

# Continuous Improvement procedure



## The background

Without sufficient resources and understanding, many smallholders and communities find it hard to fully conform with FSC standards. The concept of continuous improvement – whereby smallholders are able to take a step-wise approach to conformance, focusing on the most important criteria first and then working their way up – is not new; it has been used by other certification schemes.

But FSC has been working hard to formalise an approach to continuous improvement in forestry that works for smallholders that want to make use of the FSC system.

“Certification will be awarded as soon as the critical criteria are met.”

## What we are doing

FSC did not start from scratch and took into consideration the learning from previous FSC initiatives, such as MAP (Modular Approach Program), benchmarking with other certification schemes that implement stepwise approaches, and results from an initiative designated as Community Tool. Additional research has been conducted in two different regions in the last two years.

In Latin America, a series of workshops with smallholders, stakeholders, certificate holders and certification bodies allowed identifying together the criteria that are most critical for responsible forest management in the region. In Africa, a technical working group was in charge of identifying such critical criteria for the region.

Using existing FSC principles, two sets of criteria have been identified: the critical criteria (the things smallholders must have achieved in order to become certified), and the continuous improvement criteria (the things that must be achieved by way

of a ‘work plan’ in the next five years in order to maintain the certification).

Each year, smallholders must stick to their plan if they want to maintain their FSC certificate.

## Key features

- A new international procedure is being developed, including the two years of work implemented in Africa and Latin America. The results in these two regions are very aligned (the criteria identified as critical are very similar). There is also a strong alignment with the Community Tool.
- A step-wise approach will allow conforming with all FSC requirements, but certification will be awarded as soon as the critical criteria are met.
- It will provide FSC with a path to design complementary services to smallholders in line with FSC’s future strategic positioning.

## Current progress and next steps

A technical working group has been established to develop this new international procedure for continuous improvement.

Thanks to all the previous work done, the work plan to develop the procedure is streamlined, and includes one public consultation to take place in 2020. After that, the goal is to develop a final procedure to be approved in the first half of 2021.

## Reference documents

- FSC-PRO-01-001 Development and Revision of FSC Normative Documents
- FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators

> [Process weblink](#)