest Management Evaluations</i>

FSC normative documents replaced by this version of the standard:

FSC-STD-20-007a	<i>Forest Management Evaluations Addendum – Forest Certification Reports</i>
FSC-STD-20-007b	<i>Forest Management Evaluations Addendum – Forest Certification Public Summary Reports</i>
ADVICE-20-007-12	<i>Financial Evaluation</i>
ADVICE-20-007-19	<i>Forest Management Auditing Time</i>

¹ Including National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS), Regional Forest Stewardship Standards (RFSS) and Interim National Standards (INS).

ADVICE-20-007-21

Precautionary approach towards conflicting legislation and differing interpretations of laws and regulations

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this standard, the terms and definitions given in FSC-STD-01-002 *FSC Glossary of Terms*, FSC-STD-20-001 *General Requirements for FSC Accredited Certification Bodies*, and the following apply:

Active management unit: A management unit (MU) where site-disturbing activities have taken place since the last evaluation, or in the previous twelve months if there was no previous evaluation.

NOTE 1: The concept of active and inactive MUs is applicable for forest management group certification. The information about active/inactive MUs is provided by The Organization to the certification body.

NOTE 2: If information about active/inactive MUs is not provided by The Organization to the certification body, all MUs are by default treated as 'active'.

(Source: Adapted from FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0)

Box 1. Examples of site-disturbing and non-site-disturbing activities

Examples of site-disturbing activities:

Commercial harvesting or collection of forest products; soil preparation; planting or seeding; seedling stand management; fertilization; thinning; ditching; post-harvest remediation activities; infrastructure development (e.g. forestry road construction); road decommission (closure); fuel management (e.g. manual clearing); quarrying; chemical pesticides use; prescribed burning; pruning; harvest layout activities (e.g. tree marking, riparian buffer demarcation, identification of environmentally sensitive areas and cultural values), development of recreational infrastructure and high use recreational trails.

Examples of non-site-disturbing activities:

Forest protection monitoring activities (e.g. fire patrols, surveillance for unauthorized activities); permanent sample plots establishment and/or monitoring; fire break maintenance; road side mowing; road grading (shaping); boundary line demarcation and maintenance; forest resource surveys/inventory; non-chemical invasive species management; developing/updating forest management plan; passive operational planning of a forest management activity (e.g. GIS activities, boundary demarcation, stand level reconnaissance).

Community forest (CF): a management unit that conforms with the following tenure AND management criteria:

Tenure: The legal right to manage the forest management unit (e.g., title, long-term lease, concession) is held at the communal level, AND i) the community members must be either Indigenous Peoples or Traditional Peoples, OR ii) the forest management unit meets the SLIMF eligibility criteria.

Management: The forest management unit is managed actively by a community through a concerted effort (e.g., under a communal forest management plan) OR the community authorizes management of the forest by others (e.g., resource manager, contractors, forest products company).

If the community authorizes management of the forest by others, i. and either ii. or iii. of the following must be met:

- i. The community's own representative institution has legal responsibility for the harvesting operations, AND
- ii. The community performs the harvesting operations, OR
- iii. The community's own representative institution is responsible and has the control over the forest management decisions and follows and monitors the operations.

NOTE: The community forest can be either located in a communal forest and/or on individually assigned plots, as long as the right to use the forest is communally held (e.g., this is the case for Mexican ejidos, Brazilian sustainable development reserves). (Source: FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-0).

Days: Any reference to "days" means calendar days unless otherwise specified.

NFSS Risk Assessment: Assessments at national or sub-national level of the risks of non-conformity with a criterion or indicator of a National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS). See definition of 'risk'.

Remote audit method: Audit method where the auditor employs Information Communication Technology (ICT) to remotely audit activities (e.g., harvesting, site-disturbing activities, verification of The Organization's sites, processes, or systems) that would normally be audited on-site.

Examples of the use of ICT during audits may include:

- assessment of The Organization's sites and facilities, as well as stakeholder interviews by means of telephone calls and/or teleconference, including audio, video, and data sharing;
- assessment of documents and records by means of remote access either synchronously (in real time during an audit) or asynchronously (before or after the audit); and
- verification of The Organization's MUs through satellite imagery, aerial photograph, or videos (e.g., through drones, airplanes).

Risk: The probability of an unacceptable negative impact arising from any activity in the management unit combined with its seriousness in terms of consequences. (Source: FSC-STD-01-001 V5-2)

NOTE: In the context of NFSS Risk Assessments, the term "risk" refers to a risk of non-conformity with a criterion or indicator of a National Forest Stewardship Standard, defined as a combination of the likelihood of non-conformity with the potential negative impact of non-conformity with this criterion or indicator.

Low risk: A conclusion, following a risk assessment, that there is a low probability of non-conformity with a specific criterion or indicator of a National Forest Stewardship Standard. (Source: Adapted from FSC-PRO-60-002a V1-0.)

SLIMF (Small or low intensity managed forest): A forest management unit which meets specific FSC requirements related to size and/or intensity. (Source: FSC-STD-01-003 V1-1)

Specified risk: A conclusion, following a risk assessment, that there is a specified risk of non-conformity with a defined criterion or indicator of a National Forest Stewardship Standard. The nature and extent of this risk is specified for the purpose of supporting National Forest Stewardship

Standard implementation by Organizations and assurance planning by certification bodies.
(Source: Adapted from FSC-PRO-60-002a V1-0)

Undesignated risk: A criterion or indicator that is not designated as low risk or specified risk in the NFSS Risk Assessment or has been changed to this classification by the certification body at The Organization level. (Source: Adapted from FSC-PRO-60-010 V1-0)

Verbal forms for the expression of provisions:

[Adapted from *ISO/IEC Directives Part 2: Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards*]

“shall”:
Indicates requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform with the standard.

“should”:
Indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. A ‘should requirement’ can be met in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated and justified.

“may”:
Indicates a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.

“can”:
Is used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or causal.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASI	Accreditation Services International
CF	Community Forest
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSS	Forest Stewardship Standard
HCVs	High Conservation Values
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INS	Interim National Standards
MU	Management Unit
NFSS	National Forest Stewardship Standard
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFPs	Non-timber forest products
PSU	Performance and Standards Unit
RMU	Resource Management Unit
SLIMF	Small and low intensity managed forest

PART I GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Basic Principles

- 1.1. To provide an assurance that there is no major failure in the conformity with the applicable FSC normative requirements in any management unit (MU) within the scope of certification, the certification body shall:
 - a. complete an analysis of the area included in the scope of certification in terms of discrete MUs;
 - b. complete an analysis of the management system in place and confirm that it is capable of ensuring that all the applicable FSC normative requirements are implemented within every MU in the scope of certification;
 - c. carry out sampling of sites, assess documents and records, conduct interviews with workers, consult stakeholders and make direct factual observations sufficient to verify that there are no major non-conformities with the performance thresholds and indicators specified in the applicable FSC normative requirements within any MU in the scope of certification.
- 1.2. In the case of forest management groups, the certification body shall, in addition to the requirements specified in this standard, evaluate The Organization against the group requirements according to FSC-STD-30-005 *Forest Management Groups*.
- 1.3. The certification body shall evaluate the applicable requirements of FSC-PRO-30-006 *Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools* when The Organization wants to include ecosystem services claims in the scope of certification
- 1.4. The certification body shall evaluate The Organization managing small and low intensity managed forest (SLIMF) or community forests against the applicable requirements of FSC-PRO-30-011 *Continuous Improvement Procedure* when The Organization has decided to apply that procedure. The requirements for certification bodies in FSC-PRO-30-011 supersede the corresponding requirements in this standard.
- 1.5. The certification body shall apply FSC-POL-30-001 *FSC Pesticides Policy* to evaluate The Organization's use of chemical pesticides, as applicable.
- 1.6. The certification body shall conduct stakeholder consultations in accordance with FSC-STD-20-006 *Stakeholder Consultation for Forest Evaluations Standard*.
- 1.7. Primary processing facilities within or adjacent to SLIMF or community forest MUs that are owned or managed by The Organization may be included in the scope of FM/CoC certification if:
 - a. all MUs in the scope of certification qualify as SLIMF or community forest; and
 - b. 100% of the inputs to the processing facilities come from these MUs.
- 1.8. Primary processing facilities included in the scope of certification as per Clause 1.7 shall be evaluated for conformity with the applicable chain of custody standard(s), and a report which meets the requirements of FSC-STD-20-011 *Chain of Custody Evaluations* shall be prepared.
- 1.9. Low intensity processing activities carried out by The Organization such as log cutting, debarking, woodchipping, initial processing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (e.g., selection and drying of nuts or mushrooms, cleaning of berries), and the use of portable charcoal kilns or small portable sawmills may be added to the scope of FM/CoC

certification without conducting an evaluation against the applicable chain of custody standard(s).

- 1.10. Primary or secondary processing facilities not covered in Clause 1.7. shall not be included in the scope of FM/CoC certification.

2. Information access and collection

- 2.1. The certification body may share its checklists (e.g., draft evaluation report) with The Organization prior to the evaluation asking it, for example, to pre-fill certification scope information and sources of evidence of conformity, which will then be reviewed by the certification body as part of the evaluation process.
- 2.2. The certification body shall request access to key documents and records of The Organization to be used in preparation for the evaluation, such as management plans, inventory results, management system documentation, maps, satellite images, GIS data, legal documents, etc.
- 2.3. In the case of group certification, in addition to the requirements of Clause 2.2, the certification body shall request the following documentation and records from the group entity prior to the evaluation:
 - a. the group management system;
 - b. the updated list of group members;
 - c. the rate of membership changes within the group in relation to the specified maximum group size;
 - d. formal communication/written documents sent to group members by the group entity since the previous evaluation;
 - e. records of the internal monitoring carried out by the group entity (including specification of active and inactive MUs since the last evaluation, if applicable); and
 - f. records of any corrective action requests issued by the group entity.

3. Application of NFSS Risk Assessments in FM evaluations

- 3.1. When an NFSS Risk Assessment developed according to FSC-PRO-60-010 *Development of a National Forest Stewardship Standard Risk Assessment* exists for the country or region where the MU is located, the certification body shall use the following information from the NFSS Risk Assessment when evaluating The Organization against the applicable requirements:
 - a. the risk designations for criteria or indicators of the NFSS;
 - b. the identified factors influencing the risk of non-conformities at The Organization level in the national or sub-national context;
 - c. other means of verification and assurance techniques recommended in the NFSS Risk Assessment.

NOTE: The risk designation in an NFSS identifies the criteria or indicators that:

- a. the certification body needs to prioritize and actively seek evidence of conformity with during an evaluation (specified risk); and
- b. are less critical due to the lower risk of non-conformity (low risk).

- 3.2. If there are substantiated allegations or evidence of risk of non-conformity related to low-risk requirements, the certification body shall assess the need to change the risk designation.
- 3.3. If an upgrade to the risk designation is deemed necessary as per Clause 3.2, the certification body shall register the change and justification for it in the evaluation report according to Annex 4 (*Content of the evaluation report and public summary*).
- 3.4. After the first re-evaluation, the certification body may change the risk designated to any criteria or indicators in the NFSS Risk Assessment to a different risk at The Organization level based on its own risk assessment according to Annex 5 (*Certification body adaptation of the NFSS Risk Assessment at The Organization level*).

Table 1. Application of NFSS Risk Assessments in FM Evaluations

Pre-evaluation and Main Evaluation	Surveillance Evaluation	Re-evaluation ²
<p>NOT APPLICABLE: NFSS Risk Assessments are not applicable to these types of evaluations (see Clause 10.1.1).</p>	<p>LOW RISK: No need to actively seek evidence of conformity, unless substantiated allegations or evidence of non-conformity (see Clause 11.6).</p> <p>SPECIFIED RISK: Evaluate each surveillance in following cases (see Clause 11.10):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plantations larger than 10,000 ha* • Natural forests larger than 50,000 ha* • Sets of 'like' MUs containing HCVs* <p>UNDESIGNATED RISK: at least once per certification cycle (see Clauses 11.7).</p> <p>* Except SLIMF or community forests</p>	<p>LOW RISK: No need to actively seek evidence of conformity, unless substantiated allegations or evidence of non-conformity (see Clause 12.3).</p> <p>All SPECIFIED RISK and UNDESIGNATED requirements need to be evaluated by the CBs (see Clauses 12.2 and 10.1.1).</p>

4. Determination of the audit time

- 4.1. The certification body shall maintain a procedure for calculating audit times needed to execute and complete effective audits considering, but not limited to, the activities below:
 - a. conducting the opening and closing meeting;
 - b. performing document and records review;
 - c. conducting interviews with staff, workers and contracted people of The Organization;
 - d. conducting culturally appropriate stakeholder consultation;
 - e. evaluating a sample of the sites and contractors included in the scope of certification;

² See Clause 3.4 and Annex 5

- f. travelling to and between sites;
- g. collecting and verifying information;
- h. evaluating open non-conformities; and
- i. analysing and compiling audit findings.

4.2. Based on this procedure, the certification body shall record and justify the audit time in person days for each evaluation in the evaluation report.

5. Determination of the audit method

5.1. The certification body shall determine the appropriate audit method for each evaluation based on the type of Organization as specified in Table 2. Audit methods may vary between evaluations and may be used to complement each other or as stand-alone methods. The audit methods may include on-site audits, remote audits, or a combination of both.

Table 2. Default audit methods according to the type of Organization.

Organization Type	Default audit method
Organizations <u>not</u> managing SLIMF or community forests	<p>5.1.1. The certification body shall conduct an annual on-site audit of the relevant aspects for all types of evaluations.</p> <p>NOTE: Certain aspects of the evaluation (e.g., document review, stakeholder interviews, analysis of maps or satellite imagery, etc.) may be verified remotely provided that the eligibility criteria specified in Annex 1 are met.</p>
Organizations managing a single SLIMF or a single community forest	<p>5.1.2. The certification body shall conduct on-site audits at the main evaluation and in one surveillance evaluation during the five-year-period of validity of certification.</p> <p>5.1.3. The remaining surveillance evaluations shall be conducted remotely, unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are outstanding corrective actions to be evaluated which may require on-site verification; or • complaints requiring on-site verification; or • The Organization requests an on-site audit; or • the certification body provides justification that an on-site audit is necessary to obtain objective evidence to verify conformity related to any aspect of the evaluation.
Organizations managing forest management groups or sub-groups of SLIMF and/or community forests	<p>5.1.4. The certification body shall conduct on-site audits at the main evaluation, during the first surveillance evaluation, and at least one additional surveillance evaluation during the five-year-period of validity of certification.</p>

Organization Type	Default audit method
	<p>5.1.5. For Organizations managing forest management groups or subgroups with MUs that qualify as community forests of <50,000 ha, or with less than 100 MUs that qualify as SLIMF, the remaining surveillance evaluations shall be conducted remotely, unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are outstanding corrective actions to be evaluated which may require on-site verification; or • complaints requiring on-site verification; or • The Organization requests an on-site audit; or • the certification body provides justification that an on-site audit is necessary to obtain objective evidence to verify conformity related to any aspect of the evaluation. <p>5.1.6. For Organizations managing forest management groups or subgroups with MUs that qualify as community forests of ≥50,000 ha, or with 100 or more MUs that qualify as SLIMF, the remaining surveillance evaluations may be conducted remotely, unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are outstanding corrective actions to be evaluated which may require on-site verification; or • complaints requiring on-site verification; or • The Organization requests an on-site audit; <p>5.1.7. When a remote audit as per 5.1.6 is conducted, the certification body shall provide justification that an on-site audit is not necessary to obtain objective evidence to verify conformity related to any aspect of the evaluation.</p>

- 5.2. The justification for the selection of the audit method shall be included in the evaluation report and in the public summary.
- 5.3. All audits shall be performed by a qualified audit team. In the case of on-site audits, at least one qualified auditor shall be physically present on site.
- NOTE: The team may be supported by technical experts and/or further personnel (e.g., interpreter), who support the auditors but do not themselves act as auditors.
- 5.4. In the case of a demonstrated security risk for the life or health of auditors, the certification body may apply for a derogation from PSU to replace an on-site audit by a remote audit.
- NOTE: Derogation applications will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Table 3. Determination of audit methods during a five-year certification cycle.

Organization Type	Main and Re-evaluation	Surveillance 1	Surveillance 2	Surveillance 3	Surveillance 4
Non-SLIMFs or CF MU(s) (see Clauses 5.1.1 & 12.2)			On-site		
Single SLIMF or a single CF MU (see Clauses 5.1.2, 5.1.3 & 12.2)	On-site	One surveillance evaluation shall be carried out on-site, the remaining surveillance evaluations shall be carried out remotely unless required to be on-site as per 5.1.3			
Groups or subgroups with CF of < 50,000 ha, or with < 100 MUs that qualify as SLIMF (see Clauses 5.1.4 & 5.1.5)	On-site	On-site	One surveillance evaluation shall be carried out on-site, the remaining surveillance evaluations shall be carried out remotely unless required to be on-site as per 5.1.5		
Groups or subgroups with CF of ≥ 50,000 ha, or with ≥ 100 MUs that qualify as SLIMF (see Clauses 5.1.4, 5.1.6 & 5.1.7)	On-site	On-site	One surveillance evaluation shall be carried out on site, the remaining surveillance evaluations may be carried out remotely unless required to be on-site as per 5.1.6		

NOTE: On-site audits allow for parts of an FM evaluation to be carried out with remote audit methods as per Annex 1.

6. Preparation for pre-evaluation

6.1. The certification body shall conduct a pre-evaluation in accordance with the requirements in Section 9 of this standard prior to the main evaluation of any sets of 'like' MUs of the following categories:

- a. plantations larger than 10,000 hectares; or
- b. natural forests larger than 50,000 hectares, unless the whole area of the sets of 'like' MUs qualifies as a "low intensity managed forest" (see FSC-STD-01-003 *SLIMF eligibility criteria*).

NOTE: Pre-evaluations can take place using the FSC-STD-60-004 *International Generic Indicators* or early drafts of an Interim National Standard (INS) if there is no approved Forest Stewardship Standard (FSS).

6.2. The certification body shall take a precautionary approach to the likelihood that an MU may include High Conservation Values (HCVs). The certification body should request this

information from The Organization in the application phase and check for the presence of HCVs in the MU on FSC's Geographic Information System Portal or other HCV maps (e.g., www.globalforestwatch.org for Intact Forest Landscapes).

- 6.3. If an MU contains HCVs or if it is not known if they are present, a pre-evaluation shall be conducted, unless the MU qualifies as SLIMF or community forest (see FSC-STD-01-003 *SLIMF eligibility criteria*).
- 6.4. The pre-evaluation may be waived for MUs or sets of 'like' MUs which are already certified according to FSC-STD-30-010 *FSC Controlled Wood Standard for Forest Management Enterprises*.
- 6.5. A pre-evaluation may be conducted for any MU not meeting the criteria specified in Clause 6.1. or Clause 6.2., at the discretion of the certification body or upon request by The Organization, prior to any main evaluation.
- 6.6. Pre-evaluations are not required in the case of re-evaluations.
- 6.7. The results of pre-evaluations are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of presenting the report on the findings of the pre-evaluation to The Organization. After this period, a new pre-evaluation is required if a main evaluation has not been concluded resulting in certification.

NOTE: Pre-evaluations may be conducted by one certification body, and the main evaluation by another certification body as long as the second certification body has access to the results of the pre-evaluation and these results are still valid.

7. Preparation requirements for main evaluation

- 7.1. The certification body shall use the results of pre-evaluations in the preparation of a subsequent main evaluation.
- 7.2. Preparation for a main evaluation shall include:
 - a. identification of the applicable FSS;
 - b. an analysis of the responsibility for full conformity with the applicable FSC normative requirements (e.g., by The Organization, group entity, resource manager) as well as an analysis of the delegated responsibilities for the implementation of selected requirements (e.g., by contractors).

8. Selecting MUs and sites for evaluation

8.1. General requirements

- 8.1.1. For each evaluation, the certification body shall classify the MUs included in the scope of certification as sets of 'like' MUs for the purpose of sampling. The sets shall be selected to minimize variability within each set in terms of:
 - a. forest types (e.g., natural forest vs. plantation);
 - b. size of the MU (see sub-section 8.4.);
 - c. whether the MU has been classified as active or inactive (applicable to FM group certification);
 - d. MUs added since the last evaluation; and
 - e. other factors as may be defined in the applicable FSS.

NOTE: Forest management groups or multiple MUs may consist of one or more sets of 'like' MUs.

- 8.1.2. The certification body shall select specific MUs for evaluation within each set of 'like' MUs to reach the required sample size. The certification body should include a random element in the selection process.
- 8.1.3. The sample selected shall be representative in terms of:
- geographical distribution (ensuring that the full geographical distribution within the scope of certification is covered within the certification cycle), and
 - the personnel responsible for operational management of the selected MUs.
- 8.1.4. The certification body shall implement the requirements in the following sub-sections as applicable to determine the minimum number of MUs to be audited at each evaluation:
- multiple MU certification: sub-section 8.2.;
 - group certification: sub-section 8.3.;
 - group certification with more than 5,000 SLIMF MUs: sub-section 8.4.; and
 - sampling for contractors included in the scope of group certification: sub-section 8.5.
- 8.1.5. If new MUs have been added to the scope of certification since the last evaluation, they shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation.
- 8.1.6. If the MUs that have been added to the scope of an existing group or multiple MU certification have been FSC certified within the last six months, they may be sampled at the rate of an annual surveillance.
- 8.1.7. If there are existing risk factors, substantiated allegations of non-conformities or major non-conformities resulting in negative social or environmental impacts, the certification body shall increase the number of MUs included in a sample in relation to the calculated minimum.
- 8.1.8. The certification body shall audit a sufficient variety and number of sites within each MU selected for evaluation to make factual observations of conformity with the requirements of the applicable FSS.
- NOTE: Examples of sites that may be audited are listed in Annex 3 (*Examples of sites for evaluation*).
- 8.1.9. The certification body shall select the sites to be audited based on an analysis of the critical points of risk of non-conformity in the management system.

8.2. Sampling for multiple MU certification

- 8.2.1. During main and re-evaluation, for each set of 'like' MUs identified, the certification body shall select a minimum number of MUs for evaluation (x) by applying the formula $x = 0.8 * \sqrt{y}$ for each set of 'like' MUs (y= number of all MUs within the set of 'like' MUs). The number of MUs calculated (x) shall be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the number of MUs to be audited.
- 8.2.2. The number of MUs to be audited in a surveillance evaluation shall be at least half the number of MUs audited during the main evaluation.

8.3. Sampling for group certification

- 8.3.1. The certification body shall determine the number of sets of 'like' MUs to be audited (x) in the main evaluation, surveillance evaluation and re-evaluation according to the Table 4.

The number of sets of 'like' MUs calculated (x) shall be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the number of sets of 'like' MUs to be audited.

Table 4. Number of sets of 'like' MUs to be audited (x) from the total number of sets of 'like' MUs (y).

	Size class of set of 'like' MUs	Main evaluation	Surveillance and re-evaluation
Active MUs	> 10,000 ha	$X = y$	$X = y$
	1,000 – 10,000 ha	$X = y$	$X = 0.5 * y$
	< 1,000 ha	$X = 0.8 * \sqrt{y}$	$X = 0.6 * \sqrt{y}$
	SLIMF and community forest	$X = 0.6 * \sqrt{y}$	$X = 0.3 * \sqrt{y}$
Inactive MUs	All size classes	All MUs are considered 'active' and shall therefore be sampled like active MUs above	$X = 0.1 * \sqrt{y}$

NOTE: If inactive MUs are not specified by The Organization, all MUs are treated as 'active'.

- 8.3.2. In the case of forest management groups comprised of SLIMF/community forest MUs and MUs that do not qualify as such, the certification body may apply the 'SLIMF and community forest' formula in Table 4 to sets of 'like' MUs that only comprise of SLIMF or community forest MUs.
- 8.3.3. For each set of 'like' MU, the certification body shall determine the minimum number of MUs to be audited according to the formula in Table 5. The number of MUs calculated (x) shall be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the number of units to be audited.

Table 5. Minimum number of MUs to be audited (x) from all MUs (y) within each set of 'like' MUs (x).

	Size class	Main evaluation	Surveillance and re-evaluation
Active MUs	> 10,000 ha	$X = y$	$X = 0.8 * y$
	1,000 – 10,000 ha	$X = 0.3 * y$	$X = 0.2 * y$
	< 1,000 ha	$X = 0.8 * \sqrt{y}$	$X = 0.6 * \sqrt{y}$
	SLIMF³ and community forest	$X = 0.6 * \sqrt{y}$	$X = 0.3 * \sqrt{y}$
Inactive MUs	All size classes	All MUs are considered 'active' and shall therefore be sampled like active MUs above	$X = 0.1 * \sqrt{y}$

NOTE 1: If inactive MUs are not specified by The Organization and accepted as such by the certification body, all MUs are treated as 'active'.

NOTE 2: The certification body can decide to group MUs to higher size class provided the total sample is not reduced.

- 8.3.4. For the purposes of sampling, MUs qualifying as SLIMF or community forest within an RMU (Resource Management Unit) may be considered equal to one MU. MUs managed by a Resource Manager that do not qualify as SLIMF or community forest shall be sampled in accordance with Tables 4 and 5 (above).

NOTE: The RMU concept is defined in FSC-STD-30-005 *Forest Management Groups* and can only be applied if the Group Entity and Resource Manager conform with the applicable requirements.

- 8.3.5. The sample of MUs selected for the evaluation shall include MUs that were part of the most recent internal monitoring of the forest management group.

8.4. Group certification with more than 5,000 MUs qualifying as SLIMF

- 8.4.1. For forest management groups or sets of 'like' SLIMF MUs with more than 5,000 MUs, the certification body may sub-stratify the group or sets of 'like' MUs according to the level of risk in relation to presence of HCVs, land use or tenure disputes, or length of harvesting cycles.
- 8.4.2. The certification body may reduce the sampling size determined according to Table 5 for MUs within a set of 'like' MUs by a maximum of 50%, in the demonstrated absence of:

³ For countries or regions with an FSC-approved SLIMF size limit above 100 ha this may be used as the threshold for these size classes.

- a. High Conservation Values; and
- b. land use or tenure disputes.

8.5. Sampling process for forestry contractors included in the scope of group certification

- 8.5.1. The minimum number of forestry contractors to be audited (x) out of the total number of forestry contractors (y) in a forest management group shall be calculated according to the formula in Table 6. The calculated number of forestry contractors shall be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the actual size of the sample.

Table 6. Minimum number of forestry contractors to be audited (X) from the total number of forestry contractors (y).

Main evaluation	Surveillance evaluation and re-evaluation
$X = 0.3 * y$	$X = 0.2 * y$

- 8.5.2. The sample should include forestry contractors that performed activities within the existing sample of MUs during the evaluation period (e.g., previous 12 months).
- 8.5.3. If new forestry contractors have been added to the scope of certification since the last evaluation, the new forestry contractors shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation.
- 8.5.4. Each forestry contractor within the group should have been audited by the certification body at least once within the certification cycle.

PART II FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS

9. Pre-evaluation

- 9.1. Pre-evaluation shall include a review and discussion with The Organization of the requested scope of certification to determine the full range of applicable FSC normative requirements to be used for the evaluation, such as the applicable FSS, the group certification standard, the ecosystem services procedure, pesticide use requirements, stakeholder consultation etc.
- 9.2. In the case of group or multiple MU certification applicants, the certification body shall:
 - a. carry out an analysis and description of the MUs proposed for inclusion within the scope of certification;
 - b. define the certification body's approach to sampling of MUs within the scope of certification;
 - c. carry out an initial analysis of The Organization's management systems and capacity to administer the requirements of those systems; and
 - d. carry out an explicit review of conformity with the requirements for group entities according to FSC-STD-30-005, as applicable.
- 9.3. Based on information provided by The Organization, the certification body shall identify major gaps or likely problem areas in respect to The Organization's conformity with any of the requirements of the applicable FSC normative requirements.
- 9.4. The certification body shall prepare a written report on the findings of the pre-evaluation, which should be made available to The Organization. A summary of the findings shall subsequently be included in the main evaluation report.
- 9.5. Key stakeholders shall be identified and consulted during the pre-evaluation.

10. Main evaluation

10.1. General requirements

- 10.1.1. The certification body shall evaluate and actively seek evidence of conformity of The Organization against all applicable FSC normative requirements within the scope of certification.
- 10.1.2. The certification body shall ensure that there is sufficient audit time and an appropriate audit method is chosen to evaluate all requirements with specified or undesignated risks from the applicable FSS and other applicable FSC requirements.
- 10.1.3. In the case of evaluations of multiple MUs, forest management groups or sets of 'like' MUs in which all MUs are qualifying as SLIMF or community forest, the certification body may audit each defined set of 'like' MUs as a whole against the requirements of the applicable FSS, but it is not necessary that each sampled MU is audited by the certification body against all the requirements of the applicable FSS.
- 10.1.4. In the case of evaluations of forest management groups, the certification body shall audit the requirements of the applicable FSS in accordance with the division of responsibilities as specified in the group's management system (see FSC-STD-30-005).
- 10.1.5. For MUs not covered by Clause 10.1.3, the certification body shall audit each MU against the full set of requirements of the applicable FSS.

10.2. Evaluation of management system(s)

- 10.2.1. The certification body shall complete an explicit analysis of the critical aspects of management control required to ensure that the applicable FSC normative requirements are implemented over:
 - a. the full geographical area in the scope of certification; and
 - b. the full range of management activities.
- 10.2.2. The certification body shall evaluate the capacity of The Organization to implement its management system consistently and effectively as described. This evaluation shall include explicit consideration of:
 - a. the technical resources available (e.g., the type and quantity of equipment); and
 - b. the human resources available (e.g., the number of people involved in management, their level of training and experience; the availability of expert advice if required).
- 10.2.3. The evaluation shall include an assessment of the documentation and records applicable to each level of management, sufficient to confirm that management is functioning effectively and as described.
- 10.2.4. The certification body shall evaluate the tracking and tracing of forest products up to the forest gate or point of sale, and the procedures for the identification of products coming from the MUs in the scope of certification.
- 10.2.5. At each MU selected for auditing, the certification body shall identify and assess a sufficient variety and number of records including management documentation as to make factual observations to verify conformity with all requirements of the applicable FSS.

NOTE: Examples of such documentation and records are listed in Annex 2.

11. Surveillance evaluation

- 11.1. Surveillance evaluation shall include:
 - a. evaluation of The Organization's conformity with corrective action requests;
 - b. review of any complaints or allegations of non-conformity with any aspect of the applicable normative requirements; and;
 - c. evaluation of a sample of sites and records, and interviews with affected stakeholders sufficient to verify that management systems (documented or undocumented) are working effectively and consistently in practice, in the full range of management conditions present in the MUs selected for auditing.
- 11.2. The certification body shall assess the following aspects during surveillance evaluation:
 - a. any changes to the forest area included in the scope of certification, including additions, exclusions, or MU boundary changes;
 - b. changes to The Organization's management system;
 - c. complaints received;
 - d. harvesting records;
 - e. chemical use records, including records of quantitative data on the pesticides use;
 - f. records of sales of FSC certified products (copies of invoices, bills, shipping documents).

- 11.3. The certification body shall evaluate the capacity of The Organization's management system to manage any changes affecting certification, including any increase in size, number or complexity of MUs.
- 11.4. Timing of the audit in a surveillance evaluation shall take into account all management activities and conditions affecting forest management activities, such as seasonal forest management operations, harvesting and collection of NTFPs, etc.
- NOTE: Audits may be planned according to seasonal activities of The Organization to enable an on-site audit by auditors when these activities take place (e.g., when harvesting activities are influenced by seasonal conditions such as snow, rain or the seasonal harvesting or collection of NTFPs).
- 11.5. Where there is an approved NFSS Risk Assessment, the certification body shall prioritize the evaluation of requirements designated as specified risks of non-conformity in the NFSS.
- 11.6. The certification body is not required to actively seek evidence of conformity of The Organization against requirements designated as low risk in the approved NFSS Risk Assessment or changed to this designation by the certification body at The Organization level (see Annex 5), unless there are substantiated allegations from stakeholders or evidence of non-conformity about the low-risk designation for The Organization.
- NOTE: For low-risk indicators, the conclusion of conformity in the evaluation report can be based on a statement that "no evidence of non-conformity was observed".
- 11.7. For requirements with undesignated risk in the NFSS Risk Assessment, the certification body shall evaluate conformity against those requirements at least once per certification cycle.
- 11.8. In the absence of an NFSS Risk Assessment, the certification body may focus its evaluation on specific indicators of the applicable FSS (e.g., those pertaining to particular FSC Principles or to particular aspects of management) with the provision that all requirements of the applicable FSS shall be evaluated during surveillance evaluations within a certification cycle.
- 11.9. In the absence of an NFSS Risk Assessment, the certification body shall at minimum evaluate at each surveillance evaluation all indicators of the following criteria from the applicable FSS for the following types of sets of 'like' MUs:
- a. plantations larger than 10,000 hectares:
 - FSC Principles & Criteria (P&C) V5: Criteria 1.6; 2.3; 4.4; 4.5; 7.6; 6.9; 6.10; 10.2; 10.3; 10.6; 10.7 and 10.12
 - P&C V4: Criteria 2.3; 4.2; 4.4; 6.7; 6.9; 10.6; 10.7 and 10.8.
 - b. natural forests larger than 50,000 hectares, unless the whole area meets the eligibility criteria for SLIMF (see FSC-STD-01-003) and/or community forest:
 - P&C V5: Criteria 1.4; 1.6; 2.3; 3.2; 3.4; 4.4; 4.5; 5.2; 6.4; 6.6; 6.9; 6.10; 7.6; 8.2 and 9.4.
 - P&C V4: Criteria 1.4; 1.5; 2.3; 3.2; 4.2; 4.4; 5.6; 6.2; 6.3; 8.2 and 9.4
 - c. sets of 'like' MUs containing HCVs, unless the whole area meets the eligibility criteria for SLIMF (see FSC-STD-01-003) and/or community forest.

- P&C V5: Criteria 6.4; 6.6; 6.9; 6.10; 9.4 and 10.3
- P&C V4: Criteria 6.2; 6.3; 6.9 and 9.4

- 11.10. When there is an approved NFSS Risk Assessment providing criteria or indicators designated as specified risk, the certification body shall evaluate at minimum these requirements at each surveillance evaluation instead of the criteria listed in Clause 11.9 for these types of sets of 'like' MUs.
- 11.11. When there is an approved NFSS Risk Assessment, for sets of 'like' MUs not meeting any of the thresholds listed in Clause 11.9, the certification body is not expected to evaluate all requirements with specified risk at each surveillance evaluation but shall evaluate all undesignated and specified risk requirements at least once per certification cycle.

12. Re-evaluation

- 12.1. The certification body shall complete a re-evaluation prior to the expiry of certification as a prerequisite for granting re-certification.
- 12.2. Re-evaluation shall follow the same procedures as for main evaluation, with the following exceptions:
- a. pre-evaluation is not required;
 - b. the certification body is not required to submit the evaluation report for peer review; and
 - c. the certification body is not required to prepare a full, new evaluation report. The original report may be updated to take account of any new findings but shall include the complete set of observations made during the re-evaluation and on which the decision to grant re-certification is based.
- 12.3. The certification body is not required to actively seek evidence of conformity of The Organization against requirements designated as low risk in the approved NFSS Risk Assessment or changed to this designation by the certification body unless there are substantiated allegations from stakeholders or evidence of non-conformity about the low-risk designation for The Organization.
- NOTE: For low-risk indicators, the conclusion of conformity in the evaluation report can be based on a statement that "no evidence of non-conformity was observed".
- 12.4. In the case of a lapse in certification beyond 6 months after the expiry of certification, a main evaluation process without the peer review is required to renew certification. After a lapse in certification of 2 years or more after the expiry of certification, The Organization shall be treated as a new applicant for certification.

13. Conflicts between laws and regulations

- 13.1. The certification body shall identify and evaluate any conflicts between laws and/or regulations and certification requirements of the applicable FSS on a case-by-case basis, considering involved or relevant parties. The identified conflicts shall be registered in the evaluation report.
- 13.2. If there is a conflict between FSC certification requirements and applicable legislation that prevents The Organization from fulfilling one or more requirements of the applicable FSS, the certification body shall attempt to resolve the conflict between the relevant parties within 90 days of identifying the conflict, involving FSC Performance and Standards Unit (PSU) and FSC Network Partners at PSU's discretion.

- 13.3. If the conflict cannot be resolved, and the non-conformity with the requirement(s) results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure, the certification body shall issue a major corrective action request.
- 13.4. The certification body shall follow a precautionary approach in cases where there are:
- a. Conflicting, contradictory, or otherwise inconsistent requirements for The Organization within or between applicable laws, regulations, and administrative requirements; and/or
 - b. Differing interpretations of the above listed legal instruments by public authorities.
- 13.4.1 A precautionary approach as per Clause 13.4 implies that:
- a. the more or most restrictive requirements shall be applied as constituting the relevant legal basis;
 - b. the more or most rigorous interpretation by public authorities shall be used to determine the practical implementation of relevant requirements.
- 13.5. The certification body shall have a procedure for evaluating any conflicts between laws and/or regulations, including the precautionary approach.
- 13.6. In above cases where the most restrictive requirements or most rigorous interpretation cannot be determined, the certification body shall seek clarification through a formal interpretation by the FSC Performance and Standards Unit.

PART III CERTIFICATION DECISION

14. General requirements

- 14.1. The certification body shall make certification decisions based on their evaluation of The Organization's conformity with the applicable FSC normative requirements and in accordance with FSC-STD-20-001 *General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies*.
- 14.2. Joint forest management/chain of custody certification (FM/CoC) shall only be granted if the certification body is satisfied that the system of tracking and tracing implemented by The Organization is sufficient to provide assurance that all products invoiced with an FSC claim by The Organization originate from the MUs in the scope of certification.

15. Non-conformities and corrective action requests

- 15.1. All non-conformities that are identified by the certification body during an evaluation shall be recorded in the evaluation report and associated checklists.
- 15.2. Non-conformities with FSC normative requirements shall be recorded and addressed even if these are not in the scope of a particular evaluation.
- 15.3. Each non-conformity against indicators of the applicable FSS shall be evaluated to determine whether it constitutes a minor or major non-conformity at the level of the associated FSC criterion.
- 15.4. Each non-conformity against other applicable FSC normative requirements (e.g., FSC-STD-30-005) shall be evaluated to determine whether it constitutes a minor or major non-conformity at the level of the individual requirement.
- 15.5. Single corrective action requests shall not include requirements that relate to two or more criteria from the applied FSS.
- 15.6. If a non-conformity is related to indicators from more than one criterion, the corrective action request should be raised against the criterion with closest association to the root cause of the non-conformity.
- 15.7. A non-conformity shall be considered major if, either alone or in combination with other non-conformities, it results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure:
 - a. to achieve the objectives of the relevant FSC criterion of the FSS, or
 - b. in a significant part of the applied management system.

NOTE 1: The cumulative impact of a number of minor non-conformities may result in a failure to achieve the overall objectives of the FSS and thus constitute a major non-conformity.

NOTE 2: Information about the grading of non-conformities can be found in the FSC-STD-20-001.

- 15.8. The certification body shall consider the potential impact of a non-conformity when evaluating whether a non-conformity results in or is likely to result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant FSC criterion.

- 15.9. A major non-conformity may require immediate action to be taken by The Organization e.g., immediate cessation of use of a highly hazardous pesticide, immediate cessation of dangerous activities or activities causing serious environmental damage.
- 15.10. If the certification body receives specific information of particular instances or allegations of non-conformity with aspects of the applicable FSC normative requirements at specific MUs (for example, information received from stakeholder consultation), the certification body shall evaluate them to determine if the allegations are valid. If valid, the certification body shall evaluate whether they constitute major or minor non-conformities with the FSC normative requirements.

16. Non-conformities in Forest Management Groups

- 16.1. The certification body shall explicitly define the methodology by which the certification body determines 'failure' of a forest management group at an evaluation. The specification of 'failure' shall also distinguish between 'group failure' and 'member failure' or 'forestry contractor failure'.

NOTE: Forestry contractor failure can only occur when forestry contractors have been included into the scope of a group certification (see FSC-STD-30-005).

- 16.2. 'Group failure' shall lead to corrective actions, suspension, or withdrawal of certification, and may be caused by:
- failure to fulfil a 'group entity' responsibility, such as administration, management planning, records, monitoring, etc.;
 - failure of the group entity to ensure that group members conform with a condition or corrective action issued by the certification body; and/or
 - failure to fulfil group member responsibility(s), sufficient in number, extent and/or consequences to demonstrate that the group entity's responsibility for monitoring or quality control has broken down.

NOTE: The number as well as the seriousness of member failure or forestry contractor failures may each contribute to a group failure. Many minor non-conformities or few major non-conformities may suggest a breakdown in the group system for quality control and may be considered sufficient reason to suspend or withdraw certification.

- 16.3. Depending on the number and seriousness 'member failure' or 'forestry contractor failure' shall lead to corrective actions, suspensions or expulsion of a group member or forestry contractor, respectively.

PART IV REPORTING

17. Evaluation report

- 17.1. The certification body shall complete the evaluation report for each evaluation, using the applicable reporting template(s) provided by FSC.

NOTE 1: Annex 4 specifies the minimum mandatory content of the evaluation report.

NOTE 2: Any changes to the reporting requirements, including changes to the reporting templates, are subject to FSC-PRO-01-001 *Development and Revision of FSC Normative Documents*.

- 17.2. Once the certification body has made a certification decision and finalized the evaluation report, it shall submit the evaluation report and communicate the certification decision to The Organization as soon as possible, but latest within the following timelines:
- for main evaluation: 90 days from the closing meeting for a preliminary summary of non-conformities and 12 months from the closing meeting for the final report and certification decision;
 - for surveillance evaluation and re-evaluation: 90 days from the closing meeting, and up to 120 days in justified exceptional circumstances.
- 17.3. The certification body may provide the evaluation report to The Organization in a language convenient to The Organization and the people involved in the certification body's technical review and decision-making process.
- 17.4. The certification body shall submit the evaluation report to FSC in one of the official languages of FSC within 30 days of submitting the evaluation report to The Organization. The checklists with the audit findings at the indicator level are not required to be translated.
- NOTE 1: All fields in the FSC digital reporting template are mandatory unless otherwise stated in the template.
- NOTE 2: FSC digital template will serve as a data collection tool for implementing the FSC Global Strategy.
- 17.5. The certification body shall use data for reporting that is up to date no longer than 120 days prior to the submission of the evaluation report to FSC.

18. Public summary

- 18.1. The certification body shall complete the public summary in one of the official languages of FSC for each evaluation, using the applicable template(s) provided by FSC. The mandatory content of the public summary is provided in Annex 4 (*Content of the evaluation report and public summary*).
- 18.2. For a certification scope covering a forest area of 1,000 ha or more, the certification body shall make the public summary available in at least one of the official language(s) of the country in which the certified MU(s) are located, or the most widely spoken language of the Indigenous Peoples in the area in which the certified MU(s) are located.
- 18.3. The certification body shall submit the public summary and its translated version(s) to FSC as soon as the translated version(s) is ready, but latest 30 days after the submission of the evaluation report to The Organization.

- 18.4. No public summaries shall be removed from the FSC database by the certification body.
NOTE: FSC reserves the right to archive the published reports and data.

ANNEX 1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR APPLYING REMOTE AUDIT METHOD FOR PARTS OF AN FM EVALUATION OF ORGANIZATIONS NOT QUALIFYING AS SLIMF OR COMMUNITY FORESTS

Below are considerations the certification body shall take into account when considering the remote audit method for parts of an FM evaluation of Organizations not qualifying as either SLIMF or community forests. The list of criteria assumes a risk-based approach to efficient audit planning and requires the certification body to evaluate possibilities to apply remote audit techniques in applicable circumstances. The considerations guide the certification body to evaluate critical aspects that affect the ability to conduct an evaluation of conformity, but the certification body may use additional considerations when evaluating which parts of a particular evaluation need to be conducted on-site.

1. If the criteria in Table 7 below are met, then the respective aspect may be audited remotely at the discretion of the certification body.

Table 7. Eligibility criteria for applying remote audit method for parts of an FM evaluation of organizations not qualifying as SLIMF or community forests.

Topic	Criteria	Criteria met
Document review	<p>It is possible to access information securely and confidentially from The Organization remotely (e.g., inventory data, maps, shape files, satellite imagery).</p> <p>The Organization is able to share securely and confidentially real-time (immediately while the audit is taking place) documents and systems remotely with the certification body.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-conformities	There are no open non-conformities requiring on-site evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers Interviews	<p>The Organization and the auditors have communication tools and technologies that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient for videoconference; • accessible to all relevant workers included in the scope of the audit without having to use The Organization’s facilities and accessible throughout the full range of The Organization’s MUs included in the scope of the audit. <p>The Organization is able to ensure the availability of key staff at the times defined for the audit.</p> <p>It is possible to interview workers securely and confidentially in remote audits.</p> <p>The Organization is able to provide disclosure of all workers and their respective roles included in the scope of the audit prior to the audit.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	The application of information and communication technology (ICT), for example videoconferencing, is a stakeholder engagement method that is considered in harmony with the customs, values, sensitivities, and ways of life of workers.	
Stakeholder interviews	<p>The Organization and the auditors have communication tools and technologies that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sufficient for videoconference; • accessible to all relevant stakeholders included in the scope of the audit without having to use The Organization's facilities; and • accessible and throughout the full range of The Organization's MUs included in the scope of the audit. <p>It is possible to interview external stakeholders securely and confidentially in remote audits.</p> <p>The application of information and communication technology (ICT), for example videoconferencing, is a stakeholder engagement method that is considered in harmony with the customs, values, sensitivities, and ways of life of stakeholders included in the scope of the audit.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complaints and issues in the public domain	<p>There are no substantiated complaints related to the scope of The Organization's certification submitted to the certification body since the last evaluation that require on-site evaluation.</p> <p>The certification body is not aware of any significant issues in the public domain (e.g., NGO reports, media articles, ASI incidents), court cases or legal proceedings related to management activities of The Organization that would require on-site evaluation.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disputes	The certification body is not aware of any unresolved disputes related to land tenure with affected stakeholders (e.g., Indigenous Peoples, local communities).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scope and management system	There are no significant changes in the scope or management system – include examples e.g., change of forest manager, outsourcing activities, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANNEX 2 EXAMPLES OF DOCUMENTATION AND RECORDS

The following list provides examples of some of the documents and records that could be used to assess conformity with FSC normative requirements. This is not a complete list, nor is the certification body required to inspect all documents listed here.

- a. Copies of applicable laws
- b. Long term management plan(s)
- c. Technical management guides relating to roads, nurseries, planting, harvesting, inventory, etc.
- d. Concession agreements
- e. Documentation showing tenure or land-use rights and Indigenous Cultural Landscapes.
- f. Up-to-date maps of roads, management sites, etc.
- g. Inventory records
- h. Work instructions
- i. Contractor contracts
- j. Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) agreements with affected local communities
- k. Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) agreements with affected Indigenous Peoples, etc.
- l. Records of payments of royalties, fees, or taxes
- m. Records of complaints/disputes and their resolution
- n. Records of payments to workers
- o. Wildlife evaluation records
- p. Environmental impacts monitoring records, e.g., on water quality, soil condition
- q. Social impact survey results
- r. Results of monitoring forest growth and health
- s. Harvesting and production records
- t. Chemical use records
- u. Communications with stakeholders
- v. Purchasing and sales documentation
- w. Maps including information on the HCVs

ANNEX 3 EXAMPLES OF SITES FOR EVALUATION

The following list provides examples of some of the sites that should be audited to assess conformity with FSC normative requirements. This is not a complete list, nor is the certification body required to audit all sites listed here. The FSC GIS Portal may provide the certification body with useful information on which sites to include into the evaluation.

- a. Seed orchards;
- b. Nurseries;
- c. Production forest areas in a sufficient variety of conditions (e.g. on steeper slopes; different soil conditions; different silvicultural systems), including areas:
 - i) marked for thinning;
 - ii) recently thinned;
 - iii) marked for harvesting;
 - iv) recently harvested;
 - v) one year after harvesting;
 - vi) five years after harvesting;
 - vii) ten years after harvesting.
- d. Worker accommodation and amenities;
- e. Areas used by communities and/or Indigenous Peoples within or near the forest area;
- f. Water courses of different sizes, within and downstream of the forest area;
- g. Roads and forest roads of different sizes affected by the forest management;
- h. Sites where chemicals have been applied or stored, pesticide buffer zones, and pesticide exclusion zones;
- i. Protected areas (e.g., Conservation Areas Network, Representative Sample Areas) and potential HCV areas;
- j. Monitoring sites;
- k. Boundaries between MU and Indigenous Peoples or local communities.

ANNEX 4 CONTENT OF THE EVALUATION REPORT AND PUBLIC SUMMARY

Box 2. Evaluation reports and public summaries

Evaluation reports are of particular importance. They are more than a simple vehicle for presenting the certification decision. Evaluation reports are used by:

- a. certification bodies to compile the audit findings of the forest management evaluation to guide and demonstrate the accuracy and plausibility of certification decisions;
- b. The Organization to be informed about their performance against the applicable standards;
- c. Assurance Services International (ASI) in evaluating certification bodies' performance;
- d. FSC to monitor and evaluate the effects of FSC certification as well as for system integrity purposes; and
- e. stakeholders to be informed about the performance of The Organization (through public summaries).

Depending on the scope of certification (e.g., certification type, Ecosystem Services, NTFPs) and the type of evaluation (e.g., main evaluation, surveillance evaluation), different scope of data is collected in the evaluation report.

In addition to evaluation reports, certification bodies are required to prepare public summaries. These contain key information about each Organization's evaluation and that is made publicly available on the FSC database of registered certificates. The public summaries have the objective of providing transparency about forest management evaluations, enabling all interested or relevant parties to obtain information on certification decisions. The size and complexity of the forest operation influences the extent of the information contained in public summaries (i.e., public summaries for SLIMF and community forests are typically shorter than the reports of large forest operations).

1. The certification body shall use a default timeframe of 'since the last evaluation' for compiling reporting data, if not otherwise specified.

Table 8. Minimum mandatory content of the evaluation report and public summary.

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
CERTIFICATION BODY INFORMATION					
1. Certification body name and contact details.	x	x	x	x	x
2. Names, roles and expertise of the auditor(s), technical experts, local experts and any other personnel (e.g., interpreter) involved in the evaluation.	x	x	x	x	

⁴ The evaluation types have been abbreviated as follows: Main Evaluation (ME), Surveillance Evaluation (SE) and Re-Evaluation (RE).

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		

CERTIFICATE HOLDER INFORMATION

3. Information identifying The Organization (including the name and contact details).	x	x	x	x	x
4. General certificate information, including: a. Certificate and license codes and relevant dates (initial certification issue and expiry dates); b. Certification type (FM, FM/CoC) and specification as single or multiple MU, group certificate and whether implementing Ecosystem Services or Continuous Improvement Procedure.	x	x	x	x	x

EVALUATION PROCESS

Description of evaluation

5. Evaluation type (Pre-evaluation, Main evaluation, Surveillance evaluation, Re-evaluation).	x	x	x	x	x
6. Dates of the evaluation report and the public summary.	x	x	x	x	x
7. Codes of normative documents used in the evaluation.	x	x	x	x	x
8. Audit itinerary with dates and duration.	x	x	x	x	x
9. The person's days spent on auditing The Organization - excluding time spent on preparatory work, travelling to and from The Organization, report writing and decision making.	x	x	x	x	x
10. Justification for the audit time.	x	x	x	x	x
11. Specification of the audit method(s) employed for the evaluation (full on-site audit, remote audit or a combination of both) and justification for the selected audit method(s).	x	x	x	x	x
12. In the case of full or partial remote auditing, the tools and methods employed for the remote evaluation of The Organization.	x	x	x	x	x
13. Process and results of sampling, including: a. list of MUs selected for evaluation; b. sites audited within each selected MU. *optional for SLIMF and community forest MUs.	x	x	x	x	x
14. Rationale for selecting MUs for evaluation.	x	x	x	Optional	x

NOTE: In the case of multiple MU evaluations the report shall include an analysis and description of the area in terms of discrete MUs and conformity with the requirements about sampling system employed.

Stakeholder input

15. A description of the consultation process with stakeholders.	x	x	x	Optional	x
16. Stakeholders who were interviewed by auditors or who provided information in writing.	x	x	x	Optional	

NOTE: Personal data (including names of individuals) are not required to be stated in the evaluation report (nor in the public summary report). It is

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
<p>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 MU”; “representative from the local administration”.</p> <p>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.</p>					
17. Anonymized summary of the stakeholders’ comments and the corresponding action and conclusions from the certification body.	x	x	x	Optional	x
18. Information related to the review and resolution of any complaints raised by stakeholders with The Organization, or with the certification body, since the previous evaluation that is not gathered through the normative stakeholder consultations. The corresponding action and conclusions from the certification body shall also be included in the evaluation report.		x	x	Optional	
NOTE: The certification body may not include details about the complaint and complainant in the evaluation report and maintain this information in a separate file if this is necessary to protect privacy and confidentiality of the complainant.					
19. Identified conflicts between laws and/or regulations with certification requirements.	x	x	x	x	
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM					
Information on Management Units in the scope of certification					
20. List of MUs, including the following information for each MU:	x	x	x	x	x
a. Name, cadastral number or other means of identification for each MU;					
b. Eligibility for SLIMF and community forest;					
c. Type of tenure ownership;					
d. Type of tenure management.					
e. Forest zone (boreal, temperate, subtropical, tropical).					
f. Geographical location of the geometric centre of the MU. For forest management groups of SLIMF and/or community forests, the geographical location of the geometric centre of the group. NOTE: Requirement will be superseded by the requirement to provide spatial data of MUs according to the decision by FSC General Assembly (Motion 61/2021).					
g. Certified area of the MU					
h. Area of production forest, natural forest, plantation, restored areas, conservation areas, and area covered by ecosystem claims					
i. Stage/year of applying the Continuous Improvement Procedure (if applicable)					
j. Data necessary to calculate the AAF (Annual Administration Fee).					
21. An explanation of how MUs meet the eligibility criteria as a SLIMF or community forest (FSC-STD-01-003), if applicable.	x	x	x	x	
22. Description and area of the MUs or parts of an MU that have been excised from the scope of certification according to FSC-POL-20-003.	x	x	x	x	x

Forest Management Plan

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
23. A summary of the legislative, administrative and land use contexts in which The Organization operates, including the roles of responsible government agencies involved in aspects of forest management (e.g., harvest, monitoring, protection, health and safety, infrastructure, and other uses).	x		x	Optional	x
24. A description of the ownership and use of the lands and forest included in the scope of the scope of certification, including: a. ownership and use-rights (both legal and customary) of parties other than The Organization; b. non-forestry activities being undertaken within the area evaluated, whether they are undertaken by The Organization or by some other party (e.g., mining, industrial operations, agriculture, hunting, commercial tourism, etc.).	x		x	x	
25. A summary of the management plan, including a description of: a. the management objectives; b. the forest resources (land use and ownership status, socio-economic conditions, forest composition, profile of adjacent lands); c. the management structures (e.g., management structure, division of responsibilities, use of contractors, provision of training, etc.) implemented by The Organization; d. the silvicultural and/or other management systems being implemented (incl. harvesting techniques and equipment, rationale for species selection); e. the environmental safeguards; f. the management strategy for the identification and protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species and High Conservation Values; g. The Organization's procedures for monitoring growth, yield, and forest dynamics (incl. changes in flora and fauna), environmental and social impacts, and costs, productivity, and efficiency.	x		x	x	x ⁵
26. Annual allowable cut (AAC) for each MU, including estimate of the maximum sustainable yield for the main commercial species including: a. explanation of the assumptions (e.g., silvicultural) on which estimates are based; b. reference to the source of data (e.g., inventory data, permanent sample plots, yield tables) on which estimates are based.	x	x	x	x	x
27. Investments and measures taken for the prevention and control of natural hazards (fires, storm, flood, disease, pests, pathogens etc.).	x		x	x	
28. Categories of High Conservation Values present, including: a. area per category of HCV; b. any changes to the previously existing areas.	x	x	x	x	
29. The following elements shall be included in all reports for FM/CoC certificates: a. an evaluation of the risk of products from non-certified sources (including any areas specifically excluded from the scope of the certificate) being mixed with products from the forest area evaluated; b. a description of the control (tracking and tracing) systems in place that address the risk identified in a) above (If the evaluation does not include all the forest areas in which the Organization is involved, the report shall include an explicit statement explaining the special controls that are in place to ensure that there is no risk of confusion as to which activities or products are certified, and which are not);	x	x	x	x	

⁵If there are any significant changes to any of the items in the list presented under requirement #25, this shall be captured in the public summaries for surveillance evaluation reports.

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. a description of the final point or forest gate (e.g., log yard or depot) at which the certification body certifies that a product is sourced from the certified forest area; d. a description of the documentation or marking system that allows products from the certified forest area to be reliably identified as such at the point specified in c) above. 					
Pesticides					
30. List of pesticides (active ingredient and trade name) used, including the restricted, highly restricted and the prohibited highly hazardous pesticides (the prohibited pesticides are only allowed in emergency situations or by governmental order).	x	x	x	x	x
31. Location and area of use of chemical pesticides as per #30 above.	x	x	x	x	x
32. Quantity, number, period of use and frequency of applications and reason for use.	x	x	x	x	x
33. A summary of Environmental and Social Risk Assessment (ESRA).	x		x	x	x
34. Valid HHP derogation (if any).	x	x	x	x	x
Personnel					
35. Number of personnel (including contractors) working within the scope of certification (differentiated by gender).	x	x	x	x	
36. Total number of worker and contractor related accidents in the past calendar year differentiating between serious and fatal accidents.		x	x	x	
Commercial timber species and non-timber forest products					
37. Species, product codes and trade names of timber and non-timber forest products currently included in the scope of certification.	x	x	x	x	x
38. Harvested quantities per species/species group in the past calendar year.	x	x	x	x	x
39. Quantities sold with FSC claim in the past calendar year.		x	x	x	x
Forest Management Groups					
40. Total number of group members.	x	x	x	x	x
41. Description of division of responsibilities with entities included into the scope of certification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. group entity; b. resource manager; c. group member; d. forestry contractor. 	x	x	x	x	
42. Demonstration that any responsibilities for implementation of the applicable standard(s) at the group entity level (e.g., management planning, inventory, monitoring) are conformed with.	x	x	x	x	
43. Number of members sampled by group entity since the last evaluation.		x	x	x	
44. The maximum number of members according to FSC-STD-30-005 Clause 5.1.	x	x	x	x	

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
45. For each Group member ⁶ :					
a. name	x	x	x	x	x
b. contact details	x	x	x	x	
c. certified area	x	x	x	x	x
d. specification of whether the member is a contractor	x	x	x	x	x
e. the date of entering the group and, where relevant, the date of leaving the group NOTE: this requirement applies to both members and forestry contractors included in the group	x	x	x	x	x
NFSS Risk Assessment					
46. NFSS Risk Assessment code (if applicable)	x	x	x	x	x
47. Justification for changes in risk designations done by the certification body from low-risk to undesignated or undesignated to specified-risk		x	x	x	
48. Justification for changes in risk designations done by the certification body from specified-risk to undesignated or undesignated to low-risk		x	x	x	x
Ecosystem Services					
49. Date of the evaluation of the verified or validated ES impact in accordance with FSC-PRO-30-006.	x	x	x	x	x
50. Valid Ecosystem services claims with ES impact.	x	x	x	x	x
51. Name of the MU(s) covered by each claim.	x	x	x	x	x
52. For group certificates: a. the separation of responsibilities to demonstrate impact between the group entity level and the group member level; AND b. to which group members the verified or validated ecosystem services impact applies.	x	x	x	x	x
53. Date of verification or validation of the impact.	x	x	x	x	x
54. Date of approval of ESCD(s) (Ecosystem Services Certification Document).	x	x	x	x	x
55. Date ESCD valid until.	x	x	x	x	x
56. Name of the ES sponsors (if applicable).	x	x	x	x	x
57. Contact details of the ES sponsors (if applicable).	x	x	x	x	
58. Ecosystem Service Impacts sponsored.	x	x	x	x	x
59. MUs where the sponsored ES Impacts are located.	x	x	x	x	x
60. Start of sponsorships.	x	x	x	x	x

⁶ The elements of the reporting requirement #45 are not required to be registered in the public summary for members whose all MUs classify as SLIMF or community forests.

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
61. End of sponsorships.	x	x	x	x	x
AUDIT FINDINGS AND NON-CONFORMITIES					
62. A systematic presentation of the audit findings (including summarized findings from the pre-evaluation if applicable) on which the certification decision is based at the level of the indicators defined in the applicable standard(s), and whether the finding implies a non-conformity. a. for forest management groups, findings shall be presented separately for each MU evaluated, unless all the MUs within the scope of certification meet the eligibility criteria as SLIMF or community forest according to FSC-STD-01-003. b. for SLIMF and community forest groups and multiple MUs, findings for different MUs may be combined provided that the information about which site a particular finding relates to is maintained.	x	x	x	x	
63. A summarized presentation of findings with clear information to enable the reader to make an easy correlation between the requirements of each of the criteria of the FSC normative document used and the performance of the certified operation.	x		x	Optional	x
64. Description of any issues that were hard to assess (e.g., because of contradictory evidence, divergent stakeholder opinion, difficulty in interpreting the requirement), and explanation of the conclusion reached.	x	x	x	x	x
65. A description of any conditions and subsequent actions taken by The Organization prior to the certification decision to correct major or minor non-conformities that had been identified.	x	x	x	x	x
66. In cases where one or more stakeholders have alleged a non-conformity, but the auditors have concluded that certification should be granted, the report shall explain why the auditors concluded there was no non-conformity, or why the alleged non-conformity was considered minor, or what action was taken to correct the non-conformity prior to granting certification.	x		x	x	x
67. A recommendation from the auditor regarding: a. Whether or not The Organization is in continued conformity with the certification requirements. b. Whether or not the certificate should be maintained, or if any corrective measures shall be taken.		x		x	x
68. Description of potential infringements of the FSC Policy for Association if the certification body has identified any during the evaluation.	x	x	x	x	
REVIEW					
69. Review finalization date.	x	x	x	x	
70. Review type (Simple report review or Peer review).	x	x	x	x	
71. Reviewer name.	x	x	x	x	
72. Reviewer expertise.	x	x	x	x	
73. Auditor response.	x	x	x	x	

Information elements	Evaluation Type ⁴			For SLIMF and community forests	Public Summary
	ME	SE	RE		
CERTIFICATION DECISION					
74. Certification decision.	x	x	x	x	x
75. Certification decision date.	x	x	x	x	x
76. Name of the decision maker.	x	x	x	x	

ANNEX 5 CERTIFICATION BODY ADAPTATION OF THE NFSS RISK ASSESSMENT AT THE ORGANIZATION LEVEL

1. After the first re-evaluation, the certification body may review and change the risk designations of the NFSS Risk Assessment for The Organization if there are justified reasons for this.

NOTE: The certification body may conduct periodic review of all risk designations from the NFSS Risk Assessment or focus on individual risk designations if there is evidence suggesting a specific risk designation could be changed.

- 1.1. To change the risk designation according to Clause 3.2, the certification body shall at minimum use the risk factors provided in the applicable NFSS Risk Assessment (see Clause 3.1 b).
- 1.2. A change to the risk designation together with its justification shall be evidence-based and the changes shall be registered in the evaluation report (Annex 4).
- 1.3. The changes in risk designations from specified-risk to undesignated risk or from undesignated risk to low-risk shall be registered in the public summary (Annex 4).

Box 3. Examples of factors that could be used to adapt and change the NFSS Risk Assessment after the first re-evaluation at the level of The Organization

This information box illustrates some examples of what type of risk factors could be considered by the certification body when assessing whether a change in a risk designation is justified at the level of The Organization. The examples provide a Criterion from the FSC-STD-01-001 *FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship* and relevant risk factors that could be used to justify a change the risk designation with either an upgrade or downgrade related to the risk designation provided in the applicable NFSS Risk Assessment.

Example 1. Protecting the MU from unauthorized or illegal activities (Criterion 1.4)

The Organization shall develop and implement measures, and/or shall engage with regulatory agencies, to systematically protect the Management Unit* from unauthorized or illegal resource use, settlement and other illegal activities.*

Potential risk factors for the certification body to consider:

- Ability to prevent and implement measures to control unlicensed recreational use resulting in illegal activities (unauthorized campfire, littering etc.).
- Demonstrated cooperation with relevant regulatory bodies or governmental agencies to control unauthorized or illegal activities within the MU.
- Existence of personnel and resources to detect and control illegal activities.

Example 2. Health and safety (Criterion 2.3)

The Organization shall* implement health and safety practices to protect workers* from occupational safety and health hazards. These practices shall*, proportionate to scale, intensity and risk* of management activities, meet or exceed the recommendations of the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work.*

Potential risk factors for the certification body to consider:

- Turnover of forest workers or contractors.
- Internal monitoring system and findings from internal monitoring.
- Investment into training of forest workers and contractors.
- Demonstrated access and uptake of relevant training and guidance related to health and safety.



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