



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE FOREST MANAGEMENT EVALUATIONS STANDARD



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## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) aims to clarify aspects related to the content of <FSC-STD-20-007 V4-0 Forest Management Evaluations Standard>.

The questions included into this FAQ document have been compiled as a result of the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) first calibration activities related to the revised Forest Management Evaluations standard.

This FAQ is not normative and has been developed for all interested stakeholders. This document will be updated on a regular basis.

Requests for additional topics and questions to be considered in the FAQ can be sent to [forestmanagement@fsc.org](mailto:forestmanagement@fsc.org).

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## 1. Application of the standard

1. Do all certificate holders need to be evaluated according to the revised standard during the transition period (July 2023 – December 2024), or is that the deadline by which certification bodies need to have their systems updated?

The <[FSC-STD-20-007 V4-0 Forest Management Evaluations](#)> provides the specific accreditation requirements for FSC forest management evaluations. The standard lays out requirements for certification bodies to evaluate the conformity of Forest Management (FM) and Forest Management Chain of Custody (FM/CoC) certificate holders and to make certification decisions.

Furthermore, the FSC-STD-20-007 requirements are used as a basis for evaluating the conformity of certification bodies. The transition period allows the certification bodies a timeframe for transitioning from the V3-0 into using the V4-0 of the standard.

From the end of the transition period certification bodies are required to apply the revised version of the standard as the accreditation standard for forest management evaluations.

During the transition period, certification bodies will have to update their systems and be assessed against them. This does not automatically mean that each FM or FM/CoC certificate holder would need to be evaluated for conformity using the new version of the standard during the transition period.

<[FSC-PRO-01-001 V4-0 The Development and Revision of FSC Requirements](#)> states the following:

*11.6 By the transition end date:*

- a) all certificate holders or certification bodies (as applicable) shall have been evaluated against the revised requirements;*
- b) all major nonconformities that were identified against the revised set of requirements shall have been corrected.*

## 2. Changes to the scope of FM/CoC certification

1. Is there an expected format or quality requirements for providing justification for the selected audit method in the digital audit report template? How should justification look like (i.e., what is the minimum FSC requires for justification)?

No, there are no minimum requirements for the type of justification expected to be compiled by the certification body when determining a feasible audit method for an audit.

### 3. Remote auditing and audit method justification

1. In certain instances, the standard requires the use of remote auditing as the default audit method (“shall” for some surveillances) for small or low intensity managed forest (SLIMF)/ community forests. However, remote auditing cannot discover certain potential problems (e.g., insufficient water protection, stream disturbances). Is the use of remote auditing compulsory in cases where the certification body cannot obtain sufficient evidence of conformity, and would likely be unable to evaluate conformity of each requirement?

In cases where a certification body has a justified reason for conducting an on-site audit, this is allowed in all instances – even if the standard by default would require a remote audit to be conducted for a specific surveillance evaluation of a SLIMF or a community forest. Section 5 of the <[FSC-STD-20-007 V4-0 Forest Management Evaluations](#)> outlines possibilities for providing justification for on-site auditing in the case where a remote audit would be the default option for an upcoming evaluation.

The certification body is nonetheless, for each evaluation, required to provide justification for the selected audit method and audit duration.

2. In instances where the certification body decides to conduct the evaluation by applying both the remote and on-site audit methods, is the certification body expected to justify this in the evaluation report?

Yes, the certification body is required to provide a justification for the selected audit method for each evaluation – regardless of whether the audit is conducted fully as an on-site or remote audit, or as a combination of both.

3. Are there any technical requirements for remote forest management auditing; especially performance-based indicators?

The standard provides the framework for the certification bodies on which they are expected to make the decision on what type of audit method will be applied for each evaluation. The standard does not, however, provide any technical requirements as to how remote auditing is expected to be carried out, nor does it provide any descriptive approaches or suggest any technologies to be used by the certification bodies when conducting remote audits.

### 4. Forest Stewardship Standard (FSS) Risk Assessment

1. How many FSS Risk Assessment have been developed and are in effect?

There are no FSS Risk Assessments currently in effect to this date (November 2023). However, there are some countries currently engaging with FSC International to develop their first FSS Risk Assessments.

2. Can you apply <[FSC-PRO-60-010 Development of a Forest Stewardship Standard Risk Assessment](#)> and develop a FSS Risk Assessment for Interim Forest Stewardship Standards (“CB standards”)?

No, FSC-PRO-60-010 is currently only applicable to national Forest Stewardship Standards in countries where there is an established FSC Network Partner.

3. Currently many FSS are based on the V4-0 of the FSC Principles and Criteria. Is FSC-PRO-60-010 applicable in these cases?

No, FSC-PRO-60-010 is only applicable to FSS that are based on the version 5 of the FSC Principles and Criteria.

**4. Are certification bodies required to develop a FSS Risk Assessment in the absence of an approved and effective FSS Risk Assessment?**

No, FSC-PRO-60-010 currently only allows the development of an FSS Risk Assessment through an FSC Network Partner, as FSC is in a learning phase in the application of the procedure.

**5. Certification body adaptation of the FSS Risk Assessment risk designations**

**1. Could the risk designation adaptation processes lead to conflict with Assurance Services International (ASI)?**

Certification bodies are allowed to adapt the risk designations of the FSS Risk Assessments (FSC-PRO-60-010) at the level of individual organizations according to FSC-STD-20-007. The standard requires the certification body to justify and report any change to the risk designations as part of their forest management evaluation reporting. ASI, or any stakeholder, may disagree with the adapted risk designations.

Any conflict arising from the adaptation of the FSS Risk Assessment designations should be dealt with as any other conflict identified as part of the certification process.

**6. Public summaries**

**1. Should non-conformities be part of the public summary?**

Yes, a list of non-conformities for all types of evaluations (main, surveillance and re-evaluation) should be included in the public summaries. This also applies for evaluations of SLIMF and community forests.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ASI</b>	Assurance Services International
<b>CoC</b>	Chain of Custody
<b>FM</b>	Forest Management
<b>FSC</b>	Forest Stewardship Council
<b>FSS</b>	Forest Stewardship Standard
<b>SLIMF</b>	Small or low intensity managed forest



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