

## Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests

### Summary Proceedings of the Webinar on Forest Certification

19 May 2020

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) organized a webinar on Forest Certification on Tuesday, 19th May 2020. **Dr Sanjay Kumar, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India** delivered the inaugural address as the Chief Guest.

The webinar was attended by 225 delegates comprising Heads of Forest Force, PCCFs, CWLWs, APCCFs, CCFs, DFOs of SFDs, MDs/GMs of SFDCs, representatives of Biodiversity Boards, international organizations, central ministries of MoEF&CC, MoA&FW, Ministry of C&I, DoLR, EPCH, forestry professionals, academic and research institutions, industry and industry associations, civil society organizations, certification bodies and social groups.

#### **Some important takeaways from the DGF&SS' inaugural address are as under:**

- Forest certification, a sustainability and market based instrument, has the potential to address the market dynamics of wood/wood products/other forest products. It can reduce uncertainties and strengthen the wood/timber markets.
- Forest Certification, being evidence based, reduces risks and speeds up transactions happening in the business, as the due diligence exercised in certification through a credible third party, helps build trust and confidence amongst the stakeholders.
- Equally important is traceability of wood and need for Chain of Custody certification. It should be compulsorily made complimentary to Forest Management Certification. This will help us curb and discourage illegal sourced raw materials, wood-based products and other forest based products.
- We need to build a structured program using forest certification to reduce risks in sustainable utilization of wood/ wood products/ other forest products and make the system acceptable universally.

Two major challenges to build structure of certification are:

1. Our working plan system with new Working Plan Code of 2014 enshrines all principles of sustainable forest management. There has to be a synergy between Working Plan system based SFM and certification. Chain of Custody certification should compulsorily be complimentary to Forest Management Certification. Financial benefits accruing from certification should invariably be greater than the cost of certification.
2. Tackle issues related to restrictions due to CITES and address its impact on trade.

Government is working to bring synergy between stakeholders in this sector and will look forward for inputs from such webinars and workshops for developing a framework acceptable to the stakeholders and found conducive to growth of forestry and allied sectors. We need a unified action by all forest based stakeholders to accelerate certification for harnessing the intended benefits.

The webinar proceeded further with sessions conducted by the distinguished panelists on various aspects of certification.

**Mr A.K. Srivastava**, Director General, NCCF presented an “Introduction to Forest Certification and role of NCCF”. He highlighted policy implications, benefits of forest certification, global and country specific certification schemes and diverse activities of NCCF. Earlier, in his opening remarks, referring to the current COVID 19 pandemic, Mr Srivastava mentioned that health of people and health of planet are interdependent. We have to adopt sustainable lifestyles and focus on green growth, climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation and prudent management of natural resources. Certification promotes sustainable management of natural resources and it could contribute in a small way to keep at bay COVID like situations in future.

**Mr Avani Kumar Varma**, (ex PCCF&HoFF, Karnataka), Chairperson, Standard Development Group, NCCF FM Standard presented “NCCF Forest Management Certification Standard and Modalities for taking up NCCF FM Certification”.

**Mr AK Bansal**, Lead Forest Management Auditor (ex Addl. DG, MoEF&CC, GoI) Chairperson, Standard Development Group, NCCF NWFP Standard, in his presentation highlighted the Governance and Management Perspectives of Certification. He mentioned that UP Forest Corporation had got 41 Divisions with an area of 4.5 Lakh ha certified using NCCF Certification Scheme.

**Mr Suneel Pandey**, (Former Member of Indian Forest Service; Vice President, Paperboards and Specialty Papers Division, ITC Ltd., India), Secretary, NCCF presented the Industry Perspective of Forest Certification.

**Dr Devendra Pandey**, (ex DG, Forest Survey of India, ex PCCF&HoFF, Arunachal Pradesh), Chairperson, Standard Development Group, NCCF ToF Standard, introduced NCCF Trees outside Forest Certification Scheme which is ready for launch.

Presentations were followed by a lively interaction between the participants and panelists wherein participants were able to achieve enhanced understanding of the advantages of NCCF Certification schemes and the modalities of taking up certification. The participants appreciated the quality of presentations and the professional inputs on certification received by them and expressed keen interest in attending more such NCCF events in the future.

Based on the discussions in the webinar, following recommendations have been arrived at for submission to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for consideration:

1. Ministry may like to issue a policy guideline on Forest Certification.
2. Encourage “Green Public Procurement” to promote use of certified wood and wood products, especially by the central ministries, PSUs and state governments.
3. *Preamble* of the National Working Plan Code 2014 lays emphasis on “*assessment of forest management through forest certification schemes*”. Certification brings the quality of forest management to a global recognition, transcending departments, societies, governments and even nations. The MoEF&CC and the State Governments may take measures for full and speedy implementation of the NWP Code.
4. May request the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to facilitate streamlining export-import provisions covering legality, emission levels, phytosanitary and sanitary measures for wood and wood based products.
5. Certification is an eligible activity under CAF Rules 2018; the State Forest Departments may earmark budget under their Annual Plan of Operations under CAMPA to take up certification.
6. All major projects including externally aided forestry projects may have a component for supporting Forest Certification.
7. NCCF is ready to join a campaign with the MoEFCC on “Certification for Sustainability” to promote sustainable management of natural resources including forests and biodiversity through certification.
8. Scaling up domestic production of wood and wood products outside reserve forests, through agroforestry, urban forestry, linear plantations, woodlots etc.
9. Use of Chain of Custody certification to improve traceability of wood, wood-based and other forest based products so as to curb and discourage illegally sourced raw material and products.
10. Enable schemes and incentives for the organizations using domestically procured certified wood and gradually reduce import of wood.