



A report prepared for the project

Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa

FOREST CERTIFICATION A POTENTIAL TOOL TO PROMOTE SFM IN AFRICA

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Forest Certification

A potential tool to promote SFM in Africa

By

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Africa is characterised by extremely diverse ecological conditions, ranging from humid forests to deserts and from mountain temperate forests to coastal mangrove swamps. Superimposed on this ecological diversity are varying degrees of human interaction, which are shaped by political and institutional arrangements, economic conditions, social and cultural settings. These mixes of factors result in a dynamic landscape mosaic. Forests and woodlands, which are estimated to occupy about 650 million ha or 22% of the land area, form an integral part of this mosaic and undergo continued changes largely owing to anthropogenic factors. Africa accounts for 17% of global forest cover, and the Congo Basin is home of the second largest contiguous block of tropical rainforest in the world (*FAO, 2003a*).

African forests have fulfilled and continue to fulfil critical economic, environmental, social and cultural functions. As the continent undergoes rapid political, economic and social transitions, changes that could gain momentum during the coming decades, the society/forest relationship will be redefined, altering the relative importance of the different forest functions. Currently, forests and forestry in Africa confront a number of problems, including a rapid decline in the forest cover, loss of biodiversity and a variety of unsustainable use that cast uncertainty on the future flow of goods and services. Hence, stakeholders at various levels are confronted with various questions relating to the current and future state of forest resources and their ability to contribute to sustainable development (*FAO, 2003a*). The questions include:

- Is the current rate of deforestation likely to persist as a response to the growing demand for land and products?
- Can African forests sustainably meet growing demands for products and services?
- What roles can forests play in alleviating poverty?
- Are we likely to see a different kind of forestry, which is environmentally appropriate, economically viable, and socially/culturally acceptable and beneficial?
- How is African forestry adapting to the forces of globalisation, avoiding pitfalls and making full use of emerging opportunities?
- How can Africa most effectively capitalise on its unique forest and wildlife resources?

To highlight possible answers to these questions, it is imperative to analyse the current situation of African forest resources, driving forces, possible future scenarios, implications to the forest sector, priorities as well as strategies and actions required as outlined in the recent report on “*Forestry Outlook Study for Africa*” (*FAO, 2003a*). Various mechanisms have been proposed over the years for promoting sustainable forest management (SFM) around the globe. Of these, “*Forest Certification*” (FC) has been considered, for quite some time now, as a potential tool for enhancing “*Responsible Forestry*” towards SFM.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THIS REPORT

Just like the fact that African forest issues are often being overlooked in international fora, FC in Africa is rarely visible. Out of almost 200 million ha of certified forests in the World today just 1.5% is found in Africa, despite Africa accounting for 17 % of the World’s forest cover. Why is it so?

The African Academy of Sciences (AAS), the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and FAO’s Forestry Department took an initiative to analyse and address the fact that African forest matters are rarely discussed in the International Forestry Processes, and that African representatives hardly participate in the different meetings. This applies both to the current UNFF process (2000-2005) and to the previous processes, i.e. the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF, during 1995-1997) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF, during 1997-2000), all following on Agenda 21 and the “Forest Principles” from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.

In February 2004, a workshop was held in Nairobi, with the theme “*Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa*”, organised by AFORNET and financed by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida. During the workshop, nine reports on different topics related to the theme, which had

been commissioned to different experts, were presented and discussed in detail. A few case studies were also presented or proposed during the workshop. Among them, Åke Barklund suggested three case studies capturing some of RELMA's (Sida's Regional Land Management Unit) experiences over the last years, viz. on:

- Ethiopian land/tree tenure developments;
- The Vi Agroforestry Programme in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda; and,
- Forest Certification in Africa.

In May 2004, the AAS/KSLA/FAO project was presented during UNFF 4 in Geneva. In October 2004, a second workshop was organised in Uppsala by the Royal Swedish Academy for Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA). This will prepare the final message on *Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa* to be presented during UNFF 5 in New York in May 2005.

The objective of this report is, therefore, to present the results of the study conducted on the theme entitled “**Forest certification: a potential tool to promote SFM in Africa**” jointly by Mr. Åke Barklund¹ and Dr. Demel Teketay² as part of the initiative mentioned above.

3.0 FOREST CERTIFICATION AND EXISTING SCHEMES

3.1 Forest certification

Certification is a procedure by which a third party provides written assurance/market labelling that a product, process or service conforms to specified standards, on the basis of an audit conducted to agreed procedures (Bass et al., 2001). In the agriculture sector, it first evolved in the wine industry and is now commonly applied to laboratory quality control and organic agriculture. Forest certification is the process of inspecting particular forests or woodlands to see if they are being managed according to an agreed set of standards (*FSC, 1998; Bass et al., 2001; Meidinger et al., 2003; FERN, 2004*).

Certification of public and private forests is a major topic of discussion in forestry worldwide, and everyone has his or her own perspective on it. Environmental groups see it as a way to verify a landowner's or firm's commitment to sustainable forestry. Industrial forest companies and some government agencies hope to use their certification to get credit with the public for conservation efforts. Wood product companies hope to capture new markets and gain market advantage as they communicate their good environmental performance by using *eco-labels* to identify wood products from their certified forests. Whatever the reason, the main issue behind FC is a need to provide objective evidence that forest products are being produced without harm to forests or to the natural and human systems that they support (*Fletcher et al., 2002*).

Despite the fact that the definition of SFM has *economic, ecological* and *social/cultural* criteria and every certification scheme comprise indicators from all the three corners, certification labels are often referred to as *eco labels* because the main antagonism is between “production” and “conservation”. If a compromise is arrived at between the two, it's simply called “eco”. It is anticipated that the economic interests are covered automatically if a forestry activity actually takes place. The ecological interests are taken care of by the environmental organisations involved in the certification development process while the social/cultural interests are sometimes weakly represented. Their interests are normally found somewhere between “production” and “conservation”. More often than today, the social/cultural interests might serve as a mediator between the economic and the environmental discussion of certification.

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Already from the beginning, FC was looked upon as a customer/market driven process giving people *a possibility* to choose “green forest products”. FC was never believed to “solve” the forest destruction problem around the world, but should be regarded as a potential tool towards SFM.

During UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 the three Conventions on Climate, Biodiversity and Desertification were signed, but no convention was signed on Forests. Still, UNCED is considered as an important forestry conference. Proponents for a Forest Convention pushed a system of legally sanctioned global criteria and indicators to define SFM to be the basis for a global definition of “green wood”. This should then meet the WTO requirements of eco-labelling based on a multilateral agreement. Others believed that forests are mainly resources belonging to local communities and if a Forest Convention materialised, local people would have unfair competition from large plantations and multinational forest industries. It was emphasised that “any global criteria scheme for SFM must include, as one indicator, the involvement of local communities”.

Divergent opinions on whether a Forest Convention really will be a vehicle for sustainable forestry - before, during and after UNCED - were found in many different countries in the South and North, as well as in different environmental organisations and among representatives of social/cultural interests. Soon after UNCED, where the Forest Convention idea ended up as a chapter in Agenda 21 and as a set of “Forest Principles”, some environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS) started to develop an alternative, i.e. a consumer-influenced FC scheme of forests and forest products. A label on the forest products, based on a *Forest Certificate*, verifying SFM, and a *Chain of Custody Certificate*, verifying the linkage between a forest product and wood from a certified forest through harvesting, industry processing, transportation, storage, outlets etc., should give the customer a possibility to choose “green wood-labelled” products. Such a preference could mean willingness to pay more for the “green wood”, or at least give it “market preference” before non-labelled products.

There are three components in a FC system that have to be covered one way or the other (*Barklund, 1996*):

- a suitable Environmental Management System (EMS) like ISO 14001;
- a suitable Environmental Performance Standard (EPS), a forest company’s own internal standard or a broad, externally negotiated, standard like those of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC); and,
- a suitable Market Information System (MIS) indicating that EPS is fulfilled according to EMS, procedures checked independently and linking the certified raw material with the labelled product.

Already from the beginning, FC pioneers looked upon FC as *one* means towards Sustainable Forestry, because for a long time just a fraction of the world’s forests will end up as products in front of socially and environmentally sensitive customers ready and able to consider and evaluate other things than product price and quality. Contrary to eco-labelled foods that contain or does not contain measurable levels of non-wanted chemical substances, “green wood” just implies an extra moral value beside technical/economical values, which is not possible to trace in a laboratory. FC is a voluntary undertaking on top of forest legislation, and the idea is that costs will be recovered from the market as a price premium or market preference.

A group of timber users, traders and representatives of environmental and human-rights organisations met in California in 1990 to discuss how they could combine their interests in improving forest conservation and reducing deforestation. Their meeting confirmed the need for an honest and credible system for identifying well-managed forests as acceptable sources of forest products. It was from these beginnings that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) developed. In September 1993, 130 representatives from around the world came together to hold the Founding Assembly of the FSC in Toronto, Canada. In October 1993, an agreement was reached to launch FSC, and by August 1994 a definitive set of *Principles and Criteria*, together with the Statutes for the Council, were agreed and approved by the votes of the Founding Members (www.fsc.org). Later, other similar FC-systems have been developed and put in place.

Already in 1941, the American Forest Foundation had introduced a voluntary “American Tree Farm” certificate in the USA, but its forestry standard was developed internally by the forest owners and, therefore, not regarded as a modern FC, which should also include external interests in the design of

Forestry Performance Standards. The first FSC Certificates were given to Forest Industry Concessions in the tropical Americas and still FSC dominates FC in the tropics including Africa.

3.2 Why forest certification?

After a decade of operational certification systems, some 5% of the world's forests have been certified according to the different schemes. Around 90% of the certified forests are found in the Northern Hemisphere (Europe and North America), which is also where most environmentally and socially concerned customers are found. However, the basic assumption that buyers are willing to pay extra for wood, which is labelled "green" compared with non-labelled wood has not been as pronounced as expected, but some "market preference" for "green wood" by consumers is obvious. In the meantime, the area of certified forests is increasing and FC remains high on the agenda.

There are different ways of viewing FC (*Klingberg, 2003*), and one or more of these views may be why FC is pushed in reality:

As a means for improved forest management. Improved environmental and social behaviour in – mainly tropical - forestry was the important driving force when ENGOs promoted FC as an alternative to a UN Forest Convention. It was assumed that forest owners and forest industries already covered the economic considerations. It was also assumed that FC would lead to increased awareness and knowledge among forest owners and managers about forest ecology and social/cultural values. A heavier influence should be to put economic or social pressure on those forest owners who did not join in FC. In principle, FC is voluntary but in reality it may become more of a requirement, a kind of unofficial law and regulation besides the political system.

As a tool for communication between forestry and buyers of forest products. The point of departure is that forestry and forest industry feel that the forests from where they get the raw material are already managed in an economically, environmentally and socially/culturally sound way. The problem is just that the public and the customers of forest products don't know about that or don't trust them. As a third party, FC will therefore convey the SFM message in a credible way. If only a few suppliers introduce certification, they may gain a competitive edge over the others. If FC is widespread in a country or even a continent, it may improve the general image of forestry and forest products in the eyes of the public and the whole market for sustainable forest products may expand on behalf of other, non-sustainable, materials as plastic, concrete, steel, aluminium, etc.

As a brand marketing tool. FC was said to be a market-driven system in the name of end consumers of wood products and paper. Today, FC may be more correctly called an organisation-driven system, by ENGOs, forest owners and forest industry corporations, professional consulting firms and *retailers*. Several studies indicate that environmental arguments rank high by customers, after price and quality. Some retailers, already gaining a general reputation of good prices and high quality products, also look for an eco-label as part of their brand name.

As a power game. Scientists and ENGOs are strongly involved in the FC discussion, and the mass media create selling stories. One result is a shift of decision power over forestry from parliaments and governments, forest owners and industries to civil society actors. With power often follows economic resources, which may explain the great interest in FC and the hot temperature of the debate.

3.3 Existing schemes of forest certification

Starting with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in 1993, FC schemes proliferated rapidly, and the number of schemes has reached around twenty at present (*Meidinger et al., 2003*). A detailed account of the different FC schemes can be found in the works of various authors (e.g. *Bass et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 2002; Meidinger et al., 2003; FERN, 2004*). Out of some 20 known forest certification schemes, the six

biggest ones have endorsed certification of a total of 165 million ha forests at the end of 2003 (*Table 1*), i.e. some 85% of the certified forests around the globe so far.

Most schemes are geographically limited, with the exception of FSC, which operates globally. FSC was the first modern FC scheme developed, followed by the others. At the beginning, some forest owners found the FSC process paying too little attention to the ownership over the forest resource and some forest industries found too little interest in the economic criteria. However, the establishment of FSC in the 90s triggered the development of other FC Schemes.

Some of the schemes overlap geographically causing problems for industries getting raw materials from different certification systems. Therefore, a discussion is going on to mutually recognise the different schemes. Both FSC (already global) and PEFC (with global ambitions) discuss with the other schemes about such mutual recognition. To this end, PEFC has invited the major other schemes to its Council. The greatest overlap between FSC and PEFC is found in Sweden.

The focus of this report would be on the FC scheme developed by FSC since it is the only scheme, being implemented in Africa currently and getting even more active with its newly established African Regional Office (FSC Africa) based in Ghana, focusing on the market opportunities for Congo Basin forest products in the North.

Table 1. Comparison of the six major forest certification schemes.

Scheme*	FSC	PEFC	SFI	Tree Farm	CSA	MTCC
Sponsor	Forest Stewardship Council	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	American Forest & Paper Association	American Forest Foundation	Canadian Standard Association	Malaysian Timber Certification Council
Geography	Worldwide	Europe (Global ambitions)	USA & Canada	USA	Canada	Malaysia
Establishment	1993	1998	1995	1941	1996	1998
Performance Standard-Setter	Stakeholder Committees	Stakeholder Forums	Sustainable Forestry Board	Internal	Committee + Some Public Inputs	National Committee
Eco-Label	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Chain-of-Custody	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Area of Forest Certified (mill ha in 2003)	40	52	39	12	18	4

Source: the scheme's respective www.;

* FSC = Forest Stewardship Council; PEFC = Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (formerly Pan European Forest Certification); SFI = Sustainable Forestry Initiative; CSA = Canadian Standards Association; and MTCC = Malaysian Timber Certification Council. **Note**, some 5 million ha forests are "double counted", FSC overlaps some of the other schemes.

4.0 FSC AND ITS FOREST CERTIFICATION SCHEME

4.1 Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

FSC is an international non-profit organisation founded in 1993 to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests (www.fsc.org, www.fscoax.org). It is an association of members consisting of a diverse group of representatives from environmental and social groups, the timber trade and the forestry profession, indigenous people's organisations, community forestry groups and forest product certification organisations from around the world. FSC's principal activities are the development of forest management and related *performance standards*, communications and education, and through a separate programme the accreditation and monitoring of certification bodies working to FSC *performance standards*. Based on these standards, FSC has developed an *international labelling scheme* for forest products. In this way, FSC provides the prerequisites for an incentive in the market place for good forest stewardship. The forest inspections are carried out by a number of *FSC-accredited certification bodies*, which are evaluated and monitored to ensure their competence and credibility.

FSC also supports the development of *national and local performance standards* that implement the international *Principles and Criteria of Forest Stewardship* at the local level. These standards are developed by national and regional working groups, which work to achieve consensus amongst the wide range of people and organisations involved in forest management and conservation in each part of the world. FSC has developed guidelines for developing regional certification standards to guide working groups in this process. It has developed rigorous *procedures and performance standards* to evaluate whether certification bodies can provide an independent and competent forest evaluation (certification) service. This process is known as '*accreditation*'. FSC-accredited certification bodies are required to evaluate all forests aiming for certification according to the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship. Accredited certification bodies may operate *internationally* and may carry out evaluations in any forest type. Certified forests are visited on a regular basis, to ensure they continue to comply with the FSC Principles and Criteria. The performance of the certification bodies is closely monitored by FSC. Products originating from forests certified by FSC-accredited certification bodies are eligible to carry the *FSC-logo*, if the *chain-of-custody*, i.e. tracking of the timber from the forest to the shop, has been checked.

4.2 FSC's forest certification scheme

Under the FSC scheme, certification bodies provide two separate kinds of guarantees (FSC, 1998). The first is that management of a particular forest conforms to the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship. This is referred to as '*forest certification*.' In order to certify a forest, the certification body has to study the forest management system and policies, and carry out evaluation visits in the forest itself. A forest visit may take from one day to two weeks and involves from one to four inspectors, depending on the size and complexity of the forest. Once the forest is certified, the certification body must carry out annual monitoring visits to ensure that the standards of forest stewardship are maintained throughout the period of certification.

The second kind of guarantee relates to the origin of forest products. If the certification body can certify that the raw material of a product originates from a certified forest, the product is eligible to carry the FSC Logo. This is known as '*chain-of-custody certification*', referring to verification of the pathway of the forest products from the forest, through processing and manufacturing, to the end-user. The procedure follows the wood product through every stage of its transport and conversion. A separate certificate is issued each time it passes from one stage of '*custody*' to the next.

Certification according to the FSC scheme is considered by many (FERN, 2004) as a credible and rigorous system to demonstrate responsible tropical forest management to markets in the North. Environmentally and socially conscious forest products customers are rare in the tropics, while markets suitable for eco-labels are found mainly in the North. So, African producers of furniture and flooring (or wooden raw

material for such products) aiming at the European or USA markets are the main target groups for FC in Africa. An exception may be South Africa where, so far, almost all African FC is concentrated.

4.3 Certified forests endorsed by FSC in Africa

At the end of 2003, there were about 40 million ha of certified forests endorsed by FSC worldwide: 62% in Europe, 20% in North America, 11% in Latin America, 4% in Africa and 3% in Asia-Pacific (*FSC, 2004*). In the African Region, the number and areas of certified forests endorsed by FSC have reached 30 and about 1.74 million ha, while a total of 136 chain-of-custody certificates have been endorsed by FSC (*Table 2*).

Table 2. List of African countries with the total area of forests FSC-certified as well as the corresponding number of Forest Management and Chain-of-Custody certificates endorsed through FSC certification scheme.

Country	Certificates		
	Forest management		Chain-of-Custody
	Total Forest Area (ha)	Number	Number
Morocco	-	-	1
Namibia	61,130	1	-
South Africa	1,499,620	21	122
Swaziland	17,018	1	5
Uganda	35,000	2	-
Zambia	983	1	2
Zimbabwe	127,285	4	6
Total	1,741,036	30	136

Source: Report by Accreditation Business Unit of FSC (03 May 2004)

The FSC idea is to have a national SFM performance standard developed and agreed by the three “chambers” representing the economic, the environmental and the social interests. Then, the standard is sent to FSC for approval. Forest owners or forest concessionaires could then have their forestry activities continuously checked versus the FSC performance standard by a certification body accredited by FSC. FSC approved chain-of-custody, links forest products to the customers. So far, although encouraging processes have been ongoing for some time in some countries, there are no FSC approved national performance standard developed in Africa with the involvement of representatives in the three chambers. However, such national initiatives have now been FSC-endorsed in Cameroon, Ghana, Gabon and Mozambique. The 30 FSC certificates in Africa are issued based on performance standards developed by accredited certification bodies in accordance with the ten FSC principles.

4.4 The decentralised FSC network

Over the past decade, FSC has become a global organisation for FC and labelling. Its successes include:

- endorsement of national working groups and contact persons in 31 countries;
- more than 40 million ha certified forests in 55 countries;
- more than 2,400 chain-of-custody certificates in 66 countries;
- twelve accredited certification bodies, out of which one is Africa based (SGS South Africa branch); and,
- more than 10,000 labelled products (*FSC, 2003b*).

In order to continue providing service to a growing and diverse range of clients, FSC is decentralising into a flexible, global network. By decentralising, FSC can:

- respond better and in timely and professional way to certification opportunities;
- deliver services closer to the source of demand;
- maintain continuous open dialogue with members and stakeholders; and,
- maintain the brand and its integrity.

This means delegating authority and responsibility to appropriate levels and opening offices in different regions, while the International Centre will ensure the quality control. The decentralised network of National Initiatives (NIs) and Regional Offices (ROs) will be active in all the principal forest regions of the world. ROs act as service centres for NIs in their region by providing training and coaching programmes, and assisting with fundraising. They also support FSC processes in countries without NIs and encourage and facilitate coordination of activities between NIs in the region, and with the HQ (FSC IC). Currently, there are four ROs in operation, namely the European, Latin American, Asia-Pacific and African Regional Offices.

5.0 FOREST CERTIFICATION IN AFRICA

Ten thousand years ago there were 6 billion hectares of forest on the globe. Today, only 3.8 billion hectares are left, which represent about 63% of the original forest cover (*Perlin, 2003*). Most of the forests were converted into agriculture land but forests were also cleared for roads, buildings, etc. Forest destruction is still ongoing, mainly in Africa, South East Asia and Latin America. It alarmed scientists, ENGOs and the public beginning in the 1960s, and it gave forestry in general a bad reputation. Some ENGOs urged people to use less wood and paper. But other environmental aspects called for more use of wood and paper, since they come from a renewable resource and are recyclable and can be sourced in a sustainable manner as compared with the non-renewable metals and plastic. Also the climate effects call for decreased consumption of fossil fuels and increased use of renewable bio-energy like wood. An important element of the FC concept is, therefore, also to inform that increased use of well-managed forest resources is environmentally sound.

Africa is suffering from rapid deforestation, which creates even worse living conditions for the poor. Apart from clearing forest land for crop production and extensive pasture, some current logging systems also causes degradation of the forests. The extent and situations of forests in Africa have recently been quantified and described in different FAO reports (e.g. *FAO, 2002, 2003a & b*). These, and several other studies, point to a rather bleak situation for forests in Africa since:

- resources are being depleted and/or mismanaged;
- institutions are weak;
- policies, laws, tenure patterns and economic incentives are often not conducive to achieving sustainable management and use of forests; and,
- national governments and donor partners alike give low priority to forest issues; etc.

A result of all this is that the potential contributions of forest resources in Africa to poverty reduction, socio-economic development and ecological and hydrological stability are far from being realised (*Lundgren et al., 2004*). Therefore, there is an urgent need to identify, develop and promote different strategies, tools and actions that enhance SFM for the benefit of both present and future generations in Africa. Despite the “bleak situation”, there is still a high potential for improved forest management of African forest resources. In this regard, certification of forests could help Africa towards SFM and to better access for its forest products to international markets and thereby to increased long-term incomes for landowners, governments and forest industries, while providing jobs and livelihoods for thousands of people.

5.1 Opportunities and threats for forest certification in Africa

In a study commissioned by FSC, various threats and opportunities for SFM and certification have been identified (Atyi, 2003). The *opportunities* that exist in promoting FC include:

- presence of considerable areas of forest resources, especially in the Congo Basin;
- political will in several countries to promote SFM;
- increasing openness of government institutions to the involvement of the civil society in forest management monitoring;
- establishment of National Working Groups for SFM in some countries;
- capital investment by private companies for SFM;
- increasing interest by a number of major logging companies towards certification;
- location of major markets for timber products exported from Africa in Western Europe; and,
- the fact that donor agencies interested in the forestry sector see FC as a positive tool for the promotion of SFM.

The *threats* that exist to FC include:

- the negative publicity of certifying associations/organisations (e.g. FSC) among some important actors in forest management in Africa;
- the low level of information on FC in general;
- weak forestry institutions in the region, especially for the implementation of forestry regulation and enforcement of forest laws;
- political instability;
- illegal logging;
- poor capacity of local civil society organisations, including rural communities and local NGOs to monitor SFM;
- perception of FC by many stakeholders, mainly government institutions and the private sector, as a process aimed ultimately at the boycott of African timber products in international markets;
- perception of certification and certifying institutions to be under the domination of NGOs without due consideration paid to the opinions of other stakeholders, including government institutions;
- assumption that certifying associations/organisations are ignorant of specific conditions, ecological, economic, social and political, that characterise forest management in Africa;
- high cost attached to FC; and,
- proliferation of different FC initiatives.

5.2 Establishment of an African Regional Office of FSC

Cognizant of the objective realities regarding SFM and certification on the ground and after careful examination of the findings and recommendations from the study it commissioned, FSC decided to increase its presence in the African Region. Through promotion of its established scheme of FC, FSC feels confident to assist Africa to achieve more stable markets and incomes for long-term development while maintaining its natural forest resources with all their unique biological diversity and social values. FSC can provide choices for consumers, both domestically and internationally, to identify responsible forestry operations in Africa. Although, it is generally realised that the road to responsible forest management is long in Africa due to a history of unsustainable timber production and weak enforcement of legislation, FSC can provide a framework that addresses social issues, forest policies and environmental issues through sustainable forestry.

The successful implementation of SFM and FC entails putting the necessary capacity, i.e. skilled and competent personnel, physical and financial resources, appropriate institutional arrangements as well as a conducive policy and legislation environment, in place. FC is a suitable tool to measure and verify SFM. The current capacity prevalent in many African countries for SFM is very far from being adequate. Therefore, the first step to enhance SFM and FC in Africa is building adequate capacity. Based on lessons learnt on forestry practices in most African countries, FSC has developed and launched a project entitled “*Capacity Building for Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification in Africa*” (Boetekees,

2002) since October 2002 with financial support from Netherlands, Denmark and Novib – OXFAM Netherlands.

The development objective of the project is to contribute to ensuring that Africa's forests are well-managed and that timber harvested from these forests has access to markets in the North. The immediate objectives of the project are to:

- propagate and communicate the features of responsible forest management in the African Region and the programme of FSC to encourage responsible forest management;
- set up participatory, multi-stakeholder working groups aimed at developing forest management standards;
- support the implementation of FC based on FSC endorsed national standards for forest management developed by open, balanced, participatory and representative national working groups in the selected countries; and,
- improve natural resource management capacity of local communities and forest managers through training and capacity building.

FSC has appointed a Regional Director, responsible for coordination of the project and overall FSC activities, at the end of 2003. It has also initiated the legal processes required to establish its African Regional Office (FSC Africa) in Ghana.

5.3 African Timber Organization

In 1997, during the XI World Forestry Congress in Turkey, the African Timber Organisation (ATO), supported by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the European Union (EU), presented five major principles, and corresponding 26 criteria and 60 indicators for sustainable management of Africa's tropical forests. The original idea was to assist the national forest policy development work in African countries to respond to the UNCED Agenda 21 and the Forest Principles from 1992 (*Garba, 1997*).

ATO further developed its set of principles, with assistance from the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), into four major principles, 20 criteria, 90 indicators and 186 sub-indicators (*ATO/ITTO, 2003*):

Principle 1: *Sustainable forest utilisation and maintenance of the multiple functions of forests are a high political priority.*

Principle 2: *The forest management unit (FMU), designated for whatever form of land-use, is sustainably managed with a view to supplying the required goods and services.*

Principle 3: *The main ecological functions of the forest are maintained.*

Principle 4: *According to the importance and intensity of forest operations, the FMU manager contributes to the improvement of the economic and social well being of workers in the FMU and of local populations.*

These major principles, and their criteria, indicators and sub-indicators, continue to be discussed and also serve the needs as a basis for FC. The process is quite industry-influenced and involves mainly the sector itself and the 13 member Governments. The prime objective is guiding the forest policy and legislation development in the 13 member countries, holding more than 85% of Africa's forest cover.

5.4 Success story from South Africa

South Africa is the largest industrial round wood producer in Africa and one of the world's most productive areas for fast-growing plantations timber. The country's forestry industry is labour intensive by global standards and employs 60,000 people. A further 50,000 people are employed in secondary forest products sector.

One example of a very encouraging success story in FC in South Africa has been documented in a recent article entitled “*Changing old Paradigms in Plantations under FSC Principles and Criteria*”. The case has direct relevance to Principle 10 of FSC, which reads: “*While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.*” (FSC, 2003c; www.fsc.org).

In a world where jobs and local community needs, frequently clash with conservation goals, the FSC model (in this case the 10th Principle, its Criteria and Indicators) give practical guidance for a nice combination of natural- and plantation- forest management. Increasingly, forest companies, such as SiyaQhubeka Forests (Pty) Limited in South Africa, are proving that there is a responsible way to manage forest plantations and balance people, jobs and biodiversity.

Located at the border of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, a World Heritage Site and one of the Africa’s oldest reserves, SiyaQhubeka has demonstrated that fifty years of traditional forest plantation management can be changed in a very short period of time by using the FSC certification scheme as a model of responsible forest management. Since taking over the management of 26,450 ha of state forest plantations in 2001, SiyaQhubeka has worked with local communities on job creation initiatives and has increased conservation areas bordering the nearby park. Following assessments done by the FSC accredited certification body (SGS Qualifor Programme) in 2001, the company has been recognised for its responsible approach to the environment and stands as a model for plantations managed under the FSC Principles and Criteria. It is located on the northern coast of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, the country’s smallest but most populous province. The province’s principal economic sectors are agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, transport and tourism, with a diverse landscape that reaches from sub-tropical coastlines via savannah to the majestic Drakensberg mountain range.

The three company plantations (Nyalazi/Dukuduku, Kwambonambi and Port Durnford) were established by the Government more than fifty years ago and were managed by the South African Forestry Company Limited (SAFCOL). In recent years state forests have been sold out as part of the Government’s commercialisation programme. SiyaQhubeka was the successful bidder for the three KwaZulu-Natal state plantations. This new management led to several significant changes on the ground. “*A fundamental decision was to revise and change the plantation layout which, in many cases, was in conflict with modern environmental and forestry principles,*” said the Regional Manager, Doggy Kewley. The border of the Greater St. Lucia Wetland Park represents a special relationship between the forestry sector and a high priority conservation area. A world-first for a commercial forest plantation and a World Heritage Site has been the positioning of a 158 km ‘eco-track’ buffer zone between the park, the commercial plantation areas of Nyalazi and Dukuduku, and the adjoining commercial farm areas on the western boundary of the Park. The zone encompasses 4,000 hectares of significant conservation areas, mainly wetlands, hydromorphic soils and riparian zones and it increases the Park’s conservation area by 14,500 ha.

These sensitive areas, which had been afforested by the previous managers, have been excluded from the commercial plantation area and will be rehabilitated back to wetlands and grasslands by SAFCOL. This encourages biodiversity conservation and reduces the impact on soils and water. The buffer zone also allows wildlife, including a herd of 40 elephants – access to additional habitat and greater freedom of movement. The Langepan Vlei wetland – located within the Kwambonambi Plantation – has been declared a Natural Heritage Site as it is home to the critically endangered *Kniphofia leucocephala*, a species of ‘red hot poker’, and *Asclepias gordon-grayae*, a milkweed species. Improved wetland management has led to the exclusion of cattle and the increase in size and buffer area of the wetland. Annual monitoring of the area has indicated that the numbers of *K. leucocephala* have increased substantially in recent years.

“*What we want to achieve with this approach is to minimise adverse environmental impacts by designing a plantation layout to fit into the existing landscape rather than trying to alter the landscape features to suit the forestry operational requirements,*” commented Doggy Kewley. Rehabilitation and native plant biodiversity needs have resulted in other projects. “*To create awareness and encourage the sustainable use of these natural resources, the company has established a project with the community-owned nursery to*

cultivate indigenous trees for forest rehabilitation and for use by enterprising communities,” Doggy Kewley said.

Another project initiated by SiyaQhubeka is the Qhubeka Firewood Project whereby people from the local community of Port Durnford collect left over wood from the harvested plantations in the area. The wood is sold for firewood, fencing and building material. This has played a pivotal role in promoting environmental awareness and the development of small business initiatives. The project is set to expand to other plantations and aims to play a positive role in developing relationships with the local people and subsequently encouraging the preservation of this world-class forestry area.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNT

In Sweden, 9.5 million hectares of forest were FSC-certified during one year only; in Poland, 3.6 million ha of State forests were FSC-certified within 2 months; and in Finland, 21.9 million ha were PEFC-certified in one year. In all these cases, certification basically just confirmed that forest management was already fairly OK, although it might slowly but surely be improved. In the tropics, where forestry is often more problematic and FC is meant to change habits, it is less easy than just verifying an already OK forestry activity and, hence, it will take much more time and efforts. The 30 FSC-certified forests in Africa were also fairly well managed before they were certified and the owners/concessionaires wanted to have a trustworthy proof for it in front of their customers. The lessons learnt on SFM and FC in Africa could be summarised as follows.

6.1 Positive trends

The following are positive/encouraging trends for FC as a tool towards SFM:

- There are considerable areas of forest resources, especially in the Congo Basin, that help to justify efforts towards FC as a tool for SFM;
- There is an increasing trend of political will in several countries to promote SFM and FC;
- Government institutions are becoming increasingly open to the involvement of the civil society in forest management and monitoring;
- A number of National Working Groups for SFM and FC have been established in some countries and are being initiated in other countries;
- Capital investment by private companies for SFM is increasing, and there is increasing interest by a number of major logging companies towards FC;
- Donor agencies interested in the forestry sector are considering FC as a positive tool for the promotion of SFM;
- Increased awareness in the domestic markets, mainly in South Africa, for forest products originating from well-managed forests; and,
- Development of Principles, Criteria and Indicators by the African Timber Organisation will strengthen forest policies and legislation in ATO member countries as a good basis for FC.

6.2 Negative trends

The following are negative/discouraging trends for FC as a tool towards SFM:

- The negative publicity of certifying associations/organisations among some important actors in forest management in Africa;
- The low level of information on FC in general;
- Weak forestry institutions in the region, especially for the implementation of forestry regulation and enforcement of forest laws;

- Poor capacity of local civil society organisations, including rural communities and local NGOs to monitor SFM;
- Political instability;
- Illegal logging;
- Perception of FC by many stakeholders, mainly government institutions and the private sector, as a process aimed ultimately at the boycott of African timber products in international markets;
- Perception of certification and certifying institutions to be under the domination of NGOs without due consideration paid to the opinions of other stakeholders, including government institutions;
- Assumption that certifying associations/organisations are ignorant of specific conditions, ecological, economic, social and political, that characterise forest management in Africa;
- High cost associated with FC;
- Environmentally and socially concerned customers who are asking for forest products emanating from SFM are few in most African countries;
- Inadequate basic information about forests and forestry in Africa compared with countries in Europe and North America where, so far, most FC is found;
- Very few recognised certification groups on the African continents increase the costs;
- Poor roads and other infrastructure systems in Africa make FC costly to set up and maintain; and
- The fairly corrupt environment, both public and private, undermines the possibilities to fight illegal forestry and encourage SFM.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several studies have indicated a rather bleak situation for forests in Africa – resources are being depleted and/or mismanaged; institutions are weak; policies, laws, tenure patterns and economic incentives are often not conducive to achieving sustainable management and use of forests; national governments and donor partners alike give low priority to forest issues; etc. A result of all this is that the potential contributions of forest resources in Africa to poverty reduction, economic development and ecological and hydrological stability are far from being realised. However, it is possible to turn the present negative trend in African forestry. One tool towards SFM is FC, and based on the foregoing discussions the following recommendations are forwarded to promote this tool:

- FC has to be given a real chance to develop and not being unfairly criticised.
- A critical analysis of FC problems in Africa and efforts to address these problems could pave the way for an increase of FC in Africa as a way towards SFM.
- Increased availability of good certification companies located in Africa could accelerate the process of FC.
- Efforts should be strengthened to produce accurate data on forests in Africa.
- While some physical investments are quite costly (but still needed) e.g. roads, IT-solutions like telecommunication by cellular phones and GIS by GPS etc., are fairly low-cost and, hence, should be supported.
- Civil societies, trade unions, ENGOs and civil rights organisations have important roles to play in FC. Governments must look upon such organisations not as threats but as necessary complements to gain confidence and success in the field.
- The disastrous effects of corruption on SFM should be strongly emphasised in the public debate.
- All efforts should be made to support development of comprehensive forest policies and legislation in Africa.
- More of the FC discussions should be held in French and publications made so far on FC should be translated into French. FSC should also make French as one of its official working languages.
- Awareness creation campaigns on FC should be carried out involving policy makers, foresters and other key stakeholders.
- The need for stronger forestry institutions, also for promoting FC, should be expressed whenever the matter is discussed.
- The concept of FC as a tool for SFM should be introduced and explained to political decision makers.

- National working groups for SFM should be established in all African countries.
- Wood/logging companies should be approached about FC and assisted to take part in national working groups.
- European retailers should be connected to the national working groups for SFM and FC in Africa.
- The donor community should be informed about FC and its roles in SFM.
- It is important to actively involve missing voices in the process of FC, especially the social interest since it represents an important part of the FC process and it may play a role as mediator between the economic and environmental interests.
- FC principles must be general and give room for national solutions. The FSC concept of national working groups representing “all” parties to develop national performance standards gives such flexibility.
- An open discussion on different FC systems could respond to the African complexity.
- Though market opportunities in the North should be exploited, it is also important to take care of the growing regional and domestic markets of for forest products.

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- www.csa.co: Canadian Standards Association;
- www.fsc.org (www.fscoax.org): Forest Stewardship Council;
- www.mtcc.com.my: Malaysian Timber Certification Council;
- www.pefc.org: Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes; www.treefarmssystem.org: American Forest Foundation.