



FSC MONITORING AND EVALUATION PUBLIC REPORT 2022

Monitoring performances, evaluating outcomes and
impacts, learning

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1. MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

1.1. Scope and boundaries of FSC Monitoring and Evaluation system

1.1.1. Thematic boundaries

Since 2021, FSC Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is divided into two components with the following thematic scopes:

A. FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026

Monitoring and evaluation activities in this component aim at tracking the organization's progress against the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026. The Global Strategy, published in December 2020, defines strategic objectives of the FSC system. It is structured with three strategies - creating forest solutions, transforming markets and catalysing change at the society level. Each of these strategies is divided into four goals and eight intended outcomes that all work towards achieving FSC's 2026 objective and 2050 vision. This component has a high-level scope aiming to demonstrate the effects of the FSC system at the societal level, which can also be understood as the systemic impacts of FSC.

B. FSC-certification of forest management

Monitoring and evaluation activities in this component focus on the reach of FSC standards and on the outcomes and impacts of FSC-certification on forest value and benefits. This component is based on FSC's Theory of Change, also called The Roadmap to Forest Certification Impacts. The Roadmap builds on FSC Principles & Criteria for forest stewardship and include explicit mention of social, environmental and economic aspects of forest management. This component represents FSC's core M&E framework and its scope has been revised in 2022. It is now composed of three (3) pillars:

1. **Outcome-orientation:**

Outcome orientation in this framework means that standard setting and the implementation of normative requirements are guided by a few prioritized key intended outcomes. These outcomes are to be determined during the development of a given normative document. The key intended outcomes will constitute the basis for the requirements to be included in a normative document. These key intended outcomes are to be formulated so that they can serve both for the users to implement as well as to gather monitoring data.

2. **Impact evaluations:**

Impact evaluations test precise hypotheses about the effects of FSC-certification on a range of social, environmental, and economic topics with the aim to assess the specific added-value of FSC, or what is attributable to FSC. Therefore, they involve the comparison of carefully selected certified and uncertified forests, and/or the comparison of pre- vs post-certification situations. Impact evaluations are usually commissioned to external researchers to collect various data using robust methodologies and run statistical analysis to explore the effects of various variables on selected topics.

3. Performance monitoring:

Performance monitoring regularly tracks performance data on all, or a selected sample of certificate holders. Performance data should be understood as basic data about the reach of FSC standards, (such as the status, distribution and characteristics of FSC-certified operations), and about the direct short-term outcomes of FSC-certification on forest management practices. Additionally, performance data will include data collected because of outcome orientation. Availability of quality data and analytical tools is an important enabler of performance monitoring, and hence this M&E pillar is highly dependent on other deliverables by FSC.

1.1.2. Organizational boundaries

FSC M&E system is integrated into many departments at FSC International, as well as supported by the activities of FSC Network Partners.

Since October 2021, central functions of the M&E system are delegated to the general functions in FSC Performance and Standards Unit (PSU), while the complementary data collection and analytical functions are hosted by the Data & Innovation (DI) in the Technology and Information Unit.

Apart from core M&E functions in PSU and DI, the following departments at FSC cover significant functions related to monitoring, evaluation, and learning:

- **Other programs in Performance and Standards Unit (PSU):** Responsible for standard-setting processes and integrating learnings from the standard performance into revision processes. This data comes from scientific findings and the collection and evaluation of feedback from stakeholders participating in standard-setting processes. The unit is also working on risk-based approaches to the development normative requirements and auditing. These will be reflected in impact and performance monitoring.

M&E and other programs in PSU exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes, as well as information, is shared with senior management by PSU through established reporting lines (global leadership, Board of Directors).

- **Global Network Unit (GNU) and FSC Network Partners around the globe:** Facilitates the development of FSC national standards for forest management and controlled wood risk assessments, where the integration of learnings and monitoring of the performance takes place. The unit is also responsible for managing national stakeholders and support to other key functions of FSC on the ground.

M&E and GNU exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes. Information is also shared with senior management by GNU through established reporting lines (global leadership, Board of Directors).

- **Technology and Information Unit:** The TIU is responsible for handling disputes in FSC which are important for performance and impact evaluations because they reveal specific non-conformances with FSC requirements or concerns, and outcomes related to them. Disputes

are regulated by normative requirements developed by the unit, for which elements of PSU work in the standard-setting above apply.

Other programs of the **Technology and Information Unit (TIU)** include supply chain integrity and IT systems. Collaboration with these departments takes place continually to ensure the integrity of FSC data, as well as for learning and evaluation purposes.

- **Markets and Communications Unit (MCU):** Supports key value chains in FSC chain of custody, monitoring consumer and media opinion of FSC, exploring new markets for potential expansion of FSC certification (therefore a potential increase of FSC impact). The unit is also conducting a relevant standard-setting process (e.g. trademark standard), for which elements of PSU work above apply. These work areas relate to the systemic impact of FSC and impacts of CoC certification. M&E and MCU exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes. Information is also shared with senior management by MCU through established reporting lines (global leadership, Board of Directors).
- **Engagement:** Consists of several programs and functions supporting systemic impacts, integration of the newest trends and initiatives related to sustainability in the whole FSC system (e.g. climate change, landscape approach), and engagement with the research community.
- The monitoring and evaluation system of the **Indigenous Foundation**, established in 2021, aims at monitoring the implementation and progress of specific projects.

1.2. Plan for expansion

Current resources covering M&E activities and following recent changes are described in the next section. In addition, 2 additional FTE are planned to join the core M&E team in 2023: one Monitoring & Evaluation Officer and one Monitoring & Evaluation Manager, making a total of 4 FTE. This structure is expected to be sufficient to fulfill the objectives of the system, including the implementation of outcome orientation and the development of more analytics as part of performance monitoring. The Data & Innovation team expects to have 2 additional FTE in 2023: one Geospatial Information System Developer and one Data Engineer, making a total of 5.5 FTE.

1.3. Resources, roles, and responsibilities

The current M&E system consists of the following key functions:

- Evaluation and Learning Manager: responsible for impact area, theory of change and organizational M&E set up (1 FTE, PSU).
- Research Officer: responsible for integrating M&E learnings and development of a research portal (0.5 FTE, PSU).
- System Performance Director: overseeing the M&E activities and leading on streamlining FSC requirements (including outcome orientation and strengthened M&E). This is a new leadership position created in FSC, including dedicated senior oversight to M&E aspects.
- Student Assistant: providing support to the Program (0,5 FTE, PSU).
- GIS and Earth Observation Manager (1 FTE, DI).
- Data Analyst (1 FTE, DI).

The Data Analyst and the GIS and Earth Observation Manager are responsible for compiling data and running analytics in the Program.

- Program Manager: responsible for the strategic development, management, and deliverables in the Program (1 FTE, DI).

1.4. Data management

The FSC Certificate Database is the system for storing, organizing, and facilitating analysis and use of performance monitoring data. It currently uses a Salesforce interface, where certification bodies upload reports from the certification process and other relevant information. Data from the Salesforce is exported to other formats for the analysis (e.g. excel), or a connection to reporting tools is made (e.g. Power BI).

The results of the analysis are stored outside of Salesforce in relevant folders located on FSC servers (i.e. continually synced and backed up), with relevant access rights. Additionally, several sets of qualitative and quantitative data on standard-setting processes, the market and consumers are collected, analyzed, and stored by relevant units (PSU, MCU, GNU).

FSC is currently updating the key data infrastructure and migration to a more effective data management platform, allowing for a better integration of various databases and platforms under development. This process involves the revision of key data schemas towards improved data quality and increased analytical capability of FSC.

FSC has procedures to protect confidential and proprietary data. Transparency and data sharing aspects are also part of the certification body contracts with their clients.

Besides the certification data, FSC established different confidentiality agreements with different partners, according to FSC's legislative framework. Confidentiality agreements are part of nearly every project and every contractual engagement (e.g. funding or services). All confidentiality agreements are overseen by FSC's Legal Department. When publicizing the data, FSC searches and obtains consent from relevant parties as applicable. Upon the introduction of General Data Protection Regulation by the European Union (GDPR), FSC has revised and adapted the procedures for handling personal data.

The legal barriers to the use of data for the implementation of the M&E system are addressed by the existing procedures for data protection. Additionally, when barriers are identified, FSC is engaging with the data holders via its Legal Department to come to a solution.

Data and knowledge are the key digital asset of FSC to provide transparency for stakeholders and ensure credibility of the certification scheme. Only with data and knowledge can FSC monitor its performance and evaluate impact.

FSC Technology and Information Unit takes overall responsibility of data management covering a broad scope of activities including data management infrastructure, data model, metadata management, data standardization, data quality control, storage and distribution of data, data security and data service. The components of data management, as well as respective infrastructure and projects, are illustrated in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Data management components

Infrastructure	Data model (sources)	Quality control	Standardization	Data security	Data services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamics • Salesforce • MYSQL • MS Azure • ESRI Arc GIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID management schema • Certificate management schema • Salesforce CRM schema 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and redesign of key data schemas • Analysis of data and necessary corrections • Automation of workflows and scripts for consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing internally aligned data schemas and formats • Unique and consistent references to existing external data standards (Tree species and pesticides nomenclature, country names and boundaries) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data protection and security procedures • GDPR task force oversight • Integrated and secure ID management • Row level security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSC network report • FSC Facts and Figures • FSC On the Map • Management reports • Tableau reporting dashboard

The goal of FSC’s data management is to develop a data management strategy, to ensure data security of both business and privacy data, and to promote the data and knowledge across units. FSC is working on a series of a data-related projects tackling the challenges of data management, sharing and exposure, which include (compare Fig. 1):

- Data migration;
- Information and Data Standard for Sustainability: ISEAL – funded project to develop a common data schema for exposure of key data relevant across certification schemes;
- FM Digital Reporting project to align and collect data from FM certification reports; and
- FSC on the Map to showcase voluntarily provided geospatial representation of FSC certified areas.

FSC is continuously working on reviewing and improving the consistency of various resources combined with the retirement of unnecessary intermediary data storage and systems.

For geospatial data management, FSC is using ESRI tools and services to process and publish information and applications.

FSC provides data services across units, network partners, ASI, FSC management and interested stakeholders via business intelligence tools such as Microsoft Power BI and Tableau. Reports and dashboards are designed and refreshed regularly, providing access with credential control with active directory identity management. The use of BI tools ensures that consistent, one source data is shared via a user-friendly interface and graphic visuals, which enables insights, inspiration, analytics and decision making by a good organizational data sharing culture.

2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN M&E SYSTEM DESIGN

2.1. Stakeholder mapping and engagement

2.1.1. Stakeholder identification

Categories of stakeholders relevant for FSC’s Monitoring and Evaluation system are revised on an annual basis as part of the revision of this document. The identification of stakeholder

categories was done in 2020. Additionally, relevant stakeholders are consulted for specific projects/events.

Core stakeholder categories for the FSC Monitoring and Evaluation system are:

- External academic researchers and consultants
- FSC Global leadership forum
 - Directors of FSC Units
 - Regional directors and chosen network representatives
- FSC program areas relevant for monitoring and evaluation
 - Forest Management
 - Chain of Custody
 - Controlled Wood
 - Ecosystem Services
 - System Performance
 - Value Chain Development
 - Marketing
 - Trademark
 - Communications
 - FSC Indigenous Foundation
 - Community & Family Forests
 - Engagement (FSC Membership and partnerships)
 - Dispute Resolution
 - All programs within the Technology and Information Unit
- Stakeholders were actively engaged in 2020 and the M&E Advisory Group was established in January 2020 consisting of representatives across the above program and bodies.

2.1.2. Stakeholder consultation

In 2022, FSC staff and the management was consulted to confirm the list of indicators to be reported upon for tracking progress against FSC Global Strategy and to provide data to update the 2021 data report with 2022 data.

FSC welcomes the feedback on the above at any point of time at impacts@fsc.org.

Apart from the above, FSC is collecting feedback on system performance as part of standard-setting and revision processes. This feedback is collected and managed by relevant departments and shared with M&E as relevant.

3. INTENDED AND UNINTENDED IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

In 2021, the intended and unintended impacts and outcomes of FSC have been revised and are currently defined at two complementary levels:

- High-level strategic intended impacts and outcomes have been defined as part of the development of FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026 by the Board of Directors following a theory of change process. These intended impacts concern most units comprising FSC International and its Network Partners across the globe and the different activities that are being implemented through them.
- More detailed forest-level intended impacts and outcomes have been defined as part of the development of the Roadmap to Forest Certification Impacts.

The above components replaced the theory of change developed in 2015.

4. PERFORMANCE MONITORING, OUTCOMES AND IMPACT EVALUATIONS

Monitoring, evaluation and learning focuses mainly on forest management certification since it is the core of FSC's mission and vision. Other system areas such as chain of custody, controlled wood, and systemic impacts may intensify or decrease the impact of forest management certification; therefore, these are not treated as a priority.

The key projects described below have been included in the scope of the M&E program in 2022:

4.1. Performance monitoring

FM Digital Reporting

Key to performance monitoring is the data collected through the certification process and included in the certification reports. Since 2019, FSC has invested in developing the capacity to access and analyze such data more efficiently. Instead of manual extraction and analysis of the certification data, we initiated the **FM Digital Reporting** project. This project consists of developing an online platform for systematic and efficient collection of audit data from forest management certification. Its main goal is to enable data standardization, collection, and automatic transfer to FSC databases, which will significantly increase the scope of possible analytics.

Utilizing an online platform for systematic and efficient collection of audit data from forest management certification, standardizes and transforms the traditional forest management audit reports from unstructured documents to structured and standardized online relational database. The online reports will enable FSC to access audit data directly, aggregate them, and identify trends, outcomes, and risk areas to evaluate and improve the FSC system.

The FM Digital reporting aims to ease the current duplicated processes for data entries and reports, facilitate automation of data validation, transfer, and public summary generation. It will provide machine-facilitated translation to reduce the workload of certification bodies.

The project will enhance the transparency of the overall FSC system, provide data access to general stakeholders, and the FM Digital reporting provides the starting point of traceability of FSC certified products. It will reduce the workload for certification bodies by streamlining report and data processing steps.

The FM Digital reporting will also ensure that public summaries are automatically created in a standardized format, making it much easier for researchers and stakeholders to use and analyze the data from the ground.

In 2022, thanks to good progress done on technical aspects and a multi-stakeholder participation process, the project offers a sound solution that has already been deployed and is usable.

Monitoring performance of FM certificate holders

In recent years, FSC has developed the use of geospatial data (detailed boundaries of FM certificate holders, **FSC on the Map** project) and remote sensing analysis. This has led in 2022 to the publication of an interactive dashboard presenting the results of initial remote sensing analysis on a sample of FSC-certified forests. Specifically, we have explored the evolution of different categories of vegetation and of forest vegetation health for specific certificate holders in New-Zealand. We have also conducted country-

level analysis of the changes in percentage of forest cover in Canada and New-Zealand, covering the full set of certificate holders in these countries.

FSC's reach

FSC analyzes certification status in real-time using interactive reports (FSC Facts and Figures, Internal Power BI dashboards). On a semi-annual basis, FSC has been compiling the data originating from certification reports for analytical purposes. This process will be replaced with the FM Digital Reporting.

In 2022, the M&E team has started the development of additional interactive dashboards aiming at monitoring the uptake of FSC standards and normative documents with many more details than in the past, and therefore relevant for program-level monitoring. These analyses and dashboards are works in progress and will be finalized in 2023.

Various performance monitoring elements have been traditionally conducted by many departments within FSC, which will continue in close collaboration with M&E/DI:

- **Performance and Standards Unit (PSU):** analyzing the performance of the international FSC standards and introducing improvements based on evaluation of standard implementation. Through the standard-setting processes and the oversight of their implementation, we also monitor the performance indirectly, implementing necessary amendments to the system as relevant.
- **Markets and Communications Unit (MCU):** analyzing market-related data and adjusting work areas accordingly (e.g. prioritization of value chains, revision of the relevant standards, communication strategies).
- **Technology and Information Unit (TIU):** analyzing the contents and frequency of disputes, standard revision processes (including relevant international procedures and support to national FSC normative frameworks).
- **Global Integrity and Alignment Unit (GIA):** there are different initiatives within GIA and the FSC Network that collect and systematize FSC-relevant country information.

The processes of data collection by certification bodies are detailed in accreditation standards and data quality is monitored in the Salesforce. Data submission and quality by certification bodies are part of the regular evaluation of certification bodies by ASI.

4.2. Outcomes and impact evaluations

Complementary to performance monitoring are outcomes and impacts evaluations. These are undertaken as part of internal outcomes evaluations, and external in-depth evaluations.

In 2021, a project aimed at evaluating the effects of FSC certification on biodiversity conservation in Gabon using the environmental DNA (eDNA) methodology was initiated. In 2022, several eDNA samples were collected in two FSC-certified and two uncertified forestry concessions. The samples have now been analyzed using genetic and bioinformatic methodologies and the associated results have been extracted. The team is now collaborating with an external researcher to deepen the statistical analysis and write a scientific report with the results, which will extend to 2023.

Additionally, the M&E team is preparing a new research proposal to evaluate the social impacts of FSC-certification in Brazil, covering workers and local communities, including Indigenous Peoples. The project is planned to start in 2023.

To stimulate the production of external impact evaluations and to increase their relevance and scientific robustness, FSC engages with researchers. Engagement with researchers includes participation in research projects, compilation, and distribution of the list of the main research topics interesting for FSC, and participation in scientific conferences (not possible in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic). Engagement with the research community gives FSC a chance to address questions relevant for monitoring and evaluation, to support robust methodology development or take measures that help to achieve accurate, reliable, and relevant findings.

In addition to these evaluations directly conducted or led by FSC, we have continued to work on the FSC Research Portal to foster the communication of scientific information among FSC stakeholders through an online platform, including evidence of outcomes and impacts. More information is provided in section 5.1 below.

5. LEARNING AND IMPROVING

5.1. Learning from the Monitoring and Evaluation system

In 2022, the main highlights of the M&E program for fostering institutional learning have been:

- The publication of the **Global Strategy 2021 data report**. The interactive dashboard was shared with FSC staff and members and contains more than 50 data visualizations covering the different main strategies, goals and intended outcomes of FSC Global Strategy. This is the first time that FSC reports on high-level strategic progress using data and appears has a new and important way for the organization to learn about its actions and progress.
- The continuation of the development of **the FSC Research Portal**; a platform compiling scientific literature directly related to the impact of FSC or relevant to the activities of FSC. The primary goal of this public repository is to make scientific findings more easily accessible and digestible to all stakeholders, and therefore foster insight-driven decision making and the relevant and impactful development of the FSC system. So far, the development of the Research Portal has involved the definition of metadata to characterize scientific studies and their key findings and make them easily searchable and accessible. In 2022, the curation of metadata and information about scientific studies continued. In addition, design of the user interface is now complete and the functional specifications have been defined. The production will start in 2023, when the launch of the beta version is planned. Until the portal is launched, and interested public can access some of the key scientific references about FSC [here](#), as well as on the “[Sustainability Impacts Learning Platform](#)” (maintained in collaboration between the Food Lab, ISEAL, and WWF) and the [Evidensia](#) platform.

Throughout 2022, the M&E team has regularly communicated the development and status of performance and monitoring related projects and data initiatives to a variety of stakeholders. This communication includes, but is not limited to – online and in-person sessions with FSC Members, management and staff.

Furthermore, various aspects of the Monitoring and Evaluation system are reported to the FSC Global Leadership Forum (GLF) regularly, including through in-person sessions at the GLF meetings, or existing reporting tools (e.g. Power BI dashboards, GIS dashboards).

6. TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

6.1. Publicly available information about monitoring and evaluation

FSC provides information on its M&E system on the FSC website and in the present report. This publicly available information encompasses:

- A contact point for submission of any comments, questions, or complaints about M&E activities.
- A description of the current scope and boundaries of the M&E system, and if appropriate, the plan for expansion.
- An explanation of the scheme's strategies intended outcomes and impacts, and the most significant unintended effects.
- A list of all indicators being used in the M&E system.
- Links to the most relevant independent impact evaluations and their associated results.
- Results from internal outcome evaluations.



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