



# Forest Certification Comparison

**APRIL 2021**



# Canopy's approach to conserving the world's forests

Canopy works with marketplace partners to support conservation of the world's Ancient and Endangered Forests. Ancient and Endangered Forests are defined as being of the highest ecological value, forests containing high biodiversity and carbon stores, old-growth forests, and habitat for species at risk. As you know, Canopy supports the scientific communities' call for 30-50% of the world's forest to be protected in order to prevent further climate change and to reverse the current mass extinction of wildlife. To achieve this, Canopy and our partners seek to eliminate sourcing from all Ancient and Endangered Forests unless robust land-use planning is in place, adhering to scientific conservation targets for sustaining nature, and consistent with the rights and aspirations of indigenous and local communities.

Canopy advocates the increased use of recycled fibres, as well as Next Generation Fibre solutions such as agricultural waste and recycled textiles, in order to reduce pressure on forests. At this time, forest certification – because of its voluntary nature and focus on forest management at the tenure or concession level – is largely unable to achieve the level or certainty of Ancient and Endangered Forest conservation the planet requires. However, when it embeds key ecological and social criteria, forest certification can play an important role in ensuring that forests and plantations that are appropriate for logging (outside of Ancient and Endangered Forests) are logged and managed in a responsible way.

It is imperative that biodiversity be protected in all forests, included those used for timber extraction, and that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are supported. For this reason, where virgin wood inputs are required, Canopy strongly encourages the use of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood products – and especially those that come directly from FSC forest management with the FSC 100% claim – to encourage the responsible management of forests. Canopy does not encourage the use of products that are certified by systems other than FSC. That said, Canopy is not a member of any certification system and we engage and encourage all certification systems to improve.

# 2

## Priority issues by region (Forest management certification)



The table below outlines some issues that Canopy considers high priority in the context of our current climate and biodiversity crisis – maintaining natural forests is a critical component of preventing further biodiversity loss as well as keeping climate change below

2 degrees. The table compares the requirements of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in countries that are important sources of both dissolving and paper pulp, against schemes under the umbrella of the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

	FSC Indonesia	Indonesian Forestry Certification Cooperation (PEFC)	FSC Canada	FSC US	Sustainable Forestry Initiative (PEFC) — Canada and US	FSC Russia	PEFC Russia	FSC Brazil	Brazilian Forest Certification Program (CERFLOR — PEFC)
High Conservation Value (HCV) plan must be effective/use pre-cautionary approach	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Avoiding recent deforestation with 1994 conversion cut-off date	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	Does not refer to FPIC, but agreements with Indigenous communities are required	Refers to FPIC once but no indicators outlining requirements	✓	✗
Requires conservation of regionally identified species-at-risk*	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗

\* based on national standards requirements

# 2

## Priority issues by region (continued)

### High Conservation Values:

Many social and environmental stakeholders look to FSC because of its use of the High Conservation Value (HCV) concept, which is integrated throughout FSC's Forest Stewardship standards. The HCV concept was developed by FSC and other experts to ensure that ecological and cultural values of forests are conserved. HCVs include: species-at-risk, rare forest types, ecological services, and social and cultural sites. PEFC and its endorsed schemes do not use the HCV concept, (except in Indonesia where HCV assessments are not required to secure certification, but only recommended), but rather the more general concept of "ecologically important forest areas." The HCV concept is recognized by scientists, academic, and conservation groups as a robust system for identifying and maintaining ecological and cultural values.

FSC requires organizations to consult stakeholders on their HCV assessments and management plans, so that knowledgeable experts, as well as those who live in and near the forest, have input into the process. PEFC does not require stakeholder consultation for "ecologically important forest areas", nor the use of the precautionary approach when managing them.<sup>1</sup>

An additional issue worth noting is that FSC currently has provisions in place to protect Intact Forest Landscapes (a category of HCV), which are the world's largest remaining areas of original forest that have not yet been disturbed by industrial development. Less than 20% of these original forests remain globally. FSC currently has an interim global requirement for the protection of over 50% of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) within each forest concession until national rules are developed. The PEFC system does not recognize IFLs as a value requiring conservation.

### Deforestation – 1994 cut-off date for plantations:

The 1994 cut-off date was established by FSC when it was first created in an effort to prevent the certification of any new areas that were recently deforested. FSC prevents any lands from becoming certified if they are the result of natural forests being converted after 1994. PEFC allows the certification of converted lands, created as result of deforestation, as late as 2010. This means that many companies with a long legacy – and very recent history – of deforestation can be and are certified to PEFC.

### Requirements for Free, Prior, and Informed Consent:

FSC was one of the very first forest organizations to champion Indigenous rights, and has requirements and detailed implementation indicators to ensure that the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous peoples is upheld. FPIC is an essential right according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. While some PEFC-endorsed schemes include FPIC as a requirement, it is not systematically applied globally.

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<sup>1</sup> The precautionary approach requires "effective measures to prevent the damage and avoid the risks to welfare, even when the scientific information is incomplete or inconclusive, and when the vulnerability and sensitivity of environmental values are uncertain." (*FSC Principles and Criteria*)

# 3

## Global policy differences between FSC and PEFC

As well as the regional differences highlighted in the table above, there are some basic differences in how the FSC and PEFC function at a global policy level.

The table below looks at whether detailed policies and procedures are in place to address some issues important for credible certification, such as an approach to companies engaged in controversial activities, consultation requirements, and transparency around how violations/non-conformances are addressed.

	FSC	PEFC
Policy for Association (controversial companies can be disassociated)	✓	✗
Standards in Place for Consultation	✓	✗
Public policy on consequences of certification audits with non-conformance findings	✓	✗

### Keeping controversial companies out of the system:

FSC has a Policy for Association which prohibits companies from becoming members of FSC or achieving FSC certification if they conduct controversial activities<sup>1</sup>, including on lands outside those certified.

PEFC and its nationally endorsed schemes do not restrict membership and certification of companies that commit controversial activities, including those outside certified lands.

### Standards which outline consultation requirements:

Stakeholder consultation is one of the cornerstones of any robust forest certification system, as it requires auditors to seek input from those both directly and indirectly impacted by forestry operations. FSC governs stakeholder consultation, and outlines required processes and timelines. While most PEFC-endorsed national schemes require consultation during audits, there are no specific guidelines that auditors must follow to ensure stakeholder consultation is undertaken with integrity, rigor or in culturally appropriate ways.

### Consequences of repeated violations of standards:

Another important issue is transparency regarding consequences for a certified company violating the standard's requirements. For FSC, any company that has five or more major non-conformances (systemic problems) cannot be certified or retain certification. Minor non-conformances are elevated to major non-conformances if they are not rectified within 12 months. Unfortunately, while PEFC requires that an action plan be developed to address non-conformances, it does not publicly disclose any threshold for suspending a certificate.

Information is not available on how many certificates have been suspended based on non-conformances in the either PEFC or FSC systems. However, for Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) – the PEFC of North America – a certificate was never suspended in the certifications 25-years of operation.<sup>2</sup> FSC certificates have been suspended on the same lands where SFI certificates remained in place.

<sup>1</sup> Unacceptable activities include: deforestation; destruction of high conservation values, use of GMOs, illegal logging, violation of human and traditional rights, violation of workers' rights. See <https://fsc.org/en/unacceptable-activities/investigations>

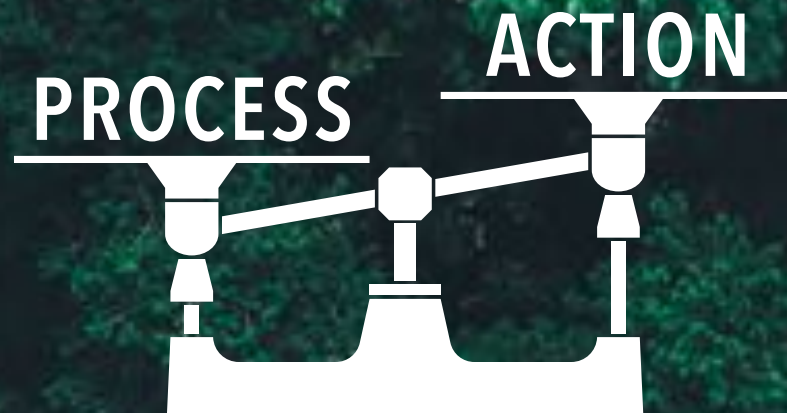
<sup>2</sup> According to a presentation SFI's, Vice President of Conservation, Indigenous and Government Relations at a presentation to the National Aboriginal Forestry Initiative on April 12, 2016

# 4

## Process versus outcome-oriented requirements

A paper published in 2020 compared four PEFC-endorsed schemes against the FSC US standard. It found that FSC was generally more rigorous, and required more “specific impact thresholds” than the PEFC schemes. While FSC is more likely to require field data, the PEFC schemes tended to be more “procedural” in

their requirements, with a focus on process and existing legal frameworks, as opposed to additional and measurable outcomes in the forest. (Garzon et. al., A Comparative Analysis of Five Forest Certification Programs, MDPI – Forests, August 2020)



# 5

## Why Canopy recommends a preference for FSC

No forest certification system is perfect, in part because the focus on management of forests at the concession or tenure level, cannot achieve the scale conservation for Ancient and Endangered Forests currently advocated by scientists. However, certification has a significant role to play once we've first determined what to conserve as it defines how to harvest sustainably. FSC is by no means perfect, and Canopy actively advocates both FSC and PEFC for improvements that will lead to more ecological certainty on the ground. Because of the issues outlined above, Canopy believes that FSC is the one forest certification system with requirements robust enough to ensure both social and ecological values are maintained in forests appropriate for management and timber extraction (outside of Ancient and Endangered Forests).

Where virgin wood inputs are required, Canopy recommends that all its partners adopt an FSC preference and work to increase their use of FSC fibres, with an emphasis on claims that provide clarity down to FSC certification of the forest management unit (FSC 100%). This of course, remains the last line of action in sourcing decisions, after prioritizing efficiencies and reduction, recycled, and Next Generation alternatives, and avoiding risk of sourcing from Ancient and Endangered Forests through tools like the EcoPaper Database and Hot Button Report.

## References

### **FSC standards and policies:**

[FSC-STD-CAN-01-2018 EN V1 –T FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard of Canada](#)

[FSC-STD-IDN-01-01-2013 – FSC Forest Stewardship Standard for the Republic of Indonesia](#)

[FSC-STD-IDN-02.1-2020 – FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard of Indonesia](#)

[FSC-STD-RUS-06-01-2012 – FSC Forest Stewardship Standard for the Russian Federation](#)

[FSC-STD-USA-1.1-2018 – FSC Forest Stewardship Standard for the United States of America](#)

[FSC-STD-BRA-01-01-2014 – Harmonised Certification Bodies' Forest Stewardship Plantation Standard for the Federal Republic of Brazil](#)

[FSC-STD-BRA-01-2001 V1-1 – FSC Standard for Forest Management on "Terra Firme" in the Brazilian Amazon](#)

[FSC-STD-40-004 V3-0 – FSC Chain of Custody Certification Standard](#)

[FSC-STD-40-005 V3-1 – Requirements for Sourcing FSC Controlled Wood](#)

[FSC-STD-20-001 V2 – General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies](#)

[FSC-STD-20-007 – FSC Forest Management Evaluations](#)

[FSC-STD-20-011 – FSC Chain of Custody Evaluations](#)

[General Requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies \(20-001\)](#)

[ASI-PRO-20-105-Procedure on Surveillance & Sampling ASI-PRO-20-105-Surveillance & Sampling-v6.4](#)

[FSC-PRO-01-001 Development and Revision of FSC Normative Documents](#)

[FSC-ADVICE-20-007-018 V1-0 – Advice Note for the interpretation of the default clause of Motion 65](#)

[FSC-POL-01-004 – Policy for the Association of Organizations with FSC](#)

### **PEFC standards and policies:**

[PEFC ST 1003: 2018 Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements](#)

[PEFC ST 2002: 2013 Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements](#)

[PEFC IFCC ST 1001 Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements](#)

[PEFC ST 1001: 2017 Standard Setting – Requirements](#)

[PEFC RUSSIA STO12015 PEFC RUSSIA Forest Certification System](#)

[CERFLOR ABNT NBR 15789 Forest Management – Principles, criteria, and indicators for native forests](#)

[CERFLOR ABNT NBR 14789 Forest management – Principles, criteria and indicators for planted forests](#)

[SFI 2015 – 2019 FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD](#)

[SFI STANDARDS AND RULES](#)

[PEFC ST 1002: 2018 Group Forest Management – Requirements](#)

[PEFC Certification and Accreditation Procedures 5 October 2007](#)

[ASB\\_POV\\_ASB-Program-Overview \\_v9\\_2019-11-01 Accreditation Program Overview](#)

[SFI External Review Panel Charter Adopted June 7, 2007](#)

[Public inquiries and official complaints – January 2015](#)

### **Other sources:**

[Garzon et. al., A Comparative Analysis of Five Forest Certification Programs, MDPI – Forests, August 2020](#)

[ISEAL Alliance](#)