

World-Standard Forest Management and Chain of Custody Certification

Recent studies by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), World Bank and ITTO (International Tropical Timber Organisation) have indicated a deteriorating state of the world's forests. This is attributed largely to such causes as over-use (excessive exploitation), abuse (clearing of forest for food crops) and sheer replacement in favour of other competing uses (such as agriculture, mining and township).

The deteriorating state of the forest poses a real threat to environmental security in terms of adverse changes in climate, biodiversity losses and pollution. It could also result in the deprivation of economic benefits to the society, particularly communities that are dependent upon the forest for their welfare.

Growing public awareness of forest destruction and degradation has led consumers to demand that their purchases of wood and other forest products will not contribute to this destruction but rather help to secure forest resources for the future. In response to this demand, certification and self-certification programmes of wood products have proliferated in the marketplace.

By obtaining certification, producers and sellers of wood products can demonstrate to their customers that they are committed to protecting the world's forests for future generations while bringing a quality product to the marketplace.

World-standard forest management - The FSC standard

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international body that introduced international labelling schemes for forest and forest



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The goal of FSC is to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests by establishing a worldwide standard of recognised and respected Principles of Forest Stewardship. FSC provides international certification principles and criteria that include performance standards with some procedural elements.

The FSC's Principles and Criteria (P&C) apply to all tropical, temperate and boreal forests. Many of these P&C apply also to plantations and partially replanted forests. It covers three main issues related to timber resource management, forest ecosystems and social

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aspect. Due to the diversity of forestry situations, it is recognised that any international standards have to be adjusted to suit local situations. Such adjustment can be made through national initiatives by all stakeholders or the certification body itself.

The P&C is the base document that needs to be implemented by the forest managers. They have to be incorporated into the evaluation systems of all certification organisations seeking accreditation by FSC.

Rigorous Evaluation Procedure

The FSC has developed rigorous procedures and standards to evaluate whether organisations (certification bodies) can provide an independent and competent evaluation (certification) service. This process is known as "accreditation". FSC-accredited certification bodies are required to evaluate all forest managers or forest owners before they are allowed to carry the FSC logo on their product or company documentation.

Accreditation is required to give certification bodies credibility with regard to their procedures and quality of assessment. It acts as a higher body that will ensure that every certification body plays by the rules and procedures and provides confidence in the marketplace.

The accreditation body assesses the resources and competence of certification

bodies in view of carrying out their tasks in an independent and reliable manner. The accreditation body licenses or franchises certification bodies to operate, provided that they follow the defined rules.

Three elements are important in the evaluation for accreditation:

- (i) Independence of the certification body,
- (ii) Certification procedure, and
- (iii) Professional skills.

The third element is particularly important in the case of forest management, as the performance standards have to be correctly interpreted at the local (site) level requiring a thorough knowledge and understanding of the specific ecosystems and social conditions.

All accredited certification bodies may operate internationally and carry out evaluations in any forest type. The performance of the certification bodies is monitored closely by the FSC. Certified organisations are visited on a regular basis in order to ensure they continue to comply with the requirements.

FSC Certification Schemes

a. Forest Management Scheme

Forest Management Certification scheme is the process of inspecting a particular forest or woodland (Forest Management Unit) to see if they are being managed according to an



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agreed set of standards of the 10 principles and criteria established by the FSC.

Competent assessors will rigorously assess Forest Management Units for compliance to the P&C. Assessors are selected based on working experience and field of expertise. They will spend an appropriate amount of time in the field and in the office to look for objective evidence of compliance. The amount of time depends on the forest size and complexity. The number of assessors involved varies from a minimum of two people.

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b. Chain of Custody Certification

Chain of Custody (COC) is a process in which timber products are verified. It provides a system for tracking certified wood from the forest through each stage of production, distribution and to the point of sale. It requires organisation to establish systems that create a paper trail demonstrating certified materials are kept



The Chain of Custody process provides a system for tracking certified wood.

separate from non-certified, and can be accurately tracked to maintain their identity and authenticity throughout the manufacturing and distribution process.

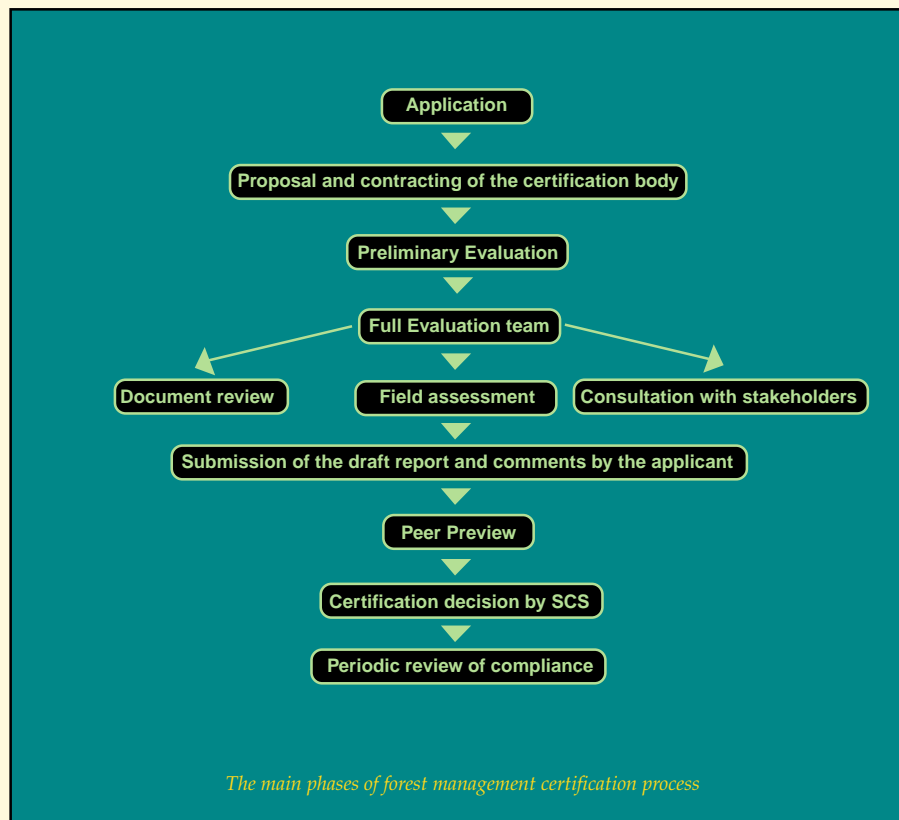
To comply with the scheme, organisation is required to establish a Chain of Custody system in accordance to FSC COC principles. An assessor will assess the Chain of Custody system before a certificate of compliance is issued. Assessment time varies depending on the organisation's size and complexity.

The assessor will verify its system of segregation between certified and non-certified wood, inventory, storage, labelling, records from receiving of raw material until delivery of finished products. Each organisation is subject to an annual surveillance audit in order to ensure continuous compliance to the six FSC COC principles.

Products originating from forests certified by FSC-accredited certification bodies are eligible to carry the FSC logo to indicate that the product originates from a well-managed forest.



As part of SIRIM QAS' commitment to the environment, a collaborative agreement was signed with Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) in 2000 to provide FSC-endorsed Forest Management Certification and Chain of Custody Certification schemes



Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)

Established in 1984, Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) has evolved to become a certifier of multiple facets of the food industry and the environmentally sound management of forests, marine habitats and a wide variety of businesses.

SCS introduced its Forest Conservation Programme in 1991 and has been accredited by the FSC. In the SCS Forest Conservation Program, SCS audit the practices of forest managers and certify them under the FSC standards and principles as "well managed". The forestry programme also includes FSC Chain of Custody certification for handling certified forest products from wood to the market such as wholesalers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

Since its inception, SCS has certified more than 12 million acres of natural forests and plantations in Central, South and North America, Europe, Asia and New Zealand.

Through its Chain of Custody Certification, SCS has audited and certified around 400 manufacturers, distributors and retailers who make or carry certified wood products.

SIRIM QAS Gains International Recognition

With over 25 years of experience in quality assurance, Malaysia-based SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd has achieved wide recognition both nationally and internationally. The company provides a comprehensive range of certification, inspection and testing services that conform to various international standards and guidelines. This includes certification of Quality Management System (ISO 9001), QS 9000, Environmental Management System (ISO 14001), Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSAS 18001).

As a certification, inspection and testing body, SIRIM QAS is accredited by DSM (Department of Standards Malaysia) and UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service). This accreditation provides the public an assurance that SIRIM QAS' certification and testing services meet internationally agreed criteria covering integrity, technical competence and validity of methods.

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Under the SCS-SIRIM QAS collaborative programme, two forestry companies, eight

manufacturers and a trader in Malaysia have been FSC-certified for Forest Management and Chain of Custody (COC) Certification respectively.

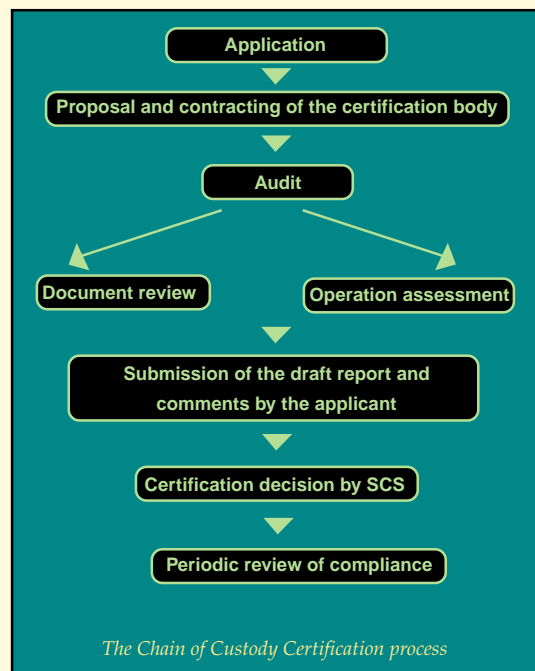
SCS-SIRIM QAS Certification Process

a) Forest Management Certification Scheme

At the request of the client and once a contract is executed, SCS-SIRIM QAS determines the scope of the project and selects local experts in the relevant fields of forestry, biology and economics to function as the evaluation team. Field experience, regional expertise and regional credibility are crucial factors considered in selecting these evaluators.

The certification process normally involves two evaluation steps, namely the Preliminary Evaluation and Full Evaluation. The Preliminary Evaluation is to help ascertain the probability for a successful certification. The information gathered during this stage will be used for estimating cost and time frame needed for the Full Evaluation.

Full Evaluation is conducted upon confirmation from the client. Subsequently, SIRIM QAS will conduct initiation steps (standard regionalisation, stakeholders notification and consultation) and assemble the evaluation team. The information gathered during this audit is obtained through various



sources, such as clients, stakeholders, government agencies and NGOs.

A report will be prepared and then peer reviewed by independent regional experts prior to recommendation for certification under SCS certification scheme.

b) Chain of Custody Certification Scheme

Upon request from the client and once a contract is executed, SIRIM QAS determines the scope of the project. The client is requested to submit a set of documentation prior to the audit. After reviewing the information, an auditor will be appointed to conduct a site audit. A report will be prepared and submitted to SCS for review and approval.

To become certified, the client must maintain adequate inventory control system to allow for separation and identification of certified materials and products.

The audit requires the tracking of certified input throughout the production process in order to ensure the validity of the certified claim. If a wood product carries the FSC label, a customer can have confidence that it is made from an FSC-certified forest. **AT**

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