



FOCUS FORESTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE FOCUS FORESTS?

'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.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS FORESTS PROJECT?

The Focus Forests project aims to find solutions for stewardship in forests that have special social and environmental values. In the Focus Forests project, FSC explores 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.

WHY IS FSC WORKING ON THIS?

The Focus Forests project aims 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.

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 is 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 proposed for the 2021-2022 General Assembly. The Focus Forests project aims to host constructive dialogue to discuss this further and agree upon an approach for FSC. FSC intends to discuss outcomes of the exploration and a way forward for Focus Forests around the world in the upcoming FSC General Assembly in October 2022.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT?

FSC has selected a consortium of 10 researchers led by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), from different organizations and geographies 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	Bern University of Applied Sciences / ETHZ - 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
<i>The team is supported by:</i>	
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

There is also a steering group made up of an FSC Board member, senior FSC International staff and the lead researcher. The FSC International Board Strategic Planning Committee is also 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 IN A MEANINGFUL WAY?

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

HOW WILL FSC DO THIS WORK?

Phase 1:

In phase 1 the research team developed a common framework for discussion with an agreed set of values and definitions:

1. The framework of values, maps, and definitions will be used to base the discussions on, asking FSC's members to contribute articles, definitions and maps they wish to be considered.
2. Publishing of a '[Green paper](#)' which encapsulates the researchers' work and provides 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:

During phase 2 FSC will host dialogues that bring 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 different uses including conservation, ecosystem services, extraction and restoration could best be developed in the landscape and the roles FSC and FSC certification could play.

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 two dialogues, and identifying lessons learned.
4. Presenting results of Phase I and Phase II at FSC's General Assembly 2022 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?

The motivation for Focus Forests is found in Strategy 1 (Co-create and implement forest solutions) and Strategy 3 (Catalyze change) of the FSC Global Strategy 2021 – 2026.

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 phase two of the Focus Forests Project when we bring actors together in a specific landscape to agree on the landscape uses.

HOW IS THE FOCUS FORESTS PROJECT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT FSC NORMALLY DOES?

1. The focus forests project looks at the 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 doing this, the project acknowledges different interests in a landscape and seeks agreement between these.
3. New methods of constructive dialogue are being developed to help seek agreements between stakeholders with different interests and perspectives in a landscape.
4. The project seeks to engage governmental bodies into the landscape dialogue, as important stakeholders, and owners of the land.

IS FOCUS FORESTS INTENDED TO HELP ADDRESS MOTION 65?

Yes. Some FSC members argue that more of the environmentally and socially valuable forests need to be fully protected and should not be certified for production. Other members argue that responsible use of forests is necessary to protect them against illegality and conversion.

In an [analysis](#) of the impact of FSC's rules on IFLs, we found that FSC certified forest management units are 0.6 to 7% of the full IFL. The analysis also showed that FSC certification is abandoned or not started due to the rules, and sustainable forest management is not supported and enhanced in IFLs.

Focus Forests is exploring a different way of addressing high ecological and social values by taking the landscape into account when certifying a FMU. If this is successful, the FSC membership can consider in the upcoming GA in 2022 a different way of stewardship in these focus forests.

WILL THE FOCUS FORESTS PROJECT HELP ADDRESS THE MANY DEFINITIONS (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF FSC) RELATING TO FORESTED AREAS THAT HAVE SPECIAL VALUE? FOR EXAMPLE, ANCIENT FORESTS, ENDANGERED FORESTS, OLD GROWTH MANAGEMENT AREAS, HCV'S, ICL'S, ETC.?

Many definitions of forests exist, and they are slightly and sometimes considerably different. This does not bring a clear starting point in the discussion. Focus Forests starts with ensuring that the research has considered these definitions, and an agreed understanding is developed, based on existing definitions and literature. The [Green Paper](#) will be a starting point for discussion. The project is developing an approach for constructive dialogues on a specific landscape, overcoming differences between stakeholders and developing an agreed approach for that landscape.

IS FOCUS FORESTS 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 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 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 HCVN. The FSC HCV framework has also become central to other certification schemes. Focus Forests will use the HCV framework as a starting block for analysis of the ways that people and institutions define and measure the value of a forest.

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 forest management units with millions of hectares, it is possible for there to be 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.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN THE FOCUS FORESTS PROJECT?

- **Propose** a landscape for field testing in the tropics or in the boreal.
- **Subscribe** to our 6-8 weekly [newsletter](#).
- **Comment** on the Focus Forests [Green Paper draft](#) before 28 February 2022.
- **Watch** the Focus Forests [Side Meeting](#) recording from the FSC General Assembly 2021-2022 held in October 2021.
- **Join** part two of the FSC General Assembly 09-14 October 2022 where researchers and FSC will present the findings of the Focus Forests project.