



TACKLING FOREST CONVERSION: FSC'S APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL REMEDY



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There are three core documents that constitute FSC's approach to environmental and social remedy:

THE POLICY FOR ASSOCIATION (PfA), THE POLICY TO ADDRESS CONVERSION (PAC), and THE REMEDY FRAMEWORK (RF). Together, this package strengthens FSC's position on conversion while encouraging ecological restoration and social remedy.



Scope and main objectives

The **Policy for Association** governs the relationship between FSC and corporate groups and outlines unacceptable activities that severely impact forests and people on-the-ground.

The **Policy to Address Conversion** sets FSC's stance on forest conversion and how organizations must comply for certification.

The **Remedy Framework** responds to instances of environmental and social harm caused by both unacceptable activities and conversion.

Innovative approach

This package is the result of an extensive and robust normative process involving input from a chamber-balanced working group and two technical working groups, numerous public consultations, research, and stakeholder engagement.

There are key changes this package presents to change to current practices that will improve the FSC system's approach to shaping resilient forests.

Topic	Doc.	Current practice	Planned changes	Effect on the FSC system
Scope of unacceptable activities	PfA	Unacceptable activities focus on forestry operations.	Activities expanded to operations in forest products sector as well as forestry operations.	A wider range of activities of corporate groups covered across the forest product supply chain.
Screening of organizations	PfA	No active screening before association with FSC-PfA operates reactively.	Information disclosure requirements and screening process introduced.	Earlier detection of organizations not committed to FSC values, thereby strengthening FSC's ability to protect its reputation.
Due diligence responsibility	PfA	Defined through majority ownership, by a minimum of 50% stake in an operation.	Defined in terms of control under a wider range of scenarios.	Larger range of organizations covered, which will further protect FSC's reputation. Aligned with Accountability Framework initiative's (AFI) definition.
Significant conversion	PfA	Threshold exceeded when 10% or 100,000 ha of forest under the organization's responsibility in the past five years, or any HCY forest has been converted.	Unacceptable activity of conversion of forest cover has been aligned with all aspects in PAC.	Conversion that was not previously detectable as a violation of the PfA will be considered unacceptable in line with the PAC.
Definition of conversion	PAC	No definition of conversion; regulated in Criteria 8.9 and 8.10 of FSC Principles & Criteria (P&C) as "a change from natural forests to plantations or from natural forests to other land uses".	New definition of conversion to apply from 2020 onwards: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of change of natural forest cover or High Conservation Value (HCV) areas, induced by human activity• Gradual forest degradation will qualify as conversion.	Establishment of a stronger and more comprehensive definition than currently stated in the FSC normative framework.
Cut-off date	PAC	No certification of land converted after 1994 if the organization was involved in the conversion. If the organization was not involved, the land is eligible for certification (ownership loophole).	Land converted between 1994-2020 will be eligible for certification after a remedy process for social and environmental harms. Level of remedy is related to the level of involvement of the organization.	FSC will be able to contribute to remedy of harms caused in the past, while strengthening the position for the future relating to post-2020 zero deforestation goals called for by the international community. The ownership loophole is closed.
Minimal conversion	PAC	The P&Cs and KIs allow a very limited conversion (5% of MUI) if there are proven conservation benefits, and it does not damage HCVs. It is not clearly stated if it is 5% before certification, after certification, or both.	5% minimal conversion of a MUI is permitted if there is proven conservation and social benefits, and it does not damage HCVs. It is clarified that minimal conversion cannot exceed 5% in total.	Concept of minimal conversion strengthened, and better clarity provided for implementation. Does not create obstacles for conservation and social projects (e.g., community development).
Conservation requirements	PAC	KIs require at least 10% of the MUI to be designated as Conservation Area Network (CAN).	Certification of converted lands only possible after fulfilling additional conservation requirements, along with KIs requirements.	Increased land area managed for conservation.
Remedy for past environmental and social harms	PAC	No remedy required from organizations not involved in conversion when pursuing certification. Remedy requirements will be developed on a case-by-case basis for PfA violations.	Social and environmental remedy will be required for certification of lands converted between 1994-2020. For a corporate group to be eligible for association, remedy of social and environmental harms caused by unacceptable activities will be required through standardized requirements.	FSC is at the forefront of creating a route for non-judicial access to remedy in the forestry sector. Encouraging restoration and social remedy. Standardized and consistent processes to provide remedy, following FSC processes for affected rights holders.

Lessons learned

As a package, these documents will increase conservation requirements, make the normative framework easier to consistently implement, and put FSC at the forefront of setting out rules for ecological restoration and non-judicial access to social remedy.

Conclusions

Members will vote on **Motion 37 at the GA**. The PAC can only be implemented if passed, but if it is, and the FSC International Board of Directors approves the PfA, PAC, and Remedy Framework, all three could become effective in January 2023.

