



Forest Stewardship Council®



# Frequently asked questions on the implementation of the FSC Ecosystem Services tools

August 2020



<b>Title:</b>	Frequently asked questions on the implementation of the FSC Ecosystem Services tools
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The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organization established to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC's vision is that the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide. FSC is the leading catalyst and defining force for improved forest management and market transformation, shifting the global forest trend toward sustainable use, conservation, restoration, and respect for all.

## **A Objective**

The objective of this FAQ is to provide support for the implementation of FSC Ecosystem Services tools:

- *FSC-PRO-30-006 V1-0 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools*
- *FSC-GUI-30-006 V1-0 EN Guidance for Demonstrating Ecosystem Services Impacts*

## **B Scope**

This FAQ is to be used by The Organizations who want to implement the FSC ecosystem services tools, and by FSC accredited certification bodies that want to evaluate ecosystem services impacts and approve FSC trademark use in association with FSC ecosystem services claims. It may also be used by FSC assessors from Accreditation Services International (ASI).

## **C References**

The following referenced documents are relevant for the application of this document. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

*FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship*

*FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*

*FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies*

*FSC-STD-20-007 Forest management evaluations*

*FSC-STD-30-005 FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups*

*FSC-STD-50-001 Requirements for use of the FSC trademarks by certificate holders*

*FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators (IGI)*

*FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact demonstration and market tools*

*FSC-GUI-30-006 Guidance for Demonstrating Ecosystem Services Impacts*

*FSC-DIR-20-007 FSC Directive on Forest Management Evaluations*

*FSC Trademark Use Guide for Promotional Licence Holders*

## **D Terms and definitions**

For the purposes of this guidance, the terms and definitions provided in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, *FSC-STD-60-004 FSC International Generic Indicators* and *FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact demonstration and market tools* apply.

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## General FAQ

FAQ 1																																																																								
Question	<b>What is the difference between ‘validation of an ecosystem service impact’ and ‘verification of an ecosystem service impact’?</b>																																																																							
Answer	<p>Verification of an ecosystem services impact can only take place when the required result from <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>, Annex B is demonstrated. The only difference between validation and verification is that verification has a comparison value that is leading to ‘result’.</p> <p>Below is an example of <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>, Annex B, ES 1.1: Restoration of natural forest cover.</p> <p>The first three columns are for both validation and verification. To verify a positive impact on ecosystem services, the fourth column (Comparison: Compare present value to) which indicates what the measure has to be compared to (Clauses 9.2–9.3) and the result of this comparison has to comply with the requirements indicated in the fifth column (Required result) (Clause 10.1).</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="6">ES1: BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Outcome indicators required</th> <th>Examples of outcome indicators (select at least one or select an alternative based on evidence)</th> <th>Measure</th> <th>Comparison: Compare present value to</th> <th>Required result</th> <th>UN Sustainable Development Goals</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="6"><b>Impact ES1.1: Restoration of natural forest cover</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6"><b>Within the first 10 years following the start of implementation of management activities to restore natural forest cover:</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The organization shall measure at least one outcome indicator to measure natural forest cover (1); AND at least one outcome indicator to measure successful replanting activities (2)</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural forest cover on the whole management unit</li> <li>Degraded forest area as a proportion of total land area</li> </ul> </td> <td>Present value of outcome indicator</td> <td>At least one previous measurement</td> <td>Condition is stable or improving</td> <td rowspan="3">           Goal 15: Life on Land            15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area            15.2.1 Progress towards sustainable forest management            15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area         </td> </tr> <tr> <td>1. 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FAQ 2	
Question	<b>How much time should be calculated for the verification of an ecosystem services impact?</b>
Answer	<p>ADVICE-20-007-19 (FSC-DIR-20-007) provides advice to certification bodies on forest management auditing time. When the evaluation of ecosystem services is included in the scope of the assessment, this will increase audit time.</p> <p>The time required to verify ecosystem services impacts depends on a number of factors, including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether the verification of ecosystem services impacts is integrated in the forest management audit or scheduled separately;</li> <li>• the number of ecosystem services impacts to be verified;</li> <li>• the type of impact(s) to be verified and the chosen methodologies to measure the outcome indicator(s);</li> <li>• whether it is the first ecosystem service impact evaluation or a subsequent evaluation;</li> <li>• the specific context of the forest management organisation.</li> </ul> <p>To minimize costs for the forest manager and maximize efficiency for the certification body, ecosystem services impacts should be evaluated during forest management certification audits (clause 17.4 of FSC-PRO-30-006).</p> <p>Generally, the more ecosystem services impacts are to be verified, the more time will be required for the evaluation.</p> <p>Experiences from pilot testing and field testing of draft versions of the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure revealed that about 1-3 auditor (person) days are needed in addition to the forest management assessment.</p> <p>Ecosystem services impacts shall be verified at least every 5 years or at each main forest management evaluation (clause 17.1 of FSC-PRO-30-006). There is no need to include ecosystem services verification in surveillance audits, unless:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. there is a need to evaluate the closure of non-conformities identified in previous evaluations;</li> <li>2. there are significant changes in the ESCD (see FAQ 3).</li> </ol>
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FAQ 3	
Question	<b>Who decides what a significant change in the ESCD is? And what is the process for determining whether or not to conduct a surveillance audit or a scope extension audit for ecosystem services?</b>
Answer	<p>Significant changes in the ESCD include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the addition of a new impact;</li> <li>• significant changes to the theory of change (for example: a change in management practices);</li> <li>• changes to the selected outcome indicators;</li> <li>• changes to the methodologies used to measure the outcome indicator;</li> </ul> <p>Other reasons for conducting a surveillance audit include a change of scope in the management unit(s) for which the impact is demonstrated, and monitoring results that would question the verified ecosystem services impact.</p> <p>During the forest management audit preparation phase, the certification body should ask the certificate holder whether there</p>

	are any changes to the ESCD and/or whether there could be any other reasons to conduct a surveillance audit. By latest 30 days prior to the scheduled forest management evaluation, the certificate holder should inform the certification body on the nature of any changes to the ESCD.
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FAQ 4	
Question	<b>How is an ecosystem services claim approved?</b>
Answer	<p>For any verified ecosystem services impact, an ecosystem services claim can be used.</p> <p>A separate approval is required when an FM, FM/COC or COC certificate holder or Promotional Licence holder uses FSC trademarks to promote ecosystem services claims (see FAQ 5).</p> <p>Certification bodies will also need to verify the passage of ecosystem services claims along the supply chain through sales and/or delivery documents.</p>

FAQ 5	
Question	<b>How does FSC trademark use approval work for ecosystem services claims?</b>
Answer	<p>There are different potential uses and users of the FSC trademarks in association with ecosystem services claims as explained in Part IV of the <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>.</p> <p>Forest managers that have an ecosystem services claim for the forest under their management may want to promote this via a news item or a video on their website or via other communication channels.</p> <p>FSC chain of custody (CoC) certificate holders may want to promote forest products that carry an FSC Ecosystem Services Claim. CoC certificate holders and non-certificate holders alike may be involved as a financial sponsor of ecosystem services and as such may want to communicate about their support for the maintenance/conservation or restoration/enhancement of the ecosystem service.</p> <p>Whether certificate holder or not, retailers and other organisations may also want to promote FSC 100% products that carry an FSC Ecosystem Services Claim.</p> <p>Buyers and sellers of external assets (e.g. carbon credits) that carry an ecosystem services claim or the registries listing such assets may also want to promote these assets with an FSC ecosystem services claim. These buyers may be CoC certificate holders or non-certificate holders.</p>



	<p>The users of the FSC trademarks in association with ecosystem services claims will propose the content for the promotion of ecosystem services claims.</p> <p>The approval for the use of FSC trademarks in association with ecosystem services claims is done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest management accredited certification bodies for forest management certificate holders</li> <li>• Chain of custody accredited certification bodies for CoC certificate holders</li> <li>• FSC trademark service providers for non-certificate holders (use of the FSC trademark requires a promotional licence)</li> </ul> <p>Part IV of the FSC-PRO-30-006 as well as section 7 and Annex 1 of the <i>FSC Trademark Use Guide for Promotional Licence Holders</i> provides examples of wording that can be used to promote ecosystem services claims. It is important that any embellishments of ecosystem services claims (for example when story-telling is used) are based on facts included in the publicly available ecosystem services certification document (ESCD).</p> <p>FSC trademark use by FSC certificate holders shall be in compliance with FSC-STD-50-001.</p>
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FAQ 6	
Question	<b>Can new members of forest management group certification also make ecosystem services claims for ecosystem services impacts that have been verified for that group?</b>
Answer	<p>Ecosystem services evaluations follow the existing normative requirement around group certification for forest management certification.</p> <p>FSC-STD-30-005, clause 3.4 states that “The Group entity or the certification body shall evaluate every applicant for membership of the Group and ensure that there are no major nonconformities with applicable requirements of the Forest Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of the Group, prior to being granted membership of the Group.”</p> <p>FSC-STD-20-007, clause 6.3.5 states that “The number of FMUs to be visited in a surveillance evaluation of forest management groups shall be determined according to Annex 1. If new FMUs (e.g. group members or newly acquired FMUs) have been added to the scope of the certificate since the main evaluation, the new FMUs shall be sampled at the rate of a main evaluation”.</p> <p>This means that group managers can add new members to the group without the immediate need of a certification body to evaluate compliance, as long as the certification body is confident that the procedures and internal control systems provide sufficient safeguards for a credible expansion of the group.</p>

	Certification bodies can use the same sampling approach to select group member for the evaluation of ecosystem services, in line with Annex 1 of FSC-STD-20-001. When ecosystem services is part of the scope of an evaluation, this should be an additional factor to weigh in on the decision what members and sites to include and to visit during the evaluation.
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FAQ 7	
Question	<b>In case of group certification, does each group member (forest) need to have a separate ecosystem services certification document (ESCD)?</b>
Answer	<p>It should be one ESCD per ecosystem service for a Certification Holder (CH) (see clause 1.5.2 <i>FSC-PRO-30-006</i>) where a CH could include multiple Management Units (MUs), e.g. in case of group certification.</p> <p>This means that if all group members pursue positive impacts on the same ecosystem services (e.g. all members want to demonstrate positive impact of their management activities on watershed services), are under the same management and the same methodology is used to measure certain outcome indicators, then one ESCD per ecosystem service is sufficient. If, however, every member is pursuing to demonstrate a positive impact on a different ecosystem services (one member wants to demonstrate positive impacts on carbon, another on biodiversity, a third on recreational services), then there will be separate ESCDs.</p> <p>In practice, it may be easier i.e. clearer to develop one ESCD per impact (even if multiple impacts within an ESCD are possible, e.g. multiple biodiversity impacts demonstrated for a CH).</p> <p>(Refer to: <i>FSC-PRO-30-006, Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>, clause 1.4 and 1.5.2)</p>

FAQ 8	
Question	<b>Can an ecosystem services impact be demonstrated for a part of the management unit or does it need to be done for the entire management unit?</b>
Answer	<p>Some of the ecosystem services impacts can be validated/verified for a part of the management unit, whereas for others the impact needs to be demonstrated for the entire management unit. Annex B of the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure stipulates per claim what is needed in terms of scope and monitoring).</p> <p>Please see the required outcome indicator(s) and the required result (Refer to: <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>, Annex B) and when there is a statement '<b>on management unit</b>', the scope is the entire management unit. For example for ES2: Carbon sequestration and storage (see figure).</p>

<b>ES2: CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE</b>				
<b>Outcome indicators required</b>	<b>Examples of outcome indicators (select at least one or select an alternative based on evidence)</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Comparison: Compare present value to</b>	<b>Required result</b>
<b>Impact ES2.1: Conservation of forest carbon stocks</b>				
The organization shall select at least one outcome indicator to measure carbon stocks (1); OR at least one outcome indicator to measure carbon loss (2) 1. Carbon stocks	• Forest carbon stocks estimated across the entire management unit	Present value of outcome indicator	At least one previous measurement	Forest carbon stocks on management unit are the same or higher than the previous measurement(s)
			OR A regional reference level	Forest carbon stocks on management unit are the same or higher than the reference level
<b>OR</b>				
2. Carbon loss	• Gross carbon stock loss resulting from recent logging	Present value of outcome indicator	A regional reference level OR a historical reference level of carbon loss from the management unit	Losses of carbon are lower on the management unit compared with the regional reference level or the historical reference level
<b>Impact ES2.2: Restoration of forest carbon stocks</b>				
The organization shall select at least one outcome indicator to measure carbon stocks	• Forest carbon stocks estimated across the entire management unit	Present value of outcome indicator	At least one previous measurement or a regional reference level	Forest carbon stocks on management unit are increasing OR higher than the regional reference level

FAQ 9	
Question	<b>If there is an event outside of the Organization’s control that damages the declared ecosystem service, shall/should the ecosystem services certification document ESCD be updated before the 5-year cycle? And shall/should the ecosystem services claim and any promotional statements/communication be also updated/changed?</b>
Answer	Events outside of the Organization’s control are part of the contextual factors that may influence whether or not the outcome and impact is achieved (see box 1 and clause 6.5 of <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i> ). In case a natural disturbance, for example forest fire, negatively influences the ecosystem services to the extent that one can no longer prove there is conservation or maintenance of that ecosystem service, the Organization loses the ecosystem services claim including the rights to use the FSC trademarks to promote that conservation/maintenance claim. However, the Organization can restore the damage done by the external event and pursue a restoration impact on that same ecosystem service. This entails a revision of the ESCD, including the Theory of Change, and the Organization may start with a validation of the restoration impact. As soon as the restoration impact is verified, the Organization will be able to use the FSC trademark in communicating about restored ecosystem service.

FAQ 10	
Question	<b>How long is the ecosystem services claim valid?</b>
Answer	The validation goes until the next ecosystem service evaluation, so it would be maximum in 5 years.

## FAQ for Certification Bodies

FAQ 11	
Question	<b>Do Certification Bodies need a separate accreditation for ecosystem services, and do they need to pass a witness audit before being able to evaluate ecosystem services impacts?</b>
Answer	<p>No. The scope section of the <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i> (p.6) states that: “Evaluating compliance with this procedure is within the scope of FSC forest management accreditation. An audit by Accreditation Services International (ASI) is not required before the certification body evaluates compliance with this procedure; ASI will carry out surveillance of the certification body’s compliance with Part V of this procedure through regular desk and witness audits.” The same applies for chain of custody-accredited certification bodies approving FSC trademark use in accordance with Part IV of the procedure.</p> <p>However, at least one member on the forest management audit team shall be trained on the ecosystem service(s) under evaluation or have proven competence based on past experience (Clause 20.1 of FSC-PRO-30-006, p.29), see FAQ 12 below.</p>

FAQ 12	
Question	<b>What kind of training or competence on ecosystem services would be considered sufficient for the member of the audit team under Clause 20.1?</b>
Answer	<p>In clause 20.1, training and competence refers to education and/or professional experience that the member of the audit team has acquired through, for example, education at university, courses and/or on-the-job training and experience on one or more ecosystem services.</p> <p>Annex 3 (audit teams) of FSC-STD-20-001 is relevant in this regard, particularly box 2 on key considerations for selection of audit team members for forest management audits. Under the heading ‘Environmental issues’, “other environmental issues that are likely to be of importance during the audit” includes the declared ecosystem service(s).</p> <p>The member on the audit team needs to be able to assess the choice and use of the methodology and interpret the results for the ecosystem service(s) under evaluation. This means that he or she may need to have a background or knowledge in, for example, ecology, forestry, biology, natural resources management, hydrology, soil management, or ecotourism.</p> <p>The certification body shall ensure that the team member is competent in the ecosystem services subject matter that is being evaluated. Ways in which such competence can be demonstrated include: university diploma, course certificate, technical outputs</p>

	(e.g. report, presentation, data analysis) of a project in which the team member had a leading role on the technical aspects and/or publication in a peer-reviewed journal.
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FAQ 13	
Question	<b>A certificate may be 3 years into the 5 year validity period at the point that the ecosystem services impact is verified – in such case, do we include the ecosystem services impact with an expiry or validity only for the remaining 2 years of the forest management certificate or can we issue the ecosystem services impact with a validity which goes beyond the end of the forest management certificate – subject to successful re-evaluation?</b>
Answer	You can use the ecosystem services impact with a validity that is longer than the forest management certificate. It needs to be ensured, however, that it expires as soon as the forest management certificate is not renewed/terminated for some reason. (Refer to: <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i> , Clause 17.1)

FAQ 14	
Question	<b>What information will be needed for the FSC database in relation to ecosystem services?</b>
Answer	The ecosystem services certification document (ESCD) needs to be uploaded in the FSC database and – in case there are any sponsors – also the list of sponsorships (Refer to: <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i> , Annex D).  The certification body needs to publish the ESCD only when an impact has been verified. It is important that the ESCD is uploaded as a separate document and under the correct category (Ecosystem Services Certification Document (available on website)), so that it is searchable in the FSC online database info.fsc.org.  In case of successful validation/verification of an impact, the evaluation of the ecosystem services impact(s) also needs to be part of the publicly available forest management report, for example as an annex.

FAQ 15	
Question	<b>Does the ecosystem services certification document (ESCD) belong to the certificate holder or the certification body (CB)? When CB needs to upload it, can CB change wording/ details of ESCD?</b>
Answer	The ESCD belongs to the Certificate Holder (CH). Based on the ESCD and information evaluated during the audit (interviews, field visit) the Certification Body makes a decision on the verification/validation of an ecosystem services impact and in case

	of a positive decision, the CB fills out the first page of the ESCD with this information. Prior to uploading the ESCD, the CB may request the CH to make certain adaptations to improve clarity or overall quality.
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FAQ 16	
Question	<b>Is it necessary to include ecosystem services in the public consultation made by the certification bodies?</b>
Answer	Yes. <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i> , Clause 17 is referencing FSC-STD-20-007, which requires a public consultation by the certification bodies.

FAQ 17	
Question	<b>What happens if there are negative stakeholder comments in relation to an ecosystem services during a forest management audit?</b>
Answer	<p>It works the same as with the stakeholder comments during the forest management audits and how these are handled, but then this information can be considered in the evaluation of the ecosystem services impact. During the audit, the team would further investigate the issue(s) brought up and decide on how this information is to be used/weighted in the overall assessment.</p> <p>(Refer to: <i>FSC-PRO-30-006 Ecosystem Services Procedure: Impact Demonstration and Market Tools</i>, Clause 5.1.6: A summary of culturally appropriate engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local communities related to the declared ecosystem service, including ecosystem services access and use, and benefit sharing, consistent with Principle 3 and Principle 4 of <i>FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Management</i>.)</p> <p>Regarding stakeholder consultation by the certification body on ecosystem services, there are no differences from the normal procedures and requirements as applicable for forest management evaluations (including clauses 1.2c) and 4.3b) FSC-STD-20-007).</p>

FAQ 18	
Question	<b>Can ecosystem services validation be done remotely?</b>
Answer	<p>It is not so much the difference between validation and verification that determines whether it can be a desk audit or not.</p> <p>Please refer to: Interpretations of the normative framework Ecosystem Services, INT-PRO-30-006_03 to see under which circumstances desk-based audits are possible.</p>

FAQ 19	
Question	<b>What is the purpose of the ‘results of the evaluation’ section on the front page of the ecosystem services certification document (ESCD)? Does this mean that the certification body</b>

	<b>does not undertake a technical review of the auditors' report before the impact is verified?</b>
Answer	The purpose of this front page is to show that the impact has been successfully verified (once this becomes publicly available in the FSC database – info.fsc.org). Ecosystem services verification or validation needs to follow the internal review process within the Certification Body and so the ESCD front page can be filled out once the certification decision has been made.

FAQ 20	
Question	<b>What dates are expected to be used on the first page of the ecosystem services certification document (ESCD) that has to be filled by the lead auditor, 'results of the evaluation'?</b>
Answer	The 'Approved on' date is the certification date (as the auditor would do for forest management assessment), and the 'Valid until' date is 5 years later.

FAQ 21	
Question	<b>Would an electric signature of the program manager on our certification decisions after report review be OK?</b>
Answer	It is fine to use the electronic signature of the program manager.



Forest Stewardship Council®

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