

RESPONSE FORM - TPAC Stakeholder Forum on FSC International 2021



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Please select

Comments relate to:

- FSC International
- FSC country:

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)	
Legislation and regulation	P 1. Relevant international, national, and regional/local legislation and regulations shall be respected.
...	
Interests of stakeholders	P 2. The interests of directly and indirectly involved stakeholders shall be taken into account.
Health and labour conditions	P 3. Safety, health, and labour conditions shall be sufficiently safeguarded and where relevant enhanced.
Biodiversity	P 4. Biodiversity shall be maintained and where possible enhanced.
Regulation functions	P 5. The regulation function and quality, health, and vitality of the forest shall be maintained and where possible enhanced.
Production function	P 6. The production capacity of timber and relevant non-timber forest products shall be maintained.
Contribution to local economy	P 7. Forest management shall contribute to the local economy and employment.
Management system	P 8. Sustainable forest management shall be realised through a management system.

Management group	P 9. Forest management in a group or regional association shall offer sufficient safeguards for sustainable forest management.

Chain of Custody (CoC)	
Chain of Custody system	P 1. A Chain of Custody (CoC) must be in place from the forest unit of origin to the final point of sale, which provides a link between the certified material in the product or product line and certified forest units.
<i>See comments below regarding C1.1. and C1.2 and C1.6</i>	
Chain of Custody group certification	P 2. If Group certification of the CoC is allowed, the standard must require that the group as whole must comply with the same requirements which are posed on individual companies.
Logos and labels	P 3. Logos and labels that belong to the certification system and occur on products and documents shall have an unambiguous meaning and shall be applied in accordance with the rules established by the certification system.
<i>See comments below regarding C3.1</i>	

Development, Application and Management of certification systems (DAM)	
Standard development	P 1. The process of standard development and the standard itself shall fulfil the requirements as established by international umbrella organisations (such as ISO and ISEAL).
System manager	P 2. The certification system shall be managed by a legal entity (system manager). The tasks and responsibilities shall be clearly distributed among the organisations, which form an organisational and/or functional part of the system.
Decision-making bodies and objection procedures	P 3. Decision-making bodies shall reflect the interests of stakeholders and shall provide for adequate procedures for objection and appeal regarding the decisions made and the functioning of the decision-making bodies.
Certification bodies and procedures	P 4. Certification bodies shall be independent and shall be competent to assess sustainable forest management and the chain of custody system.
Accreditation	P 5. The accreditation agencies that grant the accreditations for certification of sustainable forest management and/or the chain of custody shall be competent and independent, national or international organisations that are preferably member of the IAF.

Procedure on endorsement of certification systems by a meta-system (PEM)

Processes of assessment and endorsement

P1 Processes of assessment and endorsement of Certification Systems are reliable and transparent.

General comments

First of all we like to compliment FSC in general for their efforts of protecting forests and stimulating the use of materials from these forest with all the different standards/products they have in the market.

We like to address the fact that FSC has several claims and logo's and that these different product within FSC have different sets off requirements. These requirements differ greatly. The market sees FSC as one thanks to the branding of FSC but the market has to understand that not every FSC claim is the same.

Newly adapted initiatives like FSC-STD-40-006 V2 (=“FSC voor projectcertificering”) facilitate probably companies at the end of the Chain of Custody. We recognize that this standard offers a new possibility for companies to be able to make a claim and also be able to use the FSC name but this newly developed standard does not comply with the TPAC requirements.

Firstly we like to remark that this standard and also not the version prior to this one, dated 2006-06-29, was previously assessed by TPAC. This standard was not part of the TPAC assessment of FSC in march 2015(see last page <https://www.tpac.smk.nl/Public/TPAC%20Assessments%20results/TPACPublicAssessmentReportFSCMAR2015.pdf>) . This is therefore a new standard that had to follow the appropriate procedure and should not be part of this reassessment. It is not a reassessment for this specific standard. Please TPAC and FSC follow the correct procedure for this new standard

Secondly the various reasons why the “FSC voor projectcertificering” does not comply with the requirements;

-In general the Chain of Custody standard FSC-STD-40-004 , the well-known COC standard that complies with the TPAC requirements (was part of the assessment of TPAC march 2015), is NOT part of the normative documents of this “FSC voor projectcertificering” standard. See first of all the table A on page 8 and secondly the explicit sentence on this same page.

Quote: “The standards FSC-STD-40-004 and FSC-STD-40-006 cannot be combined in project certification.”

-The fact that this “FSC voor projectcertificering” does not use the COC standard is also seen in Quote; “1.7 The Organization shall demonstrate that only eligible materials were procured and used in FSC-certified projects. NOTE: This standard does not prescribe how this requirement should be met, but the information provided to the certification body shall be adequate to enable the verification that only eligible materials were used in projects and the claims made on projects are true and correct.”

Firstly this standard does not use the 40-004 and therefore does not lean on all the procedures which are in this standard. It is a standard on its own and there is no clear instruction/procedure described by FSC because it states for instance; “This standard does not prescribe how this requirements should be met”. This is not in accordance with the requirement: C1.2.

This standard “FSC voor projectcertificering” therefore secondly allows certificate holders and their different certification bodies to make their own assessments, as long as they have “adequate information to enable the verification”. The Dutch phrase “gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen” cannot be maintained because it is up to their interpretation, the interpretation of certificate holders and the controlling certification bodies. Because of this risk of free interpretations and not having “gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen” international accreditation standards, and the TPAC requirements, does not allow free interpretations within their rules.

-There is no compliance with **c1.1** and **c1.2**

“3.2 The Organization shall establish an agreement with each non-FSC-certified project member, specifying at minimum that it shall:

a) conform to all applicable certification requirements and related organization’s procedures; “
Conclusion;

1) **not all members have to be FSC certified. Therefore not all members have to have a COC system.** This is not in compliance with the requirements. In these cases there is no (externally controlled) COC.

2) These non FSC certified members have to have an agreement with the organization. This agreement consists of different requirements, who is going to check this.... not an independent certification body is checking these aspects with this non FSC certified supplier because this is not part of the agreement. It is based on a **declaration** of the company itself which is far from certification....

-There is no compliance with **c3.1 (b)**

Firstly; There has to be an unambiguous claim. In this standard “FSC voor projectcertificering” there are 3 different kinds of claims possible mentioned in 4.3 a)b)c). Three different claims, that different, cannot be unambiguous.

Secondly; In note 2 on the same page as 4.3 a percentage lower than 70% is allowed. This 70% used to be a minimum for the use of the logo and is in other schemes a minimum reference....

- there is no compliance with **c3.1 (b)**

4.3.a a) Full project certification claim: The Organization can claim that a project is fully certified when all forest-based material/products used in the project, are claim-contributing inputs.

4.4 In the case of full project certification, the project may contain the quantity of up to two (2) % non-certified and non-controlled components, if they are not visible in the final project.

The combination of these two requirements makes it clear that the statement “fully certified” is not unambiguous because 4.4 allows 2% non-certified en EVEN non-controlled components.

-there is no compliance with **c1.6**

4.4 In the case of full project certification, the project may contain the quantity of up to two (2) % non-certified and non-controlled components, if they are not visible in the final project.

This standard “FSC voor projectcertificering” allows the mixing of non-certified material with certified material. According to the requirements there has to be a mass balance claim or a percentage based claim of SFM certified material. Neither of these two are prescribed in the standard “FSC voor projectcertificering”.

-there is no compliance with **c1.6**

“4.4....

NOTE: The percentage calculation does not need to be precise, as long as The Organization is able to demonstrate that the amount of non-certified and non-controlled is not higher than two (2) %”.

Conclusion;

1) There is a) no clear instruction and b) it does not have to be precise (2% is very precise and very low but the calculation does not have to be precise and there is no instruction).

2) This standard “FSC voor projectcertificering” therefore allows different organizations to make their own calculations and allows the certification bodies to make their own assessments, because “The percentage calculation does not need to be precise”. The Dutch phrase “gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen” cannot be maintained because it is up to their interpretation. Because of this risk of free interpretations and not having “gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen” international accreditation standards, and the TPAC requirements, does not allow free interpretations within their rules.