



Focus Forests

The Focus Forests project aims to find solutions for stewardship in forests with special social and environmental values. Through this project, FSC will look for ways to address biodiversity loss and climate change, while continuing to enable the provision of responsibly produced goods and services from leading forest management practices. We anticipate that the project will facilitate a process to help understand whether and how certification inside Focus Forests can be reconciled with FSC's commitments to combat climate change and conserve and restore forest biodiversity.

What does the term 'Focus Forests' mean?

'Focus Forests' are important forests with significant social and ecological values. These include Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) but can also be found under names such as primary forests, old growth forests, Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, ancient and endangered forests, forest biodiversity hotspots and other names, depending on their geography.

Why is FSC working on this?

In line with the FSC Global Strategy 2021 – 2026, the Focus Forests project is looking to enable constructive discussions with land users, local and indigenous communities, NGOs, government representatives, business, and others – including FSC stakeholders and members from all chambers on how to consider a range of socially and environmentally important forest landscapes, inside and outside of certified forest management units, in FSC's strategies and standards.

Based on recent research, some FSC members argue that much more of the environmentally and socially valuable forests need to be fully protected, and that these forests should not be certified for production. Other members argue that responsible use of forests is necessary to protect them against illegal activity and conversion.

This disagreement has become quite clear in the discussion around FSC's efforts to protect Intact Forest Landscapes (as required by Motion 65 from 2014) as well as through several motions that have been proposed for the upcoming 2021-2022 General Assembly in relation to this topic. The Focus Forests project aims to host constructive dialogue to discuss this further and agree upon an approach for FSC.

Who is involved in this project?

FSC selected a consortium of researchers lead by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), composed of ten researchers from different organisations and geographical origin and with extensive experience in tropical and boreal forests, forest management and restoration, remote sensing, sociology and dialogue methodologies.

How will FSC do this work?

Phase 1 (January-April 2021)

The research team will work to develop a common framework for discussion with an agreed set of values and definitions:

1. **Finding a common framework of values**, maps and definitions to base the discussion on, asking FSC's members to contribute articles, definitions and maps they wish to be considered.
2. **Publishing a 'green paper'** which will encapsulate the researchers' work and provide a basis for discussion with members in online discussion sessions.
3. **Developing a methodology** for landscape-level discussion and agreement, based on behavioral economic theory and 'game' theory and involving stakeholders in the landscape.

Phase 2 (April-October 2021)

FSC will use the researchers' work as a basis for bringing together land users, local and indigenous communities, NGOs, government representatives, business, and others - including FSC members from all chambers - to listen to each other and identify where in the landscape different uses including conservation, ecosystem services, extraction and restoration could best be developed and what roles FSC and FSC certification could play in the landscape. We will do this by:

1. **Testing the methodology** in a tropical and a boreal landscape by developing and agreeing plans for landscape use in specific landscapes.
2. Identifying the **value proposition** for each of these groups.
3. **Evaluating** the experiences with these 2 dialogues, and identifying lessons learned
4. **Presenting results** of Phase I and Phase II at FSC's General Assembly 2021 - 2022 and to make decisions on how FSC shall approach Focus Forests in the future.

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