



## The FSC Contribution to Implementation of the SDGs

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The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) regards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a major opportunity for global and local leadership to promote sustainable development in all its dimensions: economic and social justice and progress, environmental and public health, mitigating climate change and halting biodiversity loss, sustainable production and consumption, freedom, peace, democracy, and effective, balanced multi-stakeholder engagement.

### The importance of forests

Forests play a key role in global and local climate trends. They create resilience against the impacts of extreme weather, they store carbon, water, and fertile soils, and are home to the largest number of species in the world. They determine the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. They are sacred places for some, and relaxation sources for others. They fully justify their important role in SDG 15, life on land.

While much public concern has been focused on deforestation, it has become clear that forest **degradation** is a similarly, if not even more, serious problem. Recent research claims that the contribution of forest degradation to global warming is globally greater than that of deforestation. Sustainable forest management has therefore become increasingly important: SDG 15.2 requires that already **by 2020** implementation of sustainable forest management is promoted, deforestation is halted, and forest restoration and afforestation are substantially increased and continuing.

### FSC contributes to 11 SDGs

FSC contributes to at least 11 of the 17 SDGs with its promotion and effective oversight of sustainable forest management, promotion of inclusive decision-making by all stakeholders involved, and facilitation of responsible consumer choice for forest-related products. Its most direct contribution is to SDG 15.2, on sustainable management of forests. See also:

<https://ic.fsc.org/en/web-page/sdgs>

By June 2018, more than 200 million hectares of the world's forests are FSC certified, across 85 countries. These forests account for some 23 per cent of all industrial roundwood production (or 11 per cent of all wood production, including non-commercial fuelwood). An important driver for the about 120,000 foresters to apply the FSC forest management requirements is the demand from industries, retailers, and private and public consumers for products that



carry the FSC logo. Currently, some 60,000 companies are playing their role in the FSC supply chain for that purpose.

### **An effective business tool**

FSC-certified forests apply management requirements that focus on legality, work safety, gender equality, fair wages, customary rights of Indigenous Peoples and other local communities, high conservation values, biodiversity, climate protection, and other ecological services that forests provide. It is the most trusted forest certification scheme in the world, with clear support from global and local environmental organizations, trades union, and Indigenous Peoples' organizations. More and more companies are expressing their commitment to use and support FSC as the, currently, most effective tool to implement the SDGs in the forest sector (see the Vancouver Declaration <https://ic.fsc.org/en/for-business/vancouver-declaration>).

### **The role of FSC**

The origin of FSC lies in the failure of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to initiate legally binding rules for sustainable forest management. Combined with serious concerns expressed by citizens, environmental and social organizations, and forest-related industries, about rampant illegal logging, deforestation, forest degradation, violation of customary rights, and poor working conditions in the sector, this led to the initiative for the Forest Stewardship Council in 1993. Environmental, social, and economic dimensions were reflected within the FSC membership from the start. And what makes FSC unique is its governance model, which ensures that each of these three groups have the same influence, while inside each group there is a North–South balance.

FSC agreed on global principles and criteria for responsible forest stewardship, which forms the basis for national forest management standards, which are developed through national, balanced, multi-stakeholder decision-making processes. Currently, FSC is rolling out the fifth version of its Principles and Criteria, with new requirements, particularly in regard to gender equality, wages, ecosystem services, and protection of intact forest landscapes<sup>1</sup>.

### **FSC's labels**

FSC works with three on-product labels. The 'FSC 100%' label is for products made solely from wood from FSC-certified forests. 'FSC Recycled' means that 100 per cent of the wood components are reclaimed material; FSC introduced this label to support efforts for resource efficiency and as its global third-party verification scheme can ensure non-abuse of the term

<sup>1</sup> The 5th version of the FSC Principles and Criteria (P&C) for Responsible Forest Stewardship can be found at: <https://ic.fsc.org/en/document-center/id/59>. The international generic indicators that are to be used to transfer these P&C into national standards can be found at: <https://ic.fsc.org/en/document-center/id/87>



‘recycled’. Recycling is important for FSC because the pressure on forests will continue to increase with population and prosperity growth, as well as climate-motivated increases in wood use for construction and new types of bio-based products.

The third label is ‘FSC Mix’. While products with this label have at least 70 per cent content from FSC-certified forests and/or reclaimed materials, up to 30 per cent can consist of so-called ‘controlled wood’. The origin of such wood is checked in risk-assessment processes led by FSC itself and complemented, where needed, by individual companies. FSC ensures that controlled wood comes from countries/regions with low risk of illegal harvesting, deforestation, violation of customary rights, degradation of high conservation values, or use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The national risk assessments validated by FSC are the most robust that exist at the global scale.

## Conclusion

Forests are gaining public interest. The SDGs help. The Paris Agreement emphasized the importance not only of preventing deforestation, but also of sustainable forest management. Large companies are committing to deforestation-free sourcing of raw materials; forest restoration has received a boon with the Bonn Challenge and the New York Forest Declaration. This all helps. It will hopefully lead to more protected natural forests in the world, but it is a fact that forests will have to increasingly contribute to the raw material needs of a growing and more prosperous global population. Sustainable forest management is, therefore, a must. And while some can organize and verify that on an ad-hoc basis, a reliable scheme such as FSC is indispensable to ensure that all affected and interested stakeholders are involved and feel that their rights and concerns are respected.

Contact during the HLPF: John Hontelez, [j.hontelez@fsc.org](mailto:j.hontelez@fsc.org) mobile: +32 486 512127  
For more information about FSC in general see: <https://ic.fsc.org>