

Forest Certification: Issues for International Cooperation

FAO

Forest Certification in China: Latest
Developments and Future Strategies
Hangzhou, China
21 - 23 July 2004

Background

- Since early 90s, proliferation of forest certification and product labeling schemes
- Indicator of popularity & “success” of certification
- Int org, NGOs, private sector increasingly supportive

Major Schemes

- Two International Certification Schemes
 - Forest Stewardship Council
 - Pan-European Forest Certification Framework

Major Schemes

- Approaches and institutional settings vary, but common feature – close cooperation with national std setting initiatives and operational certification
- FSC & PEFC - “Umbrella schemes” that influenced national initiatives like MTCC & LEI, others
- Canadian Standards Assoc. has applied for PEFC endorsement – enhance market acceptance
- Harmonization efforts – importance of certification in sensitive markets (Europe)

International Cooperation

- Forest certification – option to reduce regulatory burdens and induce policy change in a participatory process
- However, role of governments and mandate of inter-governmental deliberations still under discussion

International Cooperation

- What kind of international cooperation and support possible?
- Basic features of any certification scheme:
 - Standard setting for sfm
 - Accreditation of certifying bodies
 - Certifying forests and their management according to a set of national standards

Int. Coop.: Standard setting

- Int. cooperation agencies active at interface of standard setting, policy making and operational support to forest management.
- Areas of intervention:
 - Constructive debates between int and national certification schemes about standard setting for SFM (principles, C&I...
 - No formal consensus, but facilitated process of std setting
- FAO facilitates such debates, links national efforts to global level.

Int. Coop.: Accreditation

- Need to ensure professional competence of certifiers
- Difficult to continuously monitor certifiers
- No success possible unless standard of sustainability achieved
- Entails support in capacity building
- Major support given by int comm - ODA, NGO...
- Support cannot be focused to one targeted scheme – politically unacceptable to choose one scheme over another.
- Therefore, influence on national certifying bodies indirect.

Int. Coop.: FAO Support

- FAO supports concept of “phased approach to certification”
- Debated in ITTC (2003)
- Taken up by some certification schemes
- Approach offers solution to dilemma – that certification mainly reached forest owners with relatively high standards of forest management
- Phased approach constructive - can involve more operators into scheme regardless of current quality

Int. Coop.: Certifying

- For Cert – instrument to foster forest policy, and enhance national government-led processes to establish C&I for sfm
- E.g. national C&I mainly based on those developed in regional processes (e.g. ITTO, Montreal, Helsinki)
- C&I have driven forest policy making, especially with cross-cutting issues – community development, environment, bd, economics of production, etc.

Int. Coop.: Certifying

- Concern on working with forest operations which do not meet standards yet - does not lower standards, but enhances dynamics through broader participation, awareness, and field testing of change
- Transparency increases while forest owners prepare for sfm
- Need to clarify what measures needed to support national efforts

Int. Coop.: Certifying/Legislation

- Int. community – made major initiative on compliance to national/international legislation
- E.g. Asian Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG)
- All certification schemes subscribe to legality of operations
- FAO = forest certification excellent instrument for compliance with legislation

Int. Coop.: Impact of China

- China – major importer
- Forest certification in Malaysia, Indonesia – impt bearing on trade
- Crucial in value added products to Europe and N. America
- Analysis on trade dynamics
- FAO/UNECE Timber Branch in Geneva – oversees import/export situation in Europe

Int. Coop.: Merits of various certification schemes

- How to judge various certification schemes
 - which finds acceptance in various market places in China, region, N. Am, Europe
 - what bearing certification has on current forest operations for sfm
- Certification – not only to increase market access/share, but also fosters good forestry practices
- So certification is not only for sensitive markets
- Applies to all markets, including domestic; fosters good forestry practices = healthy forests, flourishing industry

Int. Coop.: FAO

- FAO – technical/normative mandate of neutrality
- Identified forest certification crucial for sfm
- Support goes beyond to forest industry & community-based enterprises
- Continue to serve as open and neutral forum for all stakeholders

Int. Coop.: FAO

- Forest certification – great opportunity to enhance sfm, but also for processing and market access
- Focus:
 - Advice on forest-related policy, land-use, tenure, economics, trade
 - Assistance – harnessing response to post-UNCED conventions, embed into national nfps
 - Assistance – participation in int/regional processes
 - Support – capacity building

Int. Coop.: FAO...

- Focus...:
 - Collaboration – countries efforts to improve environment for investment
 - Provide market intelligence – wood, nwfp, Env services...
 - Support countries – forestry for poverty reduction strategy
 - Neutral forum for debate

Mutual recognition

- FSC+PEFC – foster national certification schemes
- Mutual recognition – polarized, antagonistic
- Market-based instrument, competition for share
- Mutual recognition = formal endorsement of each other
- MR - though supported by forest industry
- Fear – MR would prevent clear distinction bet schemes

Mutual recognition...

- MR – as formal act, difficult, not pursued
- Forest owners/operators seek dual certification from both int schemes and national alliances
- However, communication bet 2 schemes has intensified in last 2 years
- Current cooperation steered by common interests – market access, acceptance of prods...

Mutual recognition...

- Problem – lack of trust
- FAO hosted 2 expert consultations
 - Confidence building among cert schemes
 - 9 CEOs –SEA, Latin Am, N. Am, Europe
- Participants reviewed std setting, process, effectiveness of fora
- Constituencies need more meetings – discuss vision, stds, approaches, procedures in developing certification
- More meetings to reduce counterproductive confrontations

FAO...

- FAO – Chair of Collaborative Partnership on Forests
- Joint effort of int org to support countries and provide direction for UNFF
- FAO ready to increase efforts to Member countries