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## FSC'S THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change (ToC) is regarded as the basis from which organizations can identify their intended impacts and therefore as a basis for systematic impact assessments. Developing FSC's ToC helped to articulate FSC's intended impacts, their contribution to wider sustainability goals for the forest sector, and the related pathways and supporting strategies required to achieve FSC's **mission of "promoting environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests"**.

Three documents make up FSC's full ToC<sup>1</sup>: the description, the graphic visualization showing the pathways FSC® chooses to achieve its impacts, and a table showing FSC's intended impacts and related indicators. FSC's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System Report explains in detail how we measure progress against these impact indicators.

FSC's ToC identifies four mutually reinforcing **pathways** and a set of **supporting strategies** and inspiring concepts, to facilitate and increase FSC desired impacts contributing to our mission:



### 1. From stakeholder conflict to engagement and consensus

The central **"Engagement pathway** – transparency based on stakeholder dialogue and consensus" explains that FSC brings people with conflicting interests in forests together to identify risks, opportunities and solutions related to forest management (FM). Dialogue and consensus among the full range of stakeholders leads to broadly supported, high standards of best practices, enabling the implementation of an innovative concept of responsible FM, triggering relevant improvements in certified forestry operations and the broader marketplace, and changing attitudes toward forestry and forest products.



### 2. From unknown practices to demonstrated performance

The **Standards pathway** – FSC standard development is governed by strict rules for stakeholder engagement and consultation. Changing current FM practices by reducing negative impacts caused by conventional FM, applying relevant safeguards to avoid such impacts, and requiring the maintenance or enhancement of the social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities are the most obvious improvements targeted by certification and constituting the overall impact of FSC FM standards.



### 3. From self-declaration to third party verification

The **Assurance pathway** follows a set of accreditation standards, agreed by multiple stakeholders, and relies on a system of checks and balances by specialized staff, accredited and trained third-party institutions, public stakeholder consultations and transparent reporting. It ensures that FSC delivers credible certification claims.



### 4. From unspecified sources to responsible origin

The **Market pathway** enables market advantages, because the FSC logo helps consumers to identify and to give preference to products that come from responsibly managed forests. It connects the consensus-based Standards and Assurance pathways (the "push" function of marketing) with the demand side. The FSC supply chain is a tool for companies to demonstrate their commitment to the principles of sustainable FM.



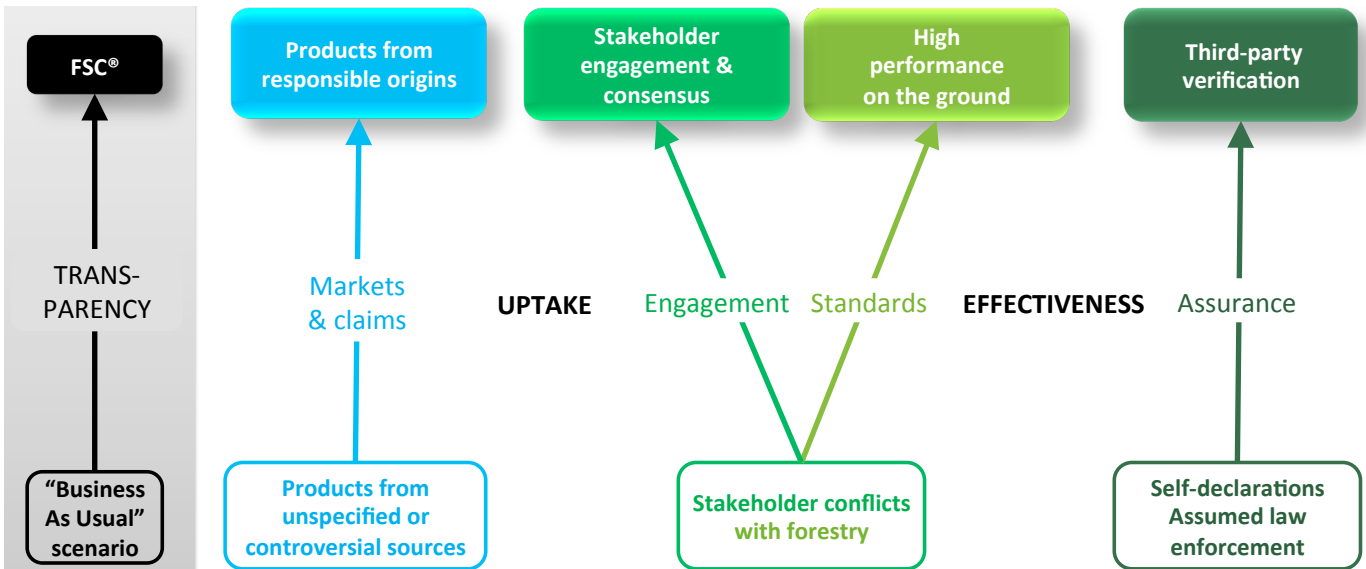
FSC implements a set of **Supporting strategies** and **inspiring concepts** to strengthen the main impact pathways and increase the use of standard-compliant practices, for example in:

- Investing in capacity and competence of FSC's National Offices
- Advocacy at political levels to make FSC more visible, and help decision makers better understand the opportunities that the FSC system offers
- Investing in FSC's own institutional capacity, e.g. in a legal system to better protect the use of the FSC logo, in M&E or in improving Accreditation Services International's capacity to monitor the performance of certification bodies.

*From FSC certification to a better understanding of responsible forest management:*

Some **concepts** of the FSC system have inspired others: FSC's three chamber governance model and its High Conservation Value (HCV) concept have been adopted by other schemes. **Knock-on effects** of FSC, often based on the fact that FSC triggers and facilitates dialogue beyond the FSC scheme, indirectly contribute to the FSC mission. An example is that the work of FSC auditors functions as "soft law", a form of market-based enforcement, particularly in countries with weak governance structures. Some forest management units with FSC certification can be seen as proof, for the relevant government, that it is indeed feasible to balance economic, ecological and social interests, and to achieve sustainable FM. These lessons are sometimes directly reflected in revised forest legislation of such countries.

## ToC: Transformation through FSC certification



## FSC ToC: Graphic visualization

