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FSC POLICY

FSC POLICY FOR PILOT TESTS OF DRAFT FSC STANDARDS

FSC-POL-01-001 (2004) EN

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FSC POLICY FOR PILOT TESTS OF DRAFT FSC STANDARDS

FSC-POL-01-001 (2004) EN

Approved April, 2004
31st meeting of the FSC Board of Directors

Original policy approved March 2003 (28th meeting)
Modifications to the original policy approved July 2003 (29th meeting)

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The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organisation based in Bonn, Germany.

The mission of the Forest Stewardship Council is to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC develops, supports and promotes international, national and regional standards in line with its mission; evaluates, accredits and monitors certification bodies which verify the use of FSC standards; provides training and information; and promotes the use of products that carry the FSC logo.

Introduction

This policy is designed to encourage collaboration between FSC, accredited certification bodies and others in the development and testing of FSC standards. The objective is to enable FSC to work more closely with companies to test new FSC proposals draft standards before they are finalised.

The benefit to FSC is to gain better understanding of the practical impacts of draft standards at an early stage of development, so as to ensure that they are fine-tuned prior to seeking formal endorsement. The benefit to companies is that they can gain early experience in the implementation of new systems, and early access to use of the FSC trademarks for innovative products. Companies are able to assist FSC to better adapt standards to their respective systems and needs.

1 Definition

- 1.1 An FSC pilot test is a study, authorised by the Executive Director of the FSC International Center, for the purpose of testing a draft FSC standard prior to its presentation to the FSC board for formal endorsement.
- 1.2 Pilot tests may be authorised for draft standards that are developed to implement previous board policy decisions, or on the basis of case-by-case approval by the FSC Board of Directors¹.
- 1.3 A key feature of an FSC pilot test is that it may result in the issue of a certificate permitting use of the FSC logo on products for a limited duration². It therefore differs from normal field testing which may be carried out at any time without Board or Executive approval, but which cannot result in the issue of an FSC certificate, or in use of the FSC logo.
- 1.4 A pilot test differs from 'provisional accreditation' of a standard in a number of ways:
 - 1.4.1 A draft FSC standard may be approved for use in a pilot test at a relatively early stage of development, prior to wide stakeholder consultation;
 - 1.4.2 Any certificates issued on the basis of pilot tests shall be for a very limited duration, up to a maximum of 12 months.
 - 1.4.3 The number of participants in a pilot test shall always be limited, up to a maximum of four per certification body. In the case of provisional accreditation of standards the number of applicants is not limited.

2 Objectives of pilot testing

- 2.1 The objectives of pilot testing are:
 - a) to gain better understanding of the practical impacts of draft standards at an early stage of development;
 - b) to encourage active involvement of forest managers, companies and certification bodies in standards development.

¹ This would include approval by a committee appointed by the Board for this purpose.

² FSC encourages field testing of any draft policy or standard prior to its submission for FSC board endorsement. Permission to field test a standard is not required, whether testing is to be carried out by national initiatives, certification bodies, or their clients. However, the results of normal field testing do NOT result in the issue of an FSC endorsed certificate, and do NOT permit the company that takes part to make use of the FSC logo, either on- or off- product.

3 Agreement to set up an FSC pilot test

- 3.1 FSC pilot testing shall be authorised only by the Executive Director of the FSC International Center, and with the necessary approval from the FSC Board of Directors (see 1.2).
- 3.2 The decision to authorise a pilot test shall be based on a written proposal which shall include:
 - 3.2.1 A description of the specific goals of the pilot test;
 - 3.2.2 An explanation as to why a pilot test is considered a better alternative than simple field testing prior to presentation of a standard to the FSC board for endorsement;
 - 3.2.3 A description of the pilot test methodology, including specifically the involvement of FSC National Initiatives, accredited certification bodies and their clients or potential clients, and the basis on which temporary certificates might be issued as a result of the test.
 - 3.2.4 A specific statement as to the range of situations in which testing is desirable (e.g. boreal, tropical, temperate forest types; large/small forest areas; large/small manufactures; north/south participation; etc);
 - 3.2.5 A specific statement as to the potential implications, both positive and negative, of permitting the temporary FSC-labelling of products as a result of the pilot test;
 - 3.2.6 A description of the specific safeguards implemented to ensure that the FSC trademarks are used properly and that the integrity of the FSC trademarks is maintained;
 - 3.2.7 A copy of the draft standard that is to be tested, together with a specific statement of the key features of the draft standard and how they differ from existing FSC policies or standards;
 - 3.2.8 Accredited certification bodies intending to participate in the pilot test are free to register their intent at any time before or during the pilot test. Certificate holders and/or applicant commercial operations intending to participate in the pilot test are free to register their intent at any time before or during the pilot test through one of the accredited certification bodies. All accredited certification bodies and their respective clients participating in any pilot test are subject the proceedings and conditions approved by the FSC.

4 Formal monitoring of the pilot tests

- 4.1 Pilot tests shall be monitored in three ways:
 - 4.1.1 All participants shall complete a formal questionnaire and feedback form provided by FSC;
 - 4.1.2 All participating certification bodies shall complete an evaluation report, detailing the client's compliance (or non-compliance) with the draft FSC standard, together with any recommendations for changes to the draft standard and any recommendations for further work to be carried out by the client.

- 4.1.3 A sample of the pilot tests shall be monitored by FSC in the field. This may be carried out by staff of the FSC International Center, members of an FSC Technical Committee, local experts, or FSC National Initiative representatives;
- 4.1.4 The results of monitoring shall be compiled and summarised in a publicly available report.

5 Funding of pilot testing

- 5.1 The FSC International Center shall not authorise any pilot testing unless a budget has been allocated to cover FSC's full participation, monitoring, and reporting.

6 Selection of participants for an FSC pilot test

- 6.1 All FSC-accredited certification bodies may participate in an FSC pilot test, on request. There is no obligation for certification bodies to take part, and certification bodies that do not take part will receive equal access to information prior to the study, and to the results of the study.
- 6.2 Each participating certification body may initially put forward the names of up to four clients for inclusion in a pilot test. If additional participants are needed to meet the objectives of pilot testing, the International Center may invite participating certification bodies to propose additional clients to take part.
- 6.3 Inclusion of a certification body client in a pilot test is at the discretion of the FSC International Center.
- 6.4 The FSC International Center shall select participants to ensure that testing takes place in the full range of situations specified in the approved pilot test proposal (see 3.2.4, above).

7 Conditions for participation

- 7.1 Prior to starting the pilot test, participating certification bodies and their clients shall sign an agreement which shall include the following provisions:
 - 7.1.1 Participation in the pilot study is at the FSC International Center's sole discretion;
 - 7.1.2 Participants agree to abide by any specific terms of participation, as set out by FSC;
 - 7.1.3 FSC shall have the right to attend any part of the pilot tests as an observer, and to nominate its representatives who shall have the right to attend the tests as observers.
 - 7.1.4 FSC shall have the right to publish a report on the results of the pilot tests, which may include observations about the cost of implementation of the draft standard, as well as details about the ease or difficulty of implementation. This report shall be publicly available.
 - 7.1.5 There is no guarantee that participation in the pilot test shall result in the issue of an FSC-endorsed certificate (see section 8, below). Therefore, there is no guarantee that participation in the test shall result in the participants receiving permission to make use of the FSC logo or other trademarks, either on- or off- product.

8 Issue of FSC certificates on the basis of pilot tests

- 8.1 When a certification body has completed a pilot test the certification body shall submit its evaluation report to the FSC International Center for review.

- 8.2 The certification body shall not issue a certificate until and unless the International Center has confirmed in writing that certification decisions may be taken on the draft standard.
- 8.3 The certification body shall only issue a temporary certificate if the requirements of the draft standard have been complied with. The FSC Accreditation Business Unit shall monitor pilot test certificates and accompanying reports as part of its normal accreditation surveillance programme.
- 8.4 The FSC International Center reserves the right to refuse permission to issue a temporary certificate if the pilot testing has revealed major flaws in the draft standard which, in the sole opinion of the International Center, should be corrected prior to the issue of a certificate.
- 8.5 The FSC International Center may give permission to issue a temporary certificate to a client that does not yet comply with the draft standard if, in the sole opinion of the FSC International Center, the non-compliances are in areas in which the draft standard appears unnecessarily onerous or impractical to implement, or implementation would not achieve the proposed purpose.

9 General provisions

- 9.1 The pilot testing of a draft policy and/or standard is intended to provide additional intelligence to refine draft standards prior to submission to the FSC Board of Directors for endorsement. Pilot testing of draft standards does not imply endorsement of the draft standard. Endorsement of standards is an independent process at the discretion of the FSC Board of Directors.