

PRINCIPLES, CRITERIA & INDICATORS (PCI) WEBINAR ON SOCIAL ASPECTS

30 April 2025

Questions and Answers from Webinars

Overall revision

1. What are the green paper topics included in this conceptual phase?

The green paper topics in this conceptual phase include:

- 1) Climate change and biodiversity conservation;
- 2) Scope and applicability of the Principles & Criteria (P&C); and
- 3) Outcome orientation.

1a. Will this green paper influence fieldwork or help practitioners prepare for actions related to International Generic Indicators (IGI) content improvement?

The green paper is currently only for the conceptual phase. Once it is published and feedback during the revision is collected, its effects will be reflected in the PCI revision.

For the moment, there will be no direct changes. The next steps will depend on the feedback received from stakeholders.

2. There is ongoing concern about increasingly complicated standards and their components. Suggestions for streamlining have been raised. However, what has been presented in this session seems to point toward more complexity. What is your response to this?

Technical documents, including streamlining considerations, will be addressed later in the process. As part of the revision of FSC-PRO-60-006, there is an active effort to streamline the standards by taking into account risk levels and intended outcomes. The focus is on key outcomes and reducing attention on low-risk issues. These efforts aim to simplify and improve the efficiency of FSC's forest management standards.

3. When will the cross-chamber working group be established to help develop the new Principles and Criteria (P&C)? How many members will be in the working group from each chamber?

A call for applications is planned for the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2025. The current plan includes one Core Working Group composed of six members, with balanced representation from each chamber. Additionally, two Auxiliary Expert Groups will be formed: Climate change and biodiversity conservation, and social topics.

4. Will youth be incorporated as a cross-cutting axis?

Youth is recognized as a key stakeholder group in the PCI revision. A targeted approach is being planned to ensure their involvement in outreach activities. One possible option is to invite youth representatives as observers in Working Group meetings. Feedback and suggestions on how to engage youth more actively in the process are welcome to forestmanagement@fsc.org.

- 5. Some certification schemes do not use a binary approach in audits. They allow nonconformities to remain “open with consultation.” How does this compare to how FSC views such issues?**

FSC has recently updated its auditing standards. More information is available on the [FSC website](#) and through [upcoming webinars](#).

- 6. In the context of many recommendations for strengthening and adding new requirements, what measures are being considered to reduce burdens in low-priority or low-risk areas, to avoid losing certificate holders who may no longer be able to afford FSC certification?**

The Secretariat is exploring how to reduce burdens, and this is an issue that will be addressed during [FSC-PRO-60-006 revision process](#).

Outcome Orientation

- 7. With the shift to outcomes (and what also appears to be strengthening or bar raising), will FSC be more accepting of local interpretation through SDGs?**

Raising the bar is not the objective. The intention is to make the Intended Outcomes (IO) clearer and more explicit, so that they can serve as inspiration. Therefore, this shift should not be seen as raising the bar.

It is unclear whether FSC will be more accepting than it is today. However, since the IO will be more locally adapted, there will be opportunities for SDG to tailor the IO in ways that are more meaningful in local contexts. Some outcomes may be more globally oriented (such as living wages), while others may allow for more local adaptability (such as those related to biodiversity).

- 8. Are the outcomes that really need to be checked to have a standard with credibility more relevant at a local or regional level instead of international?**

Intended Outcomes (IO) are being developed at the global level, with the intention of establishing a globally consistent set. Depending on the topic, some IO may be addressed at the local level. However, the current vision does not necessarily require that IO be directly verified for certification purposes. One approach could be to demonstrate that the IO are being addressed, rather than formally checked.

- 9. What would be the indicators to achieve the expected outcomes on social principles, for example, gender or Indigenous Peoples?**

There are various options based on good practices and scientific evidence for assessing the IO. In cases like gender or Indigenous Peoples, a key aspect would be the availability of disaggregated data such as information broken down by gender to assess equal opportunities. The formulation of relevant metrics is also important and should be adapted to the specific local context.

- 10. The example outcomes provided seem to require a large number of indicators and extensive data collection to document status and progress. This could place a significant burden on certificate holders. Will there be efforts to reduce the burden in other areas?**

There are three key points to consider:

- a. First, this concern relates to the broader deployment and is linked to the [FSC-PRO-60-006](#), which will be further addressed in the upcoming webinars in July and October, offering more opportunities to explore the topic in depth.

- b. Second, the examples shared so far are focused on the Principles and may not be the most appropriate for illustrating how to document progress. More targeted and specific Intended Outcomes will be developed at the Criterion level.
- c. Third, defining IO does not necessarily mean that all of them must always be monitored. Prioritization will play a key role, and this will be guided by the FSC-PRO-60-006. As different countries may require different IO, there is also ongoing work on strategies to reduce burden.

11. For demonstrating outcomes, would it not be more efficient for FSC to take on a research project to make this kind of demonstration, instead of placing a large data/monitoring burden on certificate holders?

Research projects have been and will continue to be carried out as part of regular Monitoring and Evaluation activities, aiming to provide deeper insights into FSC's impacts. However, these projects are not more efficient, they are often costly, complex, and time-consuming.

Outcome orientation is intended to enable scalable demonstration of results. Furthermore, having quantified progress toward outcomes can help certificate holders improve their management practices, which is why it is being integrated as part of forest management requirements.

Workers' Rights

12. For 'fair compensation', and with a view to raising the bar of the FSC standard - can this shift to payment of a living wage?

The aim is to reflect a progressive approach by moving toward the concept of a living wage.

13. How is FSC adapting its labor-related criteria to address the growing reliance on informal, temporary, and migrant labor in certified forests, especially in the Global South?

The current International Generic Indicators (IGI) already address issues such as forced labour and can be further clarified to include references to migrant workers. There is also a need to consider informal work and how it relates to the broader definition of "worker." This area will require revision moving forward to ensure these forms of labour are adequately covered.

14. You mention that workers' conditions are "maintained", but what is the starting point? Isn't FSC losing its aspiration if the formulation is framed this way?

The example referred specifically to "wellbeing maintained," not "conditions," which is an important distinction. Nevertheless, this is a valid point that is being taken into consideration. The examples are still under development. Overall, the process is exploring how to best formulate Intended Outcomes in a way that preserves the intent of the current P&C, maintains FSC's aspirational goals for positive change, and enables objective verification.

15. The ILO Declarations on Fundamental Rights and Principles were amended in 2022. Will that be taken into account in this revision?

Yes, the updated ILO declarations are being integrated into the relevant criterion on health and safety. This includes elements such as emergency response, decent accommodation, and other related aspects.

16. If the other Criteria already cover all the relevant elements of the ILO and UN documents mentioned in this Criterion, is it necessary to duplicate and maintain this Criterion?

The Criterion on rights at work addresses fundamental rights such as child labour, forced labour, discrimination, and freedom of association. These are based solely on ILO Core Conventions. However, there are other essential elements, such as wages, that are important in the world of work but are not

fully covered under the Core Conventions. Therefore, it is necessary to have a separate Criterion that addresses broader labour standards beyond what is included in the ILO Conventions.

17. FSC already requires compliance with legislation/regulations in Principle 1. Why would it be necessary to add indicators or requirements to align with new legislation related to workers?

While compliance with national laws is already covered under Principle 1, it is important to ensure that FSC explicitly addresses related issues, such as workers' rights, gender, and Indigenous Peoples. The aim is to strengthen and expand the scope of these topics beyond what is captured in legal compliance. Although some overlap with Principle 1 is expected, additional indicators would allow for more detailed and targeted treatment of these areas, reflecting FSC's commitment to stronger social safeguards.

18. An important element in the revised Code of Practice is the work organization to prevent accidents. Will this also be highlighted?

Yes, the revised Code of Practice is open to incorporating new areas. The element of work accidents will also be reviewed as part of this process.

Indigenous Peoples

19. Have those recommendations been developed by the FSC IP community, or is this just a top-down approach? If legitimate engagement is the goal, this approach needs to change. PIPC must be at the top of this work.

The importance of engaging the PIPC is fully recognized, and the committee has already been involved in the revision process. For example, an in-person event focused on Training and Knowledge was held on December 10, 2025. The Secretariat and the FSC Indigenous Foundation have also held several coordination meetings. In particular, regarding the recommendations presented at this webinar a questionnaire was sent to its members, and several interviews have been conducted, with more planned to further develop these recommendations. A dedicated PIPC workshop is scheduled for the following week to finalize the recommendations.

20. For the definition of Indigenous Peoples, what is FSC doing to ensure that its meaning becomes generally accepted and addresses the concerns of stakeholders?

This topic is still in the conceptual phase, and broader engagement will be necessary. Together with the Permanent Indigenous Peoples Committee (PIPC) and the Indigenous Foundation, further input will be sought during the upcoming consultation periods in October and November. Regarding definitions, standard developers may, in principle, adapt the definitions found in the glossary of terms of the International Generic Indicators in line with local context.

21. Will it be possible for standard developers to change the terminology at the P&C level regarding "Indigenous Peoples"? In many countries, this is not the preferred term by local peoples, but it is confusing to change the terminology at the indicator level (e.g. to "First Nations Peoples") while maintaining "Indigenous Peoples" at the P&C level.

In principle, standard developers may adapt definitions within the glossary of terms. It is necessary, however, to verify whether a precedent exists. Under the Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) and Interim Forest Stewardship Standards (IFSS), such adaptations are permitted, provided they are approved by the relevant approving body.

22. Are there any considerations to change the P6 conversion indicators to address cases where certified Indigenous communities are experiencing unwanted third-party land conversion (e.g., from mining leases) and wish to sell this material with FSC claims?

This level of detail is not being addressed at the current stage, as the focus remains on the general aspects of the P&C. However, we have noted this concern, and the topic may be considered in the next stage of the revision.

23. Regarding Principle 3, how will FSC address the implementation challenges of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in national contexts, considering its complexity for both Indigenous Peoples and Certificate Holders? Will FSC take into account any evaluations or experiences from past FPIC implementation?

All stakeholders are indeed important. FSC's aim is to remain a platform where Indigenous Peoples and forest companies can negotiate and engage meaningfully. More specific direction on this topic is expected during the main consultation, which will be open to input from all stakeholder groups.

24. I see a connection between Principles 2 and 3 regarding grievance mechanism criteria. Shouldn't this also be included under Principle 3, considering the prevalence of conflicts involving Indigenous communities?

Grievance mechanisms are indeed critical across all social dimensions, including those involving workers, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. While this topic is already addressed under certain criteria in Principles 2 and 4, FSC will explore how to better incorporate grievance elements into Principle 3, as it appears to be either missing or insufficiently covered. This gap has been noted and will be taken into account.

25. Are you considering Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICL) as High Conservation Values (HCV)?

Forest stewardship within ICLs requires a precautionary approach similar to that used for HCV. However, ICLs may contain HCV 6 elements of outstanding importance to Indigenous Peoples, which should not be simply generalized under a broad categorization of ICL as HCV. These distinctions are important to maintain.

Community Relations

26. When consolidating P3 and P4: what impact will this have on the issuance of nonconformities?

The revision will take these implications into account to ensure consistency in the forest management evaluations and assessment of nonconformities. FSC-STD-20-007 Specific Requirements for Certification Bodies – Forest Management may need to be revised as a consequence of the PCI revision.

27. There seems to be good support for the idea to consolidate P3 and P4. How could this discussion advance, and how and when might a decision take place?

The recommendations regarding the consolidation of P3 and P4 will be presented during the consultation planned for October–November 2025. Further direction will be determined based on the feedback received from stakeholders.

Gender & Diversity

28. On the topic of gender in the workplace, why not use general terms like "anyone" or "everyone" instead of specifically mentioning all vulnerable groups, especially if the required skills are already being fulfilled to ensure high-quality outcomes?

The terminology currently used already refers to all workers, regardless of their gender. However, recognizing the specific vulnerabilities of certain groups or communities is also important. For that reason, explicitly identifying these groups can be necessary. This type of clarification could be addressed in a separate explanatory document, but it is not intended to be explicitly included within the Principles & Criteria (P&C).

29. Given the identified gaps in diversity, proactive measures, and transformative implementation, how will the PCI revision ensure enforceable accountability mechanisms for gender equality and the protection of vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, youth, and Indigenous women?

To ensure enforceable accountability mechanisms, it is necessary to prioritize transformative implementation through a holistic, human rights-based approach that drives systemic change. This approach should be embedded within a risk management framework that proactively identifies, mitigates, and addresses the specific risks faced by vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, youth, and Indigenous women.

Furthermore, protecting these groups must be established as a prioritized outcome within the social dimensions of the revised Principles, Criteria, and Indicators, ensuring that their needs are monitored and addressed throughout the standard.

30. Will there be consideration of replacing "gender equality" with "gender equity" (as this second term appears to be much closer to how FSC intends the concept to be interpreted)?

Yes, there has been discussion about which terminology best reflects the intended meaning. Gender equality is outcome oriented, whereas gender equity is process oriented. Given that the focus is OO focused, it is proposed to continue using the term gender equality.

31. Could you tell us how the gender equity guidelines will be taken into account? And how do they relate to Principle 4?

Gender equality is considered a cross-cutting theme across Principles 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8, at both the Criterion and Indicator levels.

Scenarios for implementation are not mutually exclusive and may complement each other. One approach is to fully integrate human rights into the Principles and Criteria (P&C) by aligning with the human rights due diligence framework. For instance, in countries like Germany and Sweden, national laws already include reporting requirements related to human rights.

Additionally, corporate due diligence directives often require companies to report on the treatment of minorities and persons with disabilities. Another pathway is to align with standards such as ISO 53800, supporting organizations in advancing gender equality within their management systems.