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Clarification: FSC certification and carbon claims

There is an increasing interest in claims that biomass used for energy production has substantial greenhouse gas emission-reduction results and no negative impacts on (forest) biodiversity.

FSC certification of such biomass can play an important role in delivering the second objective. In particular, where the use of biomass for energy production leads to intensified harvesting of forest materials, FSC certification can be an essential tool to prescribe and verify practices that protect the forests' ecosystem services and biodiversity.

With regards to the carbon impact of biomass production, FSC is working on the implementation of its new '[Principles & Criteria](#)'. These will give more specific details regarding the carbon balance in forests used for biomass production.

One relevant issue not yet addressed by FSC is the conversion of wetlands or highly biodiverse grasslands into plantations before certification takes place. This process can cause substantial carbon emissions. Overall, the carbon impacts of biomass production and use will remain beyond the scope of FSC certification, in particular emissions from production processes beyond the forest.

So while we promote FSC certification of biomass to address forests' ecological integrity and carbon storage capacity, for climate policy purposes this must be complemented by a credible carbon claims methodology, such as the one delivered by the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials.

FSC expects its Certificate Holders working in this area to be explicit about both the purpose and limitations of FSC certification of biomass for energy purposes.

In the coming years, FSC will assess its potential for further contributions to the sustainable use of biomass, in both climate and biodiversity terms.

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