



FOCUS FORESTS FACTSHEET

Focus Forests Project

The Focus Forests project aims to find solutions for stewardship in forests that have special social and environmental values. In the Focus Forests project, FSC explores 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.

A definition of 'Focus Forests'

'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.

Focus Forests Project Purpose

The Focus Forests project aims 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.

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 is 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 proposed for the 2021-2022 General Assembly. The Focus Forests project aims to host constructive dialogue to discuss this further and agree upon an approach for FSC. FSC intends to discuss outcomes of the exploration and a way forward for Focus Forests around the world in the upcoming FSC General Assembly in October 2022.

Focus Forests Project Team

FSC has selected a consortium of 10 researchers led by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), from different organizations and geographies with extensive experience in tropical and boreal forests, forest management and restoration, remote sensing, sociology, and dialogue methodologies. There is also a steering group made up of an FSC Board member, senior FSC International staff and the lead researcher. The FSC International Board Strategic Planning Committee is also engaged regularly in discussions about the project.

Focus Forests Project Phases

Phase 1:

In phase 1 the research team developed a common framework for discussion with an agreed set of values and definitions:

1. The framework of values, maps and definitions will be used to base the discussions on, asking FSC's members to contribute articles, definitions and maps they wish to be considered.
2. Publishing of a '[Green paper](#)' which encapsulates the researchers' work and provides 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:

During phase 2, FSC will host dialogues that bring 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 different uses including conservation, ecosystem services, extraction and restoration could best be developed in the landscape and the roles FSC and FSC certification could play.

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 two dialogues, and identifying lessons learned.
4. Presenting results of Phase I and Phase II at FSC's General Assembly 2022 to make decisions on how FSC shall approach Focus Forests in the future.

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