



NETWORK FOR CERTIFICATION AND CONSERVATION OF FORESTS

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Contact: Ms. Deepali Rautela

Email for comments: Deepali.rautela@nccf.in

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The following document serves as a base document to the NCCF draft Forest Management Standard. This document has been developed at a very broad level, keeping in mind that it should cater to both state and non-state forests, plantations, farm and social forestry as well as protected areas.

This document has been developed by the Standards Development Group (SDG) of the NCCF through a consultative process. The document in its present form would be further refined by additional rounds of consultation both within and outside the SDG as well as with all stakeholders. Post finalization of the draft, the standard would undergo an extensive round of field level verification to see the manner in which the standard can be adopted as well as its usability and adaptability in the field in the Indian context.

The themes and identified principles are only indicative in nature and are by no means exhaustive. Readers are urged to look beyond the details mentioned in this document and contribute further suggestions on what more needs to be included or what further changes can be suggested. Being a very preliminary draft stage, no part of this document is sacrosanct, as such, even modifications/additions/deletions to the themes itself are also welcome. Based on the approval of the themes, the Standard Development Group (SDG) would further proceed to develop the attendant indicators and verifiers.

Foreword:

“Forest Certification is a market-based non-regulatory conservation tool designed to recognize and promote responsible forest management. Through Certification, timber harvest planning and practices are evaluated by an independent third party, according to standards that address environmental protection as well as social and economic welfare”

India’s forests are a compilation of contrasts, with breathtaking diversity in terms of ecological zones, forest types and sub types, species as well as a diversity and range of forest goods and services. Further, the Indian forestry scenario is different from other forestry sectors (especially the European and the North American forests) in that over 95% of forest resources are owned and managed by the state. Further, there is a huge population which is dependent on forests, sometimes for their lives and food, and some for their livelihood. It would be not out of place to summarise that India’s forests, with its range from Alpine and snow clad forests, through dry and wet deciduous forests, scrub forests, right up to evergreen forests, marshes, mangroves etc. represent a microcosm for the whole of South Asia, and indeed represent most of the known human habitats on earth.

As such, there is a need to protect and conserve this legacy that we have, for future generations. But, this protection cannot be at the cost of present needs of the population dependent on forests for their living. A judicious use of forests and their resources would depend upon proper management of our forest areas, and the tool of forest certification can act as promoter and monitor for these management practices, leading to a sustainable and responsible management of forests.

The sustainable and responsible management of forests may be broadly defined as the use and management of forests, forest resources and associated lands in such a manner as to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations, while at the same time maintaining their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and potential to fulfill relevant social, economic, ecological and social functions.

While there are currently existing and running forest certification schemes operating globally, there has been a growing realization among different stakeholders of the country that India needs to develop a Forest Certification system which meets the rigor of international benchmarking and simultaneously is suitable and conversant with the peculiar conditions and rigors of India’s forests. Keeping those conditions in mind, the present document has been developed to become a tool for monitoring, assessment and improvement of forest and plantation management practices, its improvement as well as its forming the basis for Forest Management (FM) and Chain of Custody (COC) certification to benefit

forests and plantation owners, farmers, craftsmen, decentralised value addition/manufacturing units, as well as trading units ,by getting wood based products linked to the domestic and international markets through chain through Chain of Custody (COC) certification network.

It aims to promote the implementation of improved Forest practices in the country and further the development of healthier, sustainable forestry practices which are economically beneficial, environmentally responsible and socially appropriate in *accordance with national policies, institutional frameworks and sustainability usage norms*. The project envisages development of Criteria and indicators at the national level that can be used to guide countrywide policies, regulations and legislations necessary to achieve national objectives on sustainable forest management. On a broader level, the standard will become a tool for assessment and improvement of forest and plantation management practices, as well as, an improvement tool. **The Standards so developed in the process will be having an aspirational approach so as to help in the existing forest management system improvisation** as well.

It is required to clarify here that the standard is intended for voluntary application to any forest, regardless of size or ownership. The standard is also intended to be comparable with relevant international and national policy instruments and as such has been developed with both national and international audiences in mind, keeping in view the attempt to support and strengthen the regulatory framework within which the Indian forest managers operate.

Verbal forms for the expression of provisions

[Adapted from *ISO/IEC Directives Part 2: Rules for the structure and drafting of International Standards*]

“shall”: indicates requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform to the standard.

“should”: indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. A certification body can meet these requirements in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated and justified.

“may”: indicates a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.

“can”: is used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or causal.

In the present document, major issues relevant to forest certification have been grouped together into similar themes, with the themes further designed and organized to conform to the ‘triple bottomline’ approach of sustainability and responsible forest management, with the underlying ideal of ‘socially responsible, environmentally sustainable and economically viable’ forest management. The themes have been developed after looking into the major issues that are addressed among different forest certification standards globally and also looking into the National Working Plan code. These themes are further organized into Principles, which are the building blocks of the standard. The Principles are further elaborated by means of various criteria for evaluation, with each criterion corresponding to a particular aspect of the Principle, with the whole Principle being more than the sum of its participant criteria. At a further stage of refinement, verifiers and indicators would be developed for each criteria, to enable judging the performance in the field. The themes and its organization is as follows:

Theme A: This theme deals with the legality of the forest management enterprise and the legal status of all actions and activities attributed to it.

Theme B: This Theme deals with the creation, maintenance and implementation of a written forest management plan and its monitoring.

Theme C: This theme deals with the impact of forest management activities in the social, economic and environmental spheres

Theme D: This theme deals with the aspect of ‘environmental and ecological sustainability’ of forest management and deals with matters related to identification and management of High Conservation Values, tangible and intangible forest services, biodiversity, natural resource conservation and management etc.

Theme E: This theme is concerned with the aspect of ‘socially responsible forest management’ and deals with social and community relations as well as rights of both forest workers as well as forest or forest based communities

Theme F: This theme deals with the aspect of ‘economic viability of forest management operations’ and is concerned with the sustainable and productive utilization of forest resources, including both forest products as well as services