



26 January 2011

### **Update to stakeholders**

#### **FSC certification of Veracel plantations in Brazil**

A submission of stakeholder concerns regarding FSC certification of Veracel plantations in Brazil was sent to FSC in September 2010. Upon review, FSC requested ASI-Accreditation Services International to initiate an investigation. This has included completion of a stakeholder consultation in November and an on-site Witness Assessment of SGS Qualifor in December 2010.

The final ASI FM Assessment Report of the 6 – 10 December audit has found that the Certification Body has not conformed to relevant scheme requirements. The Report reveals 8 Major Corrective Action Requests (CARs), 5 Minor CARs and 2 Observations of non-conformities of SGS Qualifor in their audit of Veracel, relating to issues such as the use of chemicals, health and safety of workers, national, local and international laws, stakeholder consultation, identification of High Conservation Value forests, and other requirements as outlined in the Report. The lead assessor for ASI has therefore recommended suspension of SGS Qualifor program for FSC Forest Management Brazil.

The final findings from the lead assessor have been submitted to the ASI Managing Director, and will be reviewed by an independent ASI Accreditation Committee. The final decision on the suspension will be taken by the ASI Managing Director within fourteen days of the Suspension Recommendation Report.

#### **Implications for FSC Accredited Certification Body SGS Qualifor**

The ASI Managing Director will make a decision regarding suspension of SGS Qualifor program for Forest Management in Brazil. If the final decision is for suspension, termination shall be recommended after 6 months if major non-conformities (Major CARs) are not closed within the timeframes outlined in the ASI FM Assessment Report. The deadline for SGS Qualifor to close the Major CARs is 10 March 2011.

#### **Implications for FSC Certificate Holder Veracel**

The ASI findings do not determine whether the Certificate Holder is in compliance. They determine whether the Certificate Holder compliance has been properly assessed by SGS Qualifor. The Corrective Action Requests (CARs) in the ASI FM Assessment Report reveal that SGS Qualifor did not perform an assessment of Veracel in accordance with FSC requirements. This means that the evaluation of Veracel by the Certification Body does not provide adequate information to determine that the Certificate Holder is in compliance with FSC re-



quirements. The closing of the non-conformities of SGS Qualifor will provide an accurate assessment of the compliance of the Veracel operation against FSC requirements.

The current FSC certificate held by Veracel remains valid during the decision review on suspension of SGS Qualifor. In the event that a termination decision is taken with regard to the accreditation status of SGS Qualifor for Forest Management in Brazil, the Certificate Holder will be required to enter into agreement with another Certification Body within 3 months.

### **Contact**

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### **Further resources**

FSC updates on the certification of Veracel: [www.fsc.org/su\\_veracel.html](http://www.fsc.org/su_veracel.html).  
ASI FM Assessment Report SGS Qualifor: [www.accreditation-services.com](http://www.accreditation-services.com)

### **Public Summaries of Certification Bodies**

The FSC Accreditation Program monitors Certification Bodies to ensure that assessments of FSC certified operations verify compliance with all relevant FSC requirements. The evaluations of Certification Bodies by ASI-Accreditation Services International are available to the public on the ASI website ([www.accreditation-services.com/public\\_fsc\\_summaries.html](http://www.accreditation-services.com/public_fsc_summaries.html)).

The Report on the FM Surveillance Assessment for SGS Qualifor Brazil may be found at the ASI website. In the report, stakeholders may find the following details:

- Overview of the ASI Assessment agenda;
- Overview of the stakeholder consultation process, including list of stakeholders consulted, summary of issues raised by stakeholders and ASI responses to these issues;
- Summary of non-conformities;
- Conclusions and recommendations from the ASI lead assessor;
- Full reports on non-conformities including status, deadline for implementation, evidence, comments from SGS and normative references to relevant FSC requirements.



### **Public Summaries of Certificate Holders**

FSC Accredited Certification Bodies monitor Certificate Holders to ensure compliance with all relevant FSC requirements. The evaluations of Certificate Holders are available to the public on the FSC Certificate Database at <http://info.fsc.org/>.

### **FSC Stakeholder Portal**

FSC is dedicated to providing information services that facilitate knowledge sharing and participation among stakeholders worldwide. The FSC Stakeholder Portal provides a central point of information related to the FSC Dispute Resolution System, participation in consultations, responses to stakeholder concerns and information on forest issues. Online at [www.fsc.org/stakeholderportal.html](http://www.fsc.org/stakeholderportal.html).

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is forest management certification?**

Forest management certification is a way of verifying careful and long-term management of forests. FSC certification is voluntary and forest managers or owners can choose to comply with FSC standards, and agree to independent inspection to earn FSC forest management (FM) certification.

FSC certification is carried out by accredited certification bodies which audit each FSC certificate at least annually. If during these audits the certification body finds that a company has non-compliances with FSC requirements, Corrective Action Requests (CARs) are issued and the company is required to make the prescribed changes within a given time frame or its FSC certificate will be suspended or withdrawn.

#### **What is FSC's role in the certification process?**

FSC develops guidelines for responsible forest management through strong multi-stakeholder processes. FSC also accredits independent certification bodies to carry out certification activities in accordance with the FSC Principles and Criteria ([www.fsc.org/pc](http://www.fsc.org/pc)). The certification body takes the decision whether operations meet the FSC requirements. FSC does not take certification decisions itself and does not influence the decision making of FSC accredited certification bodies.

The certification body's working procedures, their technical competence and expertise is evaluated by FSC through a detailed accreditation process and undergo regular surveillance under the FSC Accreditation Program to ensure continued compliance with FSC accreditation requirements. The FSC Accreditation Program is managed by ASI-Accreditation Services International GmbH ([www.accreditation-services.com](http://www.accreditation-services.com)).



### **What is accreditation?**

FSC does not issue certificates itself. The certification process is carried out by independent organizations called certification bodies. Before being able to certify according to FSC standards, certification bodies have to gain FSC accreditation.

Accreditation controls the proper implementation of the FSC rules and procedures by the FSC accredited certification bodies. The company managing the FSC accreditation program is called Accreditation Services International (ASI). More information is available at [www.fsc.org/certification.html](http://www.fsc.org/certification.html) or at the ASI website [www.accreditation-services.com](http://www.accreditation-services.com).

### **Why are FSC certificates issued in plantations?**

After extensive debate, the FSC membership recognized that there is a continuum of conditions between natural forests and plantations, varying from very diverse and complex natural systems to simpler man-made plantations. In 1995, the FSC membership voted a majority of 89% in favor of adopting Principle 10 for plantations – in addition to Principles 1-9 for plantation management. The decision was made with a majority vote in each sub-chamber: social, environmental and economic members for North and South.

FSC certified plantations do not replace natural forests, and FSC does not support conversion of natural forests to plantations or other land uses. The adoption of Principle 10 for plantations recognizes that natural forests alone should not be expected to meet the global demand for wood and fiber. It also recognizes that application of the FSC Principles and Criteria to timber plantations can contribute to improved social and environmental conditions that would otherwise be unmonitored in these more intensive production systems. By working with the different realities between forests and plantations, FSC will better be able to achieve its mission of promoting responsible forest management. More information on FSC certification in plantations is available at [www.fsc.org/plantations.html](http://www.fsc.org/plantations.html).

### **What is the purpose of the FSC Dispute Resolution System?**

As a multi-stakeholder organization, FSC is committed to facilitating consistent and timely evaluation of complaints and appeals raised by stakeholders against decisions, performances or any other issues within the FSC scheme. FSC has effective mechanisms for addressing stakeholder concerns, including, among others, the Stakeholder Dispute Resolution Process.

This process is fully defined through "FSC Dispute Resolution System" (FSC-STD-01-005) and the supporting documents. Designed in a modular way, the FSC Dispute Resolution System supports stakeholders to express concerns they may have with the operation of the FSC system and to find the best way of resolving disputes. The commitment to engage in the FSC



system is an important step for stakeholders to ensure that their concerns are brought to FSC in a constructive manner. More information is available online at [www.fsc.org/dispute-resolution.html](http://www.fsc.org/dispute-resolution.html).