

SUMMARY OF GREEN PAPER ON OUTCOME ORIENTATION

FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship
and International Generic Indicators revision



INTRODUCTION

In FSC, the topic outcome orientation originates from the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026 and its Goal 1.2: Streamline standards and policies towards outcome orientation. This is a summary of a Green Paper which explores options to make the FSC Principles and Criteria (P&C) and International Generic Indicators (IGI), hereafter referred as PCI, outcome oriented. It aims to clarify the rationale, proposals, and implications of transitioning to an outcome-oriented framework for forest stewardship certification.

The Green Paper supports the PCI revision process where outcome orientation is a key topic.

Here in this paper 'outcome' is defined by the short to medium-term effects resulting from the implementation of forest management activities. Outcome orientation refers to developing and implementing normative requirements that are guided by a few prioritized key intended outcomes, with progress against these outcomes being reported and demonstrated.

While this green paper specifically focuses on the PCI revision process, outcome orientation is also a key topic and consideration in the revision of FSC-PRO-60-006 Development and Transfer of National Forest Stewardship Standards to the FSC Principles and Criteria. This procedure governs how Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) should be developed. The proposals for the new version of this procedure includes the prioritization of 3 to 5 key intended outcomes when developing a FSS.

Therefore, the PCI revision offers the opportunity to define and agree on the intended outcomes of forest stewardship that are globally applicable but also relevant for the prioritization of key intended outcome during the development of Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS).



MAKING THE PCI OUTCOME ORIENTED

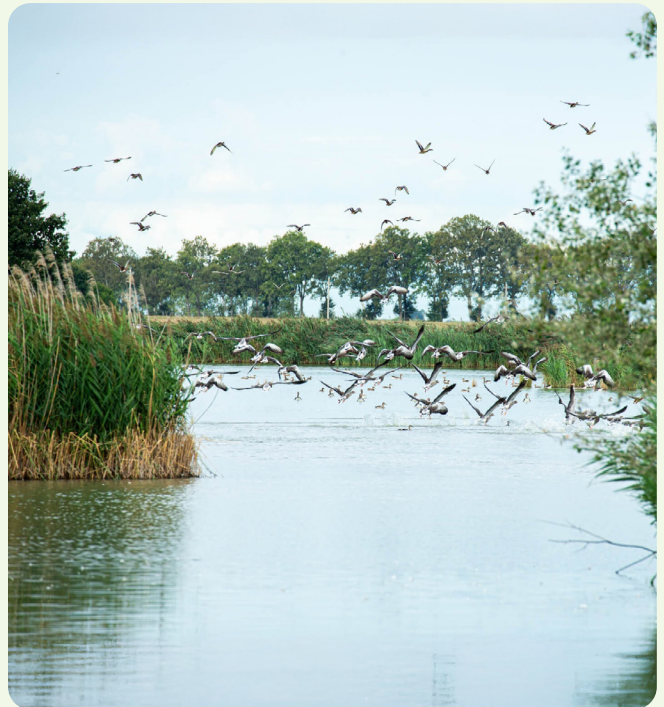
The suggestions in this section should be understood from a broad perspective where the structure and content of the PCI can be improved using outcome orientation.

USING INTENDED OUTCOMES TO FORMULATE THE PCI

Identifying the pathways that define the intended outcomes of forest stewardship is particularly useful to inform the PCI revision process, as it clarifies how and why specific forest management actions lead to desired results or outcomes. This approach also demonstrates how achieving these intended outcomes contributes to FSC's Vision. The steps to achieve FSC's Vision were therefore developed by mapping backward from the intended impacts - lasting changes required to realize the Vision - to the necessary outcomes or pre-conditions. These pre-conditions represent the changes that must occur before the intended impacts can be achieved.

Proposals

1. Use the causal pathway defining the intended outcomes of forest stewardship as a starting point to structure the PCI around intended outcomes. This pathway would therefore consist of using the main intended outcomes to define the Principles, and the intermediate outcomes to define the Criteria. The logic would thus be similar to that of the causal pathway of forest stewardship with the Criteria (i.e. intermediate intended outcomes) acting as pre-conditions and contributing to the Principles (i.e. main intended outcomes).
2. Simplify the formulation of the Principles and Criteria by using the intended outcomes to formulate the Principles and Criteria. This can be done by making the sentences short and clearly showing the desired result. Using plain language simplifies the formulation of the Principles and Criteria by removing the complexity of technical language. This would make the PCI more readable and easier to understand, therefore, supporting the goal of streamlining standards and making them more user-friendly.



Benefits

- Increase the clarity of what FSC certification is expected to achieve
- Increase relevance of IGI to contribute to expected outcomes
- Allows alignment with the FSC-PRO-60-006 and FSC-PRO-60-006a.
- Simplify the PCI language and draw more attention to the desired intended outcomes/results.

STRUCTURING THE PCI AROUND INTENDED OUTCOMES

Having explicit formulation of intended outcomes in the PCI does not necessarily mean that the requirements are consistently and coherently structured according to a given sustainability outcome, or thematic area. The PCI can be designed around intended outcomes at the level of Principles and Criteria.

Designing the Principles around intended outcomes

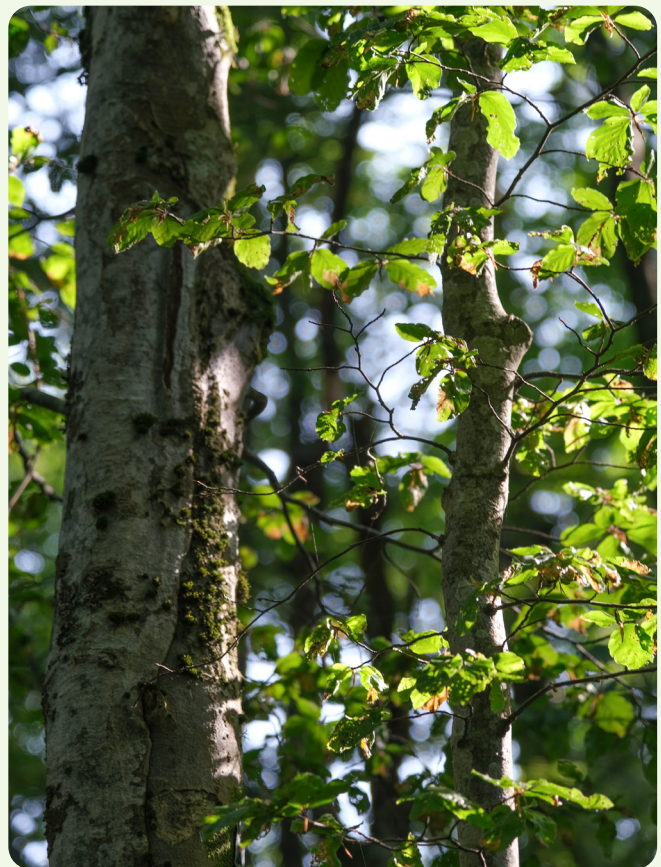
In the P&C V5-3 principles are not consistently designed around specific intended outcomes. For example, Principles 2, 3 and 4 are structured around outcomes, while Principle 9 relates to High Conservation Values for which its 6 categories relate to different sustainability outcomes (e.g. biodiversity, landscapes, ecosystem services, Indigenous Peoples, etc.). Similarly, Principle 10 currently refers to the implementation of management activities which poorly reflect the expected outcomes it should deliver.

Proposal

Structure the principles according to their intended outcomes so that each principle refers to a precise intended outcome. Restructuring the principles according to intended outcomes would entail several key changes in the design and logic of the PCI.

Benefits

1. Making emerging priorities more prominent at principle level: This approach creates space to integrate sustainability themes that are currently underrepresented or not clearly visible at the principle level by embedding them into newly defined outcome-oriented principles or adjusting the scope of existing principles.
2. Coherence across the normative hierarchy: Aligning principles with main intended outcomes enables a cascading structure where criteria define intermediate outcomes contributing to each principle, and indicators serve as measures of performance. This structure ensures vertical alignment between principles, criteria, and indicators through a clear hierarchy of intended outcomes. It reinforces the causal pathway of intended outcomes of forest stewardship by linking practices at the Management Unit to FSC's Vision.
3. Enhance communication: Organizing the principles by outcome allows FSC to more clearly articulate its contributions to global sustainability goals (e.g., biodiversity, climate), making Forest Management Certification easier to understand for stakeholders, governments, and external partners.
4. Support for monitoring and evaluation activities: An outcome-aligned structure enables better definition of what success looks like, and how progress can be measured—supporting evidence-based claim of FSC certification to sustainability goals, adaptive management, and learning.



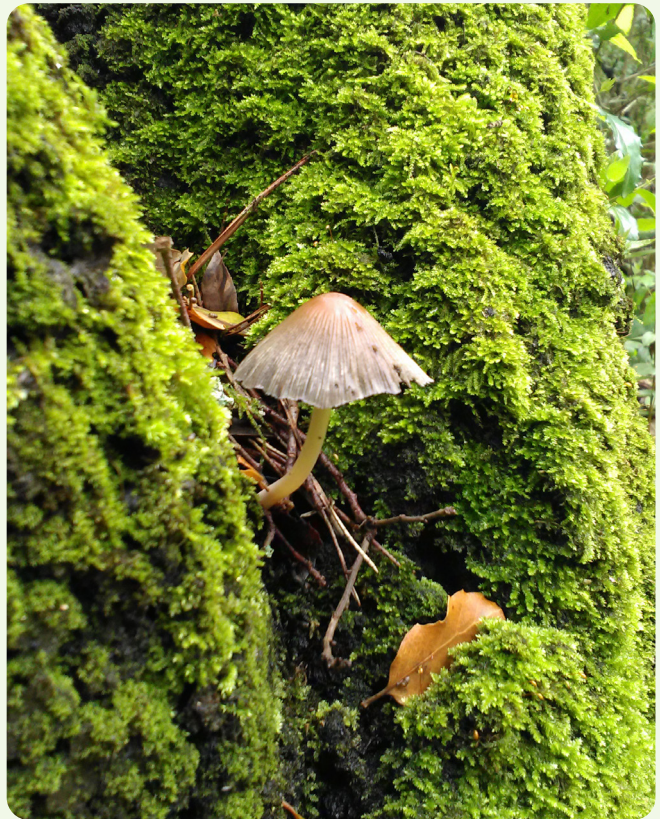
Designing the Criteria around intended outcomes

In the current P&C, the logic behind the formulation of the criteria within a given principle is not consistent. For example, in some criteria under a given principle, multiple criteria are supposed to contribute to single outcome, while in some criteria under another given principle, each criterion is supposed to contribute to a single outcome.

From an outcome perspective, such inconsistencies would make the implementation of outcome orientation more difficult and complex. For example, the criteria under Principle 9 are formulated according to a chronological sequence in which they build on each other. The sequence forms a kind of small result chain where the first criteria relate to activities (e.g. identifying and assessing X) and on which the subsequent criteria that relate more to outcomes (e.g. maintaining X) are built. Therefore, in this case each criterion under the Principle 9 is not associated, or contributing, to a single intended outcome.

Proposals

1. Keeping the formulation of criteria focused on intended outcomes or results (e.g., The presence of rare and threatened species is maintained). Conversely, criteria should not describe forest management activities (e.g., Measures to prevent hunting of rare and threatened species are implemented), which are more appropriately captured in the formulation of IGI. Therefore, forest management activities should be used in the formulation of IGI (see below), as they provide measurable means to assess how forest management contributes to the intended outcomes.
2. Formulating criteria as intended outcomes that clearly contribute to achieving the intended outcome set for the principle (i.e. main intended outcome).
3. Keep consistency and clarity by assigning only one intended outcome to a criterion. This would allow to streamline the formulation of criteria, so that each criterion relate to a single intended outcome. This will simplify, increase the clarity and focus on the scope of each criteria which should in turn facilitate the subsequent implementation and evaluation of requirements.



This proposal is recommended because it would increase the clarity of the scope of the requirement and ensure an easy prioritization of the key intended outcomes for a given Forest Stewardship Standard as per the FSC-PRO-60-006a.

Benefits

1. Increase consistency of the formulation across criteria.
2. Increase coherency between criteria and principles.
3. Increase clarity and focus of the scope of each criterion.
4. Facilitate the implementation of outcome-oriented Forest Stewardship Standards.

Designing the IGI

Currently, the IGI are formulated as binary (yes/no), field usable verifiers, that serve as assurance of certification requirements. This means that the IGI were not originally designed to quantify and monitor field performance of forest management using metrics. These indicators are practice-based, that means, they are used by certification bodies to evaluate conformity with the requirements. As a result, at the Management Unit (MU) level, it is difficult to assess exactly which management practices lead to specific outcomes or performance results in a quantifiable way.

Proposal

If criteria are structured around intended outcomes, as the FSC Secretariat suggests, a logical and coherent way to design IGI is to specify the activities clearly contributing to achieve the intermediate intended outcomes (i.e. at the Criteria level). This will make the IGI complement the P&C if they are formulated and designed around intended outcomes. Important note that this proposal does not move away from the current IGI formulation (binary), but it rather introduces a safeguard to ensure that IGIs are drafted in a way that clearly links forest management activities to the intended outcomes at the criteria level. In other words, IGIs will continue to be clear, verifiable requirements, but with an added emphasis on their contribution to achieving intermediate intended outcomes.

Benefits

1. Keep the consistency with how the current IGI work in terms of assurance requirements.
2. Focus on IGI that are clearly contributing to outcomes.
3. Contribute to an optimum balance between the cost of implementation and the need to measure progress towards outcomes by introducing monitoring indicators. These monitoring indicators are addressed under the revision of Requirements for the Development and Maintenance of FSC Country Requirements and FSC-PRO-60-006a where 3-5 key intended outcomes are to be prioritized. This assumes that IGI are specifying activities providing the most cost-effective way to define certification requirements and allow conformance evaluations.



REDESIGNING PRINCIPLE 8

Principle 8 focuses on monitoring activities, and the impacts of these to support learning and adaptive management by certificate holders. However, current evidence from the Fast-Tracking Biodiversity project ([The value of responsible forest stewardship for biodiversity](#)) shows two important limitations of how this Principle is being implemented.

Firstly, the monitoring activities conducted by certificate holders are rarely done in a way that allow quantifying the effects or results of specific forest management activities. And while this might not be necessary in all instances, it shows that adaptive forest management cannot rely strongly on data and insights derived from sound scientific approaches and quantified outcomes over time.

Secondly, monitoring activities conducted by certificate holders, as currently prescribed by the Principle 8, are not performed in a consistent way across countries and across certificate holders. The diversity of approaches used for collecting data on those monitoring activities represents a major limitation to compile data across certificate holders and countries, and therefore, these data cannot be used for learning and evaluating the effects of FSC certification. There is a clear opportunity to improve the approach to monitor and quantify the effects of forest management activities as part of forest management certification to ensure actionable insights and evidence of outcomes are gathered.

Proposal

The FSC Secretariat suggests to use Principle 8 for embedding the monitoring indicators related to the key intended outcomes that will be prioritized by standard developers when revising the Forest Stewardship Standard for a given country. Under this suggestion, Principle 8 would maintain list of generic indicators to monitor activities to support adaptive management, but also include the list of monitoring indicators and its monitoring requirements associated with the key intended outcomes prioritized under the PRO-60-006a, to monitor progress against the key intended outcomes.

Benefits

1. Bridge the gap between adaptive management and intended outcomes of forest stewardship, by ensuring that progress against intended outcomes is monitored using scientific approaches to allow adaptive forest management based on insights and data. Adding monitoring indicators in Principle 8 will ensure it continues to support local adaptive management, while also allowing aggregate information consistently across certificate holders and countries. This in turn will allow deriving insights (learnings) to improve the FSC system and track progress towards the intended outcomes of forest stewardship.
2. Ensure that all requirements related to monitoring activities of key intended outcomes are found under the same Principle 8.





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