

PROCEDURE

# THE DEVELOPMENT AND REVISION OF FSC COUNTRY REQUIREMENTS

FSC-PRO-60-006 V3-0 EN D1-0



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FOREVER**<sup>TM</sup>

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<b>Title:</b>	The Development and Revision of FSC Country Requirements
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<b>Contact:</b>	FSC International – Policy and Performance Unit Adenauerallee 134 53113 Bonn Germany
	<b>Phone:</b> +49 -(0)228 -36766 -0
	<b>Fax:</b> +49 -(0)228 -36766 -65
	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:policy_performance@fsc.org">policy_performance@fsc.org</a>

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## Version control

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Version	Description	Publication Date
V 1-0	Initial version.	03 June 2014
V 2-0	Minor change including providing further instructions on how to use the IGI as a starting point in the process.	01 June 2015
V 3-0	<p>Major change to introduce outcome orientation and streamlining the requirements for the development and revision of country requirements in accordance with the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026. This version and its addenda are replacing the following normative documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) FSC-STD-60-006 V1-2 Process Requirements for the development and maintenance of National Forest Stewardship Standards,</li><li>b) FSC STD-60-002 V1-0 Structure and Content of National Forest Stewardship Standards,</li><li>c) FSC-PRO-60-006 V2-0 Development and Transfer of National Forest Stewardship Standards to the FSC Principles and Criteria Version 5-1,</li><li>d) FSC-PRO-60-007 V1-2 Structure, Content and Development of Interim National Standards, and</li><li>e) FSC-PRO-60-002 V3-0 EN The Development and Approval of FSC® National Risk Assessments.</li></ul>	1 January 2027

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# INTRODUCTION

The FSC certification system is based on international requirements, which are adapted to regional or country conditions to ensure responsible forest management and to mitigate the risk of unacceptable material from mixing with FSC certified products. The two main sets of requirements that are adapted are Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) for FSC Forest Management Certification and the FSC Risk Assessments (RA) supporting Chain of Custody Certification that involves FSC Mix products, and certificate holders aiming to conform with the Regulatory Modules.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, FSS and RA are collectively referred to as 'FSC country requirements'. This procedure defines the process for developing, reviewing, revising, and withdrawing FSC country requirements. The requirements in this procedure and its addenda <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards> and <FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework> aim to ensure high quality FSS and RA by implementing clear and consistent processes and content requirements.

The development of this procedure has been guided by the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026 to make the FSC system more outcome-oriented, user-friendly, and efficient while strengthening its integrity, credibility, relevance, and reliability.

The processes regulated by this procedure ensure conformity with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems.

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<sup>1</sup> The FSC Regulatory Modules include:

Regulatory modules for Forest Management certification:

<FSC-STD-60-004r Regulatory Module - International Generic Indicators>

<FSC-STD-30-010r Regulatory Module - Controlled Forest Management>

<FSC-STD-30-005r Regulatory Module - Forest Management Groups>

Regulatory modules for Chain of Custody certification:

<FSC-STD-40-004r Regulatory Module - Chain of Custody Certification>

<FSC-STD-40-006r Regulatory Module - Project Certification>

Regulatory module for Use of the FSC Trademarks:

<FSC-STD-50-001r Regulatory Module - Trademark>

Regulatory modules for the Evaluations by Certification Bodies:

<FSC-STD-20-001r Regulatory Module - General Requirements for Certification Bodies>

<FSC-STD-20-007r Regulatory Module – Forest Management Evaluations>

<FSC-STD-20-011r Regulatory Module - Chain of Custody Evaluations>

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## SCOPE

This procedure is applicable to the parties involved in the development or revision of FSC country requirements as listed under Section 2 of this procedure. This procedure specifies process steps and types for the development and revision of the following types of FSC country requirements:

- a) Forest Stewardship Standards; and
- b) Risk Assessments.

This procedure shall be used, as applicable, in conjunction with the requirements defined in <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards> and <FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework> to develop or revise the relevant FSC country requirements. The resulting FSC country requirements will be approved upon demonstrated conformity with this procedure and its associated addenda.

All aspects of this document are considered to be normative, including the scope, effective date, transition end date, period of validity, references, terms and definitions, tables, and annexes, unless otherwise stated and/or marked as an example. Informative guidance, notes and examples are not considered normative.

### Consultation Note:

This procedure replaces Part I, Part II, and Part III of <FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework>. All Risk Assessments shall be developed or revised through one of the three process types: major, regular or accelerated process type. The specific process requirements are described in this procedure.

## REFERENCES

The following documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For references without a version number, the latest version of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies:

<b>FSC-PRO-01-001</b>	The Development and Revision of FSC Requirements
<b>PSU-PRO-10-201</b>	FSC Enquiry Procedure
<b>FSC-PRO-60-006a</b>	Structure and Content of Forest Stewardship Standards
<b>FSC-PRO-60-006b</b>	Risk Assessment Framework
<b>FSC-GUI-60-006</b>	Guidance for Standard Developers to develop Outcome-oriented Forest Stewardship Standards
<b>FSC-GUI-30-011</b>	FSC Guidance for Stakeholder Engagement

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AADA</b>	Adopt, Adapt, Drop and Add Indicators
<b>FSC</b>	Forest Stewardship Council
<b>FSS</b>	Forest Stewardship Standard
<b>HCV</b>	High Conservation Value
<b>IGI</b>	International Generic Indicator
<b>ISEAL</b>	ISEAL Alliance
<b>P&amp;P</b>	Policy & Performance Unit of FSC International
<b>PSC</b>	Policy and Standards Committee
<b>PSG</b>	Policy Steering Group
<b>RA</b>	Risk Assessment
<b>TBD</b>	To Be Decided
<b>WG</b>	Working group

# PART I: GENERAL

## Informative guidance

There are three process types for the development and revision of FSC country requirements: “major”, “regular”, and “accelerated.” Each process type has different requirements and steps to be followed (see Table 1).

Part I of the procedure introduces the general requirements for these processes. Part II specifies the requirements for the development and revision of FSC country requirements, while Part III outlines the requirements for the maintenance of FSC country requirements. See Figure 1 below for an overview of the process.



Figure 1. Overview of the development and revision processes and maintenance of FSC country requirements.

## 1. Process types

1.1 The responsible body shall allocate the development or revision of FSC country requirements to one of the following process types:

- a) **Major:** process to develop and revise FSC country requirements, involving a chamber-balanced working group.
- b) **Regular:** process to develop and revise FSC country requirements, involving a technical working group.
- c) **Accelerated:** process to develop and revise FSC country requirements, involving a technical working group. This type of process is urgent, necessary to preserve the integrity and credibility of the FSC system or to bring alignment and harmonization in FSC country requirements. It also includes the addition of new or revised International Generic Indicators (IGI) or administrative revisions such as the correction of typographical mistakes.

NOTE 1: An accelerated revision can be undertaken to adopt or adapt a new or revised IGI in an approved Forest Stewardship Standard (FSS), or as a result of an annual review of a Risk Assessment (RA).

NOTE 2: The final decision on the process allocation is determined by the FSC Policy and Performance Director at the time of approval of the registration request depending on the proposal submitted by the responsible body, in accordance with Clause 3.24.1 b).

- 1.2 When using the approach of 'minimal adaptation of IGI' in accordance with Clause 5.12 of <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards>, the responsible body shall allocate the process type as accelerated.
- 1.3 At the time of approval of the registration request, the FSC Policy and Performance Director may re-allocate a process to another process type, if deemed necessary. Any re-allocation decision shall be justified, documented, and shared with the responsible body.
- 1.4 During the registration or conceptual phase, the responsible body may request deviations from the process steps. The FSC Policy and Performance Director shall evaluate and decide upon such requests on a case-by-case basis.

Table 1. Phases and steps per process type to develop and revise FSC country requirements.

Phase	Steps	Major Process	Regular Process	Accelerated Process
	Type of Working Group	Chamber-balanced	Technical	Technical
Registration	Submission of the Registration Request by	Responsible body	Responsible body*	Responsible body
	Development of process terms of reference by	Responsible body	Responsible body	Responsible body
	Decision on registration request by	Policy & Performance Director	Policy & Performance Director	Policy & Performance Director
Conceptual phase	Type of consultation	Public	Consultation is optional	Not applicable
Drafting	Drafting of FSC country requirements by	Process lead	Process lead	Process lead
	Type of consultation	Development: Public; Revision: Public or focused	Public or Focused	Focused
Testing	Testing of the draft FSC country requirements	Mandatory	Testing is optional	TBD on a case-by-case
Final decision	Decision-making body is	Policy Steering Group	Policy Steering Group	Policy Steering Group
Implementation	Publication date of approved FSC country requirements is	Up to 3 months from the date of approval of FSC country requirements		Immediately after approval of FSC country requirements
	Effective date of FSC country requirements is	For FSS: 3 months after publication date For RA: same date as the publication date		TBD on a case-by-case
	Transition end date is	For FSS: 18 months after effective date		TBD on a case-by-case
	Period of validity	From effective date until it is withdrawn or replaced by a new version.		
Monitoring and Review	Review of FSC country requirements	Within five years from the transition end date and additional annual review for Risk Assessments		Not applicable

\*In the context of the Risk Information Alliance (RIA), the term responsible body can be used interchangeably with the term responsible organization. For further information on the RIA, please access the following link: <https://www.riskinformationalliance.org>

## 2. Involved parties

### Informative guidance

Figure 2 provides an overview of the parties involved in the development and revision of FSC country requirements along with their key responsibilities.

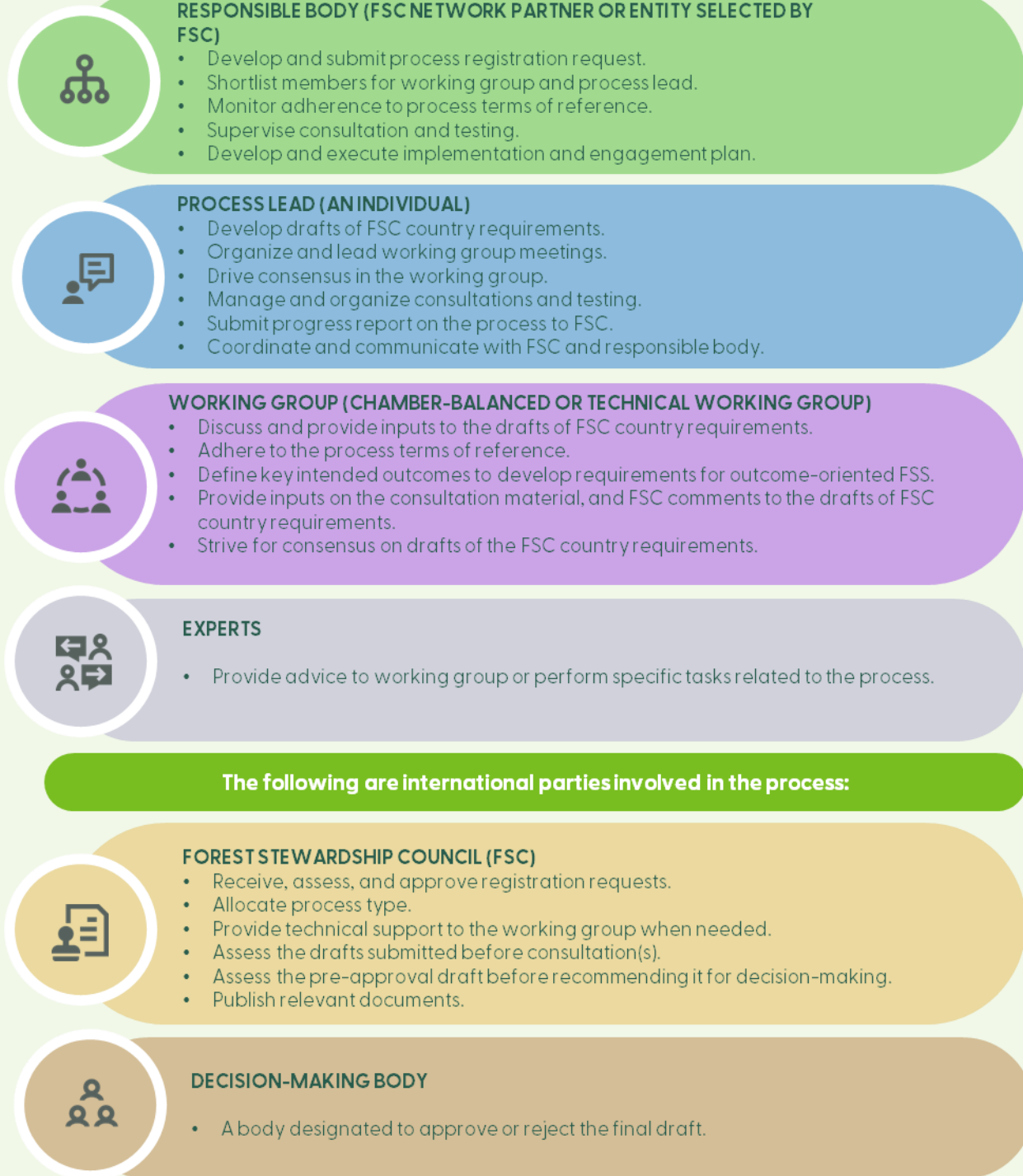


Figure 2. Overview of involved parties.

## Responsible body

2.1 The responsible body for developing or revising FSC country requirements, shall be either:

- a) By default, an FSC Network Partner within the relevant geographical scope, or
- b) An entity selected by FSC.

NOTE 1: If an FSC Network Partner is established after the process had been registered, the role of the responsible body may be transferred to this FSC Network Partner.

NOTE 2: In case of RA, one of the FSC partner organizations participating in the Risk Information Alliance can be considered as the responsible body.

NOTE 3: Clause 2.1 b) applies in case an FSC Network Partner does not exist within the relevant geographical scope, or decides not to lead the specific development or revision process.

NOTE 4: The entity includes FSC Network, FSC Regional Offices and the Policy & Performance Unit at FSC (P&P).

NOTE 5: An individual cannot be designated as the responsible body.

2.2 The responsible body shall manage the development or revision process (hereinafter referred to as 'process') by:

- a) Submitting the registration request to FSC, including confirmation of the necessary funding and resources;
- b) Developing the terms of reference;
- c) Selecting candidates for the working group and process lead;
- d) Securing the formal commitment of the working group members and the process lead to the terms of reference (see Section 4).
- e) Selecting expert(s);
- f) Supervising consultations and testing;
- g) Developing and implementing an engagement plan;
- h) Developing a review report; and
- i) Performing other activities detailed in this procedure and its addenda.

NOTE 1: The responsible body can document the formal commitment of the working group members and the process lead to the terms of reference in different ways (e.g., with a signed copy of the terms of reference, a statement of commitment sent by email or in a letter, etc.).

NOTE 2: In case of RA, the process lead may identify and engage experts along the process in accordance with Clause 2.21.

2.3 The responsible body shall adhere to the terms of reference (see Section 4).

NOTE: The responsible body can declare the formal commitment to the terms of reference by signing the terms of reference.

2.4 Before submitting the registration request to FSC, the responsible body shall launch a public call for the selection of members for the working group.

## Process lead

- 2.5 The process lead shall be selected based on the following criteria:
- a) Soft skills: Skilled in teamwork, clarity of expression, cultural sensitivity, critical thinking and consensus building;
  - b) Contribution: Oriented towards achieving solutions and results within the process timelines, and possessing knowledge of the forestry sector of the geographical area concerned, and general knowledge of the FSC system;
  - c) Engagement: Ability to engage and encourage active participation from the working group members; and
  - d) Facilitation and drafting: Possess skills to coordinate, collaborate and resolve issues, and ability to write clearly, concisely and with consistency.
- 2.6 The following persons shall not be eligible to be a process lead:
- a) Members of international FSC decision-making bodies (e.g., members of the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) or the FSC Board of Directors (BoD) or of any FSC Secretariat leadership such as Unit Directors or the Policy Steering Group (PSG));
  - b) Staff or members of decision-making bodies of other forest certification schemes (*not applicable in case of the Risk Information Alliance partner organizations*); or
  - c) Representatives of FSC-disassociated companies.
- 2.7 The process lead shall:
- a) Ensure smooth and constant communication between parties involved in the process;
  - b) Project manage the process, including regular reviews of project risks and implementing mitigation actions;
  - c) Safeguard process integrity;
  - d) Adhere to the terms of reference;
  - e) Manage the working group by:
    - i) Establishing and executing the workplan;
    - ii) Designing the structure and scope of the working group meetings;
    - iii) Organizing and leading working group meetings;
    - iv) Facilitating constructive discussions and driving consensus in the working group;
    - v) Assessing the workability of the proposals submitted by the working group; and
    - vi) Providing the working group with relevant drafts and additional documents for review.
  - f) Develop drafts of FSC country requirements based on the following:
    - i) For FSS, requirements specified in <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards>; and
    - ii) For RA, requirements specified in <FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework>.
  - g) Consult with experts, as applicable;
  - h) Develop conceptual phase consultation material in accordance with Section 5 of this procedure;

- i) Safeguard the quality of draft FSC country requirements and relevant materials;
- j) Submit regular progress reports on the process to FSC;
- k) Address FSC comments;
- l) Manage and organize consultations and testing in accordance with Section 7;
- m) Coordinate and communicate with the responsible body and FSC; and
- n) Perform other activities detailed in this procedure and its addenda.

NOTE: The process lead may modify the terms of reference as a result of the inputs received during the conceptual phase consultation in accordance with Clause 4.2.

- 2.8 The process lead should conduct a comparison with any other approved FSC country requirements in the region, pertaining to crucial topics.

NOTE: Crucial topics may include, but are not limited to: identification and involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, living wages, conversion, forest degradation, use of pesticides, High Conservation Values (HCVs), Conservation Area Networks, etc.

- 2.9 When a comparison as per Clause 2.8 is developed or already exists in the region, the process lead shall share the results with the responsible body and working group members.

### Working group

- 2.10 A chamber-balanced working group shall have one of the following compositions:

- a) In case of FSC country requirements with a country or sub-country scope, the working group shall have at least two representatives in each chamber, and equal number of members (or equal weighting) in each chamber; or
- b) In case of FSC country requirements with a scope of more than one country, the working group shall have at least one representative from each of the countries in each chamber and equal representation (weighting or number of members) in chambers.

NOTE: If the FSC National Board of Directors meets the above criteria, they can form a chamber-balanced working group to develop or revise FSC country requirements.

- 2.11 A technical working group shall consist of members with expertise in social, environmental, and/or economic aspects in relation to the forests under consideration.

NOTE: The responsible body may establish a technical working group comprising of the process lead and expert(s), if necessary.

- 2.12 The working group members shall be selected based on the following criteria:

- a) **Technical skills:** Expertise in social, environmental and/or economic aspects related to the forestry sector of the geographical area concerned, and general knowledge of the FSC system;
- b) **Soft skills:** Skilled in teamwork, consensus building, critical thinking and culturally appropriate behaviour; and
- c) **Contribution:** Oriented towards results and solutions while respecting the assigned tasks and process timelines.

- 2.13 The working group members should be selected considering gender-balance.
- 2.14 The following persons shall not be eligible to be appointed as working group members:
- a) Members of international FSC decision-making bodies (e.g., members of the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) or the FSC Board of Directors members (BoD) or of any FSC Secretariat leadership such as Unit Directors or the Policy Steering Group (PSG)); or
  - b) Staff or members of decision-making bodies of other forest certification schemes (*not applicable in case of the Risk Information Alliance partner organizations*); or
  - c) Representatives of FSC-disassociated companies.
- NOTE: Representative of FSC-disassociated companies also include employees of its subsidiaries.
- 2.15 Working group members shall formally declare their commitment to the terms of reference (see Section 4).
- NOTE: The working group members can apply for a stipend, to be decided on a case-by-case basis by FSC, in coordination with the responsible body.
- 2.16 When an organization nominates a working group member, it shall recognize the contributions of the nominated working group member as contributions of the organization.
- 2.17 For the purpose of the specific FSC country requirements process, the working group has completed its role towards FSC International upon publication of the FSC country requirements and will be delisted accordingly.

## Experts

- 2.18 The expert(s) shall be selected based on the following criteria:
- a) Experience in the relevant field (e.g., forest management, labour rights, third parties' rights, highly hazardous pesticides, HCVs, genetically modified organisms (GMO), conversion and/or forest degradation, rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and traditional peoples, international conventions and regulations on environmental and social issues, etc.);
  - b) Proven research and analysis skills, or experience based knowledge;
  - c) Proven detailed understanding of the country/regional context; and
  - d) Competence in the local language is preferred.
- NOTE: The expert role can be fulfilled by a WG member, as applicable.
- 2.19 In case of FSS, the responsible body shall select expert(s) for the key intended outcomes based on the following criteria:
- a) Knowledge on defining objectives and measurable outcomes;
  - b) Knowledge of industry best practices;
  - c) Expertise in methodologies for data collection and analysis; and
  - d) Confirmed experience in establishing monitoring protocols and utilizing technology and innovation where applicable to enhance monitoring efficiency and effectiveness.

2.20 The selected expert(s) shall:

- a) Participate in working group discussions; and/or
- b) Perform specific tasks related to the process.

NOTE 1: The expert role can be fulfilled by one or several experts, to provide the needed expertise on relevant topics.

NOTE 2: FSC staff, members of international FSC decision-making bodies, and staff of FSC-accredited certification bodies may be appointed as experts provided there is no conflict of interest.

2.21 For RA, the process lead shall consult experts on the draft risk assessment (including but not limited to selected indicators), if:

- a) There are limited publicly available sources of information to evaluate the indicator and to reach a risk conclusion; or
- b) There are doubts on the assessment of present risk (e.g., whether the risk is widespread, systematic, etc.); or
- c) Input is needed to establish mitigation measures.

NOTE: The expert consultation is recommended even if the above criteria are not met.

2.22 The expert(s) shall have no formal role in decision-making processes.

NOTE: This clause does not apply in case a WG member is fulfilling the role of an expert.

# PART II: REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REVISION

## 3. Registration phase

### Informative guidance

The registration phase is the first step in the process and is initiated by the responsible body by submitting a registration request to FSC. It is at this stage that the process is allocated as major, regular or accelerated process type. It is worth highlighting that FSC reserves the option to have registrations undergo a global prioritization exercise.

See Figure 3 below for an overview of the registration and conceptual phase.

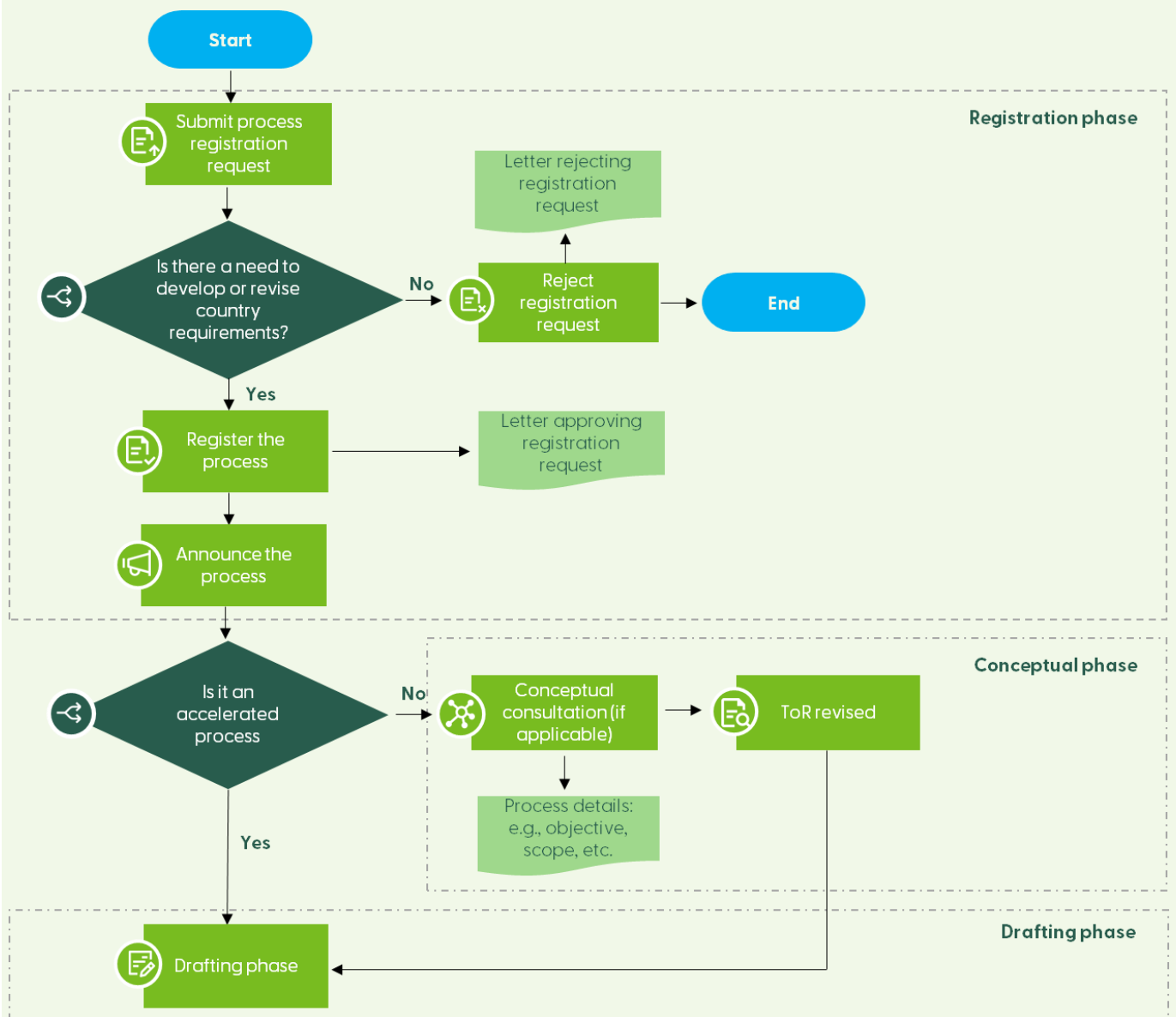


Figure 3. Overview of registration and conceptual phase.

- 3.1 The responsible body shall prepare and submit the registration request for the process to FSC.
- 3.2 The responsible body shall define and register the following information in the provided template<sup>2</sup>:

- a) Details of the responsible body submitting the registration request;
- b) Terms of reference, as specified in Clause 4.1;

NOTE: The terms of reference may change to address the feedback received during the conceptual phase consultation.

- c) Scope of the FSC country requirements, including geographical scope (country or region), forest and vegetation type, ownership type, products or commodity type, etc.;

NOTE 1: For FSS, the scope categories are described in Section 2 of <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards>.

NOTE 2: For RA, the scope categories are defined in Section 10 of <FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework>.

- d) For FSS, a risk-based approach shall be applied for assessing the risks of non-conformity with FSS indicators, either for all or covering some indicators. The FSS indicators excluded from the scope of the risk-based approach shall be marked as 'Not assessed'.

NOTE: The requirements for a risk-based approach for assessing the risks of non-conformity for FSS indicators are described in Section 4 of <FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards>.

- e) In case of RA, a partial risk assessment may be developed which covers some of the indicators. The indicators excluded from the scope of the assessment shall be marked as 'Not assessed'.
- f) Rationale for developing or revising FSC country requirements;
- g) Review report, in case of a revision;
- h) Confirmation of necessary funding and resources secured for the process;
- i) Engagement plan, in accordance with Clause 3.3;
- j) A list of candidates selected as working group members and the process lead, along with their roles and responsibilities; and
- k) A list of pre-selected experts to be engaged in the process.

NOTE 1: This list contains the experts selected in accordance with Clause 2.19 to develop outcome-oriented FSS.

NOTE 2: The process lead, in coordination with the responsible body, may identify and engage experts along the process, as applicable.

- 3.3 The engagement plan shall at a minimum include:

- a) Stakeholder identification, in accordance with Annex 1: Stakeholder Group List;
- b) A list of stakeholders to be consulted in focused consultations, in accordance with Clause 7.11;

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<sup>2</sup> The registration template is available upon request to FSC via [country\\_requirements@fsc.org](mailto:country_requirements@fsc.org).

- c) The purpose of engagement with identified stakeholder groups listed in accordance with a) above and communication channels to be used during the process;
- d) The consultation method(s) considered to be the most appropriate form of communication with stakeholder groups, including Indigenous Peoples, traditional peoples, local communities, etc.; and
- e) The plan for the announcement of process registration, consultations, and publication of approved FSC country requirements.

NOTE: <[FSC-GUI-30-011 Guidance for stakeholder engagement](#)> is recommended to be used for stakeholder mapping and developing an engagement plan.

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## Informative guidance on the allocation of process types

The registration request explains the need for and feasibility of the process. It indicates the process type (major, regular, or accelerated) and the steps to be followed for the proposed process, including but not limited to a brief introduction on the scope, objective, consultations required, testing and timeline of the process. In addition, the registration request includes the nomination of candidates for the roles of process lead, working group members and experts.

In determining the need for a process, consider the potential for FSC certification or maintaining existing FSC certification, as well as the benefits for the forestry sector in the geographical region. Examples of aspects to consider while assessing the need for a development or revision process are:

- Forest area (ha);
- Certified area (ha);
- Number of Chain of Custody certificates;
- Market development (trade, potential for increasing certificates, export of forest-based products, etc.);
- Certification bodies operating in the geographical region;
- Data on land conversion and forest degradation;
- Use of genetically modified organisms;
- Prevailing conditions in the forestry sector, including legislation; and
- FSC strategic priorities.

See Figure 4 below for examples of basic questions determining the allocation to a particular process type.

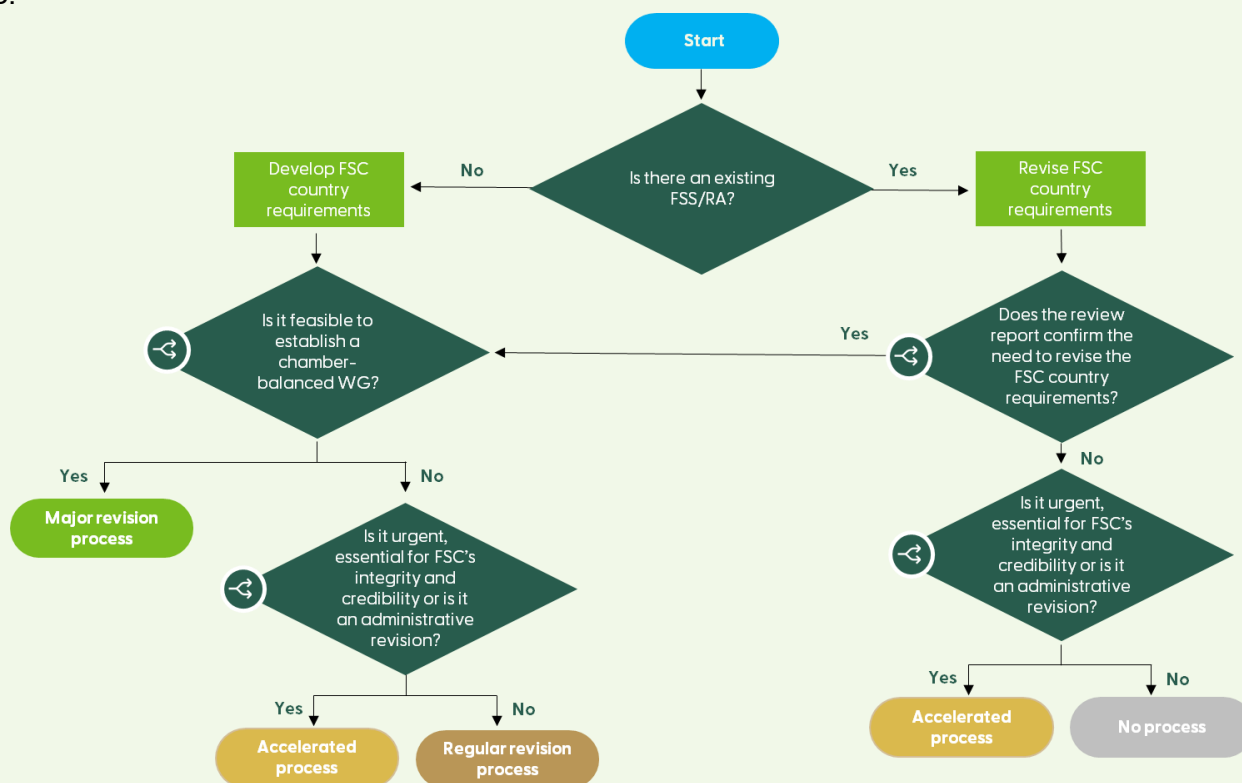


Figure 4. Guidance on the allocation of process types.

- 3.4 The responsible body shall ensure that the duration of the process for drafting, consultations, testing and addressing FSC comments, does not exceed:
- a) For major processes, eighteen (18) months from the approval date of the registration until the submission of the assessment draft to FSC; and
  - b) For regular processes, twelve (12) months from the approval date of the registration until the submission of the assessment draft to FSC.
- 3.5 FSC shall ensure that the duration of the process for review of the assessment draft of FSC country requirements until publication does not exceed twelve (12) months from the submission of the assessment draft.
- 3.6 When requested by FSC, the responsible body shall submit additional information related to a registration request within a timeframe specified by FSC.
- 3.7 The FSC Policy and Performance Director shall review the registration request and either:
- a) Approve the registration request, and allocate a process type; or
- NOTE: Upon approval of the registration request, FSC appoints the candidates recommended by the responsible body as working group members and the process lead.
- b) Reject the registration request, and request further work prior to their re-submission, when applicable. If the FSC Policy and Performance Director requests further work, the request shall state the reasons for the decision and list the specifications that need to be fulfilled for the registration request to be re-submitted.
- NOTE: The decision on a registration request considers the quality of the registration request, the FSC global strategy, annual work plans, regional or international priorities, and capacity of parties involved based on ongoing FSC projects.
- 3.8 FSC shall communicate its decision on the registration request to the responsible body within twenty (20) working days of the receipt of the request or the receipt of the additional information requested as per Clause 3.6.
- 3.9 The proposed process for the development or revision of FSC country requirements shall not commence prior to formal notification of approval of the registration request from FSC.
- 3.10 The responsible body shall announce the approval of the registration request on its website, including:
- a) A description of the scope and objectives of the FSC country requirements;
  - b) The contact information of the responsible body;
  - c) The terms of reference; and
  - d) The timeline for the process.
- 3.11 The responsible body shall announce the approval of the registration request within:
- a) For major and regular processes: fifteen (15) working days after approving the request; and
  - b) For accelerated processes: five (5) working days after approving the request.
- 3.12 After registration, the timeline for the FSC country requirements process may be extended one time and for a maximum of period of twelve (12) months, upon approval by FSC.

- 3.12.1 The responsible body shall submit the extension request to FSC no later than three (3) months prior to the upcoming milestone (e.g., consultation, submission of the assessment draft to FSC, etc.).
- 3.13 The process lead shall report to the responsible body and FSC on the progress of the process on a quarterly basis, using the template provided by FSC.

## 4. Terms of reference

### Informative guidance

The terms of reference are developed during the registration phase and can be modified during the conceptual phase to include changes identified based on stakeholder inputs.

The terms of reference include rules for developing or revising FSC country requirements, process timelines, rules pertaining to collaboration, consensus and engagement, providing inputs on comments received during consultations and their incorporation to the draft requirements, and processes to recommend, object to or abstain from recommending the draft country requirements for submission to FSC and the decision-making body.

- 4.1 The responsible body shall include in the terms of reference the following information:
- Objectives of the process;
  - The process type (major, regular or accelerated), process steps (including any proposed deviations from the requirements presented in this procedure), consultations (type, duration and number of rounds), testing type and testing plan as per Annex 2 (along with rationale);
  - Workplan;
  - Roles and responsibilities of involved parties;
  - Declaration of no conflict of interest applicable to the involved parties; and
  - Privacy statement and copyrights.
- NOTE 1: The terms of reference are approved upon approval of the registration request.
- NOTE 2: The privacy statement will specify which data collected during the FSC country requirements development and revision process can be shared with FSC.
- 4.2 The process lead shall modify the terms of reference in accordance with the comments received during the conceptual phase consultation, as needed.
- 4.3 The process lead shall submit the revised terms of reference to FSC for approval within fifteen (15) working days of completing the conceptual phase consultation.
- 4.4 The FSC Policy and Performance Director shall either approve or reject the revised terms of reference within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the revised terms of reference.
- 4.5 The process lead and working group members shall complete the FSC training for developing and revising FSC country requirements and submit evidence of completion to FSC before starting the drafting of FSC country requirements.
- NOTE 1: FSC will provide the link for the online training after the registration request is approved.
- NOTE 2: Process leads and members of working groups with prior experience in the development or revision of FSC country requirements in accordance with the latest version of this procedure and addenda are exempted from attending this training.

- 4.6 The process lead and the working group members who do not complete the training before the drafting commences shall not be eligible to continue in their respective roles.

## 5. Conceptual phase

### Informative guidance

This phase enables stakeholders to provide feedback on the key aspects or changes proposed to be included in the FSC country requirements. For example, adding new requirements as per new regulations in the country or the FSC normative framework, changing existing requirements on HCVs, conversion, forest degradation, etc. This phase also enables stakeholders to contribute to the development of key intended outcomes of an FSS.

Figure 5 below details examples on key aspects to be further defined and consulted upon during the conceptual phase.

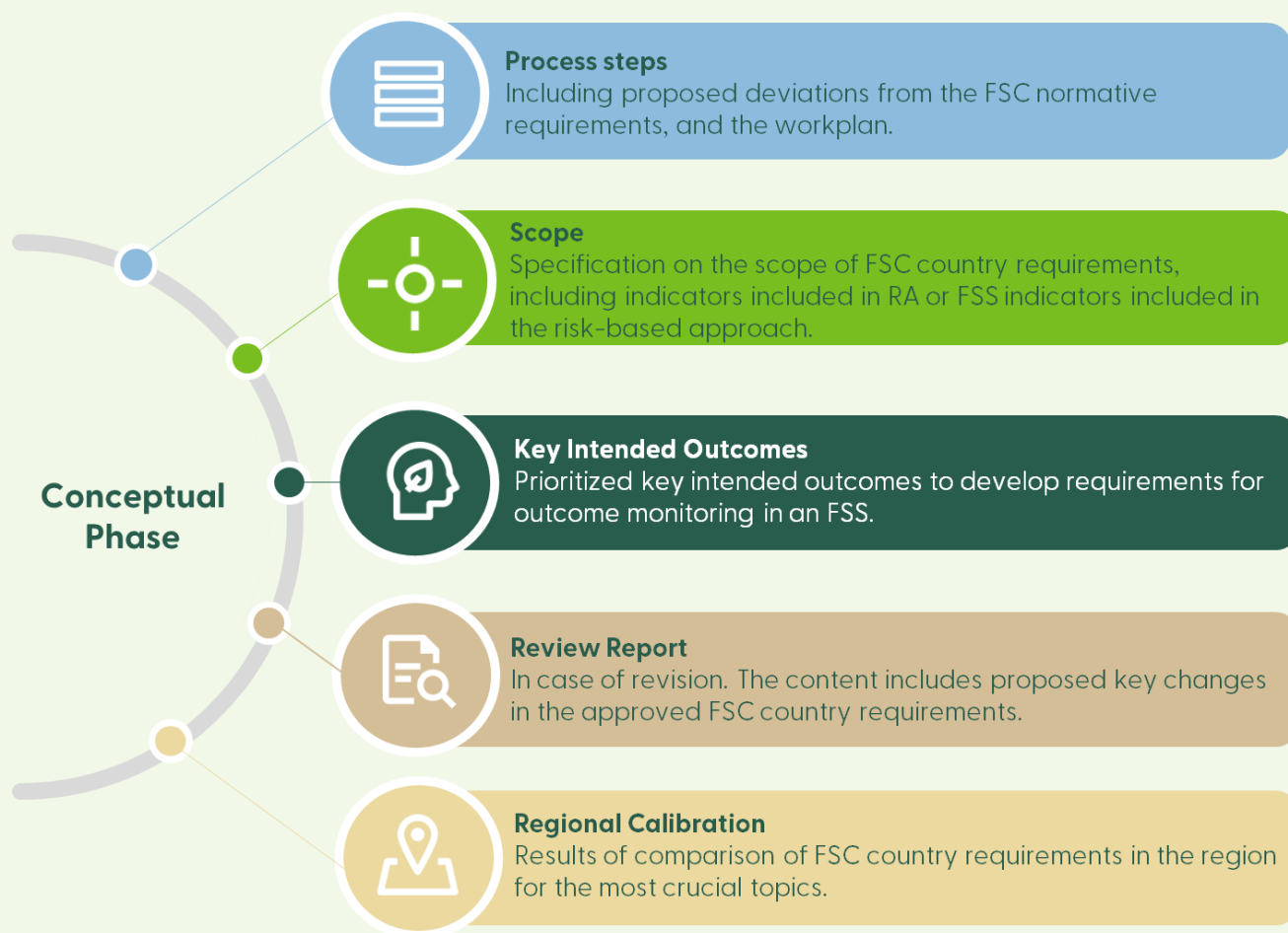


Figure 5. Examples on key aspects to be consulted during the conceptual phase.

- 5.1 The conceptual phase for FSC country requirements shall be in accordance with the process type. These are as follows:
- a) For major processes: conceptual phase is mandatory;
  - b) For regular processes: conceptual phase is optional; and
  - c) For accelerated processes: conceptual phase is not applicable.
- 5.2 The process lead shall conduct the conceptual phase consultation in accordance with requirements under Section 7.
- 5.3 The process lead shall develop consultation material on the following:
- a) The process steps and workplan in accordance with Clause 4.1 b) and c).
  - b) The scope of the FSC country requirements and relevant items in accordance with Clause 3.2 c), d) and e);
  - c) In case of FSS, the key intended outcomes proposed for developing monitoring requirements;
  - d) In case of a revision, the review report, including proposed key changes in the requirements; and
  - e) The results of a comparison of FSC country requirements in the region in accordance with Clause 2.8, if it exists.
- 5.4 The process lead shall submit the draft consultation material to FSC prior to the conceptual phase consultation.
- 5.5 Upon receipt of the consultation material, FSC shall review the documentation within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days and inform the process lead if further improvements are required before the consultation material can be released for conceptual phase consultation.
- 5.6 The process lead shall address all comments from FSC and amend the consultation material accordingly within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days after receiving the comments.
- 5.7 The process lead shall analyse the comments received during the conceptual phase consultation and prepare a consultation report in accordance with Clause 7.16.
- 5.8 The process lead shall make the conceptual phase consultation report publicly available along with the updated terms of reference within forty (40) working days after completion of the conceptual phase consultation.

NOTE: The conceptual phase ends with the publication of the conceptual phase consultation report.

## 6. Drafting FSC country requirements

### Informative guidance

This section outlines requirements related to the drafting of FSC country requirements. The process lead is responsible for drafting the FSC country requirements, while the working group reviews them and provides guidance and input to the process lead during the drafting phase. See Figure 6 below for an overview of the steps required during the development or revision of FSC country requirements, including the drafting.

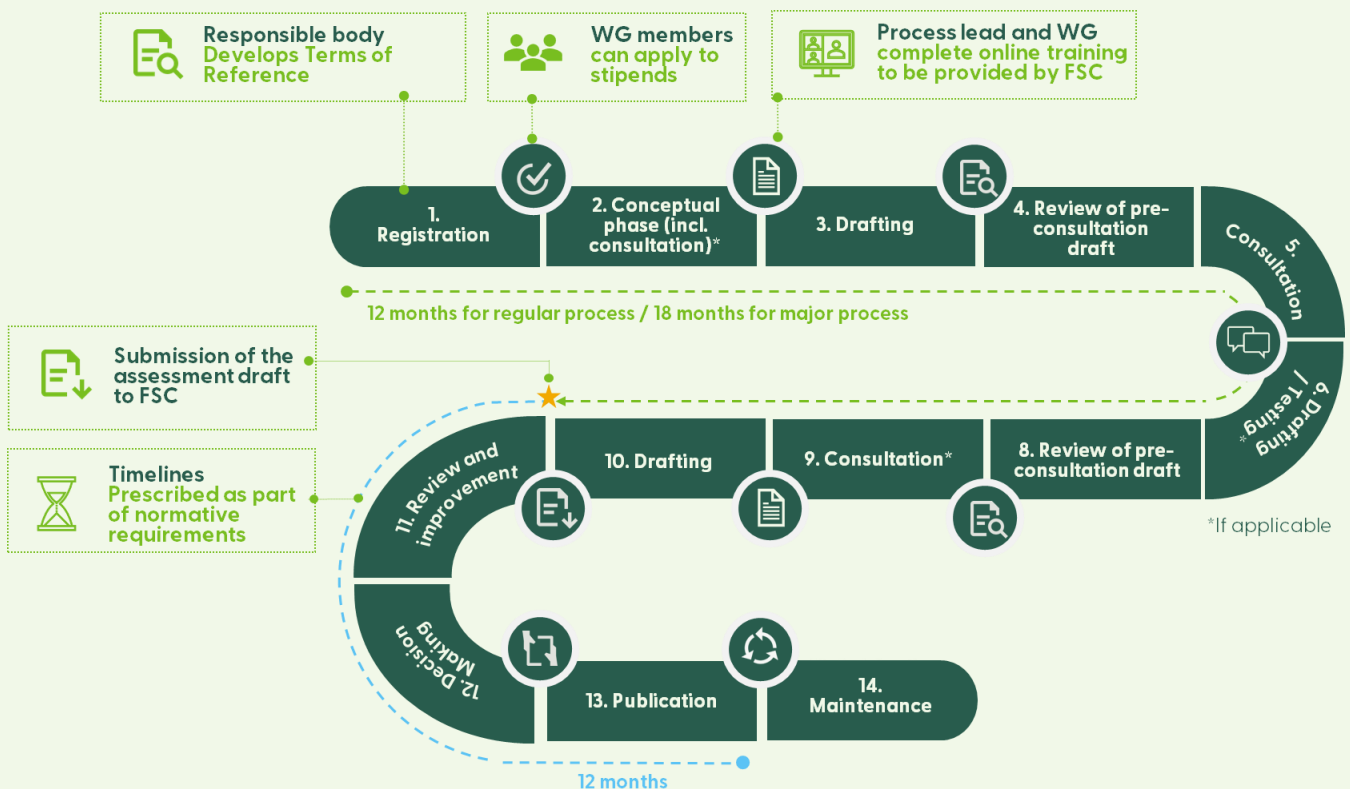


Figure 6. Steps involved during the development or revision of FSC country requirements.

- 6.1 The process lead shall develop the draft of FSC country requirements based on the terms of reference, and including:
- The conclusions of the working group;
  - Comments by FSC;
  - Consultation results;
  - Inputs provided by the selected experts;
  - Review report results (in case of a revision process);
  - The results of a comparison of FSC country requirements in the region, if it exists;
  - Testing results, if applicable;

- h) Changed (newly developed or revised) FSC normative requirements not reflected in the existing FSC country requirements;
  - i) Data collection and information management needs;
  - j) Editorial review and content quality;
  - k) Compatibility of documents for digitization; and
  - l) Drafting rules specified in <FSC-PRO-10-208 Drafting of FSC Requirements>.
- 6.2 For the purpose of this procedure and its addenda, the drafts of FSC country requirements shall be classified as:
- a) Pre-consultation draft: a draft submitted to FSC prior to the consultation during the drafting phase for preliminary review and agreement to proceed with consultation.
  - b) Assessment draft: a draft submitted to FSC for a thorough review and assessment against the requirements of this procedure and its addenda prior to the submission of the draft requirements to the decision-making body.
  - c) Final draft: the draft submitted to the decision-making body.
  - d) Stalled draft: a draft developed by the working group in a process declared as stalled, at the time of its deregistration.
- 6.3 The process lead shall incorporate any changed FSC normative requirements (see Clause 6.1 0 in the pre-consultation draft.
- NOTE: This includes new and revised IGI as specified in <FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators>.
- 6.4 After receiving agreement from the working group to proceed, the process lead shall submit the pre-consultation draft of FSC country requirements along with the proof of consensus to FSC for review and approval prior to the consultation.
- NOTE: Working group consensus can include presenting two differing options for consultation.
- 6.5 Upon receipt of the pre-consultation draft, FSC shall review the documentation within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days and inform the process lead if further improvements are required before the pre-consultation draft can be released for consultation.
- 6.6 The process lead shall address all comments from FSC and amend the pre-consultation draft accordingly within fifteen (15) working days after receiving the comments.
- 6.7 Upon completion of the assessment draft, the process lead shall prepare a submission package and submit it to FSC for assessment and decision making as per agreed timelines.
- 6.8 Before submitting the assessment draft to FSC for assessment and decision making, the working group shall formally acknowledge that the assessment draft:
- a) Meets the objectives specified in the terms of reference;
  - b) Meets the requirements of this procedure and its addenda;
  - c) Has undergone sufficient consultation and testing;
  - d) Has received consensus from the working group and is ready for submission to FSC and the decision-making body; and
  - e) Merits the approval by FSC.

- 6.9 The submission package shall include:
- a) An assessment draft of FSC country requirements;
  - b) A summary of the development or revision process, including any deviations from the original workplan and how content and process requirements have been met;
  - c) A summary of the main issues and concerns raised by the working group members during the process and how these issues have been addressed;
  - d) A list of all stakeholders invited to participate during the consultation;
  - e) The consultation report(s);
  - f) The testing report(s), if applicable;
  - g) The statement of the working group, in accordance with Clause 6.8;
  - h) For FSS, completed Adopt, Adapt, Drop and Add (AADA) Matrix;
  - i) Any other documentation deemed necessary as supporting information, including justification for non-applicability of normative elements; and
  - j) Where applicable, an implementation plan in accordance with Clause 6.12.

NOTE 1: Submission packages not meeting the above requirements will not be processed, nor will it be considered as a timely submission according to the agreed timelines.

NOTE 2: FSC maintains anonymity by default but may refer to the stakeholder group, where applicable (see Annex 1).

- 6.10 The process lead shall submit high quality draft versions of the FSC country requirements to FSC, including the submission package, by ensuring drafts are proofread, free of editorial errors and developed using the latest templates provided by FSC.

NOTE: Drafts not meeting the above requirements will not be reviewed.

- 6.11 The submission package including all the drafts submitted to FSC shall be in one of the FSC official languages, except for RA following regular processes, in which case the drafts and the submission package shall be submitted in English.
- 6.12 The responsible body should develop a plan to support the implementation of new or significantly changed FSC country requirements.
- NOTE: The implementation plan details activities needed to introduce new or significantly changed FSC country requirements to stakeholders' post-publication, ensuring clarity and understanding. For example, conducting workshops to introduce the FSC country requirements, conducting training, developing implementation guidance, and/or conducting national calibration meetings with certification bodies.
- 6.13 Upon receipt of the submission package, FSC shall assess the completeness of the submission package within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days.
- 6.14 If the submission package is incomplete, the process lead shall provide the requested additional information to FSC within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days.

6.15 After confirming the completeness of the submission package, FSC shall assess the submission package and assessment draft and provide comments to the process lead within a maximum of thirty days (30).

6.16 The process lead shall address all comments from FSC and amend the submission package accordingly within a maximum of ninety calendar (90) days after receiving the comments, and obtain agreement by the working group for submission of the final draft to the decision-making body.

NOTE: This time period includes up to two rounds of review by FSC and improvement by the process lead of the submission package.

6.17 Once FSC confirms the draft FSC country requirements is ready for decision making, including sufficient quality (content-wise and editorially), FSC shall submit the final draft and submission package to the decision-making body.

NOTE: A draft FSC country requirements that is ready for decision may contain elements where FSC and the WG do not agree on the draft requirements. In those cases, this information is part of the submission package for the decision-making body to take a final decision.

6.18 If the working group fails to reach consensus on the pre-consultation draft, or the assessment draft, or the final draft, or to adhere to the timelines, the following shall apply:

- a) FSC authorizes the process lead to release the draft for consultation without consensus from the working group, where applicable; or
- b) The responsible body agrees with FSC on next steps; otherwise,
- c) FSC declares the process as a stalled process, in accordance with Section 9.

## 7. Consultations and testing

### Informative guidance

There are two types of consultations that can be used during the development and revision processes of FSC country requirements. These are:

- a) Public consultation; and
- b) Focused consultation.

Additionally, depending on the process type, consultations can be mandatory or optional for a given process. This section outlines general requirements on how to plan and implement a consultation and at what stage.

Testing can be conducted alongside consultations to evaluate the auditability of FSC country requirements, and to collect input to enhance the draft. Desk and field testing provide the opportunity to assess the application of key intended outcomes and effects (economic, environmental, and social) of conformity with the draft requirements. The testing of draft FSC country requirements allows working groups and process leads to identify key gaps in the draft requirements and validate their applicability and auditability. The testing is carried out following the requirements specified in Annex 2.

## General requirements for consultation and testing

- 7.1 The consultation rounds in FSC country requirements processes shall be as follows:
- For a major development process:** one (1) public consultation during the conceptual phase, and at least one (1) public consultation during the drafting phase;
  - For a major revision process:** one (1) public consultation during the conceptual phase, and at least one (1) public or focused consultation during the drafting phase.
  - For a regular development or revision process:** consultation during the conceptual phase is optional, and at least one (1) public or focused consultations during the drafting phase; and
  - For an accelerated process:** at least one (1) focused consultation during the drafting phase.

- 7.2 The consultation periods shall be as follows:
- Consultation during the conceptual phase:** shall consist of at least thirty (30) calendar days. For revision processes, this consultation period can be reduced to fifteen (15) calendar days;
  - First consultation during the drafting phase:** shall consist of at least sixty (60) calendar days. For focused consultations, this consultation period can be thirty (30) calendar days; and
  - Additional consultation during the drafting phase:** shall consist of at least thirty (30) calendar days.
  - In case of a revision conducted in accordance with Clause 11.10, the focused consultation shall consist of at least fifteen (15) calendar days.

NOTE 1: An additional round of consultation can take place only if it is approved by the FSC Policy and Performance Director.

NOTE 2: The process lead is encouraged to explore various methods for gathering feedback and insights to address any substantive and unresolved issues and complaints.

- 7.3 The process lead shall be proactive and use culturally appropriate methods to seek inputs from identified stakeholders in accordance with the engagement plan (see Table 2 for examples).

NOTE: <[FSC-GUI-30-011 FSC Guidance for Stakeholder Engagement](#)> is a key tool to choose engagement methods. In addition, the <[FSC-GUI-30-003 FSC Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#)> provides guidance on culturally appropriate stakeholder engagement processes.

- 7.4 During consultations of draft versions of the FSC country requirements, the process lead shall:

- Invite Indigenous Peoples' representatives in the country to participate in the consultation(s) of the draft country requirements, considering the most appropriate form of engagement.

NOTE: This clause is applicable for countries where the presence of Indigenous Peoples is confirmed or is likely within the scope of the FSC country requirements.

- For FSC country requirements developed or revised through regular processes, engage FSC Network Partners or FSC National Representatives, where they exist.
- Consult existing FSC Working Groups (WGs), in countries where FSC Network Partners or FSC National Representatives do not exist.

- 7.5 The type of testing of draft FSC country requirements shall be in accordance with the process type. These are as follows:
- a) For major processes: testing is mandatory (in the form of field or desk testing); and
  - b) For regular processes: testing is optional (in the form of field or desk testing).
- NOTE: For accelerated processes, the testing may be carried out as per requirements presented in Annex 2, when approved by the FSC Policy and Performance Director during the registration phase.
- 7.6 The process lead shall organize testing of draft FSC country requirements following requirements in Annex 2.
- 7.6.1 The responsible body shall indicate the timing for organizing the testing in the registration request.
- NOTE: Testing typically occurs after the first consultation and during the phase of developing the second draft of FSC country requirements.

**Table 2. Culturally appropriate consultation methods**

The following are examples of aspects to consider when planning consultation methods that seek to be appropriate for and accessible by local stakeholders.

<b>Suitable (accessible) for each stakeholder group</b>	<b>Selection of methods based on existing examples of previous successful use of this method in a consultation/engagement campaign in the locality with the same or similar targeted stakeholder groups.</b>
<b>Diversify methods</b>	Selection of at least 2 different methods to be simultaneously used per consultation event (e.g., survey, personal interview, group meetings/workshops, developing supplemental material, etc.).
<b>Diversify channels</b>	Selection of at least two different communication channels per consultation event (e.g., emails in the local language, post, telephone, face-to-face, letters, radio announcements, notices published in the national and/or local press and on relevant websites, announcements on local customary notice boards in the language of the local people, etc.).

## Preparation of the consultation

- 7.7 For consultation during the conceptual phase, the consultation material shall include elements as described in Section 5.
- 7.8 For consultation on the draft FSC country requirements, the process lead shall develop consultation material, including, but not limited to:
- a) The draft FSC country requirements;
  - b) Supporting documents (e.g., working paper);
  - c) Timelines including tentative publication, effective and transition end date, and any justifications for deviations in the process;
  - d) Reports from previous consultation, if any;
  - e) Format or mechanism (including email address of the recipient) to submit stakeholder's comments; and
  - f) Privacy statement outlining how stakeholders' data will be processed in the event of collection.
- 7.9 The consultation material shall be consulted in the main local language, and one of the FSC official languages, except as specified in Clause 7.9.1.

NOTE: This requirement also applies for the consultation report to be developed in accordance with Clause 7.15.

7.9.1 In case of an RA developed or revised through a regular process, the consultation material shall be consulted in English.

NOTE : In this case, translation of the consultation material into the main local language is only recommended.

## Public consultations

- 7.10 The process lead shall announce and publish the consultation according to the engagement plan and at a minimum announce it to the following parties:
- a) FSC membership and national members in the geographical scope of the FSC country requirements;
  - b) FSC Network Partners, FSC National Representatives and FSC Regional Teams in the geographical scope of the FSC country requirements;
  - c) FSC-accredited certification bodies in the geographical scope of the FSC country requirements;
  - d) FSC certificate holders in the geographical scope of the FSC country requirements;
  - e) FSC;
  - f) All members of the working group, experts, and responsible body; and
  - g) Other key stakeholder groups identified in the engagement plan.

## Focused consultations

- 7.11 The process lead shall identify the stakeholder groups (and possibly individual stakeholders therein) to be consulted.

NOTE: The list of stakeholders to be consulted can be developed based on the list of stakeholder groups specified in Annex 1.

- 7.12 The process lead shall publicly announce there will be a focused consultation, encouraging the registration of representatives from the identified stakeholder groups, and informing that the consultation is open to any other stakeholder upon request.
- 7.13 On the first day of the consultation period, the process lead shall share the consultation announcement and materials with the registered stakeholders.

## Consultation comments and analysis

- 7.14 Stakeholders shall submit the comments:

- a) In the language(s) of the draft FSC country requirements or one of the official languages of FSC;
- b) To the designated address, on the consultation platform or channel specified in the consultation announcement;
- c) Within the consultation period; and
- d) With the required information about the commenter specified in the consultation announcement or material (e.g., name, country, type of organization).

NOTE 1: Comments not meeting the above criteria will be addressed based on the capacity of the process lead.

NOTE 2: Comments received will be addressed in accordance with existing national requirements on data protection.

- 7.15 The process lead, in collaboration with the working group, shall analyse the comments and prepare a consultation report.

- 7.16 The consultation report shall include:

- a) A list of the issues raised;
- b) A response to the issues raised, including how they are addressed in the latest draft; and
- c) A list of stakeholder groups who submitted comments.

NOTE: FSC maintains anonymity by default but may refer to the stakeholder group.

- 7.17 The process lead shall share the consultation report with FSC and make the report publicly available, at the following process milestones:

- a) For the first consultation report during the drafting phase, with the start of the second consultation or testing, or within sixty (60) calendar days after completion of the first consultation, whichever is earlier; and
- b) For the second and additional consultation reports during the drafting phase, within thirty (30) calendar days after completion of the consultation or with the submission of assessment draft to FSC for review and decision-making, whichever is earlier.

7.18 The responsible body shall manage records of all comments in compliance with applicable data protection regulations.

## 8. Decision making

8.1 The decision-making body for approval of the FSC country requirements shall be by default the PSG for all type of processes.

NOTE: In case of RA, experts from other organizations involved in the Risk Information Alliance can also be involved during the decision-making process.

8.2 FSC may change the designated decision-making body during the assessment stage, depending on the complexity and controversy of issues in the final draft, in accordance with <FSC-PRO-10-607a Criteria to determine low complexity FSC country requirements>.

NOTE: In accordance with FSC-PRO-10-607a, the PSC can be designated by FSC as the decision-making body.

8.3 The decision-making body shall either:

- a) Approve the final draft FSC country requirements; or
- b) Approve the final draft FSC country requirements with conditions; or
- c) Reject the final draft of FSC country requirements and request further work prior to their re-submission. If the decision-making body requests further work, it shall state the reasons for the decision and list the specifications that need to be fulfilled for the final draft to be re-submitted.

NOTE: In case of rejection, further work is required to address fundamental issues identified by the decision-making body. This may include rewriting the requirements to improve clarity or to adhere to the latest FSC normative requirements, developing new or additional indicators or requirements, engaging experts to address issues identified by the decision-making body, etc.

8.4 FSC shall document the decision on the final draft in a decision record and share it with the process lead.

8.5 If the decision-making body approves the final draft with conditions, the responsible body shall ensure the conditions are addressed and re-submit the final draft to FSC for closing conditions within a maximum of sixty (60) working days after the communication is made to the process lead.

NOTE: This is the maximum time allowed to close the conditions, including multiple rounds of exchanges with FSC or resubmissions of the improved final draft to FSC.

## 9. Stalled process

### Informative guidance

An ongoing process of FSC country requirements can be deregistered by FSC when the process has been declared by FSC as stalled, or when the need for developing or revising FSC country requirements no longer exists.

This section outlines two scenarios where an ongoing process can be declared as a stalled process. Scenario 1 is applicable when a development or revision process stalls at any time prior to the submission of the submission package to FSC. Scenario 2 applies when the development or revision process stalls after submission of the submission package to FSC. See Figure 7 below for an overview of these two scenarios.

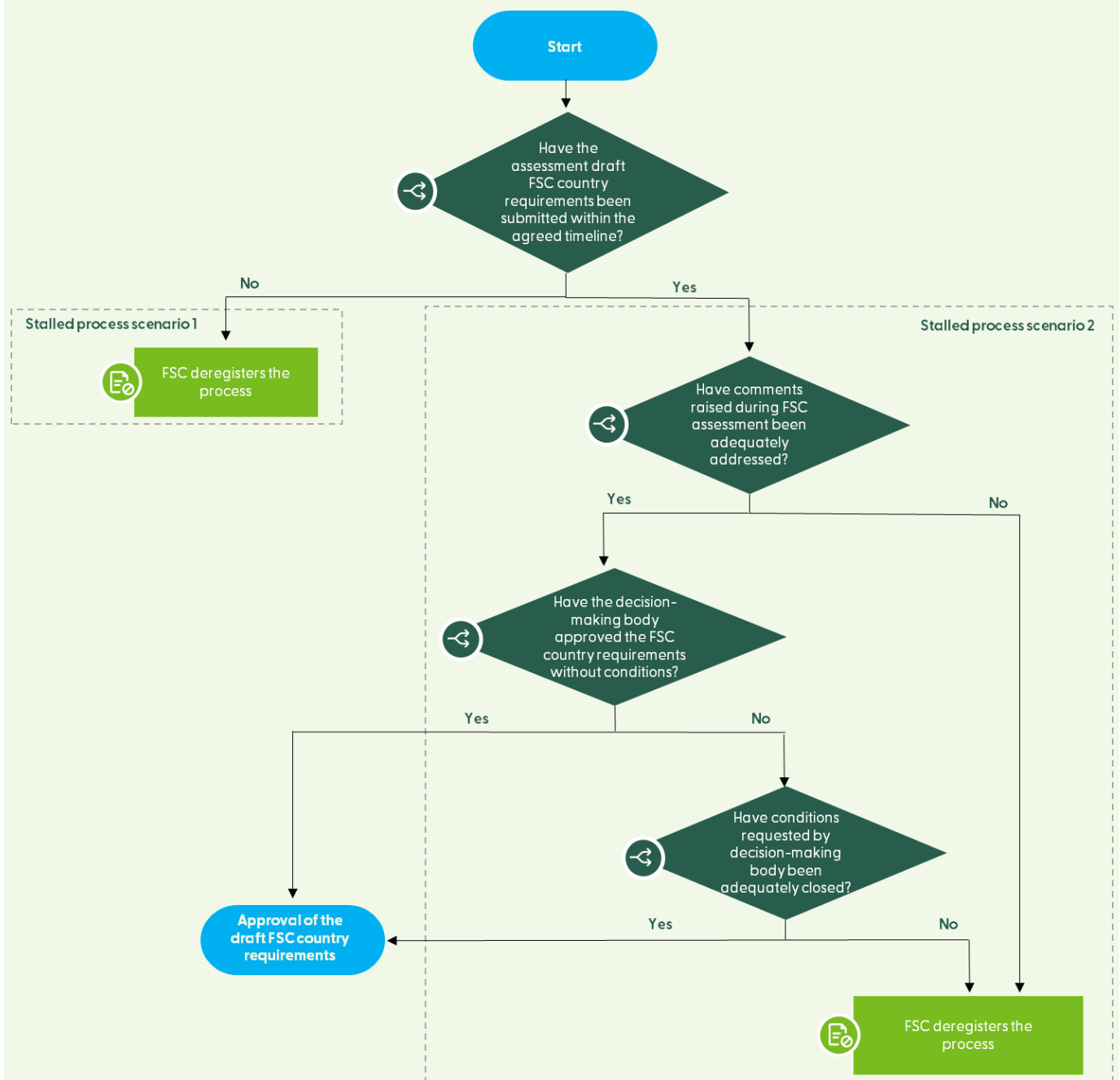


Figure 7. Flow diagram on scenarios for stalled processes.

- 9.1 A registered process shall be designated as a stalled process and deregistered when:
- a) The process lead fails to adhere to agreed timelines for submissions; or
  - b) The working group fails to reach consensus on the drafts to be submitted to FSC and the decision-making body; or
  - c) The process lead fails to address FSC comments within the agreed timelines; or
  - d) The working group and process lead fail to address conditions issued by the decision-making body within the agreed timelines.

- 9.2 The responsible body shall prepare and submit the registration request for the process to be restarted to FSC, in accordance with Section 3 of this procedure.

NOTE: On a case-by-case basis, FSC may take over the process to be restarted.

- 9.3 The latest draft of the FSC country requirements shall serve as the starting point for the restarted process.

- 9.4 If a process is stalled **prior to the submission** of the submission package to FSC, the following shall apply:

9.4.1 During registration of the process to be restarted, the FSC Policy and Performance Director may allocate it to a different process type.

- a) The process lead shall conduct at least one consultation on the draft FSC country requirements, after the restarted process has been registered.

- 9.5 If the process is stalled **after submission** of the submission package to FSC, the following shall apply:

- a) During registration of the process to be restarted, the responsible body shall appoint an expert(s) and/or a process lead with an understanding of the relevant geographic context to support the restarted process and address outstanding elements.

NOTE: 'Outstanding elements' refers to elements within the draft FSC country requirements that have not been agreed upon by FSC and the working group, or that remain unfinished.

- b) For FSS, additional consultations on the draft shall be required if the process lead or expert make adaptations to the IGI that were not included in the drafts developed during the stalled process.
- c) The responsible body may improve the final draft of FSC country requirements or close conditions, by incorporating specific IGI to FSS, or changing risk-designations or mitigation measures in RA.

NOTE: In case of RA, if the information needed to close the approval condition is not available, the responsible body can provide a 'non-negligible' risk designation to the respective indicator.

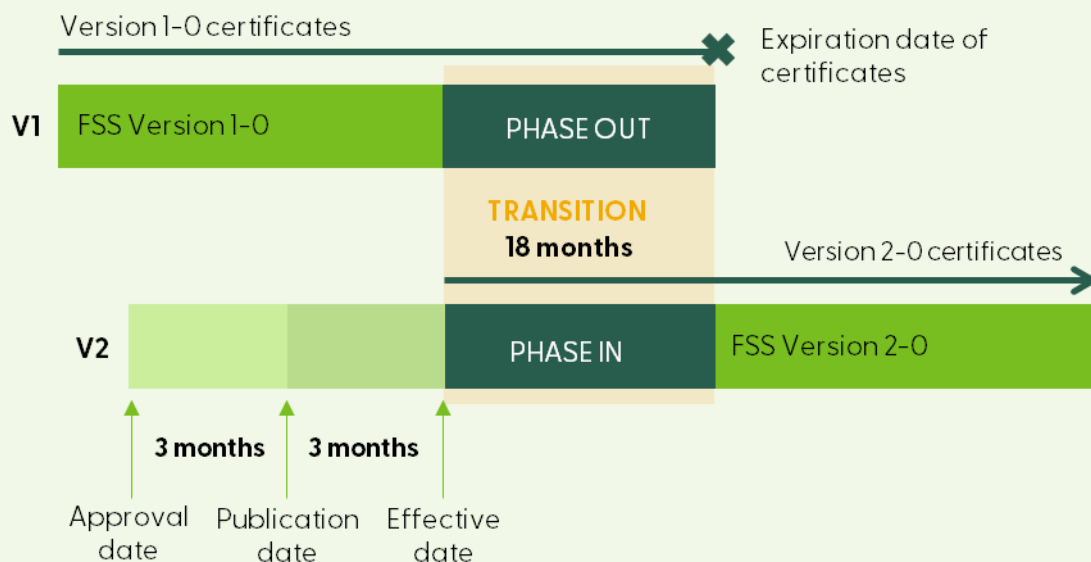
## PART III: MAINTENANCE OF REQUIREMENTS

### 10. Publication and implementation of FSC country requirements

#### Informative guidance

The time between the publication date and effective date is intended for the responsible body to inform certificate holders, certification bodies and other stakeholders and to provide all stakeholders time to prepare for the implementation of the FSC country requirements.

In case of FSS, the effective date marks the beginning of the transition period: during this period, there is a parallel phase-in of the new FSS version and phase-out of the old FSS version (if applicable). Both FSS versions are valid during this transition period. By the transition end date, all certificate holders must have transitioned to the new FSS version and the previous version is withdrawn. All certificates issued against the previous version will automatically expire and be considered terminated at the transition end date.



**Figure 8: Example of a transition between two versions of FSS developed or revised under major and regular processes.**

- 10.1 FSC shall publish the approved FSC country requirements on the FSC Document Centre.
- 10.2 The publication of approved FSC country requirements shall occur within three (3) months from the date of approval of FSC country requirements.
- 10.3 The effective date shall be as follows: three (3) months from the publication date of the approved FSC country requirements, except:
  - a) For RA developed or revised through a major or regular process, it shall be the same as the publication date; and
  - b) For FSC country requirements developed or revised through an accelerated process, it shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- 10.4 The responsible body shall communicate the approved FSC country requirements to stakeholders in accordance with the engagement plan.
- 10.5 The transition period for a FSS developed or revised through a major or regular process shall be specified in the published FSS as eighteen (18) months from the effective date, unless otherwise determined by the decision-making body. In case of accelerated process, the transition period for FSS shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- 10.6 The responsible body shall implement the activities as specified in the implementation plan, if one exists, to introduce the revised or new FSC country requirements to stakeholders.

## 11. Monitoring and review

### Informative guidance

The implementation of FSC country requirements is monitored to ensure that they remain relevant over time and effective. The results from monitoring thereby inform the review process to determine whether a set of FSC country requirements are to be revised.

- 11.1 The responsible body shall conduct a review of FSC country requirements to evaluate effectiveness and relevance of the existing requirements within five years from the transition end date of the FSC country requirements.
- 11.2 The responsible body should start the review of FSC country requirements latest by the 4<sup>th</sup> year from the transition end date of the FSC country requirements.
- 11.3 For RA, the responsible body shall conduct annual reviews to analyse the comments received from stakeholders to ensure that the applicable legislation, risk designations and mitigation measures are up to date.
  - 11.3.1 Stakeholders and experts shall have the possibility to continuously provide inputs to the RA and share information through an online platform provided by FSC or the responsible body.
  - 11.3.2 If there are changes in the area under assessment leading to a change in the risk level, the responsible body shall initiate a revision process outside of the review timelines specified in Clause 11.1.
  - 11.3.3 If there are changes in the area under assessment leading to a change in applicable legislation or risk mitigation, the responsible body shall decide to either initiate a revision process outside of the review timelines as per Clause 11.1, or to include relevant changes during the next scheduled revision.
  - 11.3.4 If a revision following an annual review is confirmed, the responsible body shall carry out the revision through an accelerated process.

- 11.4 During the review of FSC country requirements, the responsible body shall collect additional information by:
- a) Inviting experts and stakeholders to provide input to risk findings to identify additional information and gaps; and/or
  - b) Arranging webinar(s) for feedback gathering; and/or
  - c) Holding a country specific consultation, if considered relevant.
- 11.5 The responsible body shall prepare and submit a review report to FSC within five years of the:
- a) Transition end date of the FSC country requirements; or
  - b) Date of the previous review report, where the decision was taken to retain existing FSC country requirements.
- 11.6 The review report shall include:
- a) A summary of the review results;
  - b) A summary of proposed changes in the existing FSC country requirements;
  - c) A summary of key topics stakeholders have raised through change requests;
  - d) A feasibility analysis of received change requests;
  - e) An analysis of new or changed legislation and international regulations, agreements or best practices;
  - f) An analysis of emerging technologies or scientific knowledge in the region;
  - g) A recommendation on whether existing key intended outcomes and/or related monitoring requirements need to be revised, with justification;
  - h) An analysis of the changes in the social, environmental or economic context and other relevant information; and
  - i) A recommendation on whether the set of FSC country requirements should be revised or not.
- 11.7 If a revision following a review is recommended, the responsible body should submit the registration request to FSC together with the review report.
- NOTE: Prior to submission of the registration request, the responsible body can check with FSC the results of the FSC's global prioritization exercise for the development and revision of FSC country requirements.
- 11.8 In case of an approved FSS, whenever there are changes in risk level in the RA of the relevant geographical scope, the responsible body shall initiate a revision process outside of the review timelines specified under Clause 11.1, through an accelerated process.
- 11.9 In case an approved FSS was developed through the use of the minimal adaptation of IGI approach, the responsible body shall revise the FSS through a major or regular process during the next scheduled revision.
- 11.10 In the event of rapidly changing circumstances that pose a serious risk to the integrity or reputation of FSC's certification scheme within the geographical scope of the FSC country requirements, the responsible body should revise the FSC country requirements through an accelerated process.
- NOTE: In case of RA, the responsible body can establish mandatory mitigation measures for indicators with non-negligible risk designation.

## 12. Withdrawal of FSC country requirements

- 12.1 FSC reserves the right to withdraw sets of FSC country requirements in consultation with the responsible body.

NOTE: A withdrawal refers to the removal of sets of FSC country requirements from the FSC normative framework. These requirements can no longer be used for certification.

- 12.2 In the case of a withdrawal of FSC country requirements, FSC shall update the FSC Document Centre and announce the withdrawal using FSC email, FSC website, FSC Network Partner website and regional website.

## 13. Interpretations

- 13.1 Where applicable, the responsible body shall draft an interpretation on FSC country requirements to ensure clarity, consistency, and adequacy in the implementation of the requirements.

NOTE: An interpretation does not contain additions, deletions, or changes to existing FSC country requirements.

- 13.2 The responsible body shall use the template provided by FSC.

NOTE: A specific requirement (e.g. implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent) may be covered by more than one clause, indicator, or annex.

- 13.3 The responsible body shall submit the draft interpretation to FSC prior to consultation.

- 13.4 Upon receipt of the draft interpretation, FSC shall review the documentation within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days and inform the responsible body if further improvements are required before the draft interpretation can be released for consultation.

- 13.5 The responsible body shall address all comments from FSC and amend the draft interpretation accordingly within a maximum of fifteen (15) working days after receiving the comments.

- 13.6 The responsible body shall consult on the draft interpretation for a minimum of fifteen (15) working days with the affected stakeholders, prior to submission to FSC for decision-making.

NOTE: FSC may request additional consultations on the draft interpretation(s), depending on the scale and complexity of the issue.

- 13.7 The responsible body shall analyse the comments and prepare a consultation report in accordance with Clause 7.16.

- 13.8 The responsible body shall submit the draft interpretation and consultation report to FSC for assessment and decision making.

- 13.9 Upon receipt, the FSC Policy & Performance Unit shall issue interpretations on FSC country requirements in line with the [<PSU-PRO-10-201 FSC Enquiry Procedure>](#).

- 13.10 Once approved, FSC shall register the interpretation(s) in the FSC interpretation database and share the approved interpretation with the responsible body within seven (7) working days.

- 13.11 The responsible body shall publish the approved interpretation on the relevant fora and inform relevant stakeholders.

## 14. Record keeping

- 14.1 All records related to the development and revision of FSC country requirements shall be kept by FSC and the responsible body for the period of validity of the specific set of requirements, or for a minimum period of ten (10) years, whichever is longer.
- 14.2 The set of records shall follow data protection regulations and include:
- a) Names and affiliations of members of the working group, consultation stakeholders, and other stakeholders that were consulted during the development or revision process;
  - b) Copies of drafts circulated for consultations;
  - c) Copies of all comments received during consultations;
  - d) The consultation reports; and
  - e) The decisions taken during the process, including conditions for approval.

## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions included in [<FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms>](#), [<FSC-PRO-60-006a Structure and content of Forest Stewardship Standards>](#) and [<FSC-PRO-60-006b Risk Assessment Framework>](#) and the following apply:

**Approval date:** The date the set of FSC country requirements is approved by the decision-making body. In case of approval conditions, the approval date is the date when all conditions are closed.

**Consensus:** General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests (particularly by those directly affected) and by a process that involves taking into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. Consensus need not imply unanimity (ISO/IEC)<sup>3</sup> (Source: [<FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement>](#)).

### Consultation types:

- a) **Public Consultation:** open to all stakeholders, e.g. FSC members, FSC International, FSC Network Partners, FSC accredited certification bodies, FSC certificate holders, other interested stakeholders.
- b) **Focused Consultation:** open to all stakeholders who are interested in participating in a revision or development process.

(Source: [<FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement>](#)).

**Decision-making body:** The body or an individual that is mandated to take decisions during the development/review/revision/withdrawal of FSC requirements.

**Effective date:** The date the published set of FSC country requirements becomes applicable for use.

**Expert:** An individual invited or appointed by the responsible body to contribute to working group discussions and/or perform given tasks in the process, who are selected based on their qualifications.

**Involved party:** A body involved in the development, the revision, or the review of FSC country requirements, or some or all of these.

**Interpretation:** A formal normative clarification provided by the FSC Policy & Performance Unit to requirements included in documents of the FSC Normative Framework (Source: [<PSU-PRO-10-201 Enquiry Procedure>](#)).

**Period of validity:** Period over which a set of FSC requirements is valid, starting from the effective date and ending when it is withdrawn and/or replaced by a new version.

**Publication date:** The date when the FSC country requirements are published on the FSC website.

**Process lead:** The individual appointed by FSC to coordinate the working group and the development or revision process of a set of FSC country requirements.

**Revision:** Introduction of changes to a set of FSC country requirements (Adapted from [<FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirements>](#)). In addition, revisions that do not result from the conclusions of a review report include:

- a) **Urgent revision:** A focused and pressing revision of specific requirements in FSC country requirements to maintain the integrity and credibility of the FSC system. For instance, in the event of rapidly changing circumstances that pose a serious risk to the integrity or reputation of FSC's certification scheme within the area under assessment.

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<sup>3</sup> ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1 Procedures for the technical work. Consolidated ISO Supplement – Procedures specific to ISO. [https://www.iso.org/sites/directives/current/consolidated/index.xhtml#\\_idTextAnchor167](https://www.iso.org/sites/directives/current/consolidated/index.xhtml#_idTextAnchor167)

- b) **Administrative Revision:** A non-substantive revision to correct typographical, grammatical and administrative mistakes, including those related to translations. It also includes the update of contact details and links to information sources (Adapted from <[FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement](#)>).

**Responsible body:** The entity responsible for the development, review and revision of FSC country requirements. By default, the FSC Network Partner is the responsible body, however depending on circumstances, the responsible body can be the FSC regional team, P&P or an entity appointed by FSC. In the case of Risk Assessments developed or revised through a regular process type, one of the FSC partner organizations participating in the Risk Information Alliance can be considered as the responsible body.

**Stalled process:** A FSC country requirements process that is stopped and deregistered when:

- a) The process lead fails to adhere to the agreed timelines for submissions; or
- b) The working group fails to reach consensus on the draft to be submitted to FSC and the decision-making body; or
- c) The process lead fails to address FSC comments within the agreed timelines; or
- d) The working group and process lead fails to address conditions issued by the decision-making body within the agreed timelines.

**Transition period:** The date from the effective date until the revised version of a set of FSC country requirements is phased-in and in parallel the old version is phased-out (where it exists). To allow for gradual introduction, both versions are valid during the transition period. From the transition end date, certificates issued against the old version are considered invalid.

**Working group:** A group of individuals with relevant knowledge or professional experience in the field in question, registered by FSC to provide input into the content development of FSC country requirements for a specific geographical area (Adapted from: <[FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement](#)>). The different compositions are as follows:

- a) **Chamber-balanced working group (for a major process):** A group convened for the purposes of undertaking a major process which consists of individuals who equally represent the perspectives of the social, environmental, and economic chambers of the FSC membership. The chamber-balanced working group for the development or revision of an FSS was previously called “Standard Development Group” (SDG) (Adapted from: <[FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement](#)>).
- b) **Technical working group (for a regular or accelerated process):** A group of individuals with relevant knowledge or professional experience in the field of question. A regular process comprises experts from more than one stakeholder group (Source: <[FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC® Requirement](#)>).

## Verbal forms for the expression of provisions:

[Adapted from *ISO/IEC Directives Part 2 Principles and Rules for the structure and drafting of ISO and IEC documents*]

- “**shall**”: indicates requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform with the standard.
- “**should**”: indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. A ‘should requirement’ can be met in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated and justified.
- “**may**”: indicates a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.
- “**can**”: is used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or causal.

## ANNEX 1: STAKEHOLDER GROUP LIST

The stakeholders representing the interests listed below shall be identified and notified.

Each group specified may be represented by an unlimited number of representatives. The list is not exhaustive, and any other stakeholder groups relevant for the FSC country requirements process shall be identified.

1. Economic interests
  - a) Forest owners and/or managers of large, medium, and small forests; high-, medium-, and low-intensity managed forests;
  - b) Tenure and use rights holders, including landowners;
  - c) Forest contractors (including loggers);
  - d) Representatives of forest industries;
  - e) Certificate holders.
2. Social interests
  - a) NGOs involved or with an interest in social aspects of forest management and other related operations;
  - b) Forest workers;
  - c) International, national and local trade/labour unions;
  - d) Representatives of local communities involved in or possessing an interest in forest management, including those relevant for HCVs 5 and 6;
  - e) Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples (if present and/or holding rights), including those relevant for HCVs 5 and 6;
  - f) Representatives of recreational interests;
  - g) Organizations working on gender issues.
3. Environmental interests

NGOs involved in or interested in the environmental aspects of forest management. Consultation should target the following areas of interest and expertise:

  - a) Biological diversity;
  - b) Water and soil;
  - c) High Conservation Values related to the environment;
  - d) Local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and traditional peoples'.
4. FSC-accredited certification bodies active in the country.
5. FSC Working Groups.
6. National and international FSC members.
7. Local development projects.
8. Government and enforcement agencies.
9. Experts, as specified in Clauses 2.18 and 2.19.
10. Research institutions and universities.

11. If applicable, FSC Network Partners, FSC National Representatives and/or FSC Regional Teams.
12. National and regional offices of the organizations participating in the Risk Information Alliance.

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## ANNEX 2: REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTING

### Informative guidance

Testing is an important step in the process to understand if the implementation of new or revised FSC country requirements are auditable.

The type of testing depends on the specific needs of the process:

- Desk tests are suggested for processes which do not deal with technical requirements that can be tested on the ground.
- Field tests are suggested for processes which deal with new requirements that are technical in nature and can be field tested on the ground.

Drafting and testing are iterative. The draft requirements can be amended based on the results of the testing.

Individuals that participate in a test implementing the requirements are referred to as “participants”.

### 15. Desk test

- 15.1 When FSC country requirements require a desk test, requirements specified in Section 2 from Annex 3 of <FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC Requirements> shall be followed.

### 16. Field test

- 16.1 The process lead shall develop a plan to conduct field testing including forest types and products to be tested, location, number of days, testing team, list of observers (including working group members), timelines for submission of testing report, etc.

NOTE 1: The scope of the field test is representative of the scope of the draft FSC country requirements to be tested.

NOTE 2: Field test can be used as a means to consult with stakeholders who might not otherwise engage in the consultation process.

- 16.2 The process lead shall organize and manage the test, including selecting and contracting any external bodies, and managing the stakeholder engagement.
- 16.3 For new FSC country requirements, the field test shall include all requirements. Whereas, for revised FSC country requirements, the field test shall include at least those requirements where changes have been made and that affect the auditability of the FSC country requirements.
- 16.4 An FSC-accredited certification body should conduct the testing of FSC country requirements within its geographical scope.

NOTE 1: The FSC country requirements may be tested in FSC-certified and non-FSC certified areas. Testing in non-FSC certified area might be necessary where a new standard or a revised scope is being tested.

NOTE 2: For FSS, the test is conducted in a manner that it resembles as closely as possible an FSC Forest Management evaluation.

NOTE 3: Roles and responsibilities for FSC-accredited certification bodies are specified in <FSC-STD-20-001 General requirements for FSC accredited certification bodies>. An audit team

appropriate to the scope of the field test is defined between the FSC-accredited certification body and the process lead.

16.5 The process lead shall prepare a field-testing report, including:

- a) the scope of the field test;
- b) a summary of the main findings, agreed with participating certification body, as applicable;
- c) the name of the certification body that carried out the test and a list of the observers;
- d) a list of the areas, in which testing took place and their characteristics, describing their representativeness for the scope of the draft FSC country requirements;
- e) recommendations for the draft FSC country requirements; and
- f) a copy of the tested draft FSC country requirements as an Annex.

## 17. Pilot test

17.1 FSC country requirements may be pilot tested.

17.2 When FSC country requirements are pilot tested, requirements specified in Section 4 from Annex 3 of <FSC-PRO-01-001 The Development and Revision of FSC Requirements> shall be followed.



**FSC International – Policy and Performance Unit**

Adenauerallee 134

53113 Bonn

Germany

**Phone:** +49 -(0)228 -36766 -0

**Fax:** +49 -(0)228 -36766 -65

**Email:** [policy\\_performance@fsc.org](mailto:policy_performance@fsc.org)