



## FSC TO UN: USE CERTIFICATION AS INDICATOR FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT!

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In September 2015, the UN Development Summit will adopt new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide global society in promoting social, environment and economic progress for the next 15 years. Several of these goals relate to the roles of forests, and one of them is specifically about achieving sustainable forest management (SFM) globally by 2020.

The SDGs and their specific targets will demonstrate the consensus by the world's governments on the direction of human development. However, it will be **indicators** that give concrete guidance on action, monitoring and reporting. Such indicators will not be agreed by the UN Summit, but in a process just started by the UN Statistical Commission, which aims to conclude by March 2016.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is aware of the importance of such indicators and the quality requirements that the UN Statistical Commission will apply. It is concerned about the lack of consensus amongst experts and international agencies about an overarching and yet action-oriented definition of sustainable development. On the other hand, it is convinced that certification is a reasonable and practical proxy for the perfect indicator which so far does not exist.

### **The two draft targets directly related to sustainable forest management, agreed by the UN Open Working Group for Sustainable Development on 19 July 2014, are:**

*15.1. By 2020 ensure conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.*

*15.2. By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and increase afforestation and reforestation by x% globally.*

**FSC proposes the following indicator to support the sustainable forest management objectives of these targets:** **"Percentage of forests certified under inclusive, effective certification schemes"**.

### **EXPLANATION**

#### **The problem to solve**

- The need for at least one indicator on SFM which is universally applicable, measurable and existing.
- The absence of a globally agreed definition of SFM.

Even if a globally agreed definition of SFM is absent, it is important not to skip this issue. SFM relates to the three dimensions of sustainable development: it covers environmental and social quality, as

well as products for human use. It relates to employment, poverty alleviation, rights and opportunities for indigenous people, ecosystem services, climate change and conflict avoidance. It links to the six dimensions UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has proposed as framework for the SDGs: people, planet, partnership, dignity, prosperity and justice. Focus on forest cover in terms of hectares misses most of these points. So SDGs 15.1 and 15.2 certainly need to have one (or two?) indicator(s) of particular relevance to SFM.

FSC is not necessarily proposing that certification should be the only indicator for SFM. However, we submit that it is a relevant one, and invite the UN Statistical Commission to consider it. The qualifications 'inclusive' and 'effective' are optional but important, as we will explain below. But if these are not acceptable, another qualification – 'recognized' – should be included in their stead.

In presenting the relevance of our proposed indicator, we follow the criteria the UN Statistical Commission is likely to use for its selection process:

#### 1. What is the *precise* definition of the indicator?

Our basic assumption is that the indicators are primarily for policymaking, monitoring and reporting at the national level.

The indicator that FSC proposes relates to certification processes of specific forest management units (FMUs), which have clear and legal boundaries, are measured in hectares or acres, and are registered in publicly accessible databases.

The proposed qualifications mean;

- **Inclusive:** the schemes that determine the requirements for forest managers to fulfil as condition for certification, as well as the modalities for verification of the forest practices in the certified area, ensure that the rules are set in balanced, transparent, multi-stakeholder driven procedures, and that in particular the rights of the local population and indigenous peoples, including customary rights, are guaranteed in the resulting procedures and practices.
- **Effective:** the criteria and indicators the schemes apply, as well as the verification and correction procedures required, are considered by the national authority concerned as having the expected impact on forest management practices.
- **Recognized** (the alternative qualification): national authorities are expected to assess the forest certification schemes active in their country in order to decide whether any or all of these can be used for this indicator.

#### 2. How is the indicator linked to the specific TARGET, as worded in the final report of the Open Working Group?

Target 15.2. specifically mentions promoting the implementation of sustainable management of (all types of) forests. Target 15.1. implies that in fact sustainable use of forests has to be achieved by



2020. Certification is one way to get there, and – frankly speaking – globally the most concrete, applicable and measurable way.

Forest certification applies to sustainable management of all types of forests, so it is a direct reflection of this target.

### 3. Does the indicator already exist and is it regularly reported?

The indicator exists, is applied currently in some 81 countries, and could in principle be applied in other countries as well. Public information is provided on a continual basis by the schemes themselves, but international organizations such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also report regularly about the scope and expansion of forest certification globally.

See in particular:

- FAO: *State of the World's Forests*
- Convention on Biological Diversity: *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4*
- FAO/UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE): *Forest Products Annual Market Reviews*
- ITTO: Reports to the International Tropical Timber Council
- UNEP: *Keeping Track of Our Changing Environment* (2012); *Global Environmental Outlook 5*
- Biodiversity Indicator Partnership: Aichi Target 7 – Areas under Sustainable Management (most recent version 2014).

### 4. Reliability, potential coverage, comparability across countries, and possibility for computing at sub-national level.

**Reliability:** FMUs achieve certification for a clearly defined forest area, either as individual units or through a group certificate. These certificates are registered in publicly accessible databases. So for each country it is simple to calculate the total amount of certified area per certification scheme. In countries where two (or more) certification schemes are active, it is possible that one FMU unit has more than one certificate. In that case one needs to avoid double counting, which is possible because the databases provide information about the name of the forest manager/owner as well as the specific location.

The registers are constantly updated by certification bodies. These bodies register certificates they are submitted and remove certificates that have expired or been withdrawn. As regards FSC, an international body, Accreditation Services International, oversees the implementation of this registration duty.

**Potential coverage:** Forest certification can, in principle, be applied in any country of the world, provided governments allow the necessary stakeholder processes to happen and private certification bodies to operate.



**Comparability across countries:** In each country the same measurement unit is used, certified area per hectare. The only policy action that a national authority has to take before measuring is to decide which certification schemes active in its country it considers to deliver inclusiveness and effectiveness.

**Sub-national level:** This should not be a problem. The certificates database indicate in which part of the country the certified forest management unit is.

***Two general comments:***

- It may seem cumbersome to have to add up figures per country on the basis of individual forest management schemes. However, the number of certificates is quite manageable: FSC currently counts 1,312 forest management certificates in 81 countries, and the database of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) shows 750 forest management certificates in 29 countries.
- On the other hand, certification cover in the world is considerable: currently, 185 million ha is FSC certified and 264 million ha is certified by the PEFC. Taking into account double certification (which can be easily determined at the national level), certification still represents at least 10 percent of all forests in the world, and some 30 percent of managed forests. These percentages are confirmed by the 2014 Forest Products Annual Market Review in which FAO and UNECE state that almost 30 percent of industrial roundwood traded in the world comes from certified forests.

**5. Can a meaningful numerical target for 2030 be met, and is there already a baseline value for 2015?**

As targets 15.1 and 15.2 focus on 2020, this question should be adapted to that date. If this is done, the answer to both questions is “yes”. A baseline value for 2015 can be easily distilled for any country, even to the sub-national level, on the basis of existing data. As regards a numerical target there are different options, including the following combinations:

- doubling of forest certification by 2020
- doubling of forest certification by 2020 in countries which currently have 10 percent or more forest certified
- an increase of 50 percent in countries which currently have 40 percent or more certified
- at least 10 percent of total forest cover certified in countries where currently no or very little forest certification has happened.

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