



FREQUENT ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Focus Forests project?

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.

The following members are part of the team (in alphabetical order after the leader):

- Claude Garcia, ETHZ and CIRAD - Lead researcher
- Anne Dray, ETHZ – Monitoring and Evaluation
- Fabien Quétier, Biotope – Ecosystem Services and Values



- Fritz Kleinschroth, ETHZ – Remote sensing, strategic land management
- Jean-François Bastin, University of Liège – Remote Sensing and Forest Potential
- Malika Virah-Sawmy, Sensemakers collective - Facilitation
- Marie Ange Ngo Bieng, CIRAD – Forest Dynamics and Restoration
- Nadia Ida Djenontin, Michigan State University – Values and Power
- Patrick Waeber, ETHZ - Forest Management and Ecosystem Services
- Sini Savilaakso, ETH – Systematic Evidence Reviews and Mapping

In addition, the team is supported by

- Ariane Hangartner, ETHZ – Administration and Management
- Johanna Wierer, ETHZ – Qsets and Narratives
- Manon Bourey, Biotope – Management and Impacts
- Natasha Stoudmann, ETHZ – Qsets
- Nik Lausberg, ETHZ– Systematic Mapping

In addition, there is a steering group made up of senior FSC International staff and the lead researcher. The FSC International Board Strategic Planning Committee is engaged regularly in discussions about the project.

In many countries, land is the responsibility of governments, how will we encourage governments to take part in this project and bring them to the table in a meaningful way?

Government involvement, especially in areas where final land use decisions are their responsibility, is essential for the success of this project. We believe we have something to offer since we know governments are facing the same pressures to protect social and environmental values on one hand, while ensuring jobs and sound economic conditions on the other.

How will FSC do this work?

Phase 1

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

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.



How does the Focus Forests project tie into the Global Strategy for FSC?

In Strategy 1 (Co-create and implement forest solutions) and Strategy 3 (Catalyze change) of the FSC Global Strategy 2021 – 2026, the motivation for this Focus Forest project can be found.

The Strategy calls for co-creation and alliances ‘to create impact by promoting forest certification and forest landscape solutions that protect the environment and respect the rights and improve the livelihoods of people depending on them’ which is an integral part of the project.



The strategy also calls to 'work with FSC certificate holders, rights holders and stakeholders to develop FSC solutions that are relevant for climate change and related global challenges in the landscape when opportunities for success are favorable'. This is part of this project in the second phase, when we will bring actors together in a specific landscape to agree the landscape uses. Some examples are:

- From Strategy 1.3: FSC has implemented new ways to monitor performance with reliable data at the forest and landscape level. The data adds value to FSC certification for certificate holders and provides important and meaningful information to stakeholders.
- From Strategy 1.4: Work with FSC certificate holders, rights holders and stakeholders to develop FSC solutions that are relevant for climate change and related global challenges in the landscape when opportunities for success are favourable.
- And most importantly: Strategy 3: We will deliver on our mission, create results that matter to our members and partners, and seek opportunities in the broader landscape where we can achieve results without increasing burden on the FSC system and our certificate holders.
- From strategy 3.1: FSC has engaged in visible Alliances and Partnerships to create impact by promoting forest certification and forest landscape solutions that protect the environment and respect the rights and improve the livelihoods of people depending on them. Partners may include governmental and intergovernmental institutions, companies, environmental and social NGOs, trade unions, gender equity organizations, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, funders, investors, and others; FSC has demonstrated impact through these alliances and partnerships in the form of improved forest and landscape stewardship in priority locations.

How is this different from what FSC normally does?

There are 5 ways in which this project is different from what FSC normally does:

1. The project looks at a landscape, and not only at the forest management unit that is FSC certified.
2. Rather than developing a certification standard for landscapes, the project seeks to develop a masterplan for what to do where in a specific landscape between all users. In collaboration with other commodities being grown in the forest landscape, and with other users of the landscape than the forest managers, an agreement is being developed and then, where industrial forest management fits, ecosystem services, community and indigenous development, agroforestry, etc.
3. In doing this, the project acknowledges different interests in a landscape and seeks agreement between these. Farmers will seek different values than forest managers, and these interests in how to maintain the values in the landscape, wider than the FMU, can help maintaining the resilience of the landscape as a whole
4. New ways of constructive dialogue are being developed, based on economic and game theory models. These are built to help overcome very different interests in a landscape, and to assist seeking agreements in points of view that need to become aligned to be solved.
5. The project seeks to engage governmental bodies into the landscape dialogue, as they are important stakeholders and owners of the land.



Is this intended to help address Motion 65?

In line with the FSC Global Strategy 2021 – 2026, the Focus Forests project wants to enable constructive discussions in FSC about 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 illegality and conversion.

This disagreement is very clear in the discussion about FSC's efforts to activate/implement the protection of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) as required by Motion 65 from 2014, and several motions on this topic have been proposed for the upcoming 2021-2022 General Assembly. This project seeks a constructive dialogue to discuss this and to develop an agreed approach for FSC.

Will this help address the many definitions (inside and outside of FSC) relating to forested areas that have special values? For example, ancient forests, endangered forests, Old growth management areas, HCV's, ICL's etc.

Many definitions on forests exist, and they all are slightly and sometimes considerably different. This does not bring a clear starting point in the discussion. It is therefore that Focus Forests starts with ensuring that the research has considered these definitions, and that for Focus Forests an agreed understanding is developed, based on existing definitions and literature. The Green paper that will be developed as a starting point for discussion will capture this. However, the project is mainly developing an approach for constructive dialogues on a specific landscape, overcoming differences between stakeholders and developing an agreed approach for that landscape.

Is Focus Forest introducing another concept for High Conservation Values (HCV)?

No, Focus Forests does not intend to develop a new concept or propose a new definition of forests with extraordinary social and environmental values. Instead, Focus Forests will use existing concepts, such as HCV, as a starting point to understand the different ways people and institutions define and measure the value of a forest.

How will this interact with the High Conservation Value Framework?

The HCV is a detailed and well-established framework, that has gained credibility and legitimacy over the years. FSC uses this in its normative framework and is an active member of the HCV-RN. The FSC HCV framework has also become central to other certification schemes. Focus Forests does not aim to replace the HCV framework. Instead, Focus Forests takes the HCV framework as a starting block for our analysis of the different ways people and institutions define and measure the value of a forest.

How will this be applicable to the field?

The first phase of the Focus Forest deals with definitions, maps and frameworks. It aims at providing clarification, dispelling confusion, and helping FSC members, certificate holders



and boundary partners understand the point of view of the many parties involved in the discussion. By understanding these different views, discussions with auditors, NGOs, government officials and local communities and other FSC members will ideally become easier.

The second phase we are designing aims at bringing to the field a set of methods, guidelines and know-how on how to conduct these dialogues. It will serve to demonstrate how to improve the quality of the dialogues and hence of the decisions taken and build the capacity of the participants.

Is a landscape the same as a forest management unit?

Forests have key regulatory functions in a landscape. Usually, FSC certified forest management units are only a small part of a full landscape. For few forest management units with millions of hectares, it is possible there is more than one landscape inside the management unit or overlapping adjacent areas. Most landscapes are defined by their ecosystem, and forests are key elements for water management, soil, biodiversity and climate resilience. Forests are also important for communities and Indigenous Peoples in their landscapes.

How can I get involved?

- **Propose a landscape for field testing** in the tropics or in the boreal to Gemma Boetekees at g.boetekees@fsc.org
- **Stay up to date:** You can subscribe to this 6-8 weekly update over email, by [registering here](#).
- **Comment on the green paper:** The researchers will develop a green paper (discussion paper) for FSC. This green paper will be made available to all FSC members and we will invite comments and reactions in a webinar with the researchers. Will be available in April/May 2021.
- **Attend a webinar on Focus Forests:** FSC intends to organize webinars for members in May, July and September.
- **Attend a dialogue session:** FSC hopes to be able to develop structured dialogues in landscapes in a tropical and a in boreal zones with different actors in the landscape having different interests. You can propose your forest landscape and the actors you work with to try out the approach. Will take place between April-October 2021. Be sure to subscribe to our updates [here](#).
- **Join us at the General Assembly:** At the FSC General Assembly, the researchers and FSC will present their findings of the project. You can participate in the discussion at the GA where the outcome and any further steps will be considered and discussed.

More opportunities to engage may develop over the course of the project towards the FSC GA