

‘FSC certification enables forestry companies to increase productivity’

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent non-governmental organisation with over 1000 individual and organisation members from all over the world, including leading international companies. FSC develops and promotes environmentally sound, socially beneficial and economically prosperous management of the world’s forests. Interview with Nathalie Bouville, Regional Communications Manager of FSC Africa.

by Meindert Brouwer

1 What are the benefits of FSC certified forest management?

There are many benefits. FSC certification enables forestry companies to increase productivity thanks to a rigorous organisation and monitoring of activities. It also gives them added recognition on a national and international level, including better market access and green investments opportunities. This is based on the fact that FSC certification encourages beneficial forest community relations and has a positive impact on the working and living conditions of workers and their dependents. The recognition and respect for the legal and customary rights of local forest-dependent people are also obvious benefits of certification. The compliance of FSC certified holders with all relevant legal requirements has a positive impact on the economic

and social welfare of the countries involved. They greatly benefit from the payment of all fiscal and other duties from forest revenues. Finally, FSC-certified concessions strongly contribute to the protection of biodiversity and to the mitigation of climate change.

2 How can FSC Congo Basin facilitate and support forest concession holders and operators in the timber processing and trading who want to obtain FSC certification?

FSC staff in Brazzaville, Libreville and Douala provide relevant information to forest concession holders and operators in the timber value chain. This includes, for instance, what FSC certification entails for their company,

where to start the certification process, and who to liaise with for support. Companies will also be informed about and directed towards the critical entities needed outside the FSC organization, such as accredited certification bodies.

3 How can FSC Congo Basin facilitate and support forest communities who want to obtain FSC certification?

FSC Congo Basin is adapting its national standards to meet the needs of smallholders and community forests of Central Africa. Official representatives of local communities and Indigenous Peoples are duly represented in the FSC standard development groups where they can contribute to the deliberations and decisions regarding the requirements. FSC is familiar with the challenges associated with community forestry and is currently implementing a continuous improvement procedure to allow smallholders and communities to be initially certified, based only on a subset of forest management requirements. It will offer flexible steps towards conformity with the remaining



PHOTO DAVID IGNASZEWSKI

Nathalie Bouville

FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was created in 1993 to help consumers and businesses identify products from well-managed forests. FSC sets standards by which forests are certified, offering credible verification to people who are buying wood and wood products.

As of February 2020 more than 200 million hectares of forest have been certified according to FSC standards (approximately 17 percent of the world’s production forests), and almost 43,000 forest management and chain of custody certificates have been issued, worldwide.

FSC members include some of the world’s leading environmental non-governmental organisations (WWF and Greenpeace), businesses (Tetra Pak and Mondi

PLC) and social organisations (including REPALEAC in Central Africa - Network of Indigenous and Local Communities for the Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa), as well as forest owners and managers, processing companies and campaigners and individuals.

Three chambers

FSC membership has three chambers, that is to say environmental, social and economic chambers, which have equal rights in decision making. Moreover, to ensure that FSC has a globally fair representation, members represent either the northern or southern subchambers.

Source: www.ic.fsc.org

FSC certification gives forestry companies added recognition on a national and international level, including better market access and green investments opportunities.

requirements within a defined time frame. We are expecting to complete the procedure by the end of 2020 and pilot test it in the Congo Basin.

4 How can FSC Congo Basin facilitate and support national governments in Central Africa who want to promote and implement FSC standards in forest concessions in their country?

FSC Congo Basin is keen to have good relationships with governments and has already entered into cooperation agreements with the governments of the Republic of Congo and Gabon. FSC Congo Basin works with government officials to increase the appreciation of FSC certification and support the development of a conducive policy, an institutional and regulatory environment for sustainable forestry and certification. Other collaborative goals are to explore and develop market and green investment opportunities for FSC-certified companies and ensure the consistency between FSC requirements and national legislative framework and international regulations (such as VPAs, EUTR, Lacey Act).

5 How is an independent, third-party FSC certification set up?

FSC itself does not certify forest operations or manufacturers. By refraining from certification, FSC can remain independent towards anyone wanting to be certified. FSC sets the standards for forest management and chain of custody certification. It also defines the procedures that certification bodies should follow in their certification assessments. FSC certification is carried out by accredited certification bodies that are internationally qualified and managed by an independent accreditation group called Accreditation Services International. FSC is the only global forest certification system to have an

integrated accreditation program that systematically checks its certification bodies.

Editor's note: more information at

<http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/standards/fsc>

6 What are the benefits of membership of the Forest Stewardship Council?

Being a member of the FSC provides a unique opportunity to take an active role in the effort to preserve world forests, which are essential for the protection of our planet and our future. FSC members vote on the motions that define the rules that must be observed by forest management and the timber industry to guarantee to consumers that the timber products come from sustainably and responsibly managed forests. These are forests where timber harvesting operations allow for the renewal of resources, biodiversity conservation, and enhancing the livelihoods of communities. As a business, FSC membership clearly indicates a commitment to responsible corporate citizenship. FSC offers a unique platform for all its members to engage with an exceptional group of organizations and individuals working together to address challenges in the forestry sector and develop new networking or business opportunities.

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Red-tailed monkey.

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