FSC certification of small scale forest operations – opportunities and constraints

June 2007
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Our Role … … *is to bring together people, organizations and businesses to develop solutions that promote responsible management of the world’s forests.*

FSC membership a key factor:
672 organisational and individual members in 82 countries divided in 3 chambers with equal weight
The scope of certification

• FSC’s Mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world’s forests.

• FSC certification is an international market tool with universal Principles and Criteria to demonstrate responsible forest management.

• The concept of universality means it is basically a one size fits all approach – statistics based on area give skewed impression that FSC favours large over small operations.

**FSC considers it a priority within its Mission to promote equitable access to certification and address the needs of small operations!**
FSC certification of small scale operations

The situation on the ground:
FSC certification so far:

Total area certified 92 million hectares
of which
48% in boreal regions,
40% temperate regions
and 12% in the tropics.

Small operations account for some 8%-9% of
the total.
FSC certification of small scale operations

Is there then a level playing field?
FSC certification follows a global model where compliance with the FSC Principles and Criteria is identical for all producers, large or small, North or South.

• The cost of certification is a factor, the smaller the operation, the more costly per hectare.

BUT the cost can be reduced by:
• group certification (e.g. by spreading sampling requirements);
• using streamlined procedures for small and low intensity operations SLIMFS
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The first attempt to address the inequality of small producers was through the Group certification scheme in 1998.

Then followed the **SLIMFs Initiative** (small and low intensity managed forests), effective since 2003.

Note: these initiatives were intended to reduce certification costs rather than address factors which weigh against small operations such as market power, access to market information, technical constraints (volume and quality), business knowhow and the range of variables which limit competitiveness.
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Group certification:
37 certificates in the South  4,847,065 ha
150 certificates in the North  2,544,313 ha
This represents some 3000 forest owners/communities

SLIMFs:
49 certificates in the following countries:
USA 17, UK 10, Canada 7, Estonia 2, Spain, Russia, Sweden, Portugal, Indonesia, Japan, Brazil, Costa rica, Finland, Denmark, Republic of Korea, Ireland, Panama

Total: 1,971,855 ha. Largest 881,475 ha in Russia, smallest 20 ha. In Panama.
Reminder of rationale for SLIMFs Initiative:

- Standards generally developed with large operations in mind.
- Small operations often find it difficult to access information about what’s required or have the expertise to implement it.
- Costs high for many small operations to enter into certification, or maintain their certificate.
- Process, paperwork, time demands (“bureaucracy”!) are an obstacle.

A streamlined procedure was introduced, principally to reduce sampling and public consultation requirements = less audit time
Conclusions:

• Certification Bodies inform in some cases cost savings of 40% or more are being achieved through SLIMFs.

• Major savings made by reducing number of field visits and by reducing sampling requirements for group evaluations.

• Majority of small operations prior to the SLIMFs initiative were incorporated through group certification and this should continue.

• Incorporation of groups in SLIMFs allows streamlining in scoping, stakeholder consultation, evaluation, and simplified certification and public summary.
What next:

SLIMFs Initiative cannot solve all the problems of small operations. Complementary actions are needed:

- develop dedicated models for small operations, including buyer pays concept
- continue to build capacity in small forest management, organisation & marketing through institutional partnerships (not FSC’s mandate)
- promote market linkages for SLIMFs operations
- determine conditions for positive benefit/cost ratios of certification for small operations
- Use forest owners’ associations
- Modular/stepwise approach
- BETTER WITH SMALL FOREST OWNERS WITHIN THE SYSTEM!
Thank you!