

Consultative meeting on
Forest Certification in India

Introduction

Forest certification is a mechanism for forest monitoring, tracing and labeling timber, wood and pulp products and non-timber forest products where the quality of management from environmental, social and economic perspectives is judged against a series of agreed standards. It is a process that leads to the issuing of a certificate by an independent party, which verifies that an area of forest is managed to a defined standard.

Forest certification refers to two separate processes viz., forest management unit certification (FMU) and chain of custody certification (COC). Forest management certification is a process which verifies that an area of forest /plantations from where the wood, fiber and other non-timber forest products is extracted is managed to a defined standard. COC certification is a process of tracking forest products from the certified forest to the point of sale to ensure that product originated from a certified forest.

For buyers of forest products, the responsible sourcing is their adoption of policies and practices that reward suppliers using wood, fiber and other non wood forest products from well-managed forests or from recycled products and discouraging suppliers using it from unknown, illegal or otherwise controversial sources. There are several certification schemes in operation of which Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification is one of the most popular and credible certification schemes globally.

In order to meet the growing demand for forest certification in the global market, the Indian industry has to look for certified forests/plantations to source their raw materials.

The increased demand for forest certification is likely to affect the economic prospects of many farm forestry/agro-forestry areas in India unless these areas are certified. The Ministry of Environment and Forest recognized the need to promote forest certification in the country and recently constituted a committee to develop a national forest certification system. The success of such a system largely depends on its credibility at both local and global contexts.

India has established a strong policy and legal framework for forest conservation. The scientific management of forestry in India dates back to 1864. The forest management working plans in India follow several principles and criteria which are in line with best practices.

However, forest certification in India is still at an early stage and therefore the nation has not been able to make use of the benefits of forest certification. So far, India has secured one FSC Forest Management Unit Certificate (644 ha of rubber plantations in Tamil Nadu State) and a few COCs mainly by small and medium companies to meet export demand. But the situation is likely to change due to the increased demand for forest certification in the global market and the high growth of the Indian economy. The impact of such demand on forest based industries and growers, particularly those of small and medium scale in India will be severe unless they secure forest certification. To address this situation, there is a need to ensure adequate FMU certifications in the country.

The export promotion council of handicrafts (EPCH) set up by the Ministry of Textiles is concerned about the adverse effects of increased demand for forest certification on export prospects of Indian wooden handicrafts industry and initiated several approaches to promote forest certification.



In order to promote forest certification, WWF advocates a “step wise approach” and has developed suitable methods and tool kits which can be used by the forest and plantation managers and traders.

Objectives

The objectives of the consultative meeting are to:

- ◆ Understand the scope for and limitations of forest certification in India
- ◆ Identify suitable approaches to promote forest certification
- ◆ Create awareness on credible forest certification and the benefits to the stake holders

Target Group:

Forest and plantation managers, timber traders (including wooden handicraft exporters) paper and pulp companies, retailers, NGOs; Government , R&D institutions, certification companies, standard setting bodies, financial institutions

Organised by:

WWF-India *in association with* Smart wood/SWISO

Dates & Venue

New Delhi:

Date: 29th April 2008

Venue: Godrej Auditorium, WWF-India Secretariat
172-B, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi-110003

Chennai:

Date: 2nd May 2008

Venue: Quality Inn Sabari
29, Thirumalai Pillai Road, T Nagar, Chennai-600017

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**GLOBAL
FOREST
& TRADE
NETWORK**

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network in more than 100 countries. WWF-India is part of this network with secretariat at New Delhi

WWF's mission is to stop degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

For more details, please visit: www.panda.org

For details about WWF-India national office: www.wwfindia.org

The **GFTN** is a WWF's initiative to eliminate illegal logging and improve the management of valuable and threatened forests. By facilitating trade links between companies committed to achieving and supporting responsible forestry, the GFTN creates market conditions that help conserve the world's forests while providing economic and social benefits for the businesses and people that depend on them. Forest Trade Network –India is being established this year as part of GFTN. For more details, please visit www.gftn.org

SmartWood

Practical conservation through certified forestry



Smart Wood is a program of the Rainforest Alliance, an independent certification body accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to issue forest management and chain-of-custody (COC) certificates. Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood Program pioneered global forest certification in 1989 and has been a core supporter of the development of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification system. With over 400 certified forests covering 40 million hectares and more than 1,400 chain of custody (COC) certifications in 56 countries, Rainforest Alliance is a global leader in providing certification services, and well-known for a continuing record of innovation.

SWISO

International Certification Services

The SWISO Group is an internationally organized certification body with overseas subsidiaries and franchisees having its headquarter in Switzerland. SWISO India Pvt. Limited was established in May 2003 as a franchisee of SWISO GmbH, Switzerland for certifications including ISO 9000 and ISO14000. The company represents Smart wood in South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) for their Forest Certification Programmes (CoC). For more details please visit www.swisoindia.com