



FSC® A000525



# **SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES**

## **Procedures for the International Forest Certification of Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF)**

### **1. Enclosures**

- Soil Association Certification Small Forest Certification Application form
- Soil Association Certification SLIMF Certification Report Template (combined checklist and report)
- Stakeholder consultation templates
- Declaration forms.

### **2. Eligibility**

If your woodland meets either of these two criteria you may apply for certification through our small woodland certification service:

- small woodlands – woodlands of less than 100ha (or where approved by Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) <1000ha) or
- low intensity managed woodlands –
  - a) the rate of harvesting is less than 20% of the mean annual increment (MAI) within the total production forest area of the unit, AND
  - b) EITHER the annual harvest from the total production forest area is less than 5000 cubic metres,
  - c) OR the average annual harvest from the total production forest is less than 5000 /year during the period of validity of the certificate as verified by harvest reports and surveillance audits.
- where only non-timber forest products are harvested.

### **3. Preparation**

If you are eligible under the definition of a “small” woodland a pre-assessment visit is not a requirement for certification. However, we are happy to arrange a pre-assessment visit to your woodland in order to discuss your particular situation, go over the standard with you and clarify any doubts you may have about the certification process. Pre-assessment visits are recommended for SLIMF Groups or if you are not familiar with FSC requirements.

If you choose not to have a pre-assessment, we strongly advise that you go through the certification checklist (Annex 1 of our SLIMF Certification Report Template for individual woodlands and Annexes 1 and 6 for Groups) to satisfy yourself that the management of your woodland is likely to meet these requirements.

### **4. Costs**

Please complete an application form and we will give you a quote for the cost of certification.

### **5. Application**

When you are satisfied that your forest/forest management meets the requirements please fill in the application form. Please make sure the following are clear on the application form:

- scope of the audit (forest areas and any processes included e.g. charcoal making.
- description of responsibilities for compliance with the standard (eg. by land owner, resource manager) as well as of the delegated responsibilities for the implementation of selected requirements (eg. by contractors).

We may contact you to clarify these points prior to quote. We will then send you a quote for certification assessment costs with a FSC Trademark Licence Agreement (TLA), an evaluation contract and schedule for you to sign, together with our suggestion of an auditor to carry out the evaluation. When we have received the signed TLA, contract and schedule we will arrange for the auditor to contact you directly to arrange a mutually convenient date and time. If you have any questions concerning the application process, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### **6. Prior to the Audit**

In order to keep the costs of SLIMF certification low, our SLIMF procedures require the applicant to carry out certain key tasks before the audit. The aim is to reduce auditor and administration time and hence reduce the cost of certification to you.

#### Stakeholder Consultation

The aim of stakeholder consultation is to help us identify important aspects of the management (positive or negative) that should be considered during the evaluation. It can also provide useful local feedback to the forest manager.

It is the forest manager’s initial responsibility to carry out stakeholder consultation. Consultation may be carried out by a variety of means, including:

- Sending letters and questionnaires to known stakeholders
- Putting up a sign in the woodland inviting comments
- Putting a notice in the local newspaper/parish magazine
- Following up stakeholder responses with telephone calls or meetings

Templates for consultation letters and questionnaires and on-site signs are enclosed. It is important that stakeholders can return their comments either to you but must be given the opportunity to respond directly to us if they wish. Examples of who you might contact include<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> In the UK relevant bodies would include the Forestry Commission, Natural England/Scottish Natural Heritage/Natural Resources Wales, English Heritage, local Wildlife Trusts, etc.  
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- Relevant statutory bodies
- Local conservation groups
- Neighbours
- People who use your woodland (e.g. forest workers, or people who walk in the forest).

Prior to the Audit you will need to provide us with information about the people you have consulted and any responses you have received. The auditor will discuss the results of the consultation with you during the audit and may cross-check some of the responses. Please note that consultation must be carried out at **least 6 weeks prior** to the date of the main assessment.

#### Declaration Forms

There are two declaration forms attached; One concerning ownership of the woodland and the other concerning commitment to FSC principles. Printing and signing these forms is one way of meeting FSC requirements 1.1.3 and 1.1.4<sup>2</sup>. (If you wish to wait and discuss this with the auditor during the audit you are, of course, free to do so).

#### Maps and Management Documentation

We will ask to see management documentation and maps of your forest **prior to** the audit. There is no set format for forest maps but the auditor will be looking for certain information:

- Forest location
- Access and features
- Areas of special conservation interest
- Forest operations
- Areas planned for long-term retention and minimum intervention

Please note that we may also need a copy of other documents, such as a forest management plan, in order to confirm the scope of the audit.

### **7. Audit**

The auditor will carry out the audit and complete a report using our SLIMF Certification Report Template. Our certification procedures are designed to ensure that the audit complies with FSC requirements<sup>3</sup>. This means that when you receive a certificate it is automatically recognised by FSC.

The audit will involve discussions on the management of your woodland, a site visit to evaluate management on the ground and a review of documentation maps and records.

The auditor will identify any parts of the Standard which are not fully complied with and will discuss any such 'non-compliances' with you. The auditor will discuss whether these are 'major non-compliances' or 'minor non-compliances'.

- There is a MAJOR non compliance when the woodland/forest management is failing to meet a relevant requirement. A Major non-compliance will need to be corrected before certification;
- There is a MINOR non-compliance when woodland/forest management is partially failing to meet a requirement, or is entirely failing to meet a requirement but the spirit of the requirement is still being achieved;

<sup>2</sup> UKWAS requirements 1.1.3 and 1.1.4

<sup>3</sup> In the UK our certification procedures are designed to ensure that the audit complies with both UKWAS and FSC requirements.

## 8. Certification Decision

After the evaluation we will send you a copy of the auditor's report and ask for your comments, including any comments on any identified non-compliances. When we have received your comments we will finalise our certification decision. At this stage we will send you our final report.

- If there are no non-compliances we will issue a certificate immediately;
- If there are only minor non-compliances we will issue a certificate on the basis that you agree to take appropriate corrective actions to come into full compliance within a specified time frame (usually one year).
- If there are major non-compliances we will not issue a certificate until after you have taken appropriate corrective actions and after we have agreed that you comply fully with the relevant part of the Standard.

Once we have received your agreement to take any necessary corrective actions within the specified timeframe(s), and the certification fee has been paid, a Certificate of Registration will be issued, usually valid for five years conditional on the successful completion of annual surveillance audits.

On issue of a certificate the certification report will be made publicly available in compliance with FSC requirements.

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## AFTER YOU ARE CERTIFIED

### 9. Use of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Trademarks

Your certificate of registration authorises you to use the FSC Trademarks (the FSC name, initials and 'tick-tree' logo) in accordance with FSC's regulations for their use. On certification, you will be sent access details to the FSC label generator which is where you download the FSC Trademarks for use on product or for promotional use. Please note that you must seek written approval from us for any use of the FSC Trademarks before going to press.

### 10. Changes to your Management

Your certification is based on our audit of your documentation and premises. If there are material changes to your documentation (e.g. to your management plan, your policies or systems) you must inform us. Equally, if you wish to change the forest area or processes covered by the certificate you must inform us. We will then determine whether any further audit is required. Failure to inform us of such changes could lead to the suspension or withdrawal of your certificate.

### 11. Surveillance

Surveillance will take place at least annually. For small woodlands surveillance is usually carried out by a combination of desk based reviews and field visits.

For a Single Site SLIMF, at least one surveillance visit on-site will be carried out during the period of the certificate. For SLIMF Groups of <100 members, the first surveillance visit will be on site, and a minimum of one further surveillance will be on site. The remaining surveillance visits may be desk /documentation audits only if there are no outstanding CARs requiring field verification, no complaints and no significant forest activities.

For desk-based surveillance you will be required to complete and submit a surveillance form together with relevant information. This will be assessed by an auditor. The field visit will be very similar to the initial evaluation visit. We reserve the right to bring forward the date of the annual surveillance visit or to make an unannounced surveillance visit. In this case the client will be charged for the normal cost of surveillance.

## **12. Non-compliances**

If any non-compliances are identified after you have received your certificate, we will discuss the non-compliance with you. As for the initial evaluation, we will specify whether the non-compliance is 'major' or 'minor'. The corrective actions required to comply with the standard, together with a time frame for completion will be listed in your report.

Corrective actions taken by the certificate holder in response to Condition(s) are usually monitored at the next annual surveillance visit. If urgent action is required a shorter timeframe will be specified.

In exceptional circumstances, for example if it is clear that destructive practices have been taking place, we would suspend the certificate with immediate effect.

## **13. Failure to meet a Condition within the Agreed Time-frame**

If you have been asked to correct a minor non-compliance and we are not satisfied that appropriate corrective actions have been taken, the non-compliance will be upgraded from a 'minor non-compliance' to a 'major non compliance'. There will be a shorter time-frame for close out of the major non-compliance.

## **14. Failure to meet a Major Condition within the Agreed Time-frame**

If you have been asked to correct a major non-compliance and we are not satisfied that appropriate corrective actions have been taken within the specified time limit we will consider that you are no longer complying with UKWAS Standard and we will have to suspend your certificate.

If your certificate is suspended you must immediately refrain from all use of the Soil Association and FSC Trademarks, and refrain from describing your management or products as certified. We reserve the right to require you to remove the FSC logos from previously labelled products.

## **15. Withdrawal**

All certificates are issued subject to continued compliance with the certification standard. If the certificate holder is in breach of the standard, we will suspend the certificate. We will specify which part of the standard is not complied with and inform the certificate holder. If corrective action is not taken to comply with the standard within a time limit specified by us, the certificate will be withdrawn.

The certificate holder must return their certificate to the Soil Association office. All claims, promotional or marketing materials that make use of Soil Association or FSC's, name, label, logo, certification mark or Trademark must be withdrawn.

A certificate will only be re-issued following the successful completion of a full audit.

## **16. Renewal**

After the certificate has expired it can be re-issued for a further five years upon the successful completion of an audit.

## **17. Changes to the Certification Standard**

Whilst we make every effort to minimise changes to our certification standards, changes may be necessary from time to time. We will inform you in advance of any such changes, and ensure that you have sufficient time to comply with any new requirements (not usually more than 12 months). If you are not able to comply within the time frame we do however reserve the right to withdraw your certificate.

## **18. Soil Association Certification and Forest Stewardship Council® A.C.**

**Soil Association Certification** is accredited by Accreditation Services International GmbH (ASI) to carry out FSC certification. This means that ASI makes sure that our procedures meet FSC accreditation requirements and monitors us each year to ensure we are implementing our procedures properly. On some issues ASI has authority over us. In particular ASI has the final say as to whether our standards meet FSC's minimum requirements.

## **19. Complaints**

We do our best to operate an open and effective forest certification system. If for any reason you are not satisfied with our performance, please contact us. We will do our best to address your concern in a timely manner and to your satisfaction.

If we cannot resolve your concern, we operate an appeal and complaints resolution system. If you wish to make use of this system please request a copy of our document 'Appeal and Complaints Resolution Procedure', or look for it on our website, and follow the guidance in that document.

If you are not satisfied with any action taken through our complaints and dispute resolution procedures you have the right to take your concern to the Forest Stewardship Council AC (FSC) for their consideration.

Please contact the FSC Accreditation Unit at: ASI - Accreditation Services International GmbH, Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 69, 53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: +49 (228) 227 237 0; Fax: +49 (228) 227 237 30

E-mail: [asi-info@accreditation-services.com](mailto:asi-info@accreditation-services.com)

We will co-operate with any further investigation carried out by FSC.

Soil Association Certification Ltd • South Plaza • Marlborough St • Bristol • BS1 3NX • UK  
Telephone (+44) (0) 117 914 2435 • Fax (+44) (0) 117 314 5001  
Email [wm@soilassociation.org](mailto:wm@soilassociation.org)

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