



FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROCEDURE

FSC-PRO-30-006

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Title: Frequently Asked Questions for Ecosystem Services Procedure

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Version	Description
V1.0	Initial version.
V2.0	Minor revision. Contained the timeline for transition to V2-1 of FSC-PRO-30-006.
V2.1	Major revision incorporating questions for FSC-PRO-30-006 V2-1.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Objective

The objective of this FAQ is to provide support for the implementation of FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools (ES Procedure) V2.

Scope

This FAQ is to be used primarily by users of the Ecosystem Services (ES) Procedure, as mentioned in box below. Additionally, it may be used by certification bodies, FSC assessors from Accreditation Services International (ASI) and FSC staff.

This (ES) Procedure specifies requirements for:

The Organization, who shall conform with the applicable requirements of Parts I, II, III, IV, Annex A, and B to demonstrate the positive impact of their management activities on ecosystem services, and to use ecosystem services claims (ES claims).

Sponsors, who shall conform with applicable requirements of Part III and IV to register their sponsorship in the FSC Registry and use ES claims.

References

The following referenced documents are relevant for the application of this document. For updated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

Code	Title
Forest Management	
n.a.	Relevant Forest Stewardship Standard
FSC-STD-30-005	<u>Forest Management Groups</u>
FSC-PRO-30-011	<u>Continuous Improvement Procedure</u>
FSC-STD-01-003	<u>SLIMF and Community Forest Eligibility Criteria</u>
FSC-STD-30-010	<u>Controlled Forest Management</u>
Certification body	
FSC-STD-20-001	<u>General requirements for certification bodies</u>
FSC-STD-20-006	<u>Stakeholder Consultation for Forest Evaluations</u>
FSC-STD-20-007	<u>Specific Requirements for Certification Bodies - Forest Management</u>

Trademark use

FSC-STD-50-001 [Requirements for Use of the FSC Trademarks by Certificate Holders](#)

n.a. [FSC Trademark Use Guide for Promotional Licence Holders](#)

Guidance of ES PRO

FSC-GUI-30-006a [Guidance for Demonstrating Ecosystem Services Impacts](#)

FSC-GUI-30-006b [Guidance on Market Use and Communication of Ecosystem Services Impacts](#)

Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions included in [<FSC-STD-01-002 Glossary of Terms>](#), [<FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship>](#), [<FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators>](#), and [<FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact demonstration and market tools V2>](#) apply.

TIMELINE TO TRANSITION FROM V1-2 TO V2

1. How do Certificate Holders need to transition from V1-2 to V2 of the Ecosystem Services (ES) Procedure?

See also INT-PRO-30-006-08 (find the document [here](#))

Background

The transition period of V2 of the ES Procedure is between 1 July 2025 and 31 December 2026.

The scope section of ES Procedure V2 (p.7) states:

“Verified or validated ES impacts granted under <FSC-PRO-30-006 V1-2 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools> (V1-2) remain valid:

a) for five years after the evaluation date; OR

b) until the next FM main evaluation if such evaluation falls within the transition period of this revised version (V2)”

Answer

During the transition period, both version V1-2 and version 2 of the ES Procedure can be used during ES evaluations. From 1 January 2027, V2 needs to be used for all ES evaluations.

The certificate holder needs to start using V2 of the ES Procedure either five years after the ES evaluation date using V1-2 of the ES Procedure or until the next FSC FM main evaluation. In other words, the OR between a) and b) gives the certificate holder a choice when to transition to V2 of the ES Procedure.

For the avoidance of doubt, the certificate holder has the possibility to transition to V2 sooner than after five years following the ES evaluation using V1-2 of the ES Procedure.

Benefits of using V2 include enhanced visibility and expanded opportunities for sponsorship through the use of the FSC Ecosystem Services Registry. Moreover, V2 broadens the range of claim types available for communication, strengthens alignment with leading sustainability reporting standards, and introduces stronger safeguards reflecting the latest best practices in ecosystem services markets. Furthermore, for forest management groups, it is easier to add new group members to already verified or validated ES impacts.

A number of scenarios follow with guidance on how the certificate holder needs to proceed.

Scenarios

SCENARIO	HOW TO PROCEED
<p>1 FSC FM certificate issued September 2021, expiry date September 2026.</p> <p>ES impact verified in September 2021 using V1-2 of the ES Procedure, expiry date September 2026.</p>	<p>As the FM re-certification and ES re-verification audit falls within the transition period, the certificate holder can choose whether to use V1-2 or V2 of the ES Procedure.</p>
<p>2 FSC FM certificate issued September 2021, expiry date September 2026.</p> <p>ES impact verified in May 2023 using V1-2 of the ES procedure, expiry date May 2028.</p>	<p>As the FM re-assessment and ES impact re-verification audit are not coupled, but operate at separate cycles, the FSC FM re-assessment will need to be done before September 2026. The ES impact would remain valid until May 2028 when re-verification would need to be conducted using V2 of the ES Procedure. However, the certificate holder is encouraged to transition to V2 of the ES Procedure during the FM re-assessment.</p>
<p>3 New FSC FM with ES verification in the scope: initial assessment scheduled for October 2025.</p>	<p>As the FM certification and ES evaluation audit falls within the transition period, the applicant certificate holder can choose whether to use V1-2 or V2 of the ES Procedure.</p>
<p>4 FSC FM certificate issued June 2024, expiry date June 2029.</p> <p>ES impact verified in June 2024, expiry date June 2029.</p>	<p>As the FM re-certification and ES impact re-verification audit will take place after the transition period (June 2029), V2 of the ES Procedure needs to be used.</p>
<p>5 FSC FM certificate issued September 2023, expiry date September 2028.</p> <p>ES impact verified in May 2025, expiry date May 2030.</p>	<p>The ES impact will remain valid until May 2030 (independently on the FM validity date) and will need to be re-verified using V2 of the ES Procedure</p>

6 FSC FM group certificate issued September 2021, expiry date September 2026. As the FM re-certification and ES impact re-verification evaluation of the first group member falls within the transition period, the certificate holder can choose whether to use V1-2 or V2 of the ES Procedure.

ES impact verified for a first group member in September 2021, expiry date September 2026.

For a second group member in May 2025, expiry date May 2030.

The second group member's verified ES impact remains valid until May 2030, for re-verification V2 of the ES Procedure shall be used as it is after transition period.

The two members have different verified ES impacts (activities or theory of change).

7 FSC FM group certificate issued September 2023, expiry date September 2028. The second group member needs to use V2 to get the ES impact verified, as it is after the transition period.

ES impact verified for a first group member in September 2023, expiry date September 2028.

For a second group member in May 2027, expiry date May 2032.

The first group member has used V1-2 of the ES Procedure and can decide if they want to upgrade to V2 and join the second group member's verified ES impact in May 2027 or wait until September 2028 to transition to V2.

The two members have the same verified ES impacts (activities or theory of change).

8 FSC FM group certificate issued September 2023, expiry date September 2028. The second group member can decide to use V1-2 or V2 to get the ES impact verified, as it is within the transition period.

ES impact verified for a first group member in September 2023, expiry date September 2028.

For a second group member in May 2026, expiry date May 2031.

The first group member has used V1-2 of the ES Procedure and, if the second member chooses to use V2, can decide if they want to upgrade to V2 and join the second group member's verified ES impact in May 2027 or wait until September 2028 to transition to V2.

2. What is the validity of a verified (or validated) ES impact when a group member joins an already verified (or validated) ES impact?

Background

V2 of the ES Procedure allows Group Managers to add new members to existing verified (or validated) ES impacts, as long as the growth of the number of members does not exceed 100%.

Clause 1.18 of ES Procedure V2 (p.16-17) states:

“1.18 Before expanding the application of this procedure to any members that are new to using the procedure for already validated and/or verified ES impacts, the group entity shall:

a) ensure, through internal evaluation, that new members are in conformity with all applicable requirements of this procedure; and

NOTE: This means that new members have measured the relevant outcome indicators using the same methodology and have demonstrated that the proposed ES impact(s) has been achieved.

b) update all applicable sections in the ESR.

NOTE 1: This clause builds on Clause 7.1 of <FSC-STD-30-005 Forest Management Groups>.

NOTE 2: The certification body is asked in FSC-STD-20-007, Annex 8, Clause 1.6 to evaluate FM groups when the growth of new members to an already verified or validated ES impact exceeds 100%.

NOTE 3: The group entity cannot verify or validate any ES impacts. It is the certification body who verifies or validates ES impacts using sampling requirements as per FSC-STD-20-007 Section 7.”

Clause 1.6 of Annex 8 of FSC-STD-20-007 states:

“1.6 The certification body shall carry out an additional evaluation to assess the inclusion of new group members to an ESR with already validated or verified ES impacts, in case the number of new group members being added to the ESR exceeds a 100% increase.

NOTE 1: See FSC-PRO-30-006 V2-0, Clause 1.18.

NOTE 2: For growth lower than 100%, the certification body is able to approve new group members to an ESR without an additional evaluation.”

Answer

When new group members are added to already verified (or validated) ES impacts by the group manager without an ES evaluation by a certification body, the initial approval and expiry dates apply.

Two scenarios follow with guidance on how the certificate holder needs to proceed.

Scenarios

SCENARIO	HOW TO PROCEED
<p>1 ES impact verified for one group member in November 2024, expiry date of November 2029.</p> <p>Another group member got a different ES impact verified in May 2025, expiry date May 2030.</p>	<p>The first group member shall re-verify their ES impact by November 2029, and the second group member shall re-verify their ES impact by May 2030 because their impact is different, thus was verified as part of a separate ES evaluation (see Clause 1.18 NOTE 2) using V2 of the ES Procedure.</p>
<p>2 ES impact verified for four group members in November 2024, expiry date November 2029.</p> <p>A fifth group member was added to the verified ES impact in May 2025, following requirement 1.18 of FSC-PRO-30-006.</p>	<p>All five group members shall re-verify their ES impact by November 2029 as per Clause 1.18 of V2 of the ES Procedure, the new group member added in May 2025 did not undergo a separate assessment and therefore follows the validity period of the group members that initially got the ES impact verified.</p>

GENERAL FAQ

3. What is the difference between 'validation' and 'verification' of an ES impact?

'Validation' of an ES impact contains the evaluation of the management plan for the future/expected ES impact. It enables the opportunity to promote and communicate the ES project before the ES impact has been achieved; and can be used by CFM (Controlled Forest Management) certificate holders.

'Verification' contains the evaluation of an ES impact which has occurred in the past. The language of the ES claim is different for validated and verified ES impacts. See [FSC-GUI-30-006b](#) for the guidance on ES claims.

4. How much time should be calculated to complete a verified/validated ESR?

To minimize costs for the forest manager and maximize efficiency for the certification body, ecosystem services impacts should be evaluated during forest management certification audits (Refer to Clause 1.7 of Annex 8 of the [FSC-STD-20-007](#)).

The time required to verify ecosystem services impacts depends on a number of factors, including:

- whether the verification of ecosystem services impacts is integrated in the forest management audit or scheduled separately;
- the number of ecosystem services impacts to be verified;
- the type of impact(s) to be verified and the chosen methodologies to measure the outcome indicator(s);
- whether it is the first ecosystem service impact evaluation or a subsequent evaluation;
- the specific context of the forest management organisation.

Estimates from V1 of the ES Procedure show that about 1-3 auditor (man) days are needed in addition to the forest management assessment. ES PRO does not require annual audits, except for specific situations mentioned in the procedure (also see the answer below).

5. When are additional audits required?

An additional audit will be required in a few cases – listed in clause 1.5 and 1.6 of Annex 8 of the [FSC-STD-20-007](#).

Clause 1.5 of Annex 8 of the FSC-STD-20-007

“The certification body shall carry out an additional evaluation in any of the following cases:

- a) to assess significant changes in part I of the Ecosystem Services Report (ESR), which include:
 - i. the addition of a new ES impact;
 - ii. the addition of a new MU;
 - iii. significant changes to the theory of change, e.g. a change in management practices;
 - iv. changes to the selected outcome indicator(s); or
 - v. changes to the methodologies used to measure the outcome indicator(s);
- b) to assess complaints received related to the verified or validated ES impact; and
- c) to assess the implementation of the risk management plan, when a disturbance event has happened that affected the verified/ validated ES impact.”

Clause 1.5 of Annex 8 of the FSC-STD-20-007

“The certification body shall carry out an additional evaluation to assess the inclusion of new group members to an ESR with already validated or verified ES impacts, in case the number of new group members being added to the ESR exceeds a 100% increase.”

6. Can an ES impact be demonstrated for a part of the management unit or does it need to be done for the entire management unit of the FM certification?

ES impact can be demonstrated for a part or whole of the forest management unit of the FM certification. The boundaries and size of the ES project area need to be mentioned in the ESR (refer to Clause 2.2 of FSC-PRO-30-006 V2).

For Group Management

7. In cases of group certification, can new members make ES claims for ES impacts that have been verified/validated for that group?

The new member can only make ES claims if they follow the ES Procedure and have a validated/verified ESR. The group entity ensures that the new members are in conformity with the relevant methodology and ES impact (refer to Clause 1.18 of FSC-PRO-30-006 V2).

When new areas are added to an already approved ES validation or verification (this includes new members), the Organisation must submit an updated ES Report outlining the new areas and how the reported values of outcome indicators change as a result of their inclusion.

8. In case of group certification, does each group member (forest) need to have a separate ecosystem service report (ESR)?

No, each member does not mandatorily need to have separate ESRs. The group entity may create a single ESR if certain conditions are met (refer to Clause 1.17 of the FSC-PRO-30-006 V2).

If only some group members audit according to the ES Procedure, then the group entity shall document where the ES impact is validated/verified for each participating management unit (refer to Clause 1.15 and 1.16 of the [FSC-PRO-30-006 V2](#)).

9. How do CHs submit their ESR through the FSC Registry?

CHs are granted access to the ES Registry by their certification bodies. Once they have been invited, they will be able to log in and start the submission process by clicking the button "New ESR Request". Find detailed instructions in the [user manual for forest managers](#).

10. Are there resources/support to use the FSC Registry?

We have developed a comprehensive list of user manual documents and their videos, which is available on the FSC Connect platform. It includes:

- User manual documents:
 - [Outcome Indicator Selection Logic](#)
 - [User manual for CB Admin](#)
 - [User Manual for CB Auditors and Approvers](#)
 - [Quick Guide - How to Grant ESR Access to CH Contacts](#)
 - [Quick Guide - How to Grant ESR Access to CB Contacts](#)
 - [User Manual for FMs](#)
 - [User Manual for Sponsors and Transaction Management](#)
- User Videos:
 - [For CBs](#)
 - [For CB auditors and approvers](#)
 - [For CB admin](#)
 - [User video for FMs](#)
 - [User video for sponsors and transaction management](#)

For any queries, contact us at ecosystems@fsc.org.

11. Does the ecosystem services report (ESR) belong to the certificate holder or the certification body (CB)? Can CBs change wording/ details of ESR?

The ESR belongs to the Certificate Holder (CH). Based on the ESR and information evaluated during the audit (interviews, field visit) the CB makes a decision on the verification/validation of ecosystem services impact. In case of a positive decision, the CB approves the ESR in the ES Registry. The CB may reject the ESR in the registry because of a negative decision or because of needed improvements in the data submission. In either case, the ESR report will reopen for the CH to make changes for 90 days.

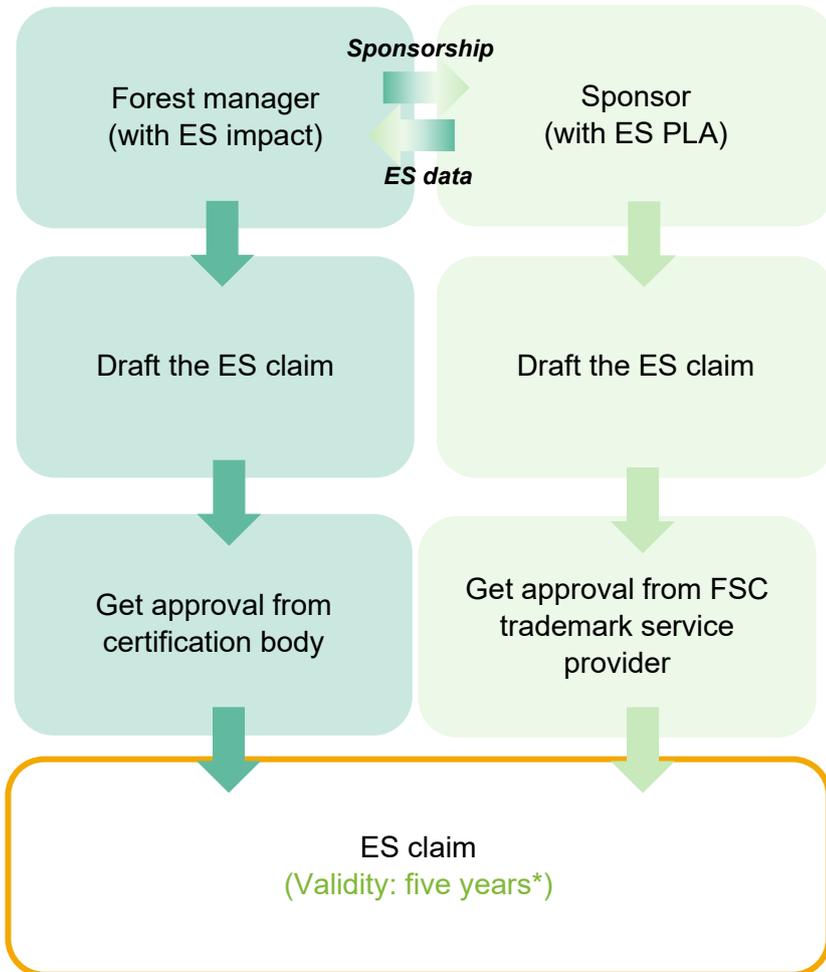
12. How is an ecosystem services claim approved?

The Organization or the sponsor propose the content of ecosystem services claims and send it to the reviewing body. The review and approval of ES claim is done by:

- Forest management accredited certification bodies for The Organization

- FSC trademark service providers for sponsors (use of the FSC trademark requires a promotional licence)

Part IV of the FSC-PRO-30-006 V2 as well as FSC-GUI-30-006b (Guidance on Market Use and Communication of Ecosystem Services Impacts) provides examples of wording that can be used to promote ecosystem services claims. FSC trademark use by FSC certificate holders shall be in compliance with FSC-STD-50-001.



*provided that forest manager’s ES impact remains valid.

Figure 1. A simplified overview of the ES claims process

FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES

13. Do Certification Bodies (CBs) need a separate accreditation for ES Procedure, and do they need to pass a witness audit before being able to evaluate ES impacts?

No. However, following Clause 2.2 of Annex 8 of the FSC-STD-20-007 states “At least one member of the audit team shall have demonstrated competence and skills to evaluate The Organization’s conformity with this procedure and the ES impact(s).” This is referenced to Annex 3 of FSC-STD-20-001, which is further elaborated in FAQ 14.

14. What kind of training or competence on ecosystem services would be considered sufficient for the member of the audit team?

In Clause 2.2 of Annex 8 of the FSC-STD-20-007, training and competence refers to education and/or professional experience that the member of the audit team has acquired through, for example, education at university, courses and/or on-the-job training and experience on one or more ecosystem services.

Annex 3 (audit teams) of FSC-STD-20-001 is relevant in this regard, particularly box 2 on key considerations for selection of audit team members for forest management audits. Under the heading ‘Environmental issues’, “other environmental issues that are likely to be of importance during the audit” includes the declared ecosystem service(s).

The member on the audit team needs to be able to assess the choice and use of the methodology and interpret the results for the ecosystem service(s) under evaluation. This means that they may need to have a background or knowledge in, for example, ecology, forestry, biology, natural resources management, hydrology, soil management, ecotourism, cultural studies, or air quality management.

The certification body shall ensure that the team member is competent in the ecosystem services subject matter that is being evaluated. Ways in which such competence can be demonstrated include: university diploma, course certificate, technical outputs (e.g. report, presentation, data analysis) of a project in which the team member had a leading role on the technical aspects and/or publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

15. What training or support does FSC offer to certification bodies and ASI?

FSC has developed a training programme which is available on FSC International’s YouTube channel. It includes:

- A webinar for all interested stakeholders offering a general introduction to the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure (link [here](#));
- A webinar targeted to ASI and certification bodies accredited for forest management certification focusing on the verification of ecosystem services impacts (link [here](#));

Note that the scope of FSC's training is limited to the use of the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure and does not extend to creating competence in ecosystem services; this expertise would need to be obtained in another way (see FAQ 14).

The accompanying technical guidance ([FSC-GUI-30-006a](#)) provides a list of methodologies, tools, and forest management processes for forest managers and project developer – which can help CBs and ASI as well.

16. Is Peer Review required for evaluations of the ES Procedure?

Yes.

Clause 3.1, Annex 8, FSC-STD-20-007 states “Audit findings and granting of a verified or validated ES impact shall be evaluated in accordance with <FSC-STD-20-001 General Requirements for certification bodies>”

Clause 7.5 of FSC-STD-20-001 refers to Clause 7.5.1 of ISO 17065-2012 which states " The certification body shall assign at least one person to review all information and results related to the evaluation. The review shall be carried out by person(s) who have not been involved in the evaluation process "

17. A certificate may be 3 years into the 5 year validity period at the point that the ecosystem services impact is verified –in such case, does the CB include the ecosystem services impact with an expiry or validity only for the remaining 2 years of the forest management certificate or can we issue the ecosystem services impact with a validity which goes beyond the end of the forest management certificate –subject to successful re-evaluation?

The CB can approve ESR which have ES impact with a validity that is longer than the forest management certificate. It needs to be ensured, however, that it expires as soon as the forest management certificate is not renewed/terminated for some reason.

18. It is necessary to include ecosystem services in the public consultation made by the certification bodies?

Yes. Clause 2.1 of Annex 8 of the FSC-STD-20-007 is referencing Clause 1.7 of the same standard, which requires a public consultation by the certification bodies. The consultation needs to be conducted in accordance with FSC-STD-20-006 (Stakeholder Consultation for Forest Evaluations Standard).

19. Is it necessary to complete the DAR report ES section if the certification body already completed reporting in ES Registry.

No. The ES section of the FSC FM DAR only needs to be completed when the audit is conducted against FSC-PRO-30-006 V1.2, which does not require the use of the ES Registry.

When the audit is conducted against FSC-PRO-30-006 V2, all ES reporting is done directly in the ES Registry. In this case, completing the ES section of the FSC FM DAR is not required, in order to avoid duplication of reporting.

Regardless of the reporting route, certification bodies are still expected to complete their applicable audit checklists.



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