

Monitoring and Evaluation at the Forest Stewardship Council:

FSC M&E Public System Report, revised version, April 2018

Introduction

This concise report provides a basic overview of FSC's Monitoring & Evaluation System. It is prepared as part of the ISEAL Impact Code Requirements and aims to inform all FSC stakeholders interested in FSC's monitoring and evaluation activities.

1. Scope and Boundaries of the M&E System

It is FSC's mission to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. Consequently FSC's M&E program monitors at a global level how FSC's governance system and forest management certification as a prominent tool of FSC have an effect on certified forest management practices and people affected, on ecosystems and on aspects of the supply chain of products from FSC certified forests, as well as on other sectors addressed through FSC supporting strategies, as described in the FSC Theory of Change (ToC).

The ToC guides FSC's M&E system of the M&E program. The graphic in Annex 1 of this document gives an overview of the 12 areas of FSC's intended impacts, which frame the scope of the M&E system. The section on the [ToC on the FSC website](#) explains how the ToC was developed, and how the intended impact areas are [related to broader sustainability goals](#) of global organizations such as the United Nations affiliates.

The core objectives of the FSC M&E System are:

- Provide FSC Management and Board of Directors with the information needed for impact-oriented management.
- Provide relevant FSC stakeholders (FSC staff, FSC members and FSC expert panels, especially Standard Development Working Groups) with information to integrate lessons' learned in the development of FSC policies, standards, and strategies.
- Incentivize other FSC stakeholders to promote responsible forest management, and actively engage in the FSC system.
- Communicate to FSC stakeholders about on-the-ground outcomes and impacts of FSC certification.

For more information:

- Earlier versions of the FSC M&E System Report ([2015](#)), which are not significantly different from this short version, but more detailed.
- Full [documentation on FSC's Theory of Change](#) (development process; descriptive 'FSC Intended Impacts and their contribution towards broader sustainability goals'; graphical visualization of the Impact Pathway; table with FSC's Intended Impacts and contributions overview).
- Two 2-page Factsheets on [FSC's Theory of Change](#) and on [FSC's M&E System](#).



2. Roles and Responsibilities

The FSC M&E Program was until October 2017 part of the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), and since then part of the Technology and Knowledge Management Unit of FSC International and is implemented by the FSC M&E Program Manager, whose responsibilities include:

- Data collection from different entities within the FSC International, and supporting projects that enable improved data collection and dissemination.
- Reporting and analysis of FSC certification impacts in the various areas of interest to the FSC M&E Program, and to other FSC programs, units, accredited certification bodies, the FSC network, and independent researchers.
- Internal and public dissemination of information derived from the different M&E activities as described in the FSC M&E System objectives.

Table 1: FSC M&E program positions (status of November 2017)

Role	FTE	Responsibilities
Director of QAU / IT	0.1	Supervision of the M&E Program Manager
FSC M&E Program Manager	1	Implementation and management of the FSC M&E Program
FSC M&E Officer	0.5	Support to the different activities of the FSC M&E Program
Student assistant (as of 1/'18)	0.5	Support with data collection

3. Defining the intended change

The FSC mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests, through the FSC scheme. The FSC scheme credibly identifies well-managed forests as the source of responsibly produced wood products.

In order to measure and monitor to what extent FSC achieves its mission, FSC has developed a Theory of Change including 12 intended impacts, subdivided into four categories (see short version in Annex 1). For each of these impacts, indicators have been developed as a basis for monitoring and evaluation, see full version "[Expected impacts of FSC and its contribution to broader sustainability objectives](#)" (under "[Documents](#)"). We also identified unintended and negative impacts of certification processes. Firstly, there is a risk that forest managers, before applying for certification, sell or exclude their forests' 'High Conservation Value' areas from certified area to get financial returns and avoid to have to implement stringent conservation measures. Secondly, there is a risk that chain of custody certified companies providing and/or purchasing "Controlled Wood" are satisfied with this status, and therefore not motivated to demand for products from much more demanding FSC 100% certified sources. Thirdly, stakeholder fatigue resulting from too many consultations from and related to FSC is a risk for FSC. Finally, the share of smallholder-managed forest area is relatively low compared to other certificate holder ownership status (although 25% of the FSC certified operations are held by smallholders), which is an unintended effect of certification. FSC is addressing these issues with the



development of new tools and revised policies. The M&E program systematically searches for intended and unintended effects, positive as well as negative through literature review, listing intended and unintended effects encountered; including research questions on intended and unintended effects in outcome and impact evaluation ToRs; and in bringing these topics to the attention of the research community and to FSC stakeholders.

In Annex 2 you can find a simplified display of FSC's ToC.

For more information:

- Full documentation on [FSC's Theory of Change](#)
- 2-page Factsheet on [FSC's Theory of Change](#)

4. Performance monitoring

Performance is being monitored at least annually through the preparation and dissemination of the Annual FSC M&E Report. This represents the current formal performance monitoring by the M&E program. Simultaneously there are multiple formal and informal monitoring processes conducted at many different levels of the organization. Examples are the monthly preparation of core statistics for the FSC management, the publicly accessible monthly [Facts & Figures](#) and the regular reports on FSC Global Market Survey and FSC Market Info Pack.

For structured performance monitoring based on the ToC and the 12 intended impacts, the M&E program relies on different data sources in the organization, among which are:

- FSC certificate database (info.fsc.org) with public forest management certification reports
- Membership database and reports from internal Working groups, studies commissioned etc.
- FSCs Global Market Survey (survey for all FSC certificate holders)
- External data from academia and official institutions (e.g. World Bank, FAO, CIFOR)

Some of the data needed to monitor the 12 intended impacts are currently available, others not yet. The M&E program is dependent on a number of other processes in the organization that are intended a.o. to provide us with more structured and better quality data needed to structurally monitor FSCs intended impacts (see section 6.)

For more information:

- Full list of FSCs intended impacts and associated indicators and how these are measured in Annex 3 to the M&E System Report:
<https://ic.fsc.org/preview.fsc-monitoring-and-evaluation-system-report.a-3503.pdf>
- FSC M&E Reports for each year from 2013 on: Context, figures, effects and impacts:
<https://ic.fsc.org/en/our-impact/program-areas/monitoring-and-evaluation/monitoring-evaluation-reports>



5. Outcome and impact evaluation

Currently, the FSC M&E Program usually does not commission or undertake outcome or impact evaluation studies. To assess outcomes and impacts of FSC certification, FSC relies on:

- increased interactions with the research community;
- involvement in steering committees of research projects on FSC outcomes and impacts conducted by third parties;
- and contributing financially, or in-kind, to research projects (only in very rare cases)

A number of researchers and research institutions are undertaking such evaluations. A prominent example is the [ISEAL coordinated VIA](#) – Value and Impact Analysis (VIA) Initiative (2015-2017), initiated and financed by major FSC certified market players, to logistically support independent researchers to develop methodologies for impact evaluation. FSC invests a sizeable share of the M&E Program Manager's time for interacting with the research community, for example by providing data from FSC sources, explaining complexities of the FSC system or giving input to research proposals and drafts.

FSC is preparing a simple online database for FSC related literature, research and impact evaluations. This database is already used within the FSC Network, and the plan is to allow public access. It aims to make such literature more easily accessible for both internal and external stakeholders. Until then the interested public can find link to a limited number of selected, independent, FSC relevant research papers as “recommended reading” on the [FSC M&E website](#), and much more on the [“Sustainability Impacts Learning Platform”](#), maintained in collaboration between the Food Lab, ISEAL, and WWF. In addition, FSC has prepared a ‘list with research themes of interest to FSC’. This list aims to provide researchers interested in FSC with inspiration for research that in our view is relevant, needed and presents current research gaps. This is expected to help create more and more structured knowledge on the outcomes and impacts of FSC certification. To support researcher in understanding FSC's complexity and in identifying and accessing relevant information we are also preparing an “FSC for Research Dummies” (working title) paper for 2018.

For more information:

- [Overview of some of the latest and most relevant studies](#) on FSC's outcomes and impacts
 - [A literature review \(2009\) on FSC outcomes and impacts](#) prepared by FSC
 - [FSC Monitoring and Evaluation reports \(2013–'16; '17 in preparation; under “Documents”\)](#)
 - List with [suggested research themes](#) of interest to FSC (under “Documents”)
- All can be found at: <https://ic.fsc.org/en/what-is-fsc/what-we-do/demonstrating-impact>

6. Improving the effectiveness of the M&E System

Getting better access to more and better data is the current main project for FSC’s IT&KM unit which includes the M&E Program. The numerous related projects include:

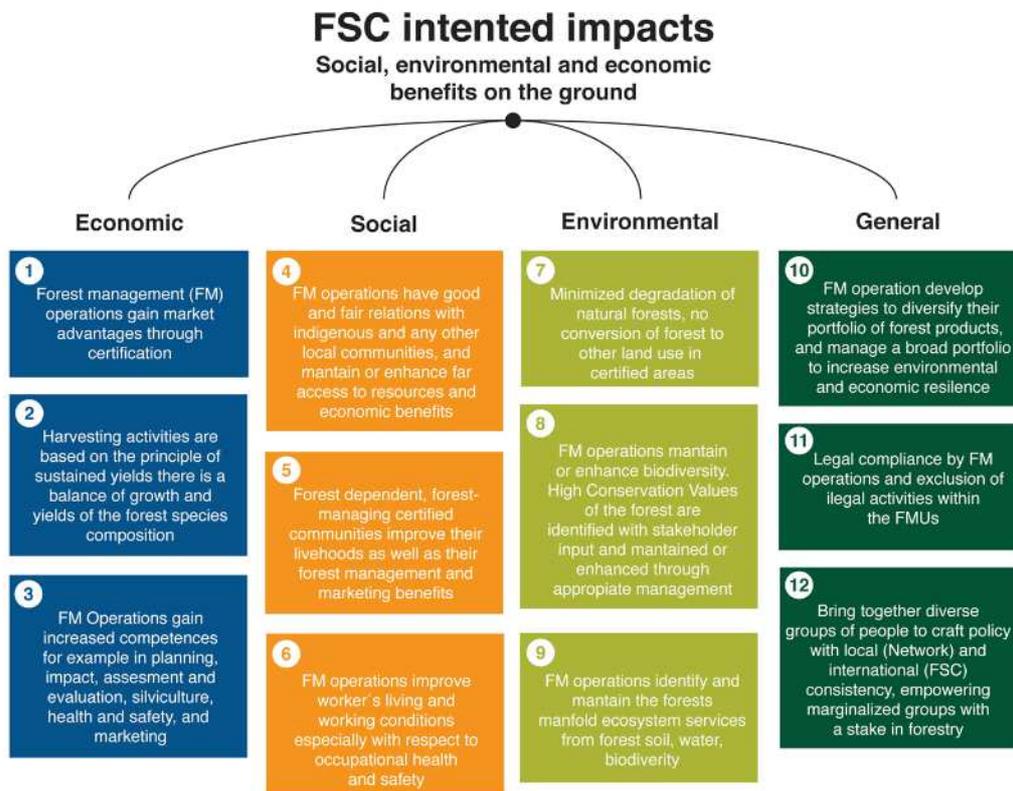
- Streamlining FSC M&E System requirements when designing new programs;
- Supporting the development of an FSC revised, standardized electronic reporting format for public forest management certification reports, including impacts indicators specified in the ToC, to improving audit data quality and accessibility (partly in cooperation with ISEAL).
- Use of space born data to map & monitor certified area (tentatively jointly with ISEAL).

7. Opportunities for engagement

A review, and potentially major consultation for a subsequent revision of FSC’s ToC and M&E System is planned for the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2018. FSC welcomes all feedback and is open to learn from research conducted on our certification system. Please feel invited to share with us any research, finished or in progress, related to FSC.

Any comments or questions with regards to FSCs M&E System can be directed to FSC’s M&E Program Manager, Dr. Marion Karmann at m.karmann@fsc.org.

Annex 1: FSC Intended Impacts



Annex 2: High-level graphic outlining FSC’s Theory of Change

ToC: Transformation through FSC Certification

