




6.5 Factsheet FSC

This factsheet aims to provide accessible and factual information on the FSC certification scheme. This factsheet presents the actual status of the scheme in March 2023. For more detailed information on the system, the reader may visit the website of the certification scheme or contact the scheme owner.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this factsheet is for informational purpose only and cannot be used in replacement of the official FSC standards and procedures

Table 13 Factsheet FSC

Scheme Feature	Description
General	
Name of scheme	Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
Scheme owner	The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organization established to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.
Website	https://fsc.org/en
Label provided	<p>FSC has three labels: 1. FSC 100 %, 2. FSC Recycled, and 3. FSC Mix. All 3 FSC labels support responsible forestry. In FSC 100% all materials used come from responsibly managed, FSC-certified forests. Products with the FSC 100% label contribute most directly to FSC's mission. In FSC Recycled certification scheme the product is made from 100% recycled materials e.g., by using FSC recycled wood or FSC recycled paper. Using recycled material reduces the pressure to harvest more trees. In the FSC Mix certification scheme the product is made with a mixture of materials from FSC-certified forests, recycled materials, and/or FSC-controlled wood. Controlled wood doesn't come from FSC-certified forests.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div>
Operational since	FSC was established in 1993
Number of active certificates	FSC has 55,095 active certificates. Out of those 53,626 certificates are chain of custody certificates and 1,469 Forest Management and Chain of Custody Certificates (on 07.03.2023)
Standard ownership	FSC is a private and voluntary standard
General objective	FSC's mission is the promotion of environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world forests.
Scope	
Biomass feedstock coverage	FSC 100 % and FSC Mix covers only wood as feedstock, FSC recycled cover reclaimed wood and paper as feedstock.
Sector/Product group coverage	The FSC certification system covers forestry and wood based manufactured products
Supply chain coverage	The FSC certification system covers the whole supply chain from production, to manufacturing, distribution
Geographic focus of the standard	The FSC certification system has a global focus
Governance, Standard Development and Certification Requirements	
Scheme governance	FSC governance structure is built upon the democratic principles of participation and equity. A three-chamber governance structure underpins all decision making, and therefore, FSC's activities. Members represent one of the three chambers – social, environmental and economic – and all have an equal say. Members are represented by a Board of Directors. The FSC General Assembly is FSC's highest decision-making body

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	where key decisions are made. The general assembly which is traditionally held every three years, brings together leaders and decision makers from indigenous peoples, environmentalists, businesses, and many others in FSC's membership to discuss a responsible future for the world's forests and the people and animals who inhabit them.
Standard documents	FSC has elaborated all the requirements very well in several different official documents. Hundreds of standards-related documents are available via the document centre on the FSC website.
Transparency and accessibility of standard documents	Transparency is ensured by freely accessible FSC documents on the website in several languages (mainly English and Spanish). However, due to the high number of documents it may be difficult to find the document that is searched for. Audit reports are not available on the FSC website, but the 'FSC certificates public dashboard' provides an overview of all valid, terminated and suspended FSC certificates.
Multi-stakeholder participation in standard development	FSC standards are continually evaluated and, when appropriate, revised. The process happens through the input and collaboration of a wide variety of stakeholders. Changes to key standards and policies are public and everyone can contribute. On the FSC website the review scheduled is published.
Compliance with ISEAL's Standards-Setting, Impacts and Assurance Codes of Good Practice	FSC complies with ISEAL code of compliance and has successfully undergone independent assessment against the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice in Standards-Setting, Assurance and Impacts (https://www.isealliance.org/community-members/forest-stewardship-council). The certification system provides internationally recognized standard-setting, trademark assurance and accreditation to companies, organizations, and communities interested in responsible forestry.
Compliance with regional, national, international laws	The first FSC principle requires compliance with all applicable laws. Besides compliance with international standards, it is explicitly mentioned that compliance to national and regional conditions is mandatory.
Reference to standards and policies	FSC makes reference to and requires compliance to all applicable national and local laws and regulations. In addition, throughout the FSC normative framework, and more specifically in Principles 3 and 4, there is a reference to "legal and customary rights".
Obligation for certification	FSC requires that all relevant actors in the value chain obtain a certificate in order to handle FSC products from production to the manufacturing and the distribution. Certification is therefore required for all organizations in the supply chain of forest-based products that have legal ownership of certified products.
Certification process	The process is as following: FSC sets the standards; The accredited certification bodies verify FSC standard compliance of organizations, take the certification decision, and register the certification status in the FSC certification database.
Traceability and Chain of custody	Chain of custody certification is how the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) verifies that forest-based materials produced according to our rigorous standards are credibly used along the product's path from the forest to becoming finished goods. The requirements are described in FSC-STD-40-004 Chain of Custody Certification. The FSC chain of custody control system is used for controlling the quantities of products in a product group that can be sold with the FSC claims. The transfer system is an FSC control system which provides the simplest approach for the determination of output claims by transferring the FSC claims of inputs materials directly to the output products. Through segregation from ineligible materials, the link between input and output material is assured through all stages of an organization's processes. The transfer system can be applied to all types of product groups, FSC claims, and activities. The percentage system is an FSC control system which allows all outputs to be sold with a percentage claim that corresponds to the proportion of claim-contributing inputs over a specified claim period. The percentage system can be applied to FSC Mix and FSC Recycled product groups (not to FSC 100%).
Verification of compliance	The verification of compliance with the FSC requirements as well as the issuance of certificates are performed by recognized third-party certification bodies that hold valid agreements with FSC. Independent certification bodies carry out the forest management and chain of custody assessments that lead to FSC certification.
Accreditation of Certification Bodies	Certification bodies are accredited by an independent accreditation body. Assurance Services International (ASI) is FSC's accreditation body.
Training of auditors and staff and qualification and evaluation of competencies	FSC operates confirm ISEAL standards and accreditation of CB's is required. Next to this FSC developed detailed certification standards and certification process requirements. Accredited CBs shall be responsible for attending training and remaining up to date with FSC requirements as described in General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies FSC-STD-20-001.
Audit process	Audits are carried out by third-party certification bodies. FSC certificates are issued following a successful audit during which the Certification Body verifies the compliance with all applicable FSC requirements.
Frequency of audit	The FSC audit cycle is 5 years. However, it is a requirement that third party audits by independent accredited certification bodies are conducted at a minimum within a 12-month period following the initial audit.
Internal audit	FSC requires internal audits and those are at least performed annually (FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies, 2.5.4)

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Certification claims and labels	The FSC Promotional License allows companies to use the FSC logo and other trademarks in their marketing and advertising efforts. There are 3 types of FSC labels: FSC 100%, FSC Mix, FSC Recycled. Only FSC certified companies are authorized to place FSC labels onto products. The FSC label applied to a product depends on the FSC claim an FSC-certified company makes and the control system they employ when producing the product.
Sanctions, non-conformities and suspension	FSC developed a specific document for certifiers. Sanctions, suspensions, non-conformities, corrective actions, are specified in the document 'FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies'. Major non-conformities shall be fully corrected within three months and may be extended once for a maximum period of another three months if full implementation of corrective action was not possible due to circumstances beyond the control of the organization. Minor non-conformities shall be fully corrected within one year.
Complaint and appeal mechanisms	FSC developed a s specific process for complaints as described in FSC-PRO-01-008 'Processing Complaints in the FSC Certification Scheme Procedure' and FSC-PRO-01-009 'FSC Template for Submitting Policy For Association Complaints'. Procedure FSC-PRO-01-005 'Processing Appeals' describes procedure for receiving, evaluating and deciding on appeals against decisions taken by FSC. Additionally, Certification Bodies should have their own Complaint and Appeal procedure. Complaints against the performance of FSC accredited Certification Bodies are dealt with by Accreditation Services International and processed according to the procedure ASI-PRO-20-104.
Guarantee smallholder inclusiveness of the standard	FSC launched the New Approaches for Smallholders and Communities Certification project in 2016 to help small or low-intensity managed forest, or SLIMF, withstand forest management challenges and overcome barriers to certification such as the number and complexity of the requirements, cost of certification and lack of access to sustainability markets. The project was later consolidated into a full-fledged program known as the Community and Family Forests (CFF) program which includes Asia Pacific Regional Forest Stewardship Standard for Smallholders for smallholders in India, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. To reduce certification costs, FSC certificate holders can also form a group. Group certification makes it easier, particularly for smallholders, to become FSC-certified.
Promote continuous improvement	The next review of the FSC Principles and Criteria shall occur within three years of the approval of the International Generic Indicators, with a view to completion of any necessary revisions within two years of the review. Subsequent review and revision of the FSC Principles and Criteria shall occur within a five-yearly cycle according to FSC-PRO-01-001. The FSC standard refers to continuous improvement as 'adaptive management'. Adaptive management is part of principle 7 ("the management plan shall be implemented and kept up to date based on monitoring information in order to promote adaptive management") and Principle 8 ("the Organization shall demonstrate that, progress towards achieving the management objectives, the impacts of management activities and the condition of the Management Unit, are monitored and evaluated proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities, in order to implement adaptive management"). Additionally, the concept of continuous improvement is used for smallholder certification whereby smallholders are able to take a stepwise approach to conformance, focusing on the most important criteria first and offers flexible steps towards conformity with the remaining requirements within a defined timeframe.
Assurance of quality	The implementation of a quality management system is part of the FSC standard requirements covered under General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies FSC-STD-20-001.
Impact assessment	FSC is compiling evidence to demonstrate outcomes and impacts of FSC certification. Currently, the two main sources of evidence are internally generated data and independent scientific studies. FSC makes reports on corrective action requests (CARs) available in the FSC certificate holder database to allow anybody to access information from certification assessments. Additionally, the FSC Impact Dashboard is an interactive and user-friendly tool that allows the user to navigate through a compilation of isolated results from scientific studies about the outcomes of FSC-certification across the world's forests available at https://connect.fsc.org/impact/demonstrating-impacts
Risk management	FSC certification requires several risk assessments. Standard FSC-STD-20-007 'Forest Management Evaluations' v4 introduces requirements for risk-based evaluations and how to audit against risk according to FSC-PRO-60-010 Development of a National Forest Stewardship Standard Risk Assessment, enabling the risk-based approach concept to be implemented across the FSC system. To support companies with their risk assessments, a FSC risk assessment platform has been set up. This platform offers in a simple and user-friendly way, an overview of the content of all 60 FSC risk assessments. In addition, free downloads are available for a quick guide, user manual, view tutorial, and legal & privacy statement available at https://connect.fsc.org/fsc-risk-assessment-platform
Cost of certification	FSC charges to the accredited certification bodies an annual administration fee (AAF) per FSC certificate holder. The CBs shall specify the scope, duration and costs related to the assessment services.

Sustainability Principles and Criteria

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Reference Document	Standard FSC-STD-01-001 'FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship' describe the ten FSC Principles and their associated Criteria. The FSC requirements are described in various documents which can be found on the FSC website in the Document Centre. The standards and along going documents are divided in four categories: Forest Management, Controlled Wood for Forest Management, Chain of Custody, and Project Certification. An overview of all FSC Certification Requirements per type of FSC certification is available.
Major Must and Minor Must	FSC distinguishes between major nonconformities and minor non conformities.
Environmental	
Reduce GHG emissions	Not explicitly covered.
Protection of land with high carbon stock	The protection of land with high carbon stock is captured in general terms in Principle 6 Environmental Values and Impacts. Specifically with Criterion 6.9 The Organization shall not convert natural forest to plantations, nor natural forests or plantations on sites directly converted from natural forest to non-forest land use; and Criterion 6.10 Management Units containing plantations that were established on areas converted from natural forest after November 1994 shall not qualify for certification.
Protection of peatland	n/a
Promote sustainable forest management	The promotion of sustainable forest management is fully covered. FSC was established with the mission to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. Especially Principle 10 Implementation of Management Activities Criterion 10.1 After harvest or in accordance with the management plan, The Organization shall, by natural or artificial regeneration methods, regenerate vegetation cover in a timely fashion to pre-harvesting or more natural conditions and Criterion 5.2 The Organization shall normally harvest products and services from the Management Unit at or below a level which can be permanently sustained.
Protection of land with a high biodiversity value	Covered under Principle 9 High Conservation Values: The Organization shall maintain and/or enhance the High Conservation Values in the Management Unit through applying the precautionary approach. Specifically, HCV 1 - Species diversity, HCV 2 - Landscape-level ecosystems and mosaics, HCV 3 - Ecosystems and habitats, and HCV 4 - Critical ecosystem services.
Restoration, preservation and strengthening of biodiversity	The restoration, preservation and strengthening of biodiversity is captured in general terms in Principle 6. The Organization shall maintain, conserve and/or restore ecosystem services and environmental values of the Management Unit, and shall avoid, repair or mitigate negative environmental impacts. Specifically Criterion 6.4 The Organization shall protect rare species and threatened species and their habitats in the Management Unit through conservation zones, protection areas, connectivity and/or (where necessary) other direct measures for their survival and viability, and Criterion 6.8 The Organization shall manage the landscape in the Management Unit to maintain and/or restore a varying mosaic of species, sizes, ages, spatial scales and regeneration cycles appropriate for the landscape values in that region, and for enhancing environmental and economic resilience.
Sustainable use of water	Covered in Criteria 6.7. Natural water courses, water bodies, riparian zones and their connectivity shall be protected or restored. The Organization shall avoid negative impacts on water quality and quantity and mitigate and remedy those that occur. Additionally, Water resources is part of the environmental values, and its protection is covered under Principle 6 Environmental Values and Impacts.
Maintaining and enhancing water quality	Covered in Criteria 6.7. Natural water courses, water bodies, riparian zones and their connectivity shall be protected or restored. The Organization shall avoid negative impacts on water quality and quantity and mitigate and remedy those that occur. Additionally, Water resources is part of the environmental values, and its protection is covered under Principle 6 Environmental Values and Impacts.
Maintaining and enhancing soil quality and productivity	Soil is part of the environmental values, and its protection is covered under Principle 6 Environmental Values and Impacts. Additionally, under Criteria 10.6 and 10.7 where organization shall prevent, mitigate and/or repair damage to environmental values, including soils, from the application of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Also, under Principle 9 High Conservation Values where HCV 4 cover control of erosion of vulnerable soils
Soil quality consideration for use of residual flows	Not explicitly covered.
Prohibition on the use of hazardous/toxic chemicals	The prohibition of hazardous/toxic chemicals is covered under Criterion 10.7 the Organization shall not use any chemical pesticides prohibited by FSC policy. In addition, FSC established a Pesticides Policy for managing the use of chemical pesticides in FSC-certified management units which includes good practices as well as list of hazardous pesticides.
Implement best practices for the use of (agro)chemicals	Covered in Criterion 10.6 The Organization shall minimize or avoid the use of fertilizers. When fertilizers are used, The Organization shall demonstrate that the use is equally or more ecologically and economically beneficial than the use of silvicultural systems that do not require fertilizers, Criterion 10.7 The Organization shall use integrated pest management and silviculture systems which avoid, or aim at eliminating, the use of chemical pesticides.

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Restrict air pollution, promote good air quality	Atmosphere is part of the environmental values, and its protection is covered under Principle 6 Environmental Values and Impacts: The Organization shall maintain, conserve and/or restore ecosystem services and environmental values of the Management Unit, and shall avoid, repair or mitigate negative environmental impacts.
Limit the risk of Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC)	Not explicitly covered.
Circularity	
Promote waste reduction and responsible waste management	The promotion of waste reduction is captured in Criteria 10.11 & 10.12, reduction of waste and disposal of waste in an appropriate manner.
Raw material efficiency	Implicitly covered under Principle 5 Benefits from the Forest - Criterion 5.1 The Organization shall identify, produce, or enable the production of, diversified benefits and/or products, based on the range of resources and ecosystem services existing in the Management Unit
Efficient use of energy	Not explicitly covered.
Promote use of renewable sources	Not explicitly covered.
Promote material circularity	The promotion of recycled material takes place due the establishment of a special standards and logos for FSC recycled and FSC mixed products.
Social	
Compliance with labour rights	The compliance with labour rights is covered in Criteria 2.1 compliance with the principles and rights at work as defined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) based on the eight ILO Core Labour Conventions is required. Additionally, Criteria 2.4 cover fair salary which is referred to as living wages and Criteria 2.6 cover mechanisms for resolving grievances and for providing fair compensation to workers for loss or damage to property
Respect wellbeing of workers	Respecting well-being of workers is captured in Criteria 2.1 - 2.6. Specifically, Criteria 2.2 promote gender equality in employment practices, training opportunities, awarding of contracts, processes of engagement and management activities; Criteria 2.3 implement health and safety practices to protect workers from occupational safety and health hazards; and Criteria 2.5 demonstrate that workers have job-specific training and supervision to safely and effectively implement the management plan.
Respect property and usage rights	Criteria 1.2 The Organization shall demonstrate that the legal status of the Management Unit, including tenure and use rights, and its boundaries, are clearly defined. Additionally Criteria 3.2 for indigenous people and 4.2 for local communities require the Organization to recognize and uphold the legal and customary rights of Indigenous Peoples/Local communities to maintain control over management activities within or related to the Management Unit to the extent necessary to protect their rights, resources and lands and territories. In the event of delegation of control over management activities, Free, Prior and Informed Consent is required.
Respect wellbeing of the local population	Respecting the wellbeing of the local population is captured in the Criteria 4.1-4.8. Specifically Criterion 4.5 The Organization, through engagement with local communities, shall take action to identify, avoid and mitigate significant negative social, environmental and economic impacts of its management activities on affected communities, and Criterion 4.6 4.6 The Organization, through engagement with local communities, shall have mechanisms for resolving grievances and providing fair compensation to local communities and individuals with regard to the impacts of management activities of The Organization.
Food security	n/a
Economic	
Financial and economic viability	The financial and economic viability is part of the mission of FSC as well as the FSC Principles and Criteria. It is specifically captured in the Criteria 5.5, and in general in the Principle 5 requiring maintaining or enhancing long term economic viability, Principle 7 requiring a management plan and Principle 8 monitoring and assessment.
Fair business practices, Integrity	Fair business practices and integrity are covered in Criteria 1.7 The Organization shall publicize a commitment not to offer or receive bribes in money or any other form of corruption and shall comply with anti-corruption legislation where this exists. In the absence of anti-corruption legislation, The Organization shall implement other anti-corruption measures proportionate to the scale and intensity of management activities and the risk of corruption.
Promote local development, Inclusive economic growth	The promotion of local development is covered by Criterion 4.3 The Organization shall provide reasonable opportunities for employment, training and other services to local communities, contractors and suppliers proportionate to scale and intensity of its management activities; and Criterion 4.4 The Organization shall implement additional activities, through engagement with local communities, that contribute to their social and economic development, proportionate to the scale, intensity and socio-economic impact of its management activities. Additionally, Criterion 5.4

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	concerns the use of local processing, local services, and local value adding. The organization shall make reasonable attempts to help establish these services.
Use of knowledge and technology	Covered by Criterion 3.6 and 4.8 The Organization shall uphold the right of Indigenous Peoples/Local communities to protect and utilize their traditional knowledge and shall compensate for the utilization of such knowledge and their intellectual property
Fair trade and market practices	Not explicitly covered
Risk assessment and management	Risk assessment and management is partly captured in the Criteria 5.5, and in general in the Principle 5 requiring maintaining or enhance long term economic viability, and criteria 7.5 requiring a management plan.

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Sources:

- FSC website [Home | Forest Stewardship Council \(fsc.org\)](https://www.fsc.org/) (Last visited: 30 March 2023)
- FSC library of tools and documents <https://connect.fsc.org/document-centre> (Last visited: 30 March 2023)
- Chain of Custody Certification FSC-STD-40-004 V3-1 EN
- <https://www.isealalliance.org/community-members/forest-stewardship-council> (Last visited: 30 March 2023)
- General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies (page 20-24)
- FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 EN
- FSC documents with reference code: FSC-PRO-01-008 and FSC-PRO-01-009
- FSC Principles and Criteria for FSC