

Forum highlights
'The Value of FSC Certification: Balanced Solutions for Responsible Forest Management and Society's Credibility'

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1. The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) represents the world's leading forest certification system, promoting responsible forest management by ensuring a balance between environmental protection, social inclusion and economic viability through consideration of the interests and expectations of all stakeholders and the facilitation of their effective engagement.
2. FSC's vision and objectives highlight the importance of recognising and gaining a deep understanding of the true value of forests and fully integrating this understanding into management systems and forestry practices worldwide. FSC's global priorities for 2026 – which are to increase the total area of FSC-certified forests worldwide, strengthen the integrity of the system, and establish a strategic framework for decisions on climate, biodiversity and restoration – guide the activities of the network's partners, taking into account the national challenges facing each of them.
3. At every stage of the product supply chain, from producer to consumer, the FSC certification system establishes a regulatory framework in the form of standards, policies, procedures and other documents, compliance with which contributes to the continuous improvement of forest management, taking into account current trends in responsible practices and present-day challenges.
4. The national context for implementing the values of FSC certification in Ukraine is shaped by both global and national challenges, primarily linked to the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine; this context is influenced by global political processes and Ukraine's corresponding commitments, as well as its European integration trajectory. Public preferences and demands determine the focus of forestry enterprises on responsible production practices.
5. FSC certification in Ukraine strengthens the forestry-policy toolkit available to Ukraine for ensuring forest management based on sustainable development, whilst remaining a voluntary, cost-effective, market-shaping, incentive-driven and long-term instrument.
6. The institutional environment in Ukraine fosters the development of various forest certification systems, reinforcing their importance in advancing state priorities for the sustainable development of the forestry sector and enhancing its economic potential at both national and international levels. Ukraine's commitments under the European Union financial-support programme (Ukraine Facility), and the strategic guidelines set out in Ukrainian legislation, together form the basis for the development of FSC certification as a benchmark for best practices in forest management and stewardship.
7. The scope of FSC certification in Ukraine covers not only the forest management system in terms of timber and non-timber resources and the supply chain, but also the certification of controlled wood, ecosystem services, and project certification, as well as the possibility of meeting additional requirements under the FSC EUDR Aligned Decision. Such diversification within the FSC certification system contributes to the effective economic development of enterprises, expanding opportunities for their long-term competitive advantages.
8. An analysis of the implementation of FSC values in Ukraine, conducted from the perspective of the practical application of the FSC Forest Management Standard for Ukraine (hereinafter – the FSC Standard for Ukraine), has demonstrated its significant impact on improving forest management. The practical application of the Standard necessitates the adoption of risk-based and adaptive approaches to decision-making (report attached).
9. The following remain weaknesses in the implementation of FSC certification values in Ukraine: the protection and conservation of environmental values, the assessment of the potential impacts of management activities on them, various types of monitoring required by the Standard, as well as compliance with occupational health and safety requirements, staff training, and stakeholder engagement, alongside the system for controlling the movement and tracking of forest products.
10. The interests of various stakeholders in the FSC certification system in Ukraine are united by the desire to ensure the responsible development of the forestry sector, its openness and transparency,

taking into account the demands of society. The mechanisms for achieving these goals are complementary: for example, strict adherence to FSC Standard requirements by FSC certificate holders in accordance with their commitments, the objective and impartial assessment of compliance with such requirements by certification bodies, and the application of relevant state instruments by public authorities. Identifying the points of convergence between the interests of various stakeholders highlights the importance of FSC as a platform for striking a balance that maximises the cumulative positive effects for each of them.

11. FSC certification enhances the capacity of non-governmental organisations to influence the implementation of responsible forest management in Ukraine, providing appropriate mechanisms for engagement with FSC certificate holders (for example, this is reflected in the FSC Standard requirements for Ukraine regarding stakeholder communication and their involvement in planning and monitoring forest management). Preserving environmental values, protecting the interests of local communities and reducing the risks of illegal logging are examples of areas where FSC certification has the potential to serve as an additional tool for influencing the forest management system, alongside other instruments of Ukraine's forestry policy.
12. The effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation between various stakeholders in the field of FSC certification are determined by their proactivity and mutual understanding of its potential effects. Awareness among all stakeholders of the necessary changes in organisational philosophy and culture, as effectively articulated by FSC certification, forms the basis for the genuine implementation of its values both within management systems and in operational practices.
13. The adaptation of management systems and forestry practices to contemporary challenges and societal expectations – where environmental and social responsibility form the foundation for effective long-term economic development – is driving the growth of FSC certification in Ukraine.
14. The establishment and implementation of management and production processes at forestry enterprises holding FSC certificates, in accordance with the requirements of the FSC Standard for Ukraine, can form the basis for systemic changes in the sector at the strategic, tactical and operational levels, taking into account the priorities of responsible management. In this context, the documentation of processes is of vital importance as a tool for ensuring consistency and continuity on the path to the continuous improvement of management systems and forestry practices.
15. The system for assessing compliance with FSC Standard requirements is an integral part of the proper implementation of FSC certification values. Non-conformities with FSC Standard requirements, identified by certification bodies during audits, effectively indicate areas for improving the management system and forestry practices, laying the groundwork for their transformation and continuous improvement in line with FSC priorities.
16. A risk-based approach in the work of certification bodies contributes to the effectiveness of the compliance-assessment system for FSC Standards and to increased confidence in FSC certification. Elements of this approach include, among others: a differentiated approach to planning audit duration and selecting sites for field inspections, defining additional criteria for assessing compliance during annual audits, expanding the information base for compliance assessments – including the use of remote-monitoring tools to identify changes in forest cover – and engaging experts and consulting stakeholders. Focusing on indicators where the risk of non-compliance is highest is, in effect, a precautionary measure in the context of inadequate implementation of FSC certification values.
17. To promote responsible forest management, taking into account the interests of various stakeholders and based on the values and requirements of FSC certification, the following steps are necessary at present:
 - promoting the adoption at the state level of the legislative act 'National Forest Policy' as a strategic guideline for the development of Ukraine's forestry sector, outlining, among other things, approaches to and tools for responsible forest management, including the place and role of forest certification among them;
 - enriching Ukraine's forestry legislation to take account of the requirements of the FSC Standard for Ukraine — for example, regarding the Standard's approaches to: assessing the impact on environmental values; retaining dead and decomposing biomass, as well as preserving forest elements during logging; protecting representative areas of native ecosystems; and monitoring the

social and environmental impacts of management activities, as well as changes in environmental conditions;

- promoting nature-friendly forestry approaches as a forestry practice that helps minimise disruption to natural ecosystems and serves as a benchmark for implementing responsible forest management in line with the requirements of the FSC Standard for Ukraine;
- strengthening expert and advisory support for responsible forest management, particularly regarding the FSC Standards for Ukraine concerning environmental values, the legality of timber products and other aspects, including the formalisation of communication and interaction mechanisms between stakeholders to facilitate constructive dialogue and effective cooperation;
- intensifying methodological and training support from various institutions (state and civil society, educational and scientific) for the implementation of FSC Standards in Ukraine, with a view to enhancing staff competencies and ensuring the proper implementation of FSC certification requirements;
- raising public awareness of FSC certification as a tool for ensuring responsible production and consumption, and for strengthening the position of forestry enterprises within the European integration process, given its requirements and mechanisms that shape management systems and forestry practices;
- promoting the development of a policy for the FSC brand in Ukraine to strengthen consumer confidence in the authenticity of the forestry sector's implementation of the FSC certification values it has declared;
- facilitating the expansion of FSC certification opportunities to include non-timber forest resources and ecosystem services, and the application of FSC marketing tools to create added value for all stakeholders in their promotion;
- further emphasising the importance of the FSC compliance-assessment system in promoting the genuine implementation of FSC certification values, taking into account the application of systematic risk assessment and differentiated approaches to audit planning by certification bodies, with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of audits as a guide for desired changes in management and operational practices, in line with FSC values;
- further supporting the adaptation of the FSC certification system to the conditions of the war and post-war period in Ukraine as part of the more systematic solutions required at the state level to create conditions for the safety of people's health and lives, taking into account areas contaminated with explosive ordnance or affected by the consequences of the war.

18. A proactive and well-founded stance by stakeholders in addressing current challenges is the foundation for the survival and development of Ukraine's forestry sector, as well as a model to be emulated by the entire FSC system.