



Frequently Asked Questions

FAQ ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCEDURE

Version 1



Title: FAQ on Continuous Improvement Procedure

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

This set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) aims to clarify aspects related to the content of <FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-1 Continuous Improvement Procedure>.

The questions included in this FAQ document have been compiled as a result of input from Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) webinars, training sessions (both in-person and virtual) and email communications with stakeholders.

This FAQ is non-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 this FAQ can be sent to communityfamilyforests@fsc.org.

PART I REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCEDURE (CIP) USERS

1.1. Who can use the Continuous Improvement Procedure (CIP)?

The CIP is available to Organizations with Management Units (MU) that conform with the eligibility criteria for small or low-intensity managed forests (SLIMF) or community forests (CF). These criteria are specified in [<FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0 SLIMF and Community Forest Eligibility Criteria>](#).

1.2. If I manage my forest only for conservation purposes, must it be smaller than 100 ha to be eligible for the CIP?

If a forest is managed solely for conservation purposes, it is likely to qualify as 'low intensity' under the SLIMF and CF Eligibility Criteria [<FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0>](#). A Management Unit (MU) can meet SLIMF criteria either by being classified as 'small' or being managed with 'low intensity'.

If timber is harvested below the maximum threshold¹ set by FSC, the CIP can be applied for FSC certification regardless of the size of the Management Unit. Additionally, if only non-timber forest products are harvested, the Management Unit also qualifies as 'low intensity managed'.

To determine the applicable threshold for 'low intensity management' in your region, please refer to the FSC standard in your country to check whether the international threshold has been adopted or adapted.

1.3. Can other organizations use the initial Conformity Self-Check, or is it exclusive to CIP users?

The initial Conformity Self-Check is a tool available to any Organization interested in obtaining FSC certification. It helps Organizations familiarize themselves with the FSC certification requirements and to conduct a gap analysis between the FSC requirements and their current practices.

The results of the gap analysis enable the development of a work plan towards FSC certification. For CIP users, this tool also aids in developing the required Action Plan.

1.4. Can members of an existing Forest management (FM) Group members apply the CIP?

Yes, members of an FM Group who meet the [<FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0 SLIMF and Community Forest Eligibility Criteria>](#) can apply the CIP.

New FM groups can be formed exclusively by CIP users (starting as a group) while existing FM groups can integrate new members who apply the CIP. If a group consists of both CIP users and non-CIP users, the Group Entity shall organize them into separate subgroups and maintain a membership register (for more details on the organization of FM Groups, please refer to [<FSC-STD-30-005 V2-1 Forest Management Groups>](#)).

¹ Management units may qualify as 'low intensity' when either:

- a) the rate of harvesting is less than 20% of the mean annual increment (MAI) within the total production forest area of the management unit, AND
- b) the annual harvest from the total production forest area is less than 5,000 m³, OR
- c) the average annual harvest from the total production forest is less than 5,000 m³/year during the certification cycle.

(Source: Clause 1.3.1 of [<FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0 SLIMF and Community Forest Eligibility Criteria>](#)).

PART II REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES

2.1. When is FSC certification granted under the CIP?

FSC certification is granted after the main evaluation if conformity with the Core Criteria is demonstrated, and the Action Plan conforms with the CIP requirements. Once these conditions are met, FSC FM Certification is granted, providing users full access to FSC trademarks, merchandising opportunities, and other benefits.

2.2. Does the CIP simplify the requirements for FSC certification for SLIMF and CF?

No, requirements for FSC Forest Management Certification remain the same, as defined in the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard – national, regional, or interim– regardless of the certification process. The CIP is a procedure that regulates when and how to demonstrate conformity with these requirements and adapts the general FSC evaluation rules when applying the CIP but does not change the standards themselves.

2.3. Does FSC provide a list of site-disturbing activities?

Site-disturbing activities are defined as “*forest management activities with a risk of adversely impacting any value of the forest, including economic, environmental, and/or social values.*” However, due to the diversity of forests and management activities globally – and since some activities may be site-disturbing in certain forests but not in others – FSC does not maintain a definitive list.

Instead, FSC provides examples of possible site-disturbing and non-site-disturbing activities (refer to Information Box 1 ‘Examples of active and inactive management’ of <FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-1>), and each Organization must develop its own list of site-disturbing activities as part of the Action Plan – Step 1. This list must be approved by the certification body during the main evaluation.

2.4. Does Advice Note ADV-20-007-22 apply to certificate holders or applicants seeking forest management certification through the < FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-1>?

Yes, Advice Note <ADV-20-007-22: Requirements for certificate holders introduced by the Policy to Address Conversion and M37/2021>, effective since July 2023, applies to all certificate holders and applicants, including those pursuing certification through the <FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-1 Continuous Improvement Procedure>.

<ADV-20-007-22> provides guidance on implementing key changes introduced by Motion 37/2021 to the FSC Principles and Criteria (P&C), particularly Criteria 6.9, 6.10, and the new Criterion 6.11, which align with the Policy to Address Conversion. These changes regulate their application until relevant Forest Stewardship Standards are revised to incorporate the updated requirements.

The scope of <ADV-20-007-22> applies to any person or entity holding or applying for FSC Forest Management Certification, including CIP users, as well as certification bodies conducting evaluations within the forest management accreditation scope.

ABBREVIATIONS

CIP	Continuous Improvement Procedure
CF	Community Forests
FM	Forest Management
FSS	Forest Stewardship Standard
GE	Group Entity
MU	Management Unit
PSU	Performance and Standards Unit
SLIMF	Small or Low Intensity Managed Forest



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