

Anonymous contribution TPAC forum - FSC International

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FSC and its accreditation body ASI are in non-compliance with the TPAC criteria C 5.1. (in addition to your previous finding that FSC is in non-compliance with C5.2), especially in regards to Chapter 4 of ISO 17011, which deals with issues of impartiality.

ASI itself states that it was in violation with ISO 17011 until at least 2010, a fact that TPAC failed to discover during its initial assessment of FSC. ASI supposedly undertook an “internal audit” in 2009 and all non-conformities was supposedly resolved in 2010 – see <http://www.cpet.org.uk/uk-government-timber-procurement-policy/files/Stakeholders2019%20comments%20and%20responses%20related%20to%20FSC%202010-1.pdf>. This statement, however, appears to be incorrect. ASI proudly announced at the end of 2012 that it finally managed to cut the “close links” to FSC (<http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/letter-from-guntars-laguns-managing-director-2>).

Is ASI now in compliance with ISO 17011?

There are a number of question marks that make this highly unlikely:

- Neither the audit report nor the verification document are public, which make it difficult to assess whether ASI in fact addressed the non-conformities.
- The “well known international auditor”, Richard Bradely, happens to have moved on to become member of the “new ASI independent Board”, <http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/new-asi-board-of-directors-starts-operating>, which places considerable doubt over the independence of the internal audit.
- Given that ASI spent 2012 cutting the close links to FSC (in violation of ISO 17011) despite the fact that all non-conformities were supposedly addressed in 2010 mean that while Richard Bradly may well be “well known”, he may not necessarily have been “good”.

Publicly available information about ASI indicates that it is still far from impartial. In fact the entire FSC verification system may not be as impartial as people want to believe - there appears to be quite a bit of nepotism: The majority of ASI Board of Directors <http://www.accreditation-services.com/about/board-of-directors> are or were directly employed by FSC or have very close relationships with FSC:

- Kim Carstensen is Director General of FSC International,
- Michael E Conroy is Chairman of the FSC Board of Directors.
- Guntars Lagūns was previously employed by FSC before becoming Managing Director for ASI.
- Both Kim Carstensen and Guntars Lagūns are also members of the ISEAL Board of Directors
- Ken Commins, was a member of the ISEAL Board of Directors until 2012.

Most importantly, however, is the final dependence of FSC on ASI, which makes any notion of impartiality and objectivity impossible. In 2010 and 2011, FSC derived 86% and 74% of

its total revenues from its 2 Accreditation Program”, ASI – see <https://ic.fsc.org/download.annual-report-2010.a-550.pdf> and <https://ic.fsc.org/download.annual-report-2011.a-1029.pdf>. So you've got FSC setting standards for companies who are paying certification bodies who are paying ASI who is paying FSC... that such an arrangement is possible under ISEAL rules puts ISEAL performance into question....

That ASI is a wholly owned subsidiary of FSC is probably something that is common knowledge and must not be specifically mentioned in this context.

In how far all of these arrangements put in doubt the confidence in accreditation (as required by ISO 17011 4.2.1), safeguards the objectivity and impartiality of ASI activities (4.3.1.), whether it can be said that there is no undue commercial, financial and other pressures (4.3.4), whether the activities of its related bodies (=FSC) do not compromise the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of its accreditation (4.3.7) etc... needs to be thoroughly investigated. Especially given that TPAC failed to see the violation of ISO 17011 requirements to in the initial assessment that ASI itself admitted should be a wake-up call for TPAC to thoroughly investigate the FSC-ASI (and ISEAL?) relationship.