

Group Certification: an Important Instrument in the Climate Change Mitigation Toolbox

Expanding Group Certification Globally
is a multi-partner project of the Programme
for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
(PEFC)



The *Expanding Group Certification Globally* project seeks to encourage and facilitate uptake of Group Certification among small forest owners and managers throughout the world. In particular, it seeks to promote certification in those areas where it is less widespread, but where sustainable management of forests has taken on increasing urgency in light of efforts to combat climate change and alleviate poverty.

The multi-partner project brings together the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification and several partners. Many are members of the Three Rights Holders Group (G3 Alliance), a platform for collaboration among family forest owners, community forestry and tribal and indigenous peoples of the tropical forest that promotes locally controlled forestry and sustainable forest management.

**Confederation of European
Forest Owners (CEPF)**

**Global Alliance of Community
Forestry (GACF)**

**International Alliance of
Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
of the Tropical Forest (IAITPTF)**

**International Family Forestry
Alliance (IFFA)**

**Programme for the Endorsement
of Forest Certification
(PEFC)**



Forestry, People and Climate Change

Forest certification offers a powerful tool in efforts to combat climate change.

Deforestation and forest degradation account for nearly 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than the entire global transport sector and second only to the energy sector. Yet forest products are by their very nature derived from renewable sources, have generally lower embodied carbon than competing products and form a critical component of a low carbon, green economy.

To expand the utilisation of wood in support of a low carbon economy, while safeguarding forest ecosystems, forest certification systems promote best practice in forest management and reduce forest degradation. Forest certification also increases market access, confidence and the value of forest products, thereby positively altering a business case which could otherwise result in deforestation.

It is these dynamics which also underpin REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiatives which seek to raise the intrinsic value of forests by putting a financial value on the carbon stored in them. Where REDD+ recognises the importance of sustainable forest management and concerted engagement with local and indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, forest certification systems offer pragmatic standards, guidelines, and verification to ensure the intended results are delivered in the forest.



GROUP CERTIFICATION: A GOOD COMPLEMENT TO REDD+

By offering assurances that forests are sustainably managed, forest certification seeks to halt their unsustainable use and degradation. It also enhances their quality and the livelihoods of those who depend upon forests by connecting them to preferential markets for forest products and services ranging from carbon to timber, and ensuring benefit sharing and economic opportunities at a local level.

Group Certification is a mechanism through which groups of small forest landholders can pool their resources and work together to achieve third-party verified sustainable forest management certification. With 25% of forest area managed locally by families, communities, and indigenous peoples, it is essential that tools, like Group Certification, are made accessible to these important stewards of the world's forests. Group Certification makes certification affordable for small landholders when individual certification may be too expensive.

Internationally, nearly one million small forest owners have achieved PEFC certification through the Group Certification mechanism. This number is testament that Group Certification is possible for small landholders, and that it is a powerful and cost-



MTK, 2010

effective mechanism for promoting forest conservation and sustainable management. Experience also shows that Group Certification can stimulate and significantly contribute to improving rural livelihoods. The knock-on effects in terms of incentives to conserve and sustainably manage forests makes Group Certification an effective complement to REDD+.

These benefits make Group Certification an important instrument in the climate change mitigation toolbox.

Expanding Group Certification Globally: The Project

The *Expanding Group Certification Globally* project seeks to encourage and facilitate the uptake of Group Certification among small forest owners and managers throughout the world. In particular, it seeks to promote certification in those areas where it is less widespread, but where sustainable management of forests has taken on increasing urgency in light of efforts to combat climate change and alleviate poverty.

The project successfully completed its first phase and will move to implementation in 2012 – provided that funding is secured. Organizations interested in contributing to our joint efforts are urged to contact PEFC for further information.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS: PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Taking stock of existing practices and identifying key elements for further uptake of Group Certification was at the centre of the first phase of the project, which is now completed.

For this purpose, existing Group Certification models in seven European countries - Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Spain and Sweden - were carefully analysed and assessed. All of these countries have an important forestry sector, a strong forestry tradition and extensive experience with certification.

Lessons Learnt from Existing Practices

Experiences and lessons learnt on the ground were gathered from forest owners and owners' associations in these countries, and include:

- Secure, long-term tenure rights are a fundamental basis for sustainability and must be defined by a robust legal framework.
- Small landholder organizations may take different forms, but the organizations are key to functional group certification.
- Certification can drive forward sustainable practices; it can also document existing sustainability.
- Successful forest certification systems acknowledge nationally-relevant standards and respect local institutions and organizations.
- Strong partnerships between small landholders and industry or the State can provide essential support.



Key Elements for Enabling Group Certification

Based on these findings, the project partners identified the following key elements to consider in promoting the uptake and expansion of certification.

1. *Preconditions*

Defined land tenure rights
Presence of robust legal framework
Existence of rights holders' organizations
Local ownership
Standards setting capacity

2. *Facilitating Conditions*

Low barriers to access
Tradition of forest management

3. *Incentives*

Market access
Premium price for products and services
Acceptance by public and private procurement policies

4. *Enabling Factors*

Industry support
Capacity building
Standards setting capacity
Organizational structure & tradition
Chain of Custody certification

5. *Supporting Elements*

Public infrastructure
State forest cooperation
Investment



EXPANDING IN OTHER REGIONS: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The project is now ready for implementation and sharing the knowledge and experience learnt from Group Certification in Europe with groups of small forest owners and owners' associations in other parts of the world.

Partner organizations are currently engaged in identifying local partners in different parts of the world where small landholders display a clear motivation to build organizational capacity, implement sustainable forest practices, or achieve forest certification.

A series of pilot projects are being designed to address the individual needs of local small landholders in a particular region and to create the conditions necessary for them to eventually pursue Group Certification.

The project will establish bilateral and/or international exchanges and relationships to support sharing of knowledge, transfer of technology and know-how, and capacity building for achieving certification.



Project Sites

Project sites will be selected based on a number of parameters, including the significance of small landholders within the countries' land tenure framework, active local partner organizations interested in advancing their capacities, and conducive national and international policy conditions including REDD+ or involvement in Growing Forest Partnership (GFP) or the FAO National Forest Programme Facility (NFPF).

The following have been identified for their potential to host pilot projects:

- Balkans
- Brazil
- China
- Cameroon
- Mexico
- Nepal



Activities

Working together with local partner organizations, each pilot project will include:

- **Field Dialogue:** to bring together a range of international and local project partners. The dialogue will facilitate a local analysis of issues facing small landholders in the region, foster experience exchange between forest landholder organizations, and look to develop a longer term cooperation and development plan.
- **Twinning Support:** to facilitate longer term cooperation and mentorship between organizations, such as a partnership between a Forest Owner Association in Finland and Forest Owner Association in Mexico.

Climate Impacts

The overarching objective of this project is to enable small landholders to better organize and manage their forest resources sustainably, while receiving more direct, tangible economic benefit from their resources and management efforts.

Building on the success of small forest owners in Europe in implementing sustainable management, accessing forest certification and receiving direct benefits, the collaborating partners seek to share knowledge, experience and build capacity of small landholders in other parts of the world.

Such outcomes will complement REDD+ and climate change mitigation through:

- Increasing the capacity and organization of small landholders to ensure sustainability in the 25% of the world's forest resources which they manage;
- Growing the supply of sustainable forest products to contribute to the shift to a green economy;
- Improving the organization of small landholders to facilitate engagement and cooperation in REDD+ implementation and the delivery of benefit sharing mechanisms;
- Establishing international cooperation to support small landholders to receive more direct benefits from their resource once they have the land rights, with lasting contributions towards vibrant rural economies, poverty reduction and sustainable development.



Join the Project



Partner organizations have been collaborating in the development of this project since 2010. With a shared vision, clear priorities, and commitment we are looking to obtain the necessary funding to support the project implementation phase commencing in 2012.

If your organization shares our vision for supporting small landholders in building organizational capacity, implementing sustainable forest practices or achieving forest certification we urge you to contribute funding to this project.

Clearly, the urgency of climate change requires new approaches and strong partnerships, and this project stands to deliver results where it is needed most.

Join us now!

development@pefc.org

The Project Partners

Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF)

The Confederation of European Forest Owners (CEPF) is the umbrella association of national forest owner organizations in the European Union.

CEPF works as the representative of family forestry in Europe, by promoting the values of private property ownership.

www.cepf-eu.org

Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF)

The Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF) is a network of community-based organizations that seeks to create common ground to meet the necessities, interests and experiences of stakeholders representing forest communities from different parts of the world to secure their rights to forests at the international and regional levels.

www.gacfonline.com

International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest (IAITPTF)

The International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests (IAITPTF) is a worldwide network of organizations representing indigenous and tribal peoples living in tropical forest regions of Africa, the Asia-Pacific and the Americas.

www.international-alliance.org

International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA)

The International Family Forestry Alliance (IFFA) represents 25 million forest owners worldwide. It seeks to promote the development of family forestry and advocate supportive policies.

IFFA provides recommendations to international forest policy processes and a forum for exchange of experience, ideas and information.

www.familyforestry.net

Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)

PEFC is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management through independent third-party certification.

PEFC is committed to conserving forests and enhancing the communities and families that own, work, and live in and around forests.

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