



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE POLICY TO ADDRESS CONVERSION AND RELATED ADVICE NOTES



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INTRODUCTION

This set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) aims to clarify aspects related to the implementation of:

1. <FSC-POL-01-007 Policy to Address Conversion>
2. <ADVICE-20-007-22 Advice Note on requirements for certificate holders introduced by the Policy to Address Conversion and M37/2021> compiled under <FSC-DIR-20-007 FSC Directive on Forest Management Evaluations>

This FAQs is non-normative and was developed for all interested stakeholders. This document will be updated regularly.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Policy to Address Conversion

- 1. Is policy element 3 only applicable to organizations who are seeking certification, and does not apply to organizations who have already gained certification?**

Yes, according to Scope section, item 3, <FSC-POL-01-007 Policy to Address Conversion> does not apply to conversion activities that have taken place prior to 31 December 2020 on management units acquired by organizations not involved in such activities and that held FSC forest management certification at the time of the policy becoming effective (see page 5). This means that existing certificate holders with conversions after November 1994 and before 31 December 2020, for which they were not responsible, are not required to conduct remedy.

- 2. What are the impacts for existing certificate holders (certified as of 1 July 2023) who are directly or indirectly responsible for conversions which occurred prior to 31 December 2020?**

According to Criterion 6.10 in the previous version of FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship (version 5-2), management units containing plantations that were established on areas converted from natural forests after November 1994 could not be certified except if the Organization was not directly or indirectly responsible for the conversion, or if the conversion affected a very limited portion of the area of the management unit and was producing conservation benefits.

Existing certificate holders certified under this exception are not required to conduct a remedy process for past harms. However, as of 1 July 2023 they need to conform with <ADVICE-20-007-22 Advice Note on requirements for certificate holders introduced by the Policy to Address Conversion and M37/2021>.

Advice Note on requirements for certificate holders introduced by the Policy to Address Conversion and M37/2021

1. Does an existing forest management certificate holder, if audited in July 2023, need to demonstrate conformance with indicators under Criteria 6.9, 6.10 and the new Criterion 6.11?

Yes, according to <ADVICE-20-007-22 Advice Note on requirements for certificate holders introduced by the Policy to Address Conversion and M37/2021>, effective 1 July 2023, certificate holders will have to conform with indicators 6.9.1, 6.10.1, 6.10.2, 6.11.1 and 6.11.2 of <FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators>.

2. What are implications in terms of corrective action requests (CARs) if they have not?

If the certification body identifies non-conformities corrective action requests (CARs) would be issued according to <FSC-STD-20-001 General Requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies>.

3. Under indicator: 6.10.1 “Based on Best Available Information, accurate data is compiled on all conversions between 1 December 1994 and 31 December 2020 within the Management Unit”. Does this mean “all conversions” including conversion of non-woodland High Conservation Values (HCVs)?

Conversion under 6.10 refers to the period between 1 December 1994 and 31 December 2020. The stipulation in this Criterion considers conversion “as a change from natural forests to plantations or other land uses.” Therefore, all conversions under 6.10.1 would not include non-woodland HCV.

The new definition of conversion in <FSC-POL-01-007 Policy to Address Conversion> applies only post 31 December 2020 and includes HCV areas: (see page 8):

Applicable definition of conversion		
Pre 1 December 1994	Between 1 December 1994 and 31 December 2020	Post 31 December 2020
The <i>Policy to Address Conversion</i> does not apply to conversion that took place prior to 1 December 1994.	The new definition in the <i>Policy to Address Conversion</i> does not apply to conversion that took place prior to the policy's cut-off date. Instead, the stipulations by Criterion 6.10 in the <i>FSC Principles and Criteria</i> (P&C) apply, basically considering conversion as a change from natural forests to plantations or other land uses.	The new definition in the <i>Policy to Address Conversion</i> applies: Conversion* : A lasting change of <i>natural forest cover*</i> or <i>High Conservation Value*</i> areas, induced by <i>human activity*</i> . This may be characterized by significant loss of <i>species diversity*</i> , habit diversity, structural complexity, ecosystem functionality or livelihoods and cultural values. The definition of <i>conversion*</i> covers gradual forest <i>degradation*</i> as well as rapid forest transformation. NOTE: when the term 'conversion' appears through the document marked with italics and asterisk (<i>conversion*</i>), it refers to this definition.

- 4. Regarding section “Advice”, item 3: “*Advice 2 shall prevail over conflicting, inconsistent, or otherwise incompatible requirements in existing Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS)*”. What is the process to follow if it is not clear whether the requirements in a National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) are conflicting or inconsistent?**

Conformance with Advice-20-007-22 will be assessed by certification bodies. In case of doubt, they can submit an interpretation request to:

- a) FSC International for Interim Forest Stewardship Standards.
- b) FSC National Office (NO) or registered Standards Development Groups (SDG) for National Forest Stewardship Standards (see <INT-STD-60-006_01>).

- 5. Does the advice note cover both National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) and Interim Forest Stewardship Standards (IFSS)?**

Yes, by Forest Stewardship Standards in section “Advice” it is implied both NFSS and IFSS.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources and supporting materials are listed below:

- [Policy to address Conversion and Remedy Frameworks information webinars](#)
- [FSC Remedy Framework | FSC Connect](#)
- [FSC Remedy Framework Executive Summary | FSC Connect](#)
- [Factsheet: Conversion and remedy \(fsc.org\)](#)
- [Development of FSC -POL-01-007 Policy to Address Conversion | FSC Connect](#)
- [FSC Remedy Framework | FSC Connect](#)
- [Policy for Association | FSC Connect](#)

ABBREVIATIONS

CARs	Corrective action request
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
FSS	Forest Stewardship Standard
HCVs	High Conservation Values
IFSS	Interim Forest Stewardship Standard
NFSS	National Forest Stewardship Standard
NO	National Office
SDG	Standard Development Group



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