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4 **Foreword**

5 The FSC General Assembly in 1996 approved the development of new approaches to
6 certification of small landholdings by establishing a consultative group, and a process
7 involving certification bodies and other FSC Members.

8 In 1998 FSC approved a Policy on Group Certification focused on guidelines for certi-
9 fication bodies. In 2005 FSC identified the need to start a review process of the Group
10 FM Policy in order to incorporate streamlined requirements for both, forest managers
11 and certification bodies.

12 This standard presents the basic requirements to be implemented by group entities
13 wishing to apply to an FSC accredited certification body for forest management group
14 certification. The requirements are based on the FSC Policy Document “Group Certifi-
15 cation: FSC Guidelines for certification bodies (July 31st 1998)”. Additionally, specific
16 requirements to address issues that have been raised by certification bodies and
17 stakeholders regarding Group Forest Management certification have been incorpo-
18 rated.

19 This is a final draft for public consultation. In the absence of outstanding comments,
20 this draft will be submitted for approval by the FSC Board of Directors together with a
21 compilation of comments by July 2009. If outstanding issues are identified by stake-
22 holders during the current consultation period, a subsequent draft will be released for
23 a final round of consultation before submission to the FSC Board of Directors..

24 The current draft includes changes that reflect the results from two pilot tests on group
25 certification held in Estonia and France in early 2009. It also incorporates comments
26 submitted by stakeholders during the first consultation period in November and De-
27 cember 2008 and review during the pilot test of the Family Forest standard in Wiscon-
28 sin, United States in early April 2009.

29

30 **Note on use of this standard**

31 All aspects of this standard are considered to be normative, including the scope, standard
32 effective date, references, terms and definitions, notes, tables and annexes, unless otherwise
33 stated (e.g. as examples).

34



35 Please send any comments or suggestions regarding this draft standard to:

36 [FSC International Center](#)

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42 **Published versions and amendments**

43

Version No.	Date	Description
Draft No		
Version 1-0	31 October 2008 – December 2008	FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0 Draft 1-0)
Draft 1-0		Sent for stakeholder con- sultation

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70 **A Scope**

71 This standard specifies the requirements for the evaluation and certification of group
72 entities (the certificate holder) managing a group of forest management units under a
73 single certificate, a process referred to as 'group certification'.
74

75 **B Standard effective date**

76 This is a final draft for public consultation. If no outstanding issues are identified by
77 stakeholders during this consultation period, the current draft will be submitted for ap-
78 proval by the FSC Board of Directors in July 2009.

79 **C References**

80 The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document.
81 For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amend-
82 ments) applies.

83 FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship

84 FSC-POL-20-001 Group certification guidelines for CBs (superseded by this standard
85 and updated requirements in FSC-STD-20-007)

86 FSC-STD-20-007 FM evaluation

87 Guidance document on group certification (under development)

88 **D Terms and definitions**

89 For the purposes of this International Standard, the terms and definitions given in *FSC-STD-*
90 *01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, and the following apply:

91 **FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship (FSC P&C):** set of require-
92 ments for forest managers to implement environmentally appropriate, socially benefi-
93 cial, and economically viable forest management on their properties. In the context of
94 this standard the operational version of the FSC P&C developed by FSC Working
95 Groups or certification bodies for application at the forest management unit level is
96 referred to as the "applicable Forest Stewardship Standard".
97



98 **Group entity:** The group entity is the entity representing the forest properties that
99 constitute a group for the purpose of FSC forest management certification. The group
100 entity applies for group certification and finally holds the forest management certifi-
101 cate. The group entity is responsible to the certification body for ensuring that the re-
102 quirements of the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship are met in all
103 forest properties participating in the group. The group entity may be an individual (e.g.
104 a 'resource manager'), a cooperative body, an owner association, or other similar legal
105 entity.

106 **Resource Manager:** a person or organization that has been given the responsibilities
107 by forest owners for the utilization of their forest resources, including operational plan-
108 ning and harvesting operations. In a group scheme, resource manager and group enti-
109 ty may be the same person / organization (this is often referred to as 'resource man-
110 ager type of group').

111 **Group member:** forest owner who participates in a group scheme for the purpose of
112 FSC forest management certification. Group members are responsible for implement-
113 ing any requirements of group membership. Group members do not hold individual
114 FSC certificates, but as long as they comply with all the requirements of group mem-
115 bership, their forest properties are covered by the forest management certificate is-
116 sued to the group entity.

117 **Types of forest management groups:**

118
119 **Type I group:** Classic type of group in which the group entity has only administrative
120 responsibilities on behalf of the group members. This may include sales and market-
121 ing but excludes any activity related to forest management implemented at the FMU
122 level (e.g. silviculture, harvesting operations, monitoring etc).
123

124 **Type II group:** group with shared responsibilities between the group entity and the
125 group members. At least the responsibilities for planning, silviculture, harvesting, and
126 monitoring are shared between the group entity and the group members.
127

128 **Type III group:** 'Resource manager' type of group in which the group entity has basi-
129 cally taken all operational responsibilities including administration, forest management
130 and harvesting activities on behalf of the group members.
131



132 **PART 1 QUALITY SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS**

133 **1 General requirements**

134 1.1 The group entity shall be an independent legal entity or an individual acting as a
135 legal entity.

136 1.2 The group entity shall comply with relevant legal obligations, as registration and
137 payment of applicable fees and taxes.

138 1.3 The group entity shall have a written public policy of commitment to the FSC
139 Principles and Criteria.

140 1.4 The group entity shall define training needs and implement training activities
141 and/or communication strategies relevant to the implementation of the applica-
142 ble FSC standards.

143 **2 Responsibilities**

144 2.1 The group entity shall have clearly defined and documented responsibilities in
145 relation to forest management activities (for example with respect to manage-
146 ment planning, monitoring, harvesting, quality control, marketing, timber sale,
147 etc).

148 NOTE: The actual division of responsibilities may differ greatly between different
149 group certification schemes. Responsibilities regarding compliance to the appli-
150 cable Forest Stewardship Standard may be divided between the group entity
151 and group members in the case of groups of SLIMFs in order to take into ac-
152 count of a landscape approach.

153 2.2 The group entity shall appoint a management representative as having overall
154 responsibility and authority for the Group entity's compliance with all applicable
155 requirements of this standard.

156 2.3 Group entity staff and group members shall demonstrate knowledge of the
157 group's procedures and the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard.



158 **3 Group entity's procedures**

159 **Development and implementation of Group entity's procedures**

160 3.1 The group entity shall establish, implement and maintain written procedures for
161 group membership covering all applicable requirements of this standard, ac-
162 cording to scale and complexity of the group including:

163 i. Organizational structure;

164 ii. Responsibilities of the group entity and the group members including main
165 activities to fulfil such responsibilities (i.e. Development of management
166 plans, sales and marketing of FSC products, harvesting, planting, moni-
167 toring, etc);

168 iii. Rules regarding eligibility for membership to the group;

169 iv Rules regarding withdrawal/ suspension of members from the group;

170 v. Clear description of the process to fulfill any corrective actions issued inter-
171 nally and by the certification body including timelines and implications if
172 any of the corrective actions are not complied with;

173 vi. Documented procedures for the inclusion of new group members after a
174 certificate has been awarded. New group members shall be subject to an
175 initial evaluation either by the group entity or the certification body before
176 they are can join the group.

177 3.2 The group entity's procedures shall be sufficient to establish an efficient internal
178 control system ensuring that all members are fulfilling all applicable require-
179 ments at all times.

180 3.3 The group entity shall define the personnel responsible for each procedure to-
181 gether with the qualifications or training measures required for its implementa-
182 tion.

183 3.4 The group entity shall evaluate every applicant for membership of the group
184 and ensure that they comply with the applicable requirements of the Forest
185 Stewardship Standard, and with any additional requirements for membership of
186 the group, prior to being granted membership of the group.



187 **Informed consent of group members**

188 3.5 The group entity shall provide each group member with documentation, or ac-
189 cess to documentation, specifying the relevant terms and conditions of group
190 membership. The documentation shall include:

- 191 i Access to a copy of the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard;
- 192 ii Explanation of certification process;
- 193 iii Explanation of certification body's, and FSC's / ASI's rights to ac-
194 cess the group members' forests and documentation for the pur-
195 poses of evaluation and monitoring;
- 196 iv Explanation of certification body's, and FSC's/ ASI's requirements
197 with respect to publication of information;
- 198 v Explanation of any obligations with respect to group membership,
199 such as:
 - 200 a. maintenance of information for monitoring purposes;
 - 201 b. use of systems for tracking and tracing of forest products;
 - 202 c. requirement to conform with conditions or corrective actions is-
203 sued by the certification body;
 - 204 d. any special requirements for group members related to market-
205 ing or sales of products within and outside of the certificate;
 - 206 e. other obligations of group membership; and
 - 207 f. explanation of any costs associated with group membership.

208 NOTE: In some groups, it may be sufficient to provide individual members with a sum-
209 mary of these items, provided that full documentation is readily available on re-
210 quest at the group entity's offices. The information should be presented in a way
211 adapted to the language and knowledge of the group members.



212 3.6 A consent declaration or equivalent shall be signed by each group member or
213 the member's representative who voluntarily wishes to participate in the group.
214 The consent declaration shall:

215 i include a commitment to comply with all certification require-
216 ments;

217 ii. acknowledge and agree to the obligations and responsibilities of
218 the group entity;

219 iii acknowledge and agree to the obligations and responsibilities of
220 group membership;

221 iv agree to membership of the scheme for the full period of validity
222 of the group certificate; and

223 v authorise the group entity to be the primary contact for certifica-
224 tion and to apply for certification on the member's behalf.

225 NOTE: A consent declaration does not have to be an individual document. It can be
226 part of a contract or any other document that specifies the relationship between
227 the group member and the group entity.

228 4. Group Records

229 4.1 The group entity shall maintain complete and up-to-date records covering all
230 applicable requirements of this standard. These shall include:

231 i List of names and contact details of group members, together with
232 dates of entering and leaving the group scheme and the type of
233 forest ownership per member;

234 ii. Any records of training provided to staff or group members, rele-
235 vant to the implementation of this standard or the applicable For-
236 est Stewardship Standard;

237 iii A map showing the location of the member's forest properties,
238 identifying outstanding environmental and social features, consid-
239 ering any confidentiality issues;

240 iv Evidence of consent of all group members;



- 241 v. Documentation and records regarding recommended practices for
242 forest management (i.e. silvicultural systems);
- 243 vi Records demonstrating the implementation of any internal control
244 or monitoring systems. Such records shall include records of in-
245 ternal inspections, non-compliance identified in such inspections,
246 actions taken to correct any such non-compliance;
- 247 vii The date of any members entering or leaving the group and an
248 explanation of the reason for leaving;
- 249 viii. Records of the estimated annual overall FSC production and an-
250 nual FSC sales of the group.

251 NOTE: The amount of data that is maintained centrally by the group entity may vary
252 from case to case. In order to reduce costs of evaluation by the certification
253 body, and subsequent monitoring by FSC, data should be stored centrally
254 wherever possible.

255 4.2 Group records shall be retained for at least 5 years.

256



257 **PART 2 GROUP FEATURES**

258 **5 Group Size**

259 5.1 There is no restriction on the maximum size that a group certificate can cover in
260 terms of number of group members, their individual forest property size or total
261 forest area. The group entity shall have sufficient human and technical re-
262 sources to manage and control the group in line with the requirements of this
263 standard.

264 NOTE: The number of group members, their individual size and the total area will
265 however influence the evaluation intensity applied by the certification body in
266 their annual audits.

267 5.2 The group entity shall specify in their procedures the maximum annual or total
268 increase of the group (in terms of members) that can be supported by the man-
269 agement system and the human and technical capacities of the group entity.

270 **6 Multinational groups**

271 6.1 Group schemes shall only be applied to national groups which are covered by
272 the same Forest Stewardship Standard.

273 6.2 In cases where homogeneous conditions between countries/ regions may allow
274 an effective and credible cross- border or multi-regional monitoring system, the
275 Group entity shall request formal approval by FSC IC through their accredited
276 Certification Body to allow certification of such a group scheme.

277

278 **PART 3 INTERNAL MONITORING**

279 **7 Monitoring requirements**

280 7.1 The group entity shall implement a documented monitoring and control system
281 that includes at least the following:

- 282 i. Written description of the monitoring and control system;
- 283 ii. Regular (at least annual) monitoring visits to a sample of group
284 members to confirm continued compliance with all the require-



311 7.4 For monitoring purposes the group entity should sub stratify the group accord-
312 to forest type, geographic location, management system, etc.

313 7.5 The group entity shall issue corrective action requests to address non-
314 compliances identified during their visits and monitor their implementation.

315 7.6 Additional monitoring visits shall be scheduled when potential problems arise or
316 group entity receives information from stakeholders about violation of the FSC
317 requirements by group members.

318

319 **PART 4 CHAIN OF CUSTODY**

320 **8 Sales of forest products and use of the FSC trademark**

321 8.1 The group entity shall document and implement a system for tracking and trac-
322 ing of forest products produced by the group members which are supposed to
323 be sold as FSC certified.

324 8.2 For the purpose of ensuring that non certified material is not being mixed with
325 FSC certified material, FSC products shall only be sold according to a sales
326 protocol agreed by the group members and the group entity.

327 8.3 The group entity shall ensure that all invoices for sales of FSC certified material
328 are issued with the required information (see FSC-STD-40-004 V2-0 Clause
329 6.1.1).

330 8.4 The group entity shall ensure that all uses of the FSC Trademark are approved
331 by the responsible certification body in advance.

332 NOTE: processing units that are included in the scope of the certificate require a sepa-
333 rate evaluation and reporting against applicable COC standards. This does not
334 refer to log cutting units or sawmills that qualify as “small enterprises” according
335 to FSC group COC criteria.