



## FOREST CERTIFICATION: OPPORTUNITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

### Key messages

- Responsibly managed forests have tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable development and a greener economy.
- FC, which involves accreditation, certification and branding/labelling, has great potential to promote SFM through its economic, environmental, social and other cross-cutting contributions.
- To bring the desired achievements through FC, the necessary capacities and capability of actors at various levels have to be built as well as appropriate policies, legislation and institutional arrangements put in place to create the necessary enabling environment for FC.
- Though encouraging achievements have been made, the acceptance and implementation of FC is far from being adequate in Africa, owing to a number of challenges.
- A wider and more successful implementation of FC requires exploiting its recognized opportunities as well as addressing the challenges identified through putting in place the necessary:
  - human, financial and physical resources;
  - technical capability;
  - enabling policy and legislative environment;
  - appropriate institutional arrangements; and
  - marketing structures and information systems for certified forest products and services.

Despite the potential of forest certification (FC) to promote Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), the progress made in promoting FC in Africa is very inadequate. This fact sheet outlines FC and the processes involved in it, in addition to opportunities, achievements and challenges related to it in Africa.

African forests have fulfilled and continue to fulfill critical economic, environmental, social and cultural functions. Various mechanisms have been proposed and tried over the years for promoting sustainable forest management (SFM) around the globe. Of these, FC has been considered an effective tool for enhancing SFM.

To provide consumers a credible guarantee that materials and products come from forests in which their management is environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable, two major types of certificates are being issued by forest certification schemes (FCSs). These are *Forest Management (FM) Certificates* - awarded to forest managers or owners whose management practices meet the requirements of the standards used by the FCSs; - and *Chain of Custody (CoC) Certificates* - awarded to manufacturers, processors and traders of certified forest products that verifies certified material and products along

### What is forest certification?

*Forest certification* is the process of inspecting particular forests or woodlands by a third party, which provides written assurance and/or market labelling that a product, process or service conforms to specified standards on the basis of an audit conducted to agreed procedures, to see if they are being managed according to these standards. FC also gives consumers a credible guarantee that the product comes from forests in which their management is:

- *environmentally responsible*: ensuring that the harvest of timber and non-timber products maintains the forest's biodiversity, productivity, and ecological processes;
- *socially beneficial*: helping both local people and society at large to enjoy long term benefits and also provide strong incentives to local people to sustain the forest resources and adhere to long-term management; and
- *economically viable*: structuring and managing forest operations so as to be sufficiently profitable, without generating financial profit at the expense of the forest resource, the ecosystem, or affected communities; the tension between the need to generate adequate financial returns and the principles of responsible forest operations can be reduced through efforts to market the full range of forest products and services for their best values (FSC, 2014).

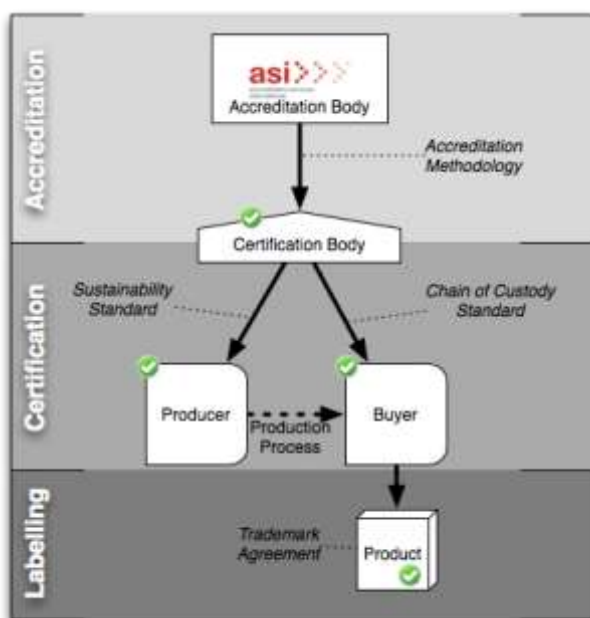


the production chain. The FSCs that have their footprints in Africa include the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), the latter through the endorsement of the Pan-African Forest Certification (PAFC) and Cameroonian Association of the Pan African Forestry Certification (CAPAFC), which are being developed as national FCSs in Gabon and Cameroon, respectively. African Eco-Labeling Mechanism (AEM) will be up and running in the near future.

In addition, other FCSs dealing with the verification of legality of timber and timber products are being implemented in Central and western Africa sub-regions.

### How does forest certification work in practice?

The main steps followed in the FC process by the different certification schemes are more or less similar and, in general, involve accreditation, certification and branding/labelling (see Figure below).



The process of FC involving accreditation, certification and labelling (source: <http://www.accreditation-services.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/accreditation.png>, accessed on 08-12-2014).

The steps involved in the process of FC include submission of an application by the forest operator/owner to the FCS, followed by a scoping visit, document review, field assessment, peer review, certification, labelling and periodic review by the FCS.

Standards are required for forest certification to be implemented on the ground. A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purposes. It is established and approved by a recognized body and sets out the requirements that must be met by any organization wishing to be certified and against which certification assessments are made.

### Opportunities and benefits from FC

The opportunities in FC and benefits that can be derived from it can be generally categorized as economic, social, environmental and cross-cutting.

#### Economic

- greater access to premium timber markets (where they exist);
- medium-term gains in efficiency and productivity;
- protection of market share and increased marketing opportunities through product differentiation;
- reduction of environmental risk, resulting in better access to financial markets for loans, rights issues, insurance, etc.;
- improved image in 'green' conscious markets and with employees;
- better commercial advantage of timber companies over competitors, e.g. preferential access to new customers or increased market share or better prices through direct sales or niche marketing;
- reduction of the number of intermediaries and, thereby, an increased proportion of the final sale price awarded to the forest owner by improving the efficiency and transparency of the supply chain;
- improved product supply prospects;
- improved management control/system, including internal mechanisms for planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
- economic benefit for local communities;
- higher recovery of national revenues where forest revenues are being avoided; and
- promotion of multiple benefits, e.g. non-timber forest products;

#### Environmental

- environmental conservation and maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity;
- great potential to promote payments for ecosystem and environmental services;
- provision of a mechanism for companies to reduce environmental risk and the negative commercial effects that high environmental risk increasingly involves;
- improve the company's governmental and political influence;
- increase credibility of companies with environmental groups;
- influencing the health and viability of World Heritage Sites in the proximity of certified forests;
- conservation, maintenance and enhancement of High Conservation Value Forests;
- protect rare, threatened or endangered species and/or their habitats;
- minimizing the movement of invasive species; and
- preventing or containing forest fires.

## Social

- improved health, safety, rights and living conditions of employees in forest companies and their families;
- protection of sites of special cultural, ecological, economic, religious significance to local communities;
- more inclusive and better governed institutions for negotiations between the local population and logging companies;
- financial or in-kind support to local communities for a variety of purposes, including consultation, capacity-building and economic development;
- better managed and more effective benefit-sharing mechanisms;
- formal agreements between forest companies and local communities, leading to verification that their interests and concerns are incorporated into the management plans of the certified forests;
- innovative ways of dealing with problems related to infringement of customary uses;
- increased stakeholder involvement in SFM and promotion of new institutional roles in addition to governments;
- balancing the objectives of forest owners, other stakeholders and society;
- bringing together industry, the environmental community and local communities in an unprecedented way;
- reduced social conflict in and around certified forests;
- securing land tenure and usufruct rights (in certified community forests);
- greater protection of NTFPs including for subsistence uses; and not least
- poverty alleviation.

## Cross-Cutting

- promote SFM more generally through dialogue between the private sector, government bodies, non-governmental organizations and civil society;
- creating a climate of change for policy and legislative reform;
- incentive to harmonize forest management standards between countries;
- enhancing capacity for SFM;
- enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of forest managers;
- development of new skills and capacities for stakeholders and organizations involved in forestry;
- contribution to foresters' professional development;
- gaps identification, leading to more appropriate forest research and allocation of research resources;
- enhancing better public reporting as a result of the

provision of independent statements on forest condition and status: the principle of third party verification;

- challenging existing institutional structures and assisting in their development so as to better meet today's needs by including all stakeholders and providing independent assessments of forestry activities in forests; and
- enhancing better international coordination required to address many forest problems as well as for forest monitoring, international accountability and harmonized standards.

**Source: Teketay (2015).**

## Achievements in Africa

Among several others, the following have been achieved with regard to FC in Africa (Teketay, 2015):

a) **forest stewardship standard (FSS) development** – FSSs define the key characteristics of responsible forest management in a country, sub-regions or regions: the following FSSs have been developed and endorsed by FSC (#s 1-8), PEFC (# 9) and AEM (# 10):

1. Cameroon (FSC-STD-CAM-01-2012: Natural and Plantations);
2. Cameroon ([FSC-STD-CAM-01-2010, SLIMF](#));
3. Central African Republic (CAR) (FSC-STD-CAR-01-2012, Natural and Plantation);
4. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ([FSC-STD-DRC-01-2012: Natural and Plantations](#));
5. Gabon (FSC-STD-GAB-01-2012: Natural and Plantations);
6. Republic of Congo (ROC) (FSC-STD-RoC-01-2012: Natural and Plantations); and
7. Ghana (FSC-STD-GHA-01-2012, Natural and Plantations).
8. Congo Basin (FSC-STD-CB-01-2012, Sub-Regional Standard);
9. Gabon (standard for FM and CoC certification); and
10. Africa (ARS AES 3-2014 Forestry - Sustainability and Eco-Labeling – Requirements).

## b) Areas of forests certified

As of September 2015, the total area of forests certified by FSC in Africa was 7,406,437 ha, representing only **4%** of the total area of FSC-certified forests worldwide (183,863,540 ha) in 10 countries (12.5% of all countries with FSC-certified forests worldwide) (FSC, 2015); and **2.8%** of the total area of PEFC-certified forests worldwide (268,331,160ha) (PEFC, 2015). The areas of certified forests (with FM certification) in Africa represent only **1.6%** of the total area of forests certified worldwide by both FSC and PEFC (452,194,700 ha), the two FCSs that have their footprints in Africa. Republic of Congo (33%), Gabon (27.8%), South Africa (19.6%) and Cameroon (12.7%) have the three largest areas of FSC-certified forests (see Table below).

**(c) Number of certificates issued**

As of September 2015, the total number of FM and CoC certificates issued in Africa by FSC were 48 (3.5% of total) in 10 countries (12.5% of all countries with FSC FM certificates worldwide), (see Tables below), and 168 (0.6% of total) in 12 countries (10.6% of all countries with FSC CoC certificates worldwide) (see Tables below), respectively.

**FSC-certified forest area and number of forest management (FM) certificates in Africa.**

| Country           | Area certified (ha) |                | Number of FM certificates |                |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
|                   | Total               | Proportion (%) | Total                     | Proportion (%) |
| Cameroon          | 940,945             | 12.7           | 4                         | 8.3            |
| Gabon             | 2,062,494           | 27.8           | 3                         | 6.3            |
| Ghana             | 3,367               | 0.1            | 1                         | 2.0            |
| Mozambique        | 59,905              | 0.8            | 3                         | 6.3            |
| Namibia           | 137,514             | 1.9            | 4                         | 8.3            |
| Republic of Congo | 2,443,186           | 33.0           | 3                         | 6.3            |
| South Africa      | 1,452,527           | 19.6           | 20                        | 41.6           |
| Swaziland         | 124,794             | 1.7            | 4                         | 8.3            |
| Tanzania          | 142,731             | 1.9            | 3                         | 6.3            |
| Uganda            | 38,974              | 0.5            | 3                         | 6.3            |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>7,406,437</b>    | <b>100.0</b>   | <b>48</b>                 | <b>100.0</b>   |

Source: FSC (2015) and Teketay (2015).

**FSC chain of custody (CoC) certificates in Africa.**

| Country           | Number of CoC certificates | Proportion (%) |
|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Cameroon          | 12                         | 7.1            |
| Egypt             | 16                         | 9.5            |
| Gabon             | 11                         | 6.5            |
| Ghana             | 7                          | 4.2            |
| Morocco           | 5                          | 3.0            |
| Mozambique        | 1                          | 0.6            |
| Namibia           | 3                          | 1.8            |
| Republic of Congo | 2                          | 1.2            |
| Seychelles        | 1                          | 0.6            |
| South Africa      | 104                        | 61.9           |
| Tanzania          | 1                          | 0.6            |
| Tunisia           | 5                          | 3.0            |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>168</b>                 | <b>100.0</b>   |

Source: FSC (2015) and Teketay (2015).

## Key challenges in FC

- inadequate financial, human, physical, technical and institutional capacities for FC at the various levels;
- availability of only a very few FC standards;
- lack of/inadequate African-based accreditation and accredited certification bodies as well as inadequate number of forest auditors for FC;
- inadequate public education and awareness on FC;
- inadequate and unethical implementation of policy and legal frameworks for SFM (inadequate political will, corruption and tax evasion), political instability and institutional weakness;
- local and sub-regional markets which do not have preferential consideration for certified forest products;
- creating and sustaining markets for certified forest products in local/national, sub-regional and international markets;
- high initial certification costs, particularly for smallholders;
- unabated continuation of deforestation and forest degradation;
- illegal logging in most of the forest resources in Africa;
- unavailability of adequate statistical data on African forest resources and the associated wood economy;

- absence of certification of NTFPs;
- negative publicity towards FC and FCSs since FC was seen as pressure from countries of the North; and
- difficulties to implement social requirements related to SFM and FC.

**Source: Teketay (2015).**

Despite the encouraging efforts made to promote and implement FC by various organizations in Africa, the area of certified forests (with FM certification) represents only **4%** of the total area of FSC-certified forests worldwide and about **1.6%** of forests certified globally by both FSC and PEFC. The proportion of the total number of FM and CoC certificates issued in Africa by FSC are **3.5%** and **0.6%** of the global total, respectively. This suggests that FC has a long way to go if Africa in general, and more specifically stakeholders engaged along the value chain in the African forest sector, are to significantly benefit from the successful promotion and implementation of SFM.

This requires exploiting the opportunities and addressing the challenges identified through putting in place the necessary capacity, enabling policy and legislative environment, appropriate institutional arrangements, as well as marketing structures and information systems for certified forest products and services.

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