2nd Public consultation results
Forest Management Groups Standard
FSC-STD-30-005 (V2-0 Draft 2)

Report

Synopsis of second public consultation results of the Forest Management Groups Standard (FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 Draft 2)

Consultation period: 21 May to 21 June 2020 (English/Spanish)

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This document has been prepared in accordance with FSC-PRO-01-001 (V3-1),[1] and contains an analysis of the type of stakeholders that participated in this consultation, as well as a summary of the main issues raised, and how these issues have been addressed in the final draft. In general, the second draft was found to be good, and just needed some final refinements. Stakeholders expressed their satisfaction about this second draft and the transparency and participatory nature of the development process.

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[1] FSC-PRO-01-001 V 3-1 *The Development and Revision of FSC Normative Documents*.

PART I General data on participating stakeholders

Number of responses: total 78 (from 30 countries)
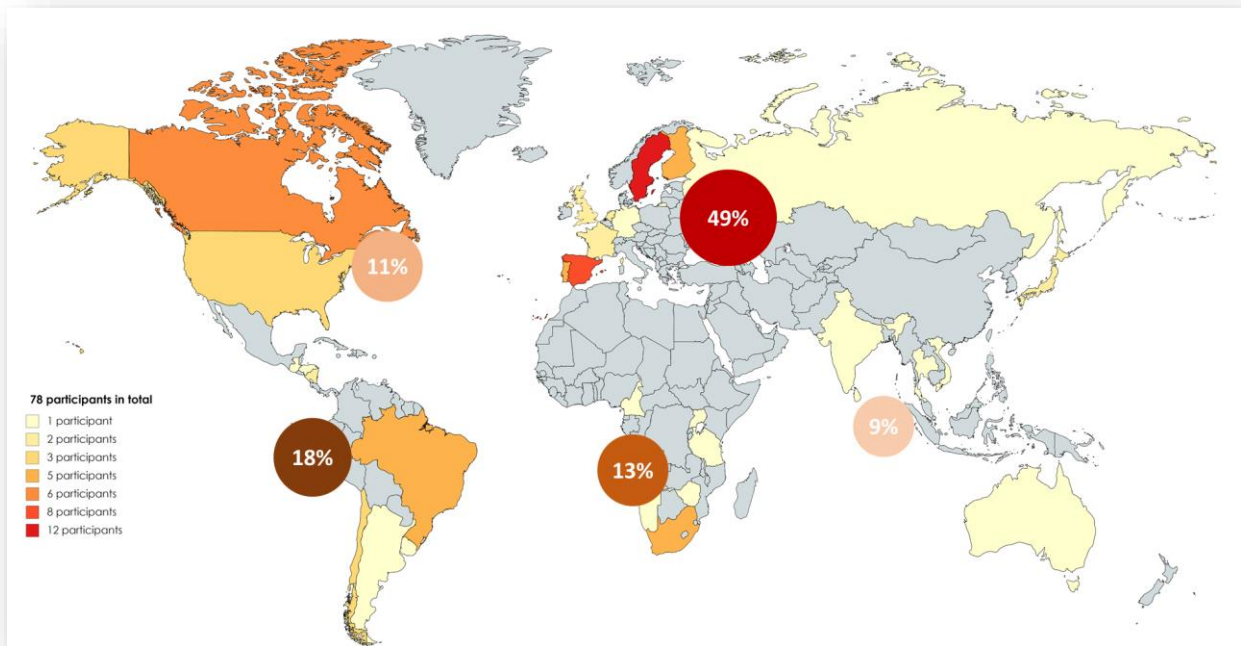

*Figure 1. Geographical distribution of consultation participants*

Statistics of respondents:

a. Category of respondent:

- FSC member: 19 (24% of respondents)
    - o Economic North 22, Economic South 8
    - o Environmental North 3, Environmental South 2
    - o Social North 2, Social South 2
- Certificate holder: 24 (31% of respondents)
- FSC network partner staff: 8 (10% of respondents)
- Other: 9 (12% of respondents)
- Consultant: 6 (8% of respondents)
- Certification body/auditor: 9 (12% of respondents)
- FSC International staff: 2 (3% of respondents)
- ASI staff: 1 (1% of respondents)

PART II Feedback summary per topic

1. Overall agreement and information boxes

Overall level of agreement with the draft standard
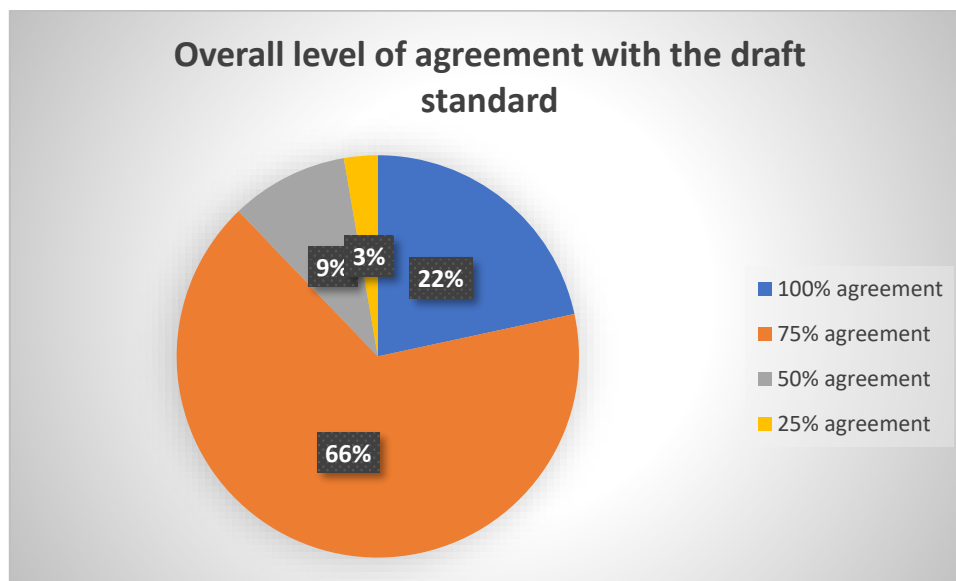
Number of responses 74

When asked about their overall agreement with the second draft of the standard, an 88% of the respondents indicated that they agree in a 100% or a 75% with the draft (74 responses in total).

This is a very positive result and shows that stakeholders are happy with the changes made based on their responses to the first consultation.

The inclusion of information boxes and examples in the standard is also seen as a positive addition. Most stakeholders indicate that they appreciate these boxes and actually some of them would like to see more examples and information boxes in the standard. New information boxes have not deemed necessary for the standard. Nevertheless, the working group has expressed the need for developing guidance to accompany the standard and to support stakeholders in implementing this revised version.
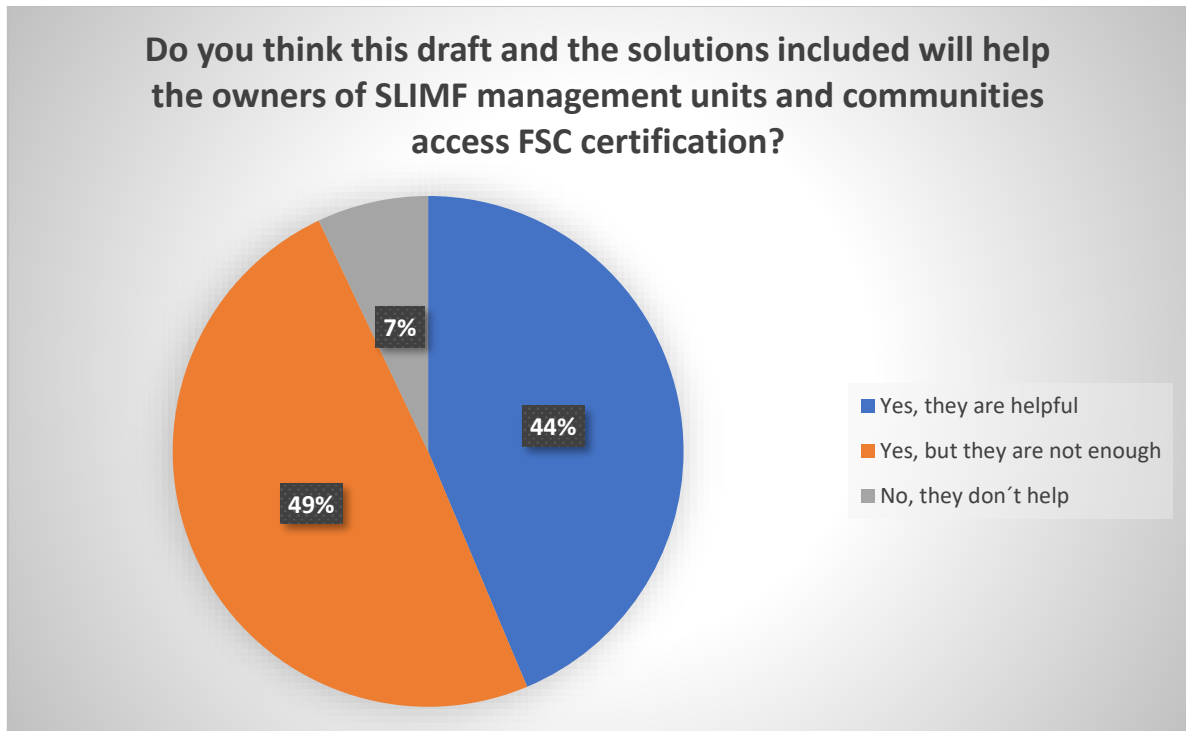
Some information boxes also needed some amendments based on the input received.

Actions taken:

- The scope of the information boxes has been clarified as not normative.

- Box 1: the term 'non-active' has been changed to 'inactive'.

- Box 2: legends have been increased. The benefits of RMUs and some of its characteristics have been clarified.

- Box 3: this box is now only focused on the relationship between the Group standard and the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, and who is 'The Organizaoitn' in the group. Clarifying examples about the delegation of responsibilities have been included.

- Box 4 is devoted now to clarifying the implementation or conformace at group level, clarifying how this possibility exists for most requirements and the importance of implementing any analysis results and forestry operations in all management units of the group.

- The graphics, legends and text of Box 5 has been revised based on the input received.

- Box 6 clarifies how the internal monitoring is flexible and can be adapted to the different realities and risks identified in each group.

- Box 7 didn´t seem relevant anymore after the inclusion of a definition for the term 'forest gate' and a corresponding note. Some examples of the activities covered by the group certificate have been included in Box 8 (Box 9 of draft two).

- Box 8 (Box 9 of draft two) has been complemented with more examples.

2. SLIMF and communities

Do you think this draft and the solutions included will help the owners of SLIMF management units and communities access FSC certification?

- 44% Yes, they are helpful
- 49% Yes, but they are not enough
- 7% No, they don´t help
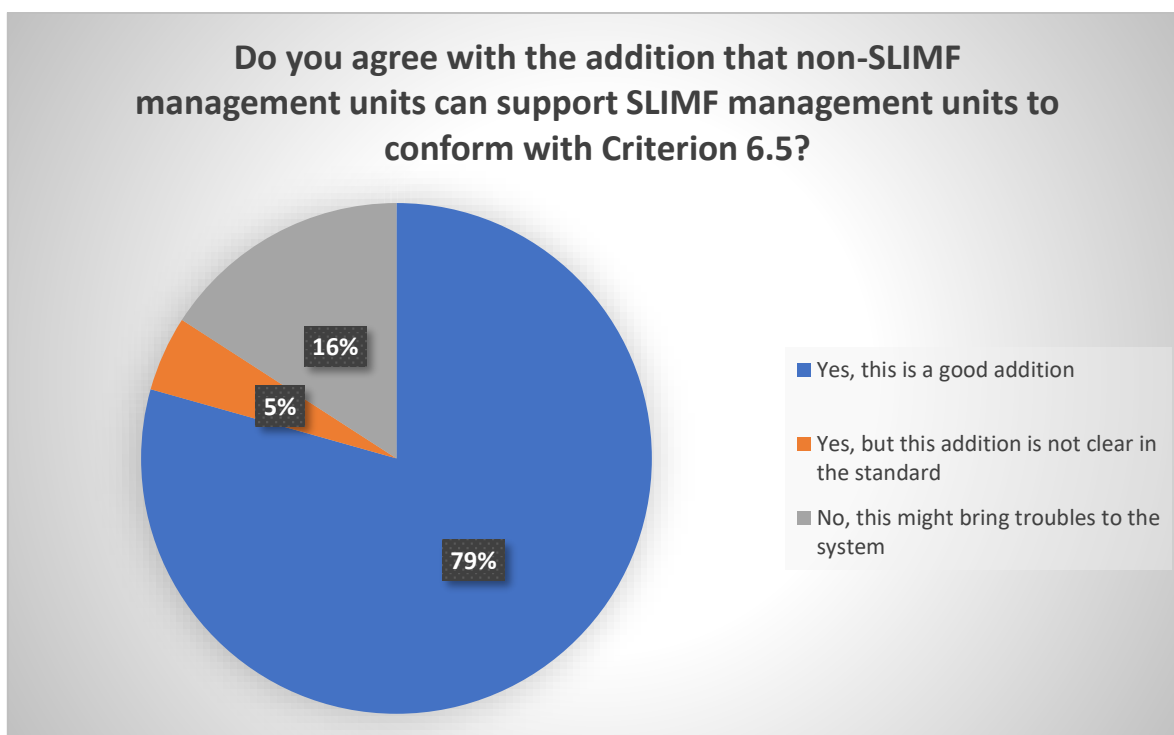
Number of responses 71

Overall, the simplification of the draft, the clarity brought and the specific measures included for SLIMF and communities are seen as helpful, although some stakeholders also mention that the biggest challeng for SLIMF and communities is the lack of technical capacity/knowledge, and the FSC requirements themselves.

Actions taken:

- Once the FM Groups standard is approved, FSC International is already planning to implement a roll-out process. This will consist on a series of online webinars, in-person training sessions[2] and the development of international guidance, with regional/national examples. The purpose of this roll-out is to support stakeholders in learning the changes brought to the standard, and understand how to implement it.

- In order to support smallholders and communities accessing the FSC system, FSC is also currently developing a Continuous Improvement procedure. The idea of this procedure is to allow conformance with FSC requirements through a set of years and with an agreed upon plan. This will reduce the initial efforts and costs to access FSC certification.

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[2] A virtual alternative is also being considered in case travel restrictions continue in the next months.

3. Conformance across management units

Do you agree with the addition that non-SLIMF management units can support SLIMF management units to conform with Criterion 6.5?

- 16%
- 5%
- 79%

Legend:
- Yes, this is a good addition
- Yes, but this addition is not clear in the standard
- No, this might bring troubles to the system

Number of responses 63

Most of the respondents (50 (79%) believe that the addition that non-SLIMF management units can support SLIMF management units in conforming with Criterion 6.5 is a good one.

Some stakeholders also highlighted that this is a better alternative than the options of conforming with Criterion 6.5 outside of the group, which is a possibility based on interpretation INT-STD-01-001_09. Some stakeholders indicated the need to reference this interpretation. The working group continues to believe that this interpretation actually refers to another standard, FSC-STD-01-001 (the FSC Principles and Criteria), and that it does not fit in the Group standard.

A couple of stakeholders from two countries indicated that non-SLIMF should also benefit from this exception, although the working group felt that non-SLIMF management units should be able to conform with Criterion 6.5 on their own.

There are some doubts regarding the existence of some approved national standards which do not coincide with the requirements included in the Group standard.

Some stakeholders indicated the need to justify the implementation of this exception, or that SLIMF and non-SLIMF applying this exception should be in the same landscape, but the working group felt non of these measures where necessary.

Actions taken:

- The exception has been maintained as it was included in draft two.
- PSU has the plan to revise any national standards that do not coincide with the Group standard.
- It has been clarified that this exception should not be taken as an 'excuse' to harvest areas of native ecosystems, which should be protected as per the rest of Criteria of Principle 6.

4. Internal monitoring methodology
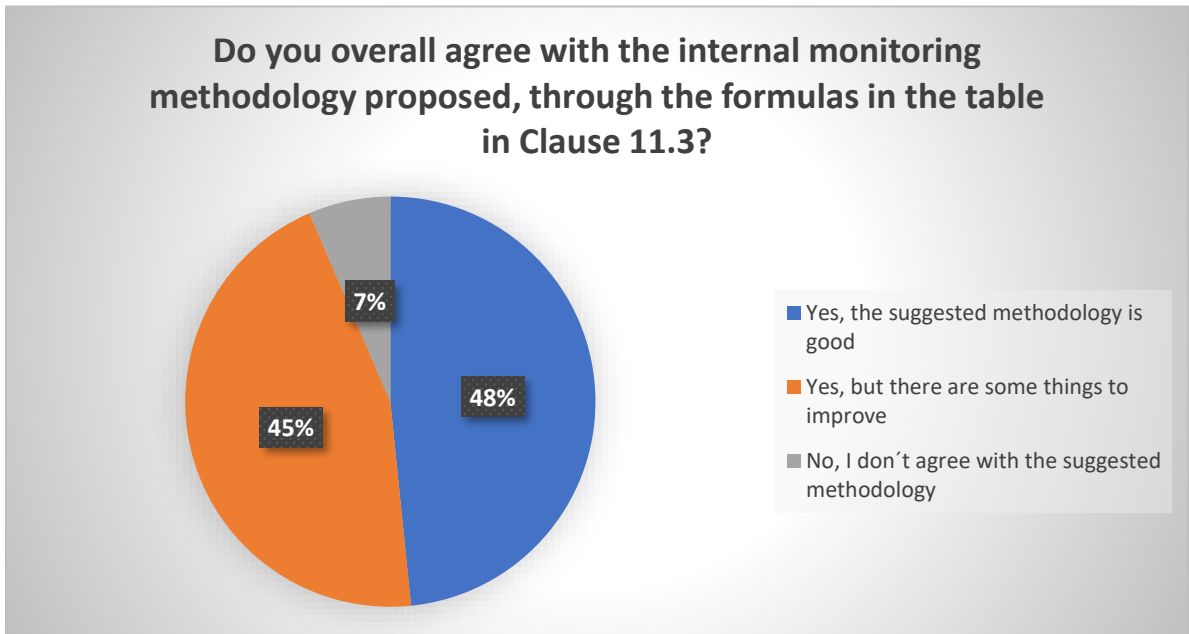
Number of responses 62
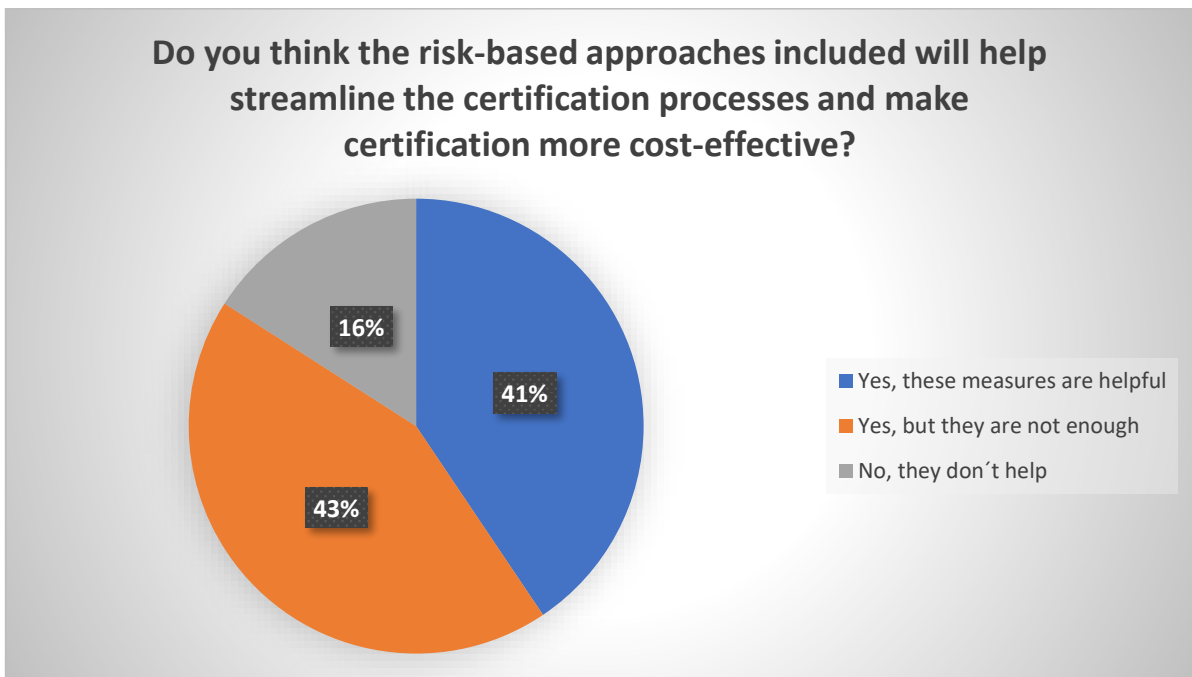
Number of responses 69

Most of the respondents (30 (48%)) think that the internal methodology proposed is good, and also a high number of them (28 (45%)) feel the methodology is good but there are some things to improve.

When asked about the risk-based approaches included in the standard, which mainly correspond to the internal monitoring part, most stakeholders (30 (43%)) indicated that these measures are good but not enough. A very similar number of respondents (28 (41%)) indicated that these measures are very helpful.
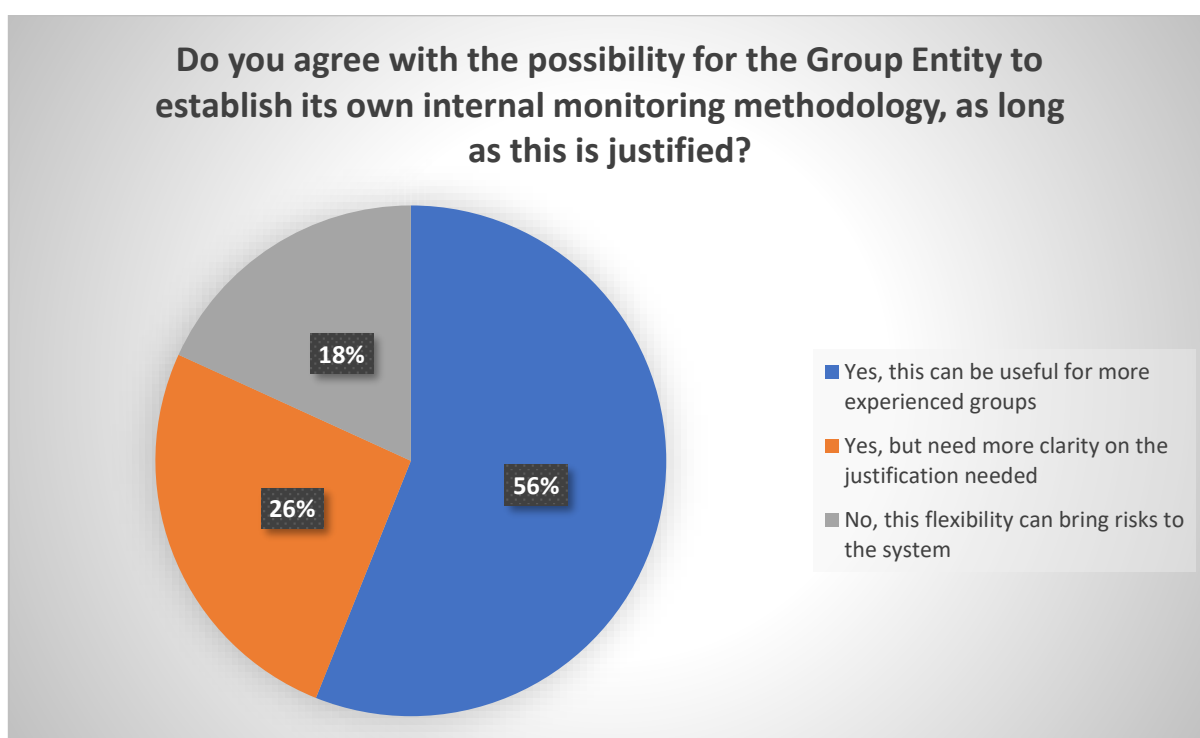
Regarding the internal monitoring of inactive management units, most respondents felt inactive management units should only be monitored externally by the certification bodies, or using more

cost-effective ways to assure that these areas remain in conformance despite longer periods of inactivity (e.g. though desk internal monitoring, the use of new technologies, etc.).

The examples for active and inactive management included in Box 1 should be treated as examples. It´s the Group Entity who needs to analyse its own context and decide which management activities imply a potential risk and be classified as 'active' for their group.

Some stakeholders suggested that the size classes used should be aligned with the SIR size distribution of national standards, or have a separate sampling rate for SLIMF and communities, or not include the < 1,000 ha category, or include specific formulas for very big management units. After discussing carefully all these suggestions received, the working group felt that the size classes included in draft two were comprehensive enough and addressed all the different situations that could take place in different groups. For this reason, the size classes have been maintained as included in draft two.

Regarding the very big management units, it was clarified by the working group members that the certification body standard for forest management evaluations (FSC-STD-20-007) ensures that these management units are visited with a very high frequency as part of the external evaluations by certification bodies.

Do you agree with the possibility for the Group Entity to establish its own internal monitoring methodology, as long as this is justified?

- 56% — Yes, this can be useful for more experienced groups
- 26% — Yes, but need more clarity on the justification needed
- 18% — No, this flexibility can bring risks to the system

Number of responses 66

When asked about the possibility for the Group Entity to establish its own justified internal monitoring methodology, most of the respondents (37 (56%)) indicate that this can be useful for more experienced groups. A high number of them (17 (26%)) indicate that this is a good option but that more clarity is required regarding the justification needed to define the internal methodology at the discretion of the Group Entity.
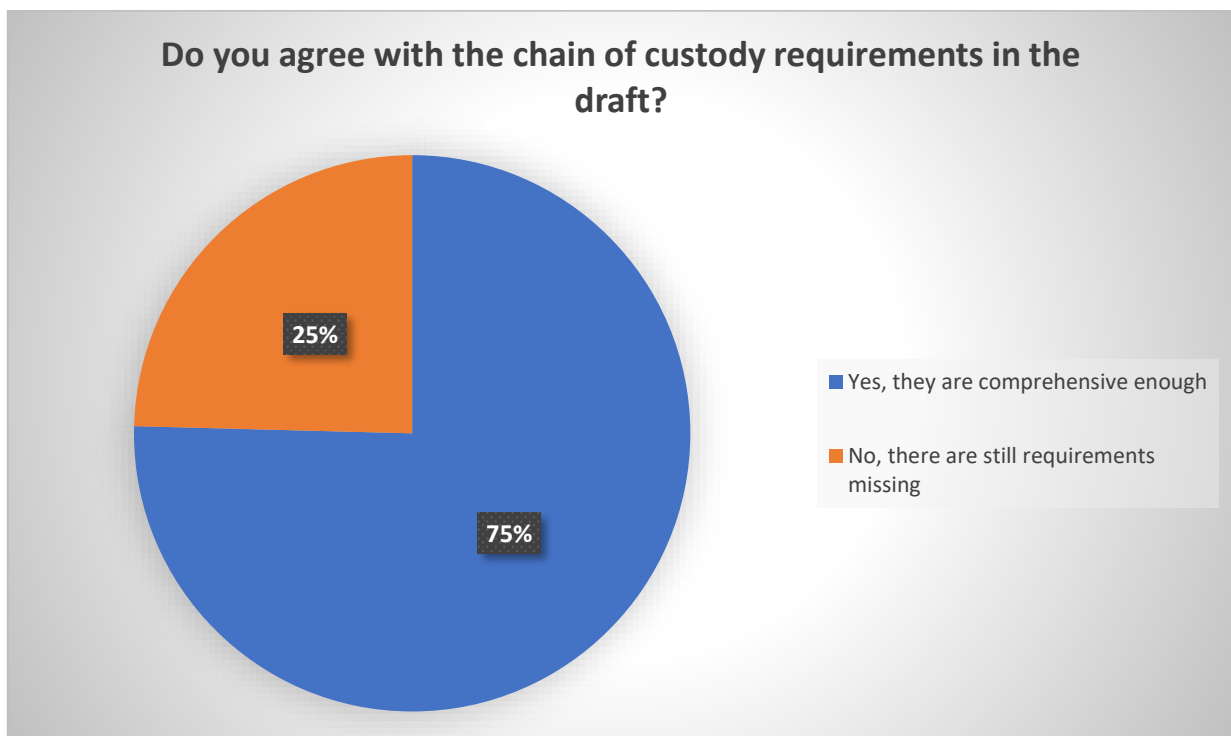
There were some doubts expressed about the justification needed for this possibility of the Group Entity defining its own internal monitoring methodology. It was felt that this could bring higher risk, lack of homogeneity and a huge responsibility for the certification bodies. Some ideas were suggested, such as establishing a compulsory minimum sampling, or defining an international methodology based on the historical performance/risk of the group.

After a careful analysis by the working group, it was decided to maintain this option, but basing it on the regular analysis of the results of the monitoring as per Clause 11.1 c). This reinforces the concept of adaptive management which should be implemented in the group. By analysing the results of the previous internal monitoring process, the Group Entity can decide whether a lower internal monitoring intensity is possible, or whether more frequent internal monitoring is required for their group.

Actions taken:

- The requirement for the Group Entity to specify what constitutes an active management unit for the group and justify the classification of the management units has been moved from the definition of 'Active management unit' to the body of the standard.

- It has been included the possibility of monitoring the inactive management units remotely if the necessary information is available.

- It has been clarified that the regular analysis of the results of the internal monitoring should be made at least annually.

- The Group Entity may lower the minimum sample based on the regular analysis of the results of the monitoring as per Clause 11.1 c) (instead of needing to provide a justification, the reduction in the minimum sample is now based on the results of the previous internal monitoring).

5. Chain of Custody

Do you agree with the chain of custody requirements in the draft?

- Yes, they are comprehensive enough — 75%
- No, there are still requirements missing — 25%

Number of responses 61

A majority of the respondents (46 (75%)) agree with the Chain of Custody requirements included in draft two.

Nevertheless, input was received regarding the mismatch between the estimated volumes that are harvested in management units of the group, and the real volumes that are finally harvested and sold. In some countries, this is a risk of false claims, since it can happen that a contractor (harvester)

estimates and pays for a volume of FSC-certified wood, but then when selling this wood to the mill that will process the timber the volume becomes significantly higher, being this an indication of a potential false claim. To address this, some stakeholders have indicated that it would be necessary to measure the harvested and sales volume at the management unit level.

Some stakeholders indicated that it can be challenging for the Group Entity to control the volume of wood sold outside of the group (e.g. to an external mill, not through the Group Entity). For this cases, it was requested that groups could decide that their members keep the sales records, allowing for ad hoc gathering of group level data when needed. This is always a possibility for groups, since a Group Entity can decide to request such record keeping from their members in the Group Rules, if they identify that such risk exists in their group.

The technical group decided not to request, by default, the record of harvest and sales volumes for each member (and management unit). This is because this can become a very big burden, especially for SLIMF and communities, and for those who join groups and FSC certification for the first time. Nevertheless, in order to address these potential risk situations, a risk-based clause has been included (see actions taken below).
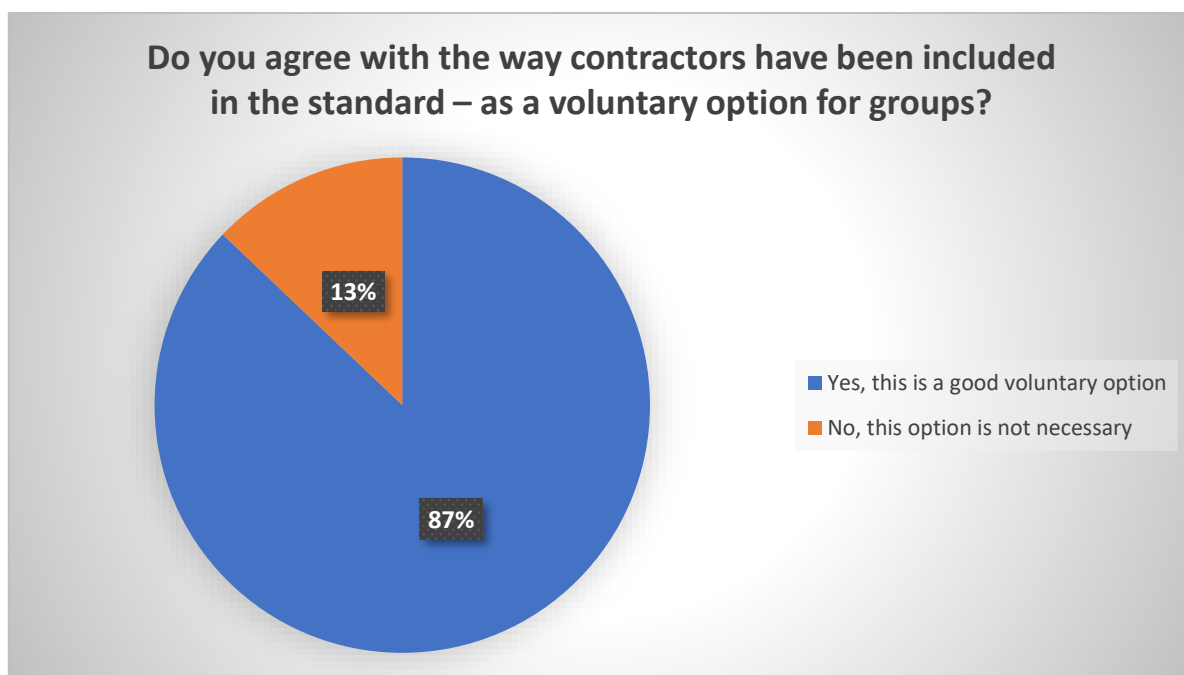
There were also some questions about the forest gate for groups, especially when forestry contractors are included in the group, and about which operations would be covered by the FM/CoC certificate.

Actions taken:

- Inclusion of the definition of 'forest gate', together with a clarification note. The operations covered by the group certificate have also been clarified in Box 8.

- A risk based clause (10.3) has been included for those countries where FSC International determines that there is a high risk of false claims involving material harvested from groups. In these cases, the Group Entity shall maintain up-to-date records of the harvesting and FSC sales volumes for each management unit of the group.

   The clause includes a note explaining that for management units of the group where the harvesting and sales are carried out by a contractor, the Group Entity is expected to verify that the volumes sold by the contractor correspond to the estimated volumes bought from its group. For this purpose, it is recommended that the contract between the forest owner and the contractor includes a requirement for the contractor to communicate to the forest owner and the Group Entity the actual (measured) volume harvested and sold.

6. Forestry contractors

Do you agree with the way contractors have been included in the standard – as a voluntary option for groups?

- 13%
- 87%

■ Yes, this is a good voluntary option
■ No, this option is not necessary

Number of responses 62

Most of the respondents (54 (87%)) agree that the way forestry contractors have been included in the standard, as a voluntary option for groups, is a good addition.

There were some questions about this voluntary inclusion of contractors in the group, and whether some contractors can still implement operations in the group without being included in the group certificate scope and conforming with Part III of the standard. It has been clarified that this is still possible, and that the inclusion of contractors of the group is a voluntary possibility for groups.

There were some comments about the low monitoring intentsity for contractors.

There were also some questions about the sales operations covered by the group certificate.

Actions taken:

- It has been clarified that this is a voluntary inclusion, but that contractors can still operate in the group without the need of being included in the certificate or conform with Part III.

- It has also been clarified that contractors can have a separate CoC certificate to operate in management units outside of the group.

- It has been clarified that contractors of the group are monitored through the regular internal monitoring of the management units, where they implement the operations, and also through a targeted internal mevaluation, focused on whether contractors fulfil their group responsibilities.

- It has been included that sub-contractors hired by contractors of the group also need to conform with the Group Rules and the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard (Clause 14.5 a)).

- The method for the initial evaluation of contractors has been specified.

- It has been clarified which certificate code to use in the sales of contractors of the group.

7. Other changes from Draft 2 to Final Draft

- The term 'Group Rules' has been defined.

- A Note has been included to clarify the use of the sub-certificate codes.