



Standard Operating Procedure to develop and trial ‘continuous improvement’

Foreword

FSC’s General Assembly in 2017 passed motion GA2017/46 that urges FSC New Approaches program to develop new solutions that are needed to significantly advance the ability of smallholders and communities to access, maintain and capture the benefits of FSC certification. One of the main actions recommended by the motion was to conduct a number of trial or pilot projects in selected countries, to assess the feasibility of different approaches. This recommendation is one of the triggers for the New Approaches to constitute a Working Group (WG) to develop and trial ‘continuous improvement’ in three countries in East Africa.

This Standard Operating Procedure outlines the roles, responsibilities and operational requirements for the WG on ‘continuous improvement’ development and trailing.

The Standard Operating Procedure contains three different elements:

- 1) Basic principles for the development and trialing of Continuous Improvement approach.
- 2) Working Group tasks and responsibilities, including information about drafting ‘continuous improvement’ framework
- 3) Guidance to final report preparation and submission

The expected outputs of the WG are:

- i. To recommend to the FSC, how ‘continuous improvement’ can be integrated and implemented within the FSC system based on the outputs and learnings and generated from this trial phase.
- ii. Provide a definition of smallholders based on the information collected
- iii. Provide information to any on-going processes for the National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS).
- iv. Inform revision process of FSC-STD-20-007 (V3-0)EN *FSC Standard for Forest Management Evaluations*.
- v. Inform the revision process of FSC-STD-30-005 (V 1-0) EN *Standard for group Entities in Forest Management Groups FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups*.

Tale of Contents

FOREWORD	1
A. OBJECTIVE	3
B. SCOPE	3
I. CONTEXT AND CONTENT.....	3
II. GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE.....	3
C. REFERENCES.....	3
D. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS	4
1.0. BASIC PRINCIPLES	4
2.0. EXPECTED OUTCOME	4
3.0. DRAFTING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK	4
• REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT DATA AND/ OR AVAILABLE INFORMATION.....	5
• VIRTUAL AND FACE TO FACE MEETINGS.....	6
4. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TRIALS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES	6
5. FINAL REPORT	6

A. Objective

The objective of this Standard Operating Procedure is to describe assigned tasks for the Working Group and to provide guidance and/or steps the group members will undertake to accomplish the respective tasks and provide information that will feed into the final report with recommendations to the FSC on how to integrate and implement 'continuous improvement' in the system.

B. Scope

i. Context and Content

This Standard Operating Procedure is not Normative. It is mainly developed for guidance to the Technical Working Group members during the development and trialling of 'continuous improvement'. Every member of the WG shall implement assigned tasks and/or requirements individually or as a group, based on the guidance provided in this Standard Operating Procedure and as illustrated in the Terms of Reference. The content generated as findings and learnings will be consolidated into a final report with recommendations that will be submitted to PSU, PSC and BoD for decision making.

ii. Geographical Scope

'continuous improvement' is intended for smallholders in all geographies where FSC operates e.g. similar initiatives and activities are ongoing in Latin America, and Asia Pacific. New Approaches project team will consolidate and process all the learnings and recommendations from the different regions for further consideration.

For purposes of this trial phase of 'continuous improvement' in Africa, three East Africa countries namely; Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya have been considered. The Technical Working Group will undertake on- the ground trial activities including but not limited to consultations, review of relevant country based information and any available data and desk research.

C. References

It is expected that the Working Group members have sufficient knowledge about the significance and implementation of relevant FSC standards e.g.

- *FSC-STD-01-001 (V4-0) FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship*. The fact that some countries have not transferred their standard to the version 5 of the P&C, *this document is relevant*; *FSC-STD-01-001 (V-5-2) FSC Principles and Criteria*, *FSC-STD-20-007 (V3-0)EN FSC Standard for Forest Management Evaluations*,

(FSC-STD-30-005 (V 1-0)EN *Standard for group Entities in Forest Management Groups*, FSC-STD-30-005 (V 1-1)EN *Standard for group Entities in Forest Management Groups*, and FSC-GUI-60-002 (V1-0) *Guideline for Standard Developers for addressing risk of unacceptable activities in regard to scale and intensity* among others, as well as Relevant National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS)

D. Terms and Definitions

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* apply.

1.0. Basic Principles

- a. Development and trialing 'continuous improvement' shall not be implemented in a way that would imply FSC certified status to any organization or operation during or after the trial period.
- b. Developing and trialing 'continuous improvement' shall not be associated to FSC endorsing any external certification scheme.
- c. Developing and trialing 'continuous improvement' shall apply various methods such as; desk research, consultations with various stakeholders including existing and potential certificate holders but this shall in no way interfere with the normal certification process, with in the countries selected for the field tests.

2.0. Expected outcome

The Technical Working Group is assigned to develop and trial Continuous Improvement approach. The findings and learnings generated during the trial period shall be compiled into a final report with recommendations to the FSC on how 'continuous improvement' can be integrated and implemented within the FSC system.

3.0. Drafting Continuous Improvement framework

- i. The Technical Working Group shall draft the 'continuous improvement' framework consisting of a list of i) Critical Criteria and ii) Continuous Improvement Criteria respectively. The Technical Working Group shall further categorize Continuous Improvement criteria into levels C and B respectively based on the information from the review of relevant FSC Normative Standards, other standards outside of the FSC system that are using Continuous Improvement Approach, and other related information available. The group is expected to discuss and agree by consensus on each category of the criteria developed and their implication to implementation of forest management on the ground.

- ii. Upon generation of the list of Critical and continuous improvement Criteria, with the respective levels, the Technical Working Group shall then assign realistic minimum years for compliance to the continuous improvement criteria levels. To accomplish this task, the Technical Working Group will be guided by the current FSC system where re-evaluation of the certificate is done every five years. The WG will also review and consider proposals suggested by the public consultation on the Stepwise Approaches discussion paper undertaken in November- December 2017.
- iii. The working Group shall also develop and make a set of performance rules for critical criteria and each category of continuous improvement criteria.
- iv. The WG shall identify and propose to FSC, key areas that can be further developed to incentivize users of the 'continuous improvement' e.g. areas of cost reduction and increased benefits.

Note: During the development and trailing of Continuous Improvement Approach, the Technical Working Group shall endeavor where possible to align with the Risk Based Approach - ADAM concept being developed by the FSC's priority project 6&7. Any current information available on this concept will be availed to the Working Group.

To accomplish the task described in 3.0 above, a number of activities are envisaged to be undertaken by the Technical Working group namely;

- **Review and analysis of relevant data and/ or available information**

The Technical Working Group members shall individually or as a group, review and analyze all information and/or data sources availed to them and/or known by them based on their individual expertise in the group. Some of the information sources include but not limited to; FSC normative standards, including National Stewardship Standards, procedures and guidance documents, research papers and discussion papers and findings from the community certification tool. Other possible sources are; standards and documents of other certification schemes outside of FSC system.

As specified in the ToR, the WG shall seek advice from the Technical Advisors when required, throughout out the trial process. The Technical advisors may be called upon to participate in specific Virtual or face to face meetings, for their input/advice.

The WG shall also further analyze and make use of feedback received from the public consultation on Stepwise Approaches discussion paper conducted in November-December 2017.

In addition, the Consultative Forum shall be kept up to date on proceedings of the process and allowed to comment on the drafts developed by the WG.

- **Virtual and face to face meetings**

The WG shall hold atleast four (04) virtual meetings to discuss and agree on the structure of the draft Continuous Improvement framework, and consolidate all the collected information into one document. Atleast one (01) face to face meeting shall be conducted to finalize the drafting of the 'continuous improvement' framework and sign it off for field test on the ground in the selected countries.

4. Continuous Improvement field test in selected Countries

The WG shall conduct atleast one face to face engagement in each country where field testing has been planned. The National Stewardship Standards (NFSS) for Uganda and Tanzania, will be key reference documents during the field test process.

Consultations with the respective Standard Development Groups (SDGs) will further inform the WG's recommendations on how 'continuous improvement'. Where no national standard exists, e.g. in Kenya, the WG shall use a combination of references e.g. FSC-STD-60-004 (V1-0) EN *International Generic Indicators*, the National standards for Uganda and Tanzania and the existing CB interim Standard.

Note: It is expected that the WG will collect substantial information from each country to define smallholders either at country level and/or sub regional level. The definition will feed into the New Approaches global perspective of what smallholders are within the FSC system.

5. Final report

The WG shall provide a final report with recommendations to FSC on how 'continuous improvement' can be integrated and implemented in the FSC certification system. The WG shall participate in drafting of the final report and shall provide comments/edits to the final version before submission to the Policy and Performance Unit (PSU), Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) and to the FSC Board of Directors (BoD) for decision making.

6. Time lines

The anticipated timelines can be found as an Annex 4.2 to the Terms of Reference