

Test of innovative approaches to certification of small forest holdings

A pilot test of new approaches to certification of small forest holdings will be carried out in the Baltic countries during 2008. Behind the project is the global environmental organisation WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) and StoraEnso, one of the world largest forest product companies, as well as NEPCon, representative of the FSC accredited SmartWood program in the Baltic Countries. Furthermore, a broad range of stakeholders including the national FSC initiatives will be invited to participate in the pilot test.

Background: Failure to address certification among small properties

While forest certification during the last year has become widespread around the globe for state owned forest and company owned forest, virtually no certification has taken place for the small private owned forest, except from a few countries operating a regional certification scheme. Some of the most important reasons for this include:

- *Certification requirements* not adjusted the management of small forest properties. A number of requirements related to procedures, planning, surveys and monitoring that are relevant if you manage a 10.000 ha property can not be expected for a 25 ha property.
- *Certification costs*: Owners of small forest areas do not have regular income from the forest. On a 25 ha property the logging might be carried out every 5 or 10th year. It is not justified to have annual cost for certification and monitoring.
- *Control of high impact operations*: Owner of small forest holdings has limited influence on the logging operation. Often logging is conducted by logging companies buying wood on standing stock. A forest owner is selling a couple of ha of forest for harvest is not in a position to require and check that the logging company follows all the certification requirements.

In the pilot test forest holdings less than 30 ha are eligible for participating. It is expected that about 80 pct of the forest properties and more then 60 pct of the private forest land in the Baltic countries will qualify.

Transfer of responsibilities to logging companies

The project aims at testing alternative approaches to certification of small private forest holdings by transferring some of the certification requirements and costs from the forest owner to the logging companies.

Logging companies anyway pay a key role since the logging operations typically are the activity with highest impact on the forest property. Analysing forest management certification requirements

and standards it is evident that many of the requirements are related to harvesting operations in the forest including the planning of these, the harvest itself and the follow up.

Logging certification

Logging certification can be the key to ensure that certification requirements are met for small forest holdings. If the forest owner can be assured that a logging company fulfils all applicable certification requirements by choosing a certifier logger, the owner does not need to consider about a majority of the requirements.

SmartLogging is a standard for logging certification has recently been developed and published by Rainforest Alliance. The standard is generic by nature and is expected to be adapted to local conditions. For the aim of the project local the SmartLogging standard has been merged with applicable forest management certification requirements. This standard will be used as basis for logger certification within the project.

Certification requirements

The certification requirements are specified in the applicable forest management certification standards. As a part of the pilot test the certification requirement will be analysed and adopted where relevant:

- It will be evaluated if requirements are applicable for a forest property of less than 30 ha. A number of the certification requirements are not applicable for small properties.
- Requirements will be divided into requirements that are expected to be met by the forest owner and requirements that shall be met by the logging company. The forest owner still has the responsibility to ensure that all applicable requirements are observed, but by choosing a certified logging company, he will be assured that all logging company applicable requirements are observed.
- Focus will be given on field performance and requirements that can be evaluated during field visits. For small forest holdings a site visit by the auditor can easily get an overview of forest management taking place and the requirements for system descriptions, policies, procedures, records etc is kept at a minimum.

The pilot test takes place in the Baltic countries where there are no formal endorsed FSC standards. The certification body therefore have some flexibility in adapting standards to the special conditions of very small properties.

Key players in the certification system for small forest holdings

The key players in the pilot test will be:

- The *owner* is the owner of the small forest holding. In the current project only holdings less than 30 ha qualify. The forest owner signs a commitment to certification requirements with a certification group manager. The commitment includes specification of requirements

directly applicable to the owner as well as a commitment to use certified loggers for harvesting activities.

- The *group manager* has a contract with the forest owners and a certification contract with an accredited certification body. The group manager is responsible for doing monitoring of group members according to the requirements, as well as keeping updated list of members. Furthermore, the group manager shall maintain the certification of the group. The group manager can for instance be a logging company, a group of logging companies or a forest owners association.
- The *logging company* is certified by an accredited certification body according to a locally adapted SmartLogging standard. The logging company are committed to observe all certification related requirements when conducting forest harvesting operations.
- The *certification body* is accredited according to accreditation standards and responsible for evaluating compliance with certification requirements by the group manager and the certified logging companies.

Benefits for involved parties:

By joining the certification program and using services of certified loggers the forest owner gets:

- Assurance fair treatment in terms of prices and qualities.
- Assurance that the logging operations are conducted according to highest internal standards.

The logging companies:

- Increased access to certified wood from the private forest land.
- Recognition as a logging company meeting the highest international standards for best management practice.

Project organisation

- The *project steering committee* has the overall responsibility for implementation of the pilot text. The steering committee consists of representatives of from StoraEnso, WWF and FSC.
- The *reference group* will be kept informed about the project development and result, as well as being consulted on certification requirements and other issues during the project implementation. The reference group consist of a broad range of stakeholders from the 3 Baltic countries including national initiatives, NGOs and logging companies.
- The *project management team* are responsible for the daily implementation of the project and coordination of the activities. The team consist of representatives of StoraEnso Wood Supply Baltic and NEPCon.

Project implementation

January

- Adapt certification requirements to small forest holdings.
- Adapt the SmartLogging standard to Baltic conditions and include certification requirements applicable for logging companies.
- Draft concept paper

February

- Kick off seminar for reference group in Latvia.
- Stakeholder consultation process on indicators and approach (reference group)

March to May

- Identify parties involved in the pilot test
- Prepare the system needed
- Prepare for certification

June

- Pilot test of at least one logging company and a group of at least 20 owners.

September

- International workshop and study tour presenting the result for steering group, reference group and other stakeholders. International stakeholders will be invited.
- Final report including suggestions for indicators, concept and follow up.

November

- Side event at FSC General Assembly