



FSC Monitoring and Evaluation's Public Report 2020

Monitoring performances, evaluating outcomes and impacts, and learning

Department in charge	Data, Analytics, Evaluation and Learning – DAEL
Version	1.0
Last update	May 2020



Table of contents

1. Monitoring and Evaluation System Requirements	3
1.1. Scope and boundaries of FSC monitoring and evaluation system.....	3
1.1.1. Thematic boundaries.....	3
1.1.2. Organizational boundaries	3
1.1.3. Key M&E and data projects.....	6
1.2. Plan for expansion	8
1.3. Resources, roles, and responsibilities	9
1.4. Data management.....	10
2. Stakeholder Engagement in M&E System Design	12
2.1. Stakeholder mapping and engagement.....	12
2.1.1. Stakeholder identification	12
2.1.2. Stakeholder consultation	14
3. Intended and unintended impacts and outcomes.....	15
4. Performance Monitoring and Outcome & Impact evaluations	15
4.1. Performance monitoring	15
4.2. Outcome and impact evaluations	17
5. Learning and improving.....	18
5.1. Learning from the monitoring and evaluation system	18
6. Transparency and Public Information	19
6.1. Publicly available information about monitoring and evaluation	19



1. Monitoring and Evaluation System Requirements

1.1. Scope and boundaries of FSC monitoring and evaluation system

1.1.1. Thematic boundaries

FSC monitoring and evaluation system is based on FSC Theory of Change (ToC), which identifies the intended and unintended effects of the FSC system.

According to the ToC, there are four mutually reinforcing pathways and a set of supporting strategies and inspiring concepts FSC uses to facilitate and increase its desired outcomes and impacts contributing to its vision and mission. ToC also includes indicators for measuring intended outcomes and impacts.

1.1.2. Organizational boundaries

FSC monitoring and evaluation system is integrated into many departments at FSC International, as well as supported by the activities of FSC Network. It is an ongoing process to conclude FSC contribution to intended outcomes and impacts. It consists of a set of interconnected functions, processes, and activities, including a continuous collection of monitoring data and the implementation of outcome and impact evaluations.

Central functions of the system are delegated to the Program of Data Analytics, Evaluation and Learning (DAEL) created in early 2019 in Technology and Information Unit. This program deals with three (3) main work areas (Fig. 1):

- **Impact:** Covering the design of the monitoring system, evaluation of the results and compilation of evidence of outcomes and impacts of the FSC system, including through innovations and analytics that provide necessary data or solutions.
- **Analytics:** Covering the gathering and analyzing of data about system performance including internal and external data (traditional and spatial).



- **Innovations:** Covering new ways of organizing internal processes, acquiring new tools and methodologies to increase the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation activities and the quality of evidence of outcomes and impacts.

Apart from DAEL, the following departments at FSC cover significant functions related to monitoring, evaluation, and learning:

- **Performance and Standards Unit (PSU):** Responsible for standard-setting processes and integrating learnings from the standard performance into revision processes (data comes from scientific findings, from collection and evaluation of feedback from stakeholders participating in standard-setting processes). The unit is also working on the risk-based approach to the normative requirements and the auditing that will be reflected in impact and performance monitoring.

DAEL and PSU exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes, as well as information, is shared with senior management by PSU through established reporting lines (Global leadership, Board of Directors).

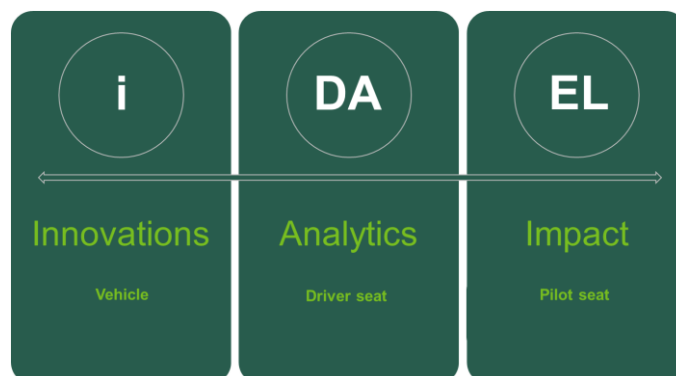
- **Global Integrity and Alignment (GAI) and FSC Network Partner around the globe:** Facilitating the development of FSC national standards for forest management and controlled wood risk assessments, where the integration of learnings and monitoring of the performance takes place. The unit is also responsible for managing national stakeholders and support to other key functions of FSC on the ground.

The GIA is responsible for handling disputes in FSC, which are important for performance and impact evaluations because they reveal specific non-compliances with FSC requirements or concerns, and outcomes related to them. Disputes are regulated by normative requirements developed by the unit, for which elements of PSU work in the standard-setting above apply. DAEL and GAI exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes, as well as information, is shared with senior management by GAI through established reporting lines (Global leadership, Board of Directors).

- Marketing and Communications Unit (MCU):** Supporting key value chains in FSC chain of custody, monitoring consumer and media opinion of FSC, exploring new markets for potential expansion of FSC certification (therefore a potential increase of FSC impact). The unit is also conducting relevant standard-setting process (e.g. trademark standard), for which elements of PSU work above apply. These work areas relate to the systemic impact of FSC and impacts of CoC certification. DAEL and MCU exchange information for evaluation and learning purposes, as well as information, is shared with senior management by MCU through established reporting lines (Global leadership, Board of Directors).
- Engagement:** Consisting of several programs and functions supports systemic impacts, integration of the newest trends and initiatives related to sustainability in the whole FSC system (e.g. climate change, landscape approach), and the engagement with the research community.
- Upcoming:** the monitoring and evaluation program for Indigenous Foundation (position to be filled in 2020-2021): This program will monitor and evaluate the impacts and performance of the FSC system on Indigenous Peoples.

Other programs of the **Technology and information unit (TIU)** include supply chain integrity and IT systems. Collaboration with these departments take place daily to ensure the integrity of FSC data, as well as for learning and evaluation purposes.

Fig 1. Scope of the Data Analytics, Evaluation and Learning Program at FSC.





1.1.3. Key M&E and data projects

Historically monitoring, evaluation and learning have been focusing mainly on the forest management certification, being in the core of FSC mission and vision.

Forest management certification is a vehicle of FSC and therefore is in the focus of the monitoring and evaluation system. Other system areas (chain of custody, controlled wood, systemic impacts) may intensify or decrease the impact of forest management certification; therefore, these are not treated as a priority.

The following key projects are included in the scope of the DAEL in 2020:

- Development of an online platform for systematic and efficient collection of audit data from forest management certification.

The online platform for systematic and efficient collection of audit data from forest management certification (FM Online project) standardizes and transforms the traditional forest management audit reports from unstructured documents to structured and standardized online relational database. The online reports will enable FSC to access audit data directly, aggregate them, and identify trends, outcomes, and risk areas to evaluate and improve the FSC system.

The FM Online will work with a technical sound solution and multi-stakeholder participation process which will ease the current duplicated processes for data entries and reports, facilitate automation of data validation, transfer, and public summary generation. It will provide machine facilitated translation to reduce the workload of certificate bodies.

The project will enhance the transparency of the overall FSC system, provide data access to general stakeholders, and the FM online provides the starting point of traceability of FSC certified products. It will reduce the workload for certification bodies by streamlining report and data processing steps.



FM Online will also ensure that public summaries are automatically created in a standardized format, making it much easier for researchers and stakeholders to use and analyze the data from the ground.

- Development of an online mapping platform to identify and detect forest dynamics using GIS and Remote Sensing technologies for improving the auditing process.

Besides, one of the key components of FSC's digital transformation is to start using Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing technologies to support a digital verification system and provide an assessment of validations and claims. Thus, iDAEL started working on a project to develop an innovative, interoperable, and user-friendly online platform that will allow all those involved in the auditing process the access and use of reliable and up-to-date geospatial data. The deployment of such a tool will improve the auditing process, the forest certification, and the FSC operation as follows:

- **Objectivity:** unbiased satellite-derived data provide reliable measurements, giving the auditor a full picture and an objective assessment of the whole area of interest.
- **Transparency:** access to global-scale geospatial datasets from reliable sources. Workflows of analysis integrated into built-in widgets based on automated spatial operations using the available datasets
- **Efficiency:** providing access to data before field evaluation, enabling better planning of more adequate, targeted and risk-based field visits based on the concentration of potential non-conformities
- **Traceability:** constantly identify differences in the state of the forest by leveraging the availability of satellite imagery. The monitoring over time gives a better understanding of how the land has evolved instead of giving a snapshot of one specific moment without including the temporal dimension.



- Development of an online Research Portal to foster the communication of scientific information among FSC stakeholders, including evidence of outcomes and impacts.
- Development of a relational database of all FSC requirements, in which the normative requirements traditionally stored in PDF documents (standards, procedures, policies etc.) will be migrated to a database allowing to manage consistency and dependencies of the requirements across the whole system, as well as enabling building user-friendly interfaces for querying requirements and filtering them by relevant stakeholders.
- Maintenance of a workflow for geospatial data (detailed boundaries) contribution, and online visualization of FSC certified forests on web maps.
- Maintenance and creation of new maps in a gallery of map-based dashboards to display FSC data on certification, membership, and locations in a user-friendly way.

The following projects originally planned for 2020 were postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis affecting FSC capacity:

- Update of FSC Theory of Change for monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Commissioning of external outcome evaluation.
- Knowledge Hub providing a collection of single data sources, rules for data standardization and management for FSC staff as part of FSC Intranet.

1.2. Plan for expansion

FSC expanded its system from 2.5 to 4.5 FTE in early 2019 to intensify and strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning system. This structure is expected to be sufficient enough for fulfilling the objectives of the system. However, due to changes in the Technology and Information structures, the additional position was added to the DAEL program to manage the project of a database of FSC requirements. Therefore, the resource allocation in 2020 was planned to reach 5.5.

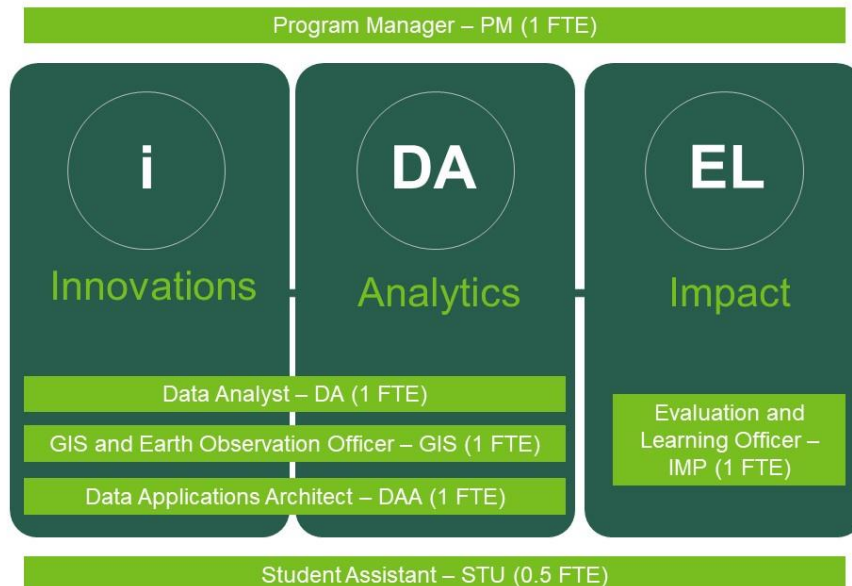
However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, overall FSC capacity across various teams have been reduced and from May 2020 onwards, DAEL reduced capacity with the intention to return back to 5.5. in 2021.

1.3. Resources, roles, and responsibilities

The Data Analytics, Evaluation and Learning Program (DAEL) consist of the following key functions¹ (Fig. 2):

- Evaluation and Learning Officer: responsible for impact area of the Program - IMP (1 FTE).
- GIS and Earth Observation Officer – GIS (1 FTE).
- Data Analyst – DA (1 FTE).
- Data Applications Architect (DAA)
GIS, DA, and DAA are responsible for data gathering, management and analytics in the Program.
- Student Assistant: providing support to the Program – STU (0,5 FTE).
- Program Manager: responsible for the strategic development, management, and deliverables in the Program - PM (1 FTE).

Fig 2. Key functions of DAEL Team (2020)



¹ Original FTE allocation is given



1.4. Data management

The FSC Certificate Database is the system for storing, organizing, and facilitating analysis and use of performance monitoring data. It currently uses a Salesforce interface, where certification bodies upload reports from the certification process and other relevant information. Data from the Salesforce is exported to other formats for the analysis (e.g. excel), or a connection to reporting tools is made (e.g. Power BI).

The results of the analysis are stored outside of Salesforce in relevant folders, with relevant access rights. Additionally, several sets of qualitative and quantitative data on standard-setting processes, market and consumers are collected, analyzed, and stored by relevant units (PSU, MCU, GAI).

FSC is in the process of updating the key data infrastructure and migration from current to more modern data management platform, allowing better integration of various databases and platforms under development. This process is planned to be completed by Q2 2021 and involves revision of key data schemas towards improving data quality and increasing analytical capability of FSC.

With the establishment of DAEL, new solutions are being designed to integrate data storage across units, with key data being centralized in the global intranet (Knowledge Hub project).

FSC has procedures to protect confidential and proprietary data. Transparency and data sharing aspects are also part of the Certification Body contracts with their clients.

Apart from the certification data, FSC has different confidentiality agreements with different partners, following the legislative framework. The confidentiality agreements are part of nearly every project and part of every contractual engagement (e.g. funding or services). All confidentiality agreements are overseen by FSC Legal Department. When publicizing the data, FSC looks for and obtain the consent from relevant parties as applicable. Upon introduction of General Data Protection Regulation by the European Union (GDPR), FSC has revised and adapted the procedures for handling personal data.



The legal barriers to the use of data for the implementation of the M&E system are addressed by the existing procedures for data protection. Additionally, when barriers are identified, FSC is engaging with the data holders via its Legal Department to come to a solution.

Data and knowledge are the key digital asset of FSC, that provides transparency for stakeholders, ensure credibility of the certification scheme and enables monitoring of FSC’s performances and evaluation of FSC’s impact.

FSC Technology and Information Unit takes overall responsibility of data management covering a broad scope of activities including data management infrastructure, data model, metadata management, data standardization, data quality control, storage and distribution of data, data security and data service. The components of data management, as well as respective infrastructure and projects, can be illustrated in Fig. 3.

Fig 3. Data management components

Infrastructure	Data model (sources)	Quality control	Standardization	Data security	Data services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamics • Salesforce • MYSQL • MS Azure • ESRI Arc GIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID management schema • Certificate management schema • Salesforce CRM schema 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and redesign of key data schemas • Analysis of data and necessary corrections • Automation of workflows and scripts for consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing internally aligned data schemas and formats • Unique and consistent referenceto existing external data standards (Tree speices and pesticides nomenclature, country names and boundaries) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data potection and security procedures • GDPR task force oversight • Integrated and secure ID management • Row level security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSC network report • FSC Facts and Figures • FSC On the Map • Management reports

The goal of FSC’s data management is to develop a data management strategy, ensure data security of both business and privacy data, and promote the data and knowledge across units. FSC is working on a series of a data-related project on tackling the challenges of data management, sharing and exposure, which include (compare Fig. 3):



- Data migration.
- Information and Data Standard for Sustainability: ISEAL – funded project to develop a common data schema for exposure of key data relevant across certification schemes.
- FM Online project to align and collect data from FM certification reports.
- FSC on the Map exposing the voluntarily provided geospatial representation of FSC certified areas.

FSC is working on reviewing and improving the consistency of various resources combined with the retirement of unnecessary intermediary data storage and systems.

Regarding geospatial data management, FSC is using ESRI tools and services to process and publish information and applications.

FSC provides data service across units, network partners, ASI, FSC management and interested stakeholders via business intelligence tools such as Microsoft Power BI and Tableau. Reports and dashboards are designed and refreshed regularly, provided access with credential control with active directory identity management. The use of BI tools ensures the consistent, one source data is shared via a user-friendly interface and graphic visuals, which enables insights inspiration, analytics and decision making by a good organizational data sharing culture.

2. Stakeholder Engagement in M&E System Design

2.1. Stakeholder mapping and engagement

2.1.1. Stakeholder identification

Categories of stakeholders relevant for FSC monitoring and evaluation system are revised on an annual basis, as part of the revision of this document. The identification of stakeholder categories in 2020 was done by DAEL Team. Additionally, relevant stakeholders will be consulted for specific projects/events.



The following core stakeholder categories are considered relevant for the FSC monitoring and evaluation system:

- External academic researchers and consultants
- FSC Global leadership forum
 - Directors of FSC Units
 - Regional directors and chosen Network representatives
- FSC program areas relevant for monitoring and evaluation
 - Forest Management
 - Chain of Custody
 - Controlled Wood
 - Ecosystem Services
 - Quality and Assurance
 - Value Chain Development
 - Marketing
 - Trademark
 - Communications
 - Indigenous peoples
 - New approaches (smallholders)
 - Engagement (FSC Membership and partnerships)
 - Dispute Resolution
 - All programs at the Technology and Information Unit
- Above stakeholders were actively engaged in 2020 and the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Group was established in January 2020 consisting of representatives across the above program and bodies.
- In the course of 2021, FSC plans to expand the M&E Advisory Group to include external partners, e.g.:
 - Certification bodies and Accreditation Services International (ASI) (“trialogue group” composed from representatives of certification bodies and ASI)
 - ISEAL (through the assessment of compliance against the Impacts Code)
 - Key environmental individuals or organizations
 - Key social individuals or organizations



- Key economic individuals or organizations.

2.1.2. Stakeholder consultation

In 2020, internal stakeholders have been consulted to receive feedback on:

- Various components of FSC's Theory of Change for M&E activities for its update, including:
 - Main activities and outputs of the various programs and organizational units.
 - Their intended and unintended outcomes and impacts on the short-, medium- and long-term, as well as logical pathways connecting successive outcomes.
 - Most relevant indicators to allow monitoring of these outcomes.
- Scope and boundaries of the M&E system.
- Scope of DAEL and TIU Projects.

Consultation of internal and external stakeholders to received feedback on the final draft of FSC's Theory of Change for M&E activities was planned, however, this was put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FSC welcomes the feedback on the above at any point of time at impacts@fsc.org.

Additionally, researchers and certification bodies have been consulted to provide feedback on a pre-selected list of voluntary indicators to be included in the FM Online tool to allow the collection of data on outcomes of FSC certification.

Finally, some external researchers and colleagues from the FSC Network and FSC International, including members of the Senior Management Team, were consulted to collaboratively define the most relevant research project for which FSC would commission an independent external evaluation. The project was put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Apart from the above, FSC is collecting feedback on system performance as part of standard-setting and revision processes. This feedback is collected and managed by relevant departments and shared with DAEL as relevant.

3. Intended and unintended impacts and outcomes

FSC developed its Theory of Change in 2015 (ToC), which defines intended long-term social, environmental, and economic impacts of the FSC certification system. Our ToC is complemented by a list of detailed indicators that relate to the short and medium-term social, environmental, and economic outcomes that are expected as a result of compliance with FSC standards.

In the organization, the ToC describes and illustrates four (4) main pathways and supporting strategies that contribute to the intended impacts. But also, includes a description of unintended impacts from the FSC system. To identify the unintended effects, the FSC ToC was consulted with stakeholders at the time of its development.

Additionally, as part of regular standard-setting processes and the oversight on implementation, FSC is collecting feedback from stakeholders which often reports on unintended effects. In 2020, the unintended effects were explicitly mentioned in the consultation with stakeholders identified as relevant to M&E (See section 2.1.2).

4. Performance Monitoring and Outcome & Impact evaluations

4.1. Performance monitoring

FSC implements monitoring and evaluation mainly through performance monitoring and through support to external impact evaluations. Monitoring is guided by the indicators provided in the FSC Theory of Change.



The key to performance monitoring is data collected through the certification process and included in the certification reports. With the introduction of DAEL, FSC has invested in developing the capacity to access and analyze this data more efficiently. Instead of manual extraction and analysis of the certification data, we now initiated the FM online project (described in section 1.1.3) to enable data standardization, collection, and automatic transfer to FSC, which will significantly increase the scope of possible analytics.

With the new GIS capacity, we are also introducing GIS analytic for corroboration and expansion of evidence for (in)compliance with FSC standards. FSC interactive maps constitute an example of initial GIS functionality and its added value to traditional data analysis (visualization, geo-component, time series, automatic selection etc.). Development of GIS online platform will significantly further increase GIS capacity (described in section 1.1.3).

FSC analyzes certification status in real-time using interactive reports (FSC Map of Facts and Figures, Internal Power BI dashboards). On a semi-annual basis, FSC has been compiling the data originating from certification reports for analytical purposes. This process will be replaced with the FM online project.

Additionally, future annual revision of the systemic report of monitoring and evaluation brings a compiled summary of the performance monitoring.

Various performance monitoring elements have been traditionally conducted by many departments within FSC (compare section 1.1.2), which will continue in close collaboration with DAEL:

- **Performance and Standards Unit (PSU):** analyzing the performance of the international FSC standards and introducing improvements based on evaluation of standard implementation. Through the standard-setting processes and the oversight of their implementation, we also monitor the performance indirectly, implementing necessary amendments to the system as relevant.



- **Marketing and Communication Unit (MCU):** analyzing market-related data and adjusting work areas accordingly (e.g. prioritization of value chains, revision of the relevant standards, communication strategies).
- **Global Integrity and Alignment (GIA):** analyzing the contents and frequency of disputes, standard revision processes (including relevant international procedures and support to national FSC normative frameworks). There are also different initiatives within GIA and the FSC Network that collect and systematize FSC-relevant country information.

The data collection protocols to ensure data quality is detailed in the monitoring and evaluation indicators included in the FSC Theory of Change, as well as in a separate overview document. The processes of data collection by certification bodies are detailed in accreditation standards and data quality is monitored in the Salesforce. Data submission and quality by certification bodies (CBs) are part of the regular evaluation of certification bodies by ASI. Data quality is monitored while data is used. In case data quality issues are discovered, data is corrected (compare section 1.3).

4.2. Outcome and impact evaluations

Complementary to performance monitoring is the independent evaluations conducted by external parties such as academic researchers and consultants. To stimulate the production of external impact evaluations and to increase their relevance and scientific robustness, FSC engages with researchers. The engagement includes participation in research projects, compilation, and distribution of the list of the main research topics interesting for FSC, and active and passive participation in scientific conferences. Engagement with research community gives FSC a chance to address questions relevant for monitoring and evaluation, to support robust methodology or take measures that help to achieve accurate, reliable, and relevant findings.

In 2020, the DAEL program developed and shared among pre-selected relevant researchers a request for proposals for an independent research project to be commissioned by FSC. The project aimed at evaluating the outcomes of FSC certification on forest



degradation in Intact Forest Landscapes, and specifically the added value of the High Conservation Value approach for the maintenance of forest intactness in Intact Forest Landscapes compared to other normative requirements. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared as a major blocker threatening the development of sound research project and its effective implementation in the field. Therefore, FSC decided to pause this project until further notice.

5. Learning and improving

5.1. Learning from the monitoring and evaluation system

In 2020, the main highlight of the DAEL program for fostering institutional learning is the development of FSC Research Portal: an open repository compiling FSC impact-related and other FSC-relevant scientific literature. This public repository aims to make scientific findings more easily accessible and digestible for both internal and external stakeholders, and therefore fostering insight-driven decision making and relevant and impactful development of the FSC system. So far, the development of the Research Portal has involved the definition of metadata to characterize scientific studies and their key findings and make them easily searchable and accessible. Until the portal is launched, the interested public can find some of the key scientific references about FSC [here](#), as well as on the “[Sustainability Impacts Learning Platform](#)” (maintained in collaboration between the Food Lab, ISEAL, and WWF) and the [Evidensia](#) platform.

With the establishment of DAEL, FSC is further investing in learning from its monitoring and evaluation system. In 2020, DAEL was communicating on the performance and monitoring, related projects and data initiatives to a variety of stakeholders, including online sessions with FSC Members, management and staff.

Furthermore, various aspects of the monitoring and evaluation system are reported to the FSC Global Leadership Forum (GLF) regularly, including through in-person sessions at the GLF meetings, or existing reporting tools (e.g. Power BI dashboards, GIS dashboards).

Generally, results from performance monitoring, outcome and impact evaluations and the learning from these activities are used to inform a periodic review and refinement of the



intended change in the FSC Theory of Change and FSC Global Strategic Plan. These subsequently lead to relevant updates of the monitoring and evaluation strategy (its scope and boundaries).

In 2020 the work on the revision of ToC was initiated, as well as the revision of the FSC Global Strategic Plan is ongoing. Apart from monitoring results, the feedback obtained from stakeholder consultation on the monitoring and evaluation system will be considered for the revision of the monitoring and evaluation strategy.

6. Transparency and Public Information

6.1. Publicly available information about monitoring and evaluation

FSC provides information on its monitoring and evaluation system on the FSC website, and in the present report. This publicly available information encompasses:

- A contact point for submission of any comments, questions, or complaints about the DAEL program and its M&E activities.
- A description of the current scope and boundaries of the monitoring and evaluation system, and if appropriate, the plan for expansion.
- Procedures and opportunities for stakeholder engagement in the design and revision of the M&E system and the results of these consultations through this report.
- An explanation of the scheme's strategies intended outcomes and impacts, and the most significant unintended effects in the FSC Theory of Change.
- A list of all indicators being used in the monitoring and evaluation system.
- A list of completed, ongoing and planned outcome and impact evaluations; and
- Links to the most relevant independent impact evaluations.