



General
Assembly
2025 **Panama**

FSC® Chain-of-Custody group certification is an excellent –and affordable – solution for smaller companies

Small and medium-sized businesses are the true engines of our world economy, and we need them to help make sustainable forest products the norm.



Scope and main objectives

Time and time again, we see smaller companies decide not to pursue FSC certification because myths have been masquerading as facts. Let's break down **five common myths of group certification** and provide the facts of why FSC CoC group certification is a powerful option for even the smallest of companies.



Group Certification In Motion

- Motion 28/2020 asked for simplified requirements to help improve accessibility of FSC certification for smaller companies. Group certification is already an excellent solution and addresses the complexities small businesses face in conforming to the CoC standard.
- Motion 55/2021 asked for increased transparency of organizations and products certified through CoC group certification. Group certification offers that transparency by requiring group participants to have their own records on the FSC database.



Group Certification Case Study

“We created the group certificate years ago, when the FSC came out with a new way for smaller companies to become certified. Prior to that, it was way too expensive for a small company to do it. But they came out with this group methodology, and a few of us started talking and decided we'd try to put together a group.

Not only do you save a lot of money by joining a group certificate, but you have your group manager as a resource that cuts a lot of time and red tape out of the process.”

– Timothy Freeman, former president of Printing Industries Alliance

Groups are formed independently from FSC. If you're interested in learning more about joining a group, contact the CoC Group Network at groupcert.org.

Authors

Bert de Jong, DuraCert
Christopher Gibbons, American Green Consulting Group
Doug Patterson, Forest Products Certification Group
Ulf Sonntag, ZGD
Jordan Zettle, Sustainable Northwest



CoC Group Certification: Myth vs. Fact

- **Myth #1:** Group certification is not as credible as single certification.
Fact: Group certification is designed to be fully compliant with FSC standards.

The risk for non-compliance is much lower when compared to single certification. Group certificate participants submit to more audits (both internal and external) and have access to ongoing support from their group managers.

- **Myth #2:** If one site loses its certificate, the whole group is suspended.
Fact: Group compliance is governed by the totality of its participant oversight. If one site fails an audit, the entire group is not in danger.

If a participant site consistently fails to address problems identified by the group manager, that site is removed from the group.

- **Myth #3:** My company is too large for group certification.
Fact: While the size and revenue thresholds differ country to country, these ceilings may be higher than you think.

For example, in the U.S., companies qualify if they make less than \$10M in gross annual forest product sales or have fewer than 25 employees.

- **Myth #4:** Certification is too expensive.
Fact: Group certification is designed to help reduce the overall costs of certification.

Smaller companies not only benefit from the lower cost of group certification, but they also have a better experience overall because documents and support are included.

- **Myth #5:** Getting certified is too much work.
Fact: Complicated requirements can be burdensome for smaller companies.

That's why group certification is overseen by a group manager—who handles all the details.

