# FOCUS CONSULTATION REPORT

Alignment process of FSC-STD-30-005 Forest Management Groups Standard

05 August 2024

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Consultation Report Alignment FSC-STD-30-005 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Contact for comments:** | FSC International – Performance and Standards Unit<br>Adenauerallee 134<br>53113 Bonn<br>Germany<br><br>**Phone:** +49 – (0)228 -36766 -0<br>**Fax:**   +49 – (0)228 -36766 -30<br>**Email:**   psu@fsc.org |

# CONTENTS

# A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Forest Management Groups Standard

The FSC Forest Management Groups Standard (FSC-STD-30-005) was developed by FSC to address the challenges faced by small-scale forest owners, cooperatives, and forestry contractors in obtaining FSC certification individually.

Originating from the need to promote sustainable forest management practices among diverse stakeholders, this standard offers a collective approach, providing the requirements for the establishment and management of group certificates. In this way, forest owners or managers can attain certification collectively, thereby reducing the administrative burden and costs associated with individual certification. Its primary purpose is to facilitate access to certification for small-scale forest entities, promote responsible forest management, and enhance market access for sustainably sourced forest products. Although group certification is commonly used by smallholders, it is available to any type of management unit and ownership worldwide.

The previous version (V 2-0) of the FM Groups standard included the optional possibility of incorporating forestry contractors in the group certificate to implement forestry services in the management units in its group.

## Alignment process mandate

The Forest Management Groups Standard V2-0 became effective on 16 March 2021. With the publication and effectiveness of the FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-0 EN Continuous Improvement Procedure, FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0 EN Small or Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) and Community Forest Eligibility Criteria, and FSC-STD-30-010 V3-0 EN Controlled Forest Management (CFM), an alignment process was justified.

The changes for which the alignment is required were triggered by the following normative documents:

- FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-0 EN Continuous Improvement Procedure
- FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0 EN SLIMF and Community Forests Eligibility Criteria
- FSC-STD-30-010 V3-0 EN Controlled Forest Management

**Key next steps:**

- Preparation of final alignment requirements document for approval by the FSC Director Policy Operations in August 2024.
- Publication date: 01 October 2024.
- Effective date: 01 January 2024.

# B. MAIN STAKEHOLDERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE FOCUSED CONSULTATION

## Background and interests

A total of 6 people responded to the consultation questions.

**Region:** The majority of respondents were from North America (3), followed by Europe (2) and Latin America (1).

**RESPONDENTS PER REGION**

Latin America 17%

Europe 33%

North America 50%
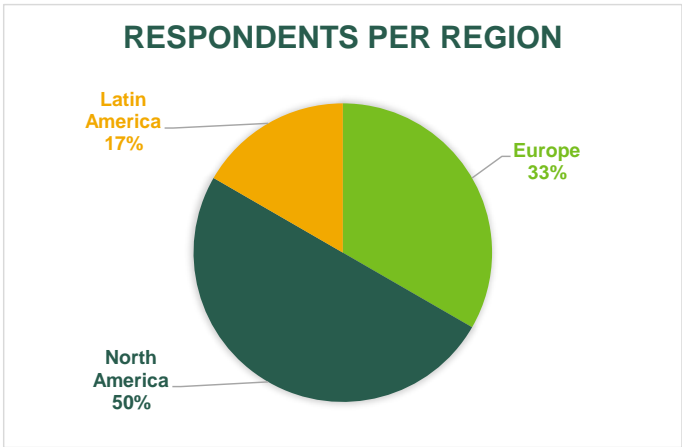
**Type of organization:** Participants were asked to identify themselves regarding their type of organization. Half of the respondents were FSC Network Partner staff, followed by Certificate Holders (33%) and International Staff (17%).

**RESPONDENTS PER TYPE OF ORGANIZATION**

FSC International Staff 17%

Certificate holder 33%

FSC Network Partner staff 50%
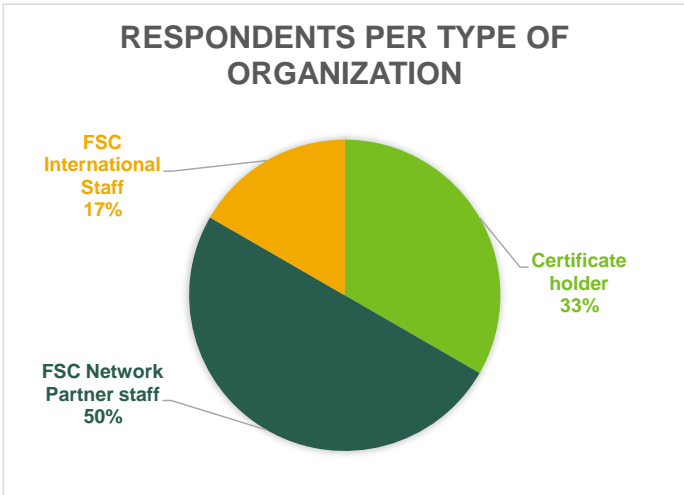
# C. KEY INSIGHTS OBTAINED FROM THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES

## Analysis of Consultation Responses

1. For closed questions, responses are shown for all participants (total) and by type of organization (e.g., Certificate Holders, FSC Network Partner Staff and FSC International Staff).
2. For each closed question, the average rating for each respondent category is shown. 'Yes', indicates full agreement (highlighted in pale green), while 'No' represents total disagreement (light red).
3. The closed questions are followed by an analysis of the open questions. This includes FSC responses on how key insights for the alignment process have been addressed.

**Closed questions**

All participants agreed with the rationale provided by FSC for the proposed changes in the sections titled 'Objective', 'Scope' and 'References' within the Forest Management Groups Standard.

For the proposed changes to the sections on 'Terms and Definitions' and 'Requirements for Group Members,' 83% of participants expressed full agreement (highlighted in pale green). The remaining 17% (highlighted in light red) disagreed and shared their feedback in the open questions Q4 and Q7.

All participants agreed with the deletion of Box 3 – Controlled Wood in Part I 'Establishment of forest management groups', as well as the proposed changes in Part II 'Group Management system' and Part III 'Optional Inclusion Contractors in Groups'.

| | Question | Answers | Certificate Holder | FSC Network Partner Staff | FSC International Staff | Total Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **2** | **3** | **1** | **6** |
| **Q1** | Is the rationale provided for the proposed changes in the objective, scope, and references section clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 50% | 17% | 100% |
| | | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **Q3** | Is the rationale provided for the proposed changes regarding the definitions, and addition of notes for clarification clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 33% | 17% | 83% |
| | | No | 0% | 17% | 0% | 17% |
| **Q5** | Is the rationale provided for the proposed update to the note in the section "Requirements for Group Members" clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 33% | 17% | 83% |
| | | No | 0% | 17% | 0% | 17% |
| **Q6** | Is the rationale provided for deleting the Controlled Wood paragraph in Box 3 clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 50% | 17% | 100% |
| | | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

| | Question | Answers | Certificate Holder | FSC Network Partner Staff | FSC International Staff | Total Participants |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **2** | **3** | **1** | **6** |
| **Q8** | Is the rationale provided for the proposed changes in Part II section "Group Management System" clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 50% | 17% | 100% |
| | | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **Q10** | Is the rationale provided for the proposed changes in Part III clear to you? | Yes | 33% | 50% | 17% | 100% |
| | | No | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

**Open questions**

**Question 2.** If your answer is 'No' to Q1, please share any objections, concerns, or doubts you have regarding the proposed changes.

As no respondent answered 'No' to question 1, the analysis of question 2 is not applicable.

**Question 4.** If your answer is 'No' to Q3, please share any objections, concerns, or doubts you have regarding the proposed changes.

| Consolidated key feedback | FSC Responses |
|---|---|
| 1. **Clarification on 'Community Member' in Group Member definition:** The term 'community member' in the definition of 'group member' is confusing. As presented it implies individuals within a community can be group members, but in practice, it is the community as a whole that manages the forest. Participants recommended revising the definition to refer to 'communities' instead of 'community members' to better reflect this reality. | The definition will be revised to include both 'communities' and 'community members' to accurately reflect the diverse settings in community forestry settings around the world. This revision will ensure that the definition covers all possible scenarios where the community as a whole and individual community members may be recognized as group members in the context of forest management. |

**Question 7.** If your answer is 'No' to Q5 and/or Q6, please share any objections, concerns, or doubts you have regarding the proposed changes.

| Consolidated key feedback | FSC Responses |
|---|---|
| 1. **Need for Clear Definitions of 'Community,' 'Community Member,' and 'Community Forest':** Participants pointed out that the terms 'community,' 'community member,' and 'community forest' are missing. Participants emphasized the need to distinguish between the roles of the community as a whole and individual community members, highlighting this differentiation is crucial to avoid confusion about who holds the responsibility and ownership in the context of group certification. | The FM Groups STD (FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0) is currently being aligned with the SLIMF and Community Forests STD (FSC-STD-01-003 V2-0). This alignment updates the definition of 'community forests' and replaces the outdated term 'community' with 'community forests' as per the eligibility criteria.<br><br>In the Continuous Improvement Procedure (FSC-PRO-30-011 V1-0), the term 'community member' is included within the 'community forest' definition under the tenure criteria.<br><br>According to FSC-PRO-01-001 (Development and Revision of FSC Requirements), this alignment process focuses on updating requirements based on previously approved changes, rather than introducing new definitions or addressing specific community structures. FSC recognizes the need for clarity on these matters, but this alignment process is not intended to add new definitions or address specific queries. For detailed clarification or to address specific situations such as the structure and roles within communities, stakeholders should use the FSC Enquiry Procedure (PSU-PRO-10-201 V2-2 EN). This procedure is intended to provide guidance and clarification on such issues. |

**Question 9.** If your answer is 'No' to Q8, please share any objections, concerns, or doubts you have regarding the proposed changes.

As no respondent answered 'No' to question 8, the analysis of question 9 is not applicable.

**Question 11.** If your answer is 'No' to Q10, please share any objections, concerns, or doubts you have regarding the proposed changes.

As no respondent answered 'No' to question 10, the analysis of question 11 is not applicable.

**Question 12.** Please provide any additional related feedback, comments, or suggestions if you have them.

| Consolidated key feedback | FSC Responses |
|---|---|
| 1. Participants appreciated the alignment for clarity but were concerned about the short 10-day consultation period. They suggested extending consultations to at least 30 days to allow sufficient time for stakeholders to respond. | FSC acknowledges and will take into consideration the concern.<br><br>While 30-day consultations are reserved for major processes per FSC-PRO-01-001 V4-0, we will consider extending consultation periods for minor processes such as withdrawals and alignment between requirements to better accommodate stakeholders' concerns. |

## THANK YOU

On behalf of the Community and Family Forest program, thank you very much for providing your feedback in this consultation!

For comments or questions please contact communityfamilyforests@fsc.org.