



Forest Stewardship Council®



Standard Operating Procedure for pilot testing Type III group model for group certification

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Standard
operating
procedure

Introduction

FSC has committed to developing new tools that will improve smallholders and communities certification uptake in its Global Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The commitment has been further strengthened by the FSC membership's decision during the 2017 General Assembly through motion 46, with a focus on developing new solutions and improving the FSC forest management group certification framework.

FSC New Approaches to Smallholders and Communities certification (hereafter: 'New Approaches') project is proposing a pilot test of a new suggested Type III group model, with the aim to streamlining smallholder group certification. This Type III group model suggests the incorporation of forestry contractors as members of group certificates, which will improve the group certification process and certification uptake by smallholders.

The inclusion of forestry contractors as group members may allow for a new way to dividing responsibilities within the group, and for a focus on the management activities rather than on the management unit.

The pilot tests will help identify the impacts of the Type III group model on the group certification process and costs, as well as potential improvements to group certification internal procedures, international normative documents and certification uptake.

The results of this pilot test will also inform the revision processes of standards FSC-STD-30-005 *FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups* and FSC-STD-20-007 *Forest management evaluations*, planned to start in Q4/2018 and Q1/2019 respectively.

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A. Objective

The objective of this Standard Operating Procedure is to set the requirements for the entities participating in the pilot tests for a Type III group model for group certification.

B. Scope

This document is to be used by the participants in the pilot tests for a Type III group model for group certification:

- FSC-accredited certification bodies (Part I);
- Forest management groups, represented by the group entity (Part II);
- Forestry contractors (Part III);

All aspects of this Standard Operating Procedure are considered to be normative, including the scope, effective date, references, terms and definitions, tables and annexes, unless otherwise stated.

C. References

The following documents are relevant for the application of this document. For references without a version number, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies:

FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship V4-0; V5-2

FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms

FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF Eligibility Criteria

FSC-STD-20-007 Forest Management Evaluations

FSC-STD-30-005 FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups

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

The applicable Forest Stewardship Standard

D. Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this Standard Operating Procedure, the terms and definitions provided in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, *FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship* and *FSC-STD-60-004 FSC International Generic Indicators*, as well as the following, apply:

Forestry contractor: The person or organization that is working under a direct contractual relationship with a group entity, a forest owner and/or a resource manager, to implement forest management activities. Forestry contractors are legal entities independent from the group entity or forest owner (i.e. they do not represent neither one). The scope of activities of the forestry contractors include all forest management operations from silvicultural to harvesting activities.

Type III group model¹: Type of forest management group where forestry contractors have been included as members of the group. Responsibilities within the group are shared, but overall responsibility of ensuring conformity is with the group entity and forestry contractors. Type III group is only applicable to SLIMF groups or sub-groups.

¹ Type III group model builds from Type II group model. Additional requirements are illustrated in the FSC-STD-30-005.

Part I – Procedures for certification bodies

1 General requirements

- 1.1 The pilot tests shall not imply endorsement of the draft standards being tested, as the endorsement of standards is an independent process at the discretion of the FSC Board of Directors.
- 1.2 The pilot test may be carried out with existing group members or be used to include new members into the group.
- 1.3 The scope of the pilot test shall be limited to a maximum 10% of the total area of each participating group, calculated based on the group size at the moment of applying to participate in the pilot test.

Note: For example, for a group certificate of 1.000 hectares, the pilot test can be carried out in 10 % of the existing management units (i.e. 100 hectares), or it can be used to include 100 hectares of new members into the group under the pilot test requirements.

2 Pilot testing requirements

- 2.1 The certification body shall evaluate the participating group's conformity with the following requirements for the designated pilot testing proportion of the group certificate:
 - 2.1.1 The applicable forest stewardship standard;
 - 2.1.2 FSC-STD-30-005 with the suggested additions as shown in Annex 1 of this Standard Operating Procedure;
 - 2.1.3 FSC-STD-20-007 with the suggested additions as shown in Annex 2 of this Standard Operating Procedure;
 - 2.1.4 The pilot test internal procedure with the group rules as per Clause 7.4.
- 2.2 The certification body shall evaluate the group's conformity with Clause 2.1 requirements before the group starts implementing the pilot test, through a desk audit.
- 2.3 The certification body shall evaluate the group's conformity with Clause 2.1 requirements in conjunction with the regular forest management certification process of the participating group.

3 Expected outcomes

- 3.1 The certification body shall evaluate, through a desk audit, the conformity of the 10% pilot proportion of the group with Clause 2.1, resulting in the following outcomes:
 - 3.1.1 A decision on the inclusion in the scope of the certificate of the members implementing the pilot test requirements;
 - 3.1.2 A decision on the suitability of the pilot test internal procedure;
 - 3.1.3 A decision on the allowance for the group to begin implementing the pilot test requirements (Type III group model).

3.2 The certification body shall evaluate, during the regular forest management certification process, conformity with Clause 2.1 requirements, resulting in the following outcomes:

3.2.1 A decision on the renewal of the certificate, including a decision on the 10% of the group participating in the pilot test, which may be included in the certificate scope;

Note: this Clause relates to the FMUs included into the pilot testing.

3.2.2 Feedback to the Performance and Standards Unit by filling in the pilot test report as described in Section 4.

3.3 The certification body shall produce an additional report at the end of the 12 month pilot period, with any additional input or suggestions regarding the pilot implementation for the Performance and Standards Unit. To produce this report, the certification body may conduct an additional desk audit on the 10 % pilot participating group members.

4 Pilot test report

4.1 The certification body shall submit to the Performance and Standards Unit a pilot test report in accordance with Annex 3 - *Template for Certification body report for Type III group model pilot test*. This report includes:

4.1.1 An evaluation of conformity of the participating group with the Type III group model requirements stated in Clause 2.1;

4.1.2 Detailed recommendations for the Performance and Standards Unit for the improvement of the requirements being pilot tested.

Note: recommendations in the form of tracked changes modifications to standards FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007 (Annex 1 and Annex 2) may also be annexed to the report.

4.2 The certification body shall submit the pilot test report within fourteen (14) days after the audit of the group as per Clause 3.2.

Note: The Performance and Standards Unit might require additional input from the certification body about the conclusions and insights of the pilot test, as indicated in Clause 3.3.

5 Approval of pilot test certificates to Type III groups

5.1 The certification body shall not make any decision regarding the 10% of the group participating in the pilot test until and unless the Performance and Standards Unit has confirmed in writing that certification decisions may be taken based on the pilot test requirements.

Note: the Performance and Standards Unit will communicate its decision to the certification body after each audit.

5.2 The certification body shall only allow the inclusion of the 10% of the group participating in the pilot test into the group's certificate if the applicable requirements (Clause 2.1) have been complied with for that 10%.

- 5.3 The Performance and Standards Unit reserves the right to refuse permission to issue a pilot test certificate if the pilot testing has revealed major flaws in the applicable requirements (Clause 2.1) which, in the sole opinion of the Performance and Standards Unit, should be corrected prior to making a certificate decision.
- 5.4 The inclusion of the 10% of the group in the certificate on the basis of this pilot testing process shall have a maximum duration of 12 months.
- 5.4.1 The Policy and Standards Committee, after the first 12 months of pilot testing, will analyse the pilot testing results and recommend to the FSC Board of Directors one of the following:
- a) extend the initial 12 months duration of the pilot test certificate;
 - b) change the scope of the pilot test, based on the first year's results;
 - c) let the pilot test certificate expire.
- Note: the group entity will take into consideration the Board of Directors decision and make the necessary changes to the group structure.

6 Conditions for participation

- 6.1 The certification body shall hold a valid accreditation by Accreditation Services International for FSC forest management evaluations.
- 6.2 Prior to starting the pilot test, participating certification bodies and the participating groups shall sign an agreement which includes the following provisions:
- 6.2.1 Participants agree to abide by this Standard Operating Procedure and its Annexes;
- 6.2.2 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 pilot tests as observers.
- 6.2.3 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 standards, as well as details about the ease or difficulty of implementation. This report shall be publicly available, excluding confidential information.
- 6.2.4 There is no guarantee that participation in the pilot test shall result in the issue of a pilot test certificate (see Section 5). 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.

Part II – Procedures for forest management groups

7 Conditions for participation

- 7.1 Any participating group shall hold a valid FSC certificate for forest management.
- 7.2 Any participating management unit shall be under the approved size threshold according to FSC-STD-01-003 *SLIMF Eligibility Criteria*.
- 7.3 Prior to starting the pilot test, the participating group shall:

- 7.3.1 Sign a pilot test agreement with their CB which includes the provisions stated in Clause 6.2;
 - 7.3.2 Assess the pilot participating forestry contractors for their inclusion in the group and the certificate scope (Clause 8.1).
- 7.4 The participating group shall develop a specific pilot test internal procedure, considering the following:
- 7.4.1 Regulate the group members' participation in the pilot test;
Note: the decision of including new members to the participating groups may take place throughout the duration of the pilot test.
 - 7.4.2 Designate the division of responsibilities within the group.
 - 7.4.3 Specify the training protocol used to train the forestry contractors for ensuring sufficient knowledge over the applicable FSC standard requirements.
Note: The pilot test internal procedure can be an adjustment of the normal internal procedure the certificate holder has for administrating the group scheme.
- 7.5 The participating group shall send feedback to the Performance and Standards Unit by filling in the template provided in Annex 4 - *Template for Certificate holder report for Type III group model pilot test* to the Performance and Standards Unit 12 months after the inclusion of the pilot test participants in the scope of the certificate.

Part III – Procedures for forestry contractors

8 Conditions for participation

- 8.1 Forestry contractors who wish to participate in the pilot test and become group members shall, prior to being accepted as a group member:
- a) have a previous working relationship over a period of at least 2 years with some members of the participating group they intend to join;
 - b) not have contributed in any outstanding major non-conformities as a result of their cooperation with the members of the group;
 - c) demonstrate sufficient knowledge over the **applicable** FSC standard requirements as per the training protocol described in Clause 7.4.3.
- 8.2 The forestry contractor shall assume the delegation of the responsibility of complying with the applicable FSC requirements by signing an agreement with the group entity with the following specifications:
- 8.2.1 The forestry contractor shall commit to comply with all the FSC requirements that are applicable to the group entity and which, by extension, are also applicable to the forestry contractor;
 - 8.2.2 Any legal requirements applicable to the group entity shall also be applicable, and complied with, by the forestry contractor;
 - 8.2.3 Any dispute between the group entity, the resource manager, a group member, a forestry contractor or a stakeholder should be addressed at the lowest level possible. In order this would be:

- a) Within the group;
- b) With the certification body, in an informal way first, and otherwise using the certification body's formal dispute resolution process;
- c) With FSC, through its formal [dispute resolution process](#).

Annex 1: FSC-STD-30-005 with Type III group model additions.

FSC-STD-30-005 *FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups* with added suggestions for pilot testing a Type III group model for group certification.

(Included as Annex 2 of this pilot proposal)

Annex 2: FSC-STD-20-007 with Type III group model additions.

FSC-STD-20-007 *Forest Management Evaluations* with added suggestions for pilot testing a Type III group model for group certification.

(Included as Annex 3 of this pilot proposal)

Annex 3: Template for certification body report.

Template for Certification body report for Type III group model pilot test.

Introduction

This report is designed to collect information about the Type III group model pilot test. It is a mandatory requirement and has to be filled in by the participating certification body, and sent to the Performance and Standards Unit.

This report will be used for several purposes:

- To provide an evaluation of conformance of the participating group with the requirements included in:
 - o FSC-STD-30-005 *FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups* with added suggestions for pilot testing a Type III group model for group certification (Annex 1).
 - o FSC-STD-20-007 *Forest Management Evaluations* with added suggestions for pilot testing a Type III group model for group certification.
 - o The applicable national forest stewardship standard.
- This report will be also used to:
 - o Provide recommendations to the Performance and Standards Unit for the improvement of the draft standards being pilot tested, and the suggested Type III model group;
 - o Provide input on the benefits of the Type III model, particularly for smallholders;
 - o Provide input for the upcoming revisions of standards FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007;

This report is divided in three sections:

- I. General information about the certification body and general characteristics of the group being evaluated.
- II. Evaluation of conformity of the participating group with the Type III group model requirements.
- III. Feedback about the suggested Type III group model.

Report Template

Part I – General Information

1	Certification body	<i>Please include here the name of the certification body, lead auditor and audit team.</i>
2	Location of the group certificate	<i>Please include here the Country, Province, City and District where the group entity is located.</i>
3	Type of evaluation	<p><i>Please select the evaluation carried out:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Main evaluation and Type III group model requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Surveillance audit and Type III group model requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Only Type III group model requirements</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify)</p>
4	Characteristics of the FSC certificate	<p><i>Please include here the following information:</i></p> <p>Number of members: []</p> <p>Number of SLIMF members: []</p> <p>Area (in hectares): []</p> <p>Area of SLIMF management units: []</p> <p>FSC Certificate Code: []</p> <p>First Issue Date: []</p> <p>Last Issue Date: []</p> <p>Expiry Date: []</p>

Part II - Evaluation of conformity with the Type III group model requirements.

1. Evaluation of conformity with the Type III group model requirements
<p><i>Describe how the group conforms with the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>The applicable national forest stewardship standard;</i> 2) <i>FSC-STD-30-005 with the suggested additions as shown in Annex 1 of this Standard Operating Procedure;</i> 3) <i>FSC-STD-20-007 with the suggested additions as shown in Annex 2 of this Standard Operating Procedure.</i> <p><i>The certification body can provide a detailed checklist of conformity for each requirement on a separate document as an annex.</i></p>

Please, indicate any non-conformities identified during the evaluation.

2. Decision on the FSC-endorsed certificates for Type III groups

The certification body shall state whether the group has complied with all the applicable requirements, and the decision to approve or reject the issuance of an FSC-endorsed certificate to the participating group.

The decision shall specify the duration of the FSC-endorsed certificate, the specific group members included in the certificate, and a brief justification for the decision.

3. Recommendations for further work to be carried out by the group

Please describe any actions that should be carried out by the group to improve its performance regarding the requirements evaluated.

Part III - Recommendations for the FSC Performance and Standards Unit.

1. Requirements included in FSC-STD-30-005

Provide your assessment about the clarity of the requirements: is the language clear?

Provide your assessment about the feasibility of the requirements: are they feasible to implement?

Provide your assessment about the auditability of the requirements: it is clear how to define conformity/non-conformity?

Do you agree the Type III group model should be included in a next revision of standard FSC-STD-30-005?

2. Requirements included in FSC-STD-20-007

Provide your assessment about the clarity of the requirements: is the language clear?

Provide your assessment about the feasibility of the requirements: are they feasible to implement?

Provide your assessment about the auditability of the requirements: it is clear how to define conformity/non-conformity?

Do you agree the Type III group model requirements should be included in a next revision of standard FSC-STD-20-007?

3. Benefits/constrains of the Type III group model

Do you think the Type III group model can bring benefits to group certificates? If so, which benefits?

Do you think it should only be available for SLIMF groups?

Do you think the Type III group model can bring any potential conflicts or problems to FSC certification?

4. Time invested in the pilot test

Please, indicate the number of man/days invested to prepare for and implement this pilot test:

- *Read and understand the pilot test documents: #days: #persons:*
- *Read the documentation from the group (changes to the group share of responsibilities, group requirements, group structure, etc.): #days: #persons:*
- *Participate in the evaluation: #days: #persons:*
- *Evaluation report and pilot test report development: #days: #persons:*

5. Impact on costs of the evaluation

Please indicate whether the suggested Type III group model or the version of the national standard used have an impact on the cost of the evaluation.

Please, describe in terms of man/days whether there has been any change in the number of days needed to implement the evaluation, and if additional time was needed what was it devoted for.

Please, describe if any specific knowledge was needed by the audit team.

6. Phase 2 of the pilot test

If you were to participate in the phase 2 of the pilot test (additional 12 months), would you change the scope of the pilot test to better provide input to the revision of standards FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007?

7. Other suggestions and observations

Please provide any other suggestions or observations that you may have to improve the suggested Type III group model, or to better incorporate it into the FSC system.

Annex 4: Template for certificate holder report.

Template for Certificate holder report for Type III group model pilot test.

Introduction

This report is designed to collect information about the Type III group model pilot test. It is a mandatory requirement and has to be filled in by the participating groups, and sent to the Performance and Standards Unit.

This report will be used for several purposes:

- Provide input on the benefits of the Type III model, particularly for smallholders;
- Provide input for the upcoming revisions of standards FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007;

This report is divided in two sections:

- I. **General information** about the participating group and the management units and members where the pilot tests will be implemented.
- II. **Recommendations for the Performance and Standards Unit.** Feedback about the suggested Type III group model. An estimation of the time and cost associated to the pilot test.

Report Template

Part I – General Information

1	Group entity	<i>Please include here the name of the group entity, its legal representative, an e-mail and a telephone number for contact.</i>
2	Location of the group entity and the participating members.	<i>Please include here the Country, Province, City and District (if applicable) where the group entity is located. Please, also indicate the location of the group members and management units participating in the pilot test.</i>
3	Type of evaluation	<i>Please select the evaluation carried out:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Main evaluation and Type III group model requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Surveillance audit and Type III group model requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Only Type III group model requirements <input type="checkbox"/> Others (specify)
4	Characteristics of the FSC certificate	<i>Please include here the following information:</i> Number of members: [] Number of SLIMF members: [] Area (in hectares): [] Area of SLIMF management units: [] FSC Certificate Code: [] First Issue Date: [] Last Issue Date: [] Expiry Date: []

Part II - Recommendations for the FSC Performance and Standards Unit.

1. Requirements included in FSC-STD-30-005
<i>Provide your opinion about the clarity of the requirements: is the language clear?</i>
<i>Provide your opinion about the feasibility of the requirements: are they feasible/easy to implement?</i>
<i>Do you agree the Type III group model should be included in a next revision of standard FSC-STD-30-005?</i>

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2. Benefits/constrains of the Type III group model

Do you think the Type III group model can bring benefits to group certificates? If so, which benefits?

Do you think the Type III group model can help you increase the size and number of members of your group?

Did it increase or reduce the time you devote to FSC certification?

Do you think it should only be available for SLIMF groups?

Do you think the Type III group model can bring any potential conflicts or problems to FSC certification?

3. Time invested in the pilot test

Please, indicate the number of man/days invested to prepare for and implement this pilot test:

- *Read and understand the pilot test documents: #days: #persons:*
- *Implementation of the pilot test requirements (changes to the group share of responsibilities, group requirements, group structure, etc.): #days: #persons:*
- *Participate in the evaluation: #days: #persons:*
- *Post-evaluation activities (filling in FSC pilot report, solve non-conformities and observations, etc.): #days: #persons:*

4. Impact on costs of the operations

Please indicate whether the suggested Type III group model has an impact on the cost of the operations.

Please, describe in terms of man/days whether you had to hire technical consultants or external experts, whether you had additional evaluation costs, additional travel costs or any other cost related to the implementation of the pilot test.

5. Phase 2 of the pilot test

If you were to participate in the phase 2 of the pilot test (additional 12 months), would you change the scope of the pilot test to better provide input to the revision of standards FSC-STD-30-005 and FSC-STD-20-007?

6. Other suggestions and observations

Please provide any other suggestions or observations that you may have to improve the suggested Type III group model, or to better incorporate it into the FSC system.



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