



Forest Stewardship Council®



Technical Working Group to revise the SLIMF Eligibility Criteria FSC-STD-01-003 V1-0

Terms of Reference and Operating Rules







June 2021



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Terms of
reference

WORKING GROUP SUMMARY	
Type of Working Group:	Technical Working Group
Number of Working group members	3
Project Supervisor	Vera Santos
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Technical coordinators	Lauri Moisander and Janja Eke
Working language	English

PROJECT SUMMARY					
Project Title:	Revision of the SLIMF Eligibility Criteria (FSC-STD-01-003 V1.0)				
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PROJECT INFORMATION

1 Introduction

At its 88th meeting in June 2021 the FSC Board of Directors (BoD) approved the revision of FSC's SLIMF Eligibility Criteria:

- [FSC-STD-01-003 V1-0 SLIMF Eligibility Criteria](#)

The objective of FSC-STD-01-003 is to provide consistent definitions of 'small' and 'low intensity' managed forests for the purpose of implementing streamlined certification and auditing procedures.

2 Background of the project

FSC-STD-01-003 V1-0 *SLIMF Eligibility Criteria* was published in 2004 and has not been revised since. Today, the SLIMF concept is being applied throughout the FSC system and beyond its original purpose to allow Certification Bodies applying streamlined audit procedures, such as decreasing annual audit intensity or allowing for demonstration of conformance against Criterion 6.5 (Principles and Criteria V5-2) across management units. Examples of use outside of the original scope for the definition are:

- A prominent use of the SLIMF concept within National Forest Stewardship Standards where forest managers operating on small and low intensity management units can demonstrate their conformance to FSC Principles and Criteria based on alternative 'SLIMF indicators'.
- The SLIMF concept is further used in Controlled Wood, FSC-STD-30-010 V2.0 *FSC Controlled Wood Standard for Forest Management Enterprises*, in FSC-STD-40-005 V3-1 *Requirements for Sourcing FSC Controlled Wood* and in Controlled Wood National Risk Assessments.
- Being registered under the category of SLIMF also means 'free of charge' in the Policy FSC-POL-20-005 V2-8 *Annual Administration Fee (AAF)*.

In the beginning of 2021, the Performance and Standards Unit (PSU) completed a review of FSC-STD-01-003. The review report was circulated first internally within the Secretariat with all relevant programs and projects, and thereafter sent to public consultation between 12 March and 11 April 2021. Based on the results, the Secretariat recommended the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) and BoD to approve a revision of FSC-STD-01-003 *SLIMF Eligibility Criteria*.

Apart from the overdue revision of Version 1.0, this revision is also part of the streamlining efforts of the FSC Normative Framework (i.e., Goal 1.2 Streamline policies and standards towards outcome orientation of FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026), aiming at making it more efficient, effective, outcome-oriented and risk based. The revision further provides the opportunity to refine the distinction of the user groups, such as community forest producers and smallholders, as identified in several initiatives of New Approaches to Smallholders and Communities Certification project.

3 Organizational set up of the project

FSC will establish a Technical Working Group (TWG) to deliver on the tasks and responsibilities outlined in these Terms of Reference (ToR).

In addition to the TWG, the following bodies are involved in the project, established in line with [FSC-PRO-01-001 Development and revision of FSC normative documents](#):

A **Project Coordinator**, who is a PSU staff member appointed by the Director Policy Operations, to:

- set up, manage, and administer the Technical Working Group, including organizing meetings, agendas and keeping minutes.
- ensure that the TWG operates responsibly and in accordance with the Terms of Reference and applicable procedures.
- ensure TWG's deliberations and deliverables correspond with the scope of content of ToR.
- set up, administer, and manage a Consultative Forum.
- administer the process, keeping track of the work plan and timelines, and inform involved parties on work plan milestones and upcoming deadlines.
- prepare and launch the public consultations.
- provide the TWG with all necessary materials and information.
- report to the Policy Steering Group.
- coordinate with other FSC staff and Programs related to the project to seek expertise and alignment, as necessary.
- manage the communications, both within the project and with external stakeholders.
- coordinate the outreach to specific user groups.

The **Technical Coordinator A**, appointed by the Director Policy of Operations, to:

- execute the technical drafting of the to be revised document.
- provide support to the Project Coordinator to ensure TWG's content specific deliberations and deliverables correspond to the scope of the ToR.
- ensure consistency within the FSC Normative Framework, for both, existing documents and ongoing processes, such as the revision of FSC-STD-20-007, *Forest Management Evaluations*.
- make technical recommendations and provide references for TWG.
- support the project Coordinator in the targeted outreach to specific user groups, as necessary.

The **Technical Coordinator B**, appointed by the Director Policy of Operations, to:

- provide support to the Project Coordinator to ensure TWG's content specific deliberations and deliverables correspond to the scope of the ToR.
- ensure consistency within the FSC Normative Framework for both, existing documents and ongoing processes, such as the FSC-PRO-30-011 V1.0, *Continuous Improvement Procedure*.
- make technical recommendations and provide references for TWG.
- support the project Coordinator in the targeted outreach to specific user groups, as necessary.

A **Policy Steering Group**, steering committee with a fixed composition of FSC senior management team members, which provides oversight on all phases of the process until the final decision by the FSC Board of Directors.

A **Consultative Forum**, which is a self-selecting group of interested/affected members, Certificate Holders, Certification Bodies, and other stakeholders interested in providing ongoing, direct, and meaningful input into the process. The consultative

forum is not a decision-making body and has no formal responsibilities. At the discretion of the TWG, the forum can be consulted with specific questions to provide input to the process.

A **Project Supervisor** is appointed by the Director Policy Operations to supervise the process and to support the TWG in reaching its goals.

In addition, the FSC BoD and the PSC may appoint liaison persons to this process, if it deems appropriate. The role of the **Board Liaison Person** and the **Policy and Standards Committee Liaison Person** is to keep the FSC Board of Directors (BoD), and the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC), respectively, closely informed about the process and to give advice to the TWG on timely alignment to relevant processes within the FSC normative framework.

An Organogram is provided in Annex 2.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP INFORMATION

4 Objective

The objective for the TWG is to conduct the revision of the FSC-STD-01-003 V1-0 *SLIMF Eligibility Criteria* to:

1. Review all aspects of the application of the SLIMF concept.
2. Expand the scope of the standard to cover and include all uses of the SLIMF concept within the FSC system to improve consistency and transparency.
3. Consider the specific needs of very small landholders.
4. Introduce an improved mechanism to develop and approve nationally adapted thresholds for 'small' and 'low intensity' when a deviation from the default categories is deemed necessary.

In this context, the TWG shall be guided by the following principles:

- Ensure the resulting approach to forest management certification and evaluation is more objective, transparent, efficient, effective, outcome-oriented and risk-based.
- Ensure consistency of the normative framework for revised approaches to SLIMF applications,
- Ensure alignment with introduction of new technology (if needed) and guidance to improve auditing performance.

5 Tasks and Responsibilities of the Technical Working Group

The members of the TWG will work together throughout the process, discussing issues and interacting with each other as a group, through online calls, email communication, and meetings, as necessary and/or required by the Project Coordinator.

The TWG is expected to advise and provide content-related input in the revision of FSC-STD-01-003.

In relation to the tasks and responsibilities listed below, members of the TWG shall:

Set the scope

- a) Define the purpose and application of the SLIMF eligibility criteria, its parameters, its thresholds, including options of further parameters beyond scale and intensity;
- b) Analyse and consider results of the needs assessment for SLIMF application in relevant documents of the FSC Normative Framework, such as
 - FSC-STD-60-002 Structure and Content of National Forest Stewardship Standards.
 - FSC-GUI-60-002 Guideline for Standard Developers for addressing risk of unacceptable activities in regard to scale and intensity.
 - FSC-PRO-60-006 Development and Transfer of National Forest Stewardship Standards to the FSC Principles and Criteria Version 5-1.
 - FSC-STD-30-005 Forest Management Groups Standard.
 - FSC-STD-30-010 FSC Controlled Wood for Forest management Enterprises.
 - FSC-PRO-60-002 The Development and Approval of FSC National Risk Assessments
- c) Analyse the data compiled and its adequacy for the revision process.

Review and align

- a) Review, consider and adapt (if needed) to new developments in FSC-STD-20-007 Standard for Forest Management Evaluations, for instance the alignment with future reporting requirements and FSC-PRO-30-011 Continuous Improvement Procedure (under development)
- b) Review, consider and adapt (if needed) to the risk-based approaches for forest management certification under FSC-PRO-60-010 Incorporating a risk-based approach in National Forest Stewardship Standards to ensure consistency of the FSC Normative Framework.
- c) Align and adopt (as needed) with the implementation of FM online reporting system, GIS Portal and FSC database of normative requirements.
- d) Collaborate with other PSU processes as feasible.

Streamline the normative framework

- a) Review and revise the current structure and content of SLIMF Eligibility Criteria, ensuring consistency and clarity to implement. (i.e., update definition of SLIMF, incorporate all applications across the FSC normative framework, etc.)
- b) Consider as an alternative option, to house SLIMF elements under other normative documents and support PSU's ongoing efforts to streamline the FSC system by reducing the number of Normative Framework documents.
- c) Clarify national SLIMF definition and provisions for deviation from the generic thresholds for SLIMF and/or develop a framework for SLIMF definition application across the system.

General tasks

- a) Consider feedback gathered during public consultation.
- b) Participate in stakeholder outreach and information-sharing forums, as needed.
- c) Seek comprehensive advice on the development and outcome from the Forest Management Community (FMC), FSC Global Network, Standard Development

- Groups, FSC Board of Directors, FSC accredited Certification Bodies, FSC Certificate Holders, other FSC stakeholders and/or relevant Technical Experts.
- d) Recommend when the final drafts are ready to be sent for decision making by the FSC Board of Directors.

6 Selection of Technical Working Group members

A call for expressions of interest (supported by Curricula Vitae) will be launched for identifying the candidates of the Technical Working Group. Members of the Technical Working Group will be selected by the Policy Steering Group according to the following criteria:

1. Technical Skills

- Solid understanding of the SLIMF concept, the certification process for small-scale and/or community forestry and context, including Group certification.
- Ability to provide specific technical input on the definition and application of SLIMF Eligibility Criteria and its implementation at Certificate Holder level.
- Experience as a FSC forest management auditor.
- Up-to-date knowledge and experience of FSC's systems and procedures.
- Ability to review and comment on documents submitted in the working language(s) agreed for the TWG.

2. Soft Skills

- Ability to work together in a group.
- Clarity in expression (verbally/written).
- Ability to work systematically and plan accordingly.

3. Contribution

- Track record on successful working groups is an asset.
- Solution-oriented mindset.

4. Engagement

- Participate actively in online calls and in person meetings and provide valuable input.
- Commit to build a trusting work environment.

7 Structure and Accountabilities

The TWG will consist of 3 members.

Appointed TWG members are expected to adhere to the rules and regulations of this ToR and are expected to donate sufficient time to thoroughly fulfil their duties as outlined in the work plan (Annex 2).

The TWG is accountable to FSC. TWG members may be asked to leave the group by the Policy Steering Group, if they are not fulfilling their duties properly.

The term of TWG members ends with the submission of the final draft of the deliverables to the Board of Directors, after the Policy Steering Group's review and recommendation for approval.

8 Expected outputs.

A revised FSC-STD-01-003 *SLIMF Eligibility Criteria* that facilitates the specific application of the SLIMF concept throughout FSC normative framework.

9 Workplan and time commitment

The TWG will be established after the approval of this ToR. The expected start-date for the Technical Working Group is August 2021, with a targeted completion date for all outputs by September 2022 for their approval in December 2022.

An estimated timetable is provided in Annex 3. The timetable and the detailed work plan will be updated, as necessary. The TWG will conduct most of its work via e-mail or similar means of electronic communication (e.g., MS Teams, Zoom conference calls), and through one-on-one calls with the coordinator(s) when required. At least three in person or intensive virtual meetings are envisaged for completing the outputs of this TWG. Considering the ongoing COVID pandemic, if in person meetings cannot be held due to travel restrictions, they will be replaced by virtual meetings until further notice.

10 Expenses and remuneration

FSC is an international not-for-profit membership organization with limited funding. Participation in the TWG takes place on a voluntary non-paid basis.

If required, FSC covers reasonable travel and accommodation expenses related to the work plan upon submissions of the respective invoices and receipts, and if expenses are agreed upon in advance.

If required, a stipend can be granted by FSC on a case-by-case basis.

11 Confidentiality and conflict of interest

TWG members shall sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement with FSC at the beginning of their work.

Per default, non-attributable content of discussions and papers prepared by or presented to the TWG is not considered confidential, unless otherwise specified. TWG members are expected to declare any conflicts of interest, where they arise. This will cause the person(s) to be excused from the discussion and to abstain from participating in decision-making.

12 Language

The working language of the TWG is English.

All drafts for public consultation, as well as other documents, as requested and as possible, shall be translated into Spanish.

OPERATING RULES

1 Deliberation and Decision Making

For the TWG to meet and deliberate, there must be quorum, defined as a minimum of 2 out of 3 TWG members. The Project Coordinator will strive to select meeting dates and venues that allow for full participation of all TWG members.

All TWG members must participate in each point of decision-making. If any of the member(s) is not present for a decision, then a provisional decision may be made, subject to endorsement by the absent member(s). Quorum is required for any provisional decisions, and full member participation is preferred.

The TWG shall strive and make every effort possible to take decisions by consensus (see Annex 1: Glossary).

The coordinator(s), FSC Staff, Policy Steering Group members and any other supportive personnel shall not participate in any decision-making. If the TWG is not able to agree on critical discussion points, or a final draft within six (6) months after the final round of public consultation, the Policy Steering Group shall take a decision on how to move forward with the process.

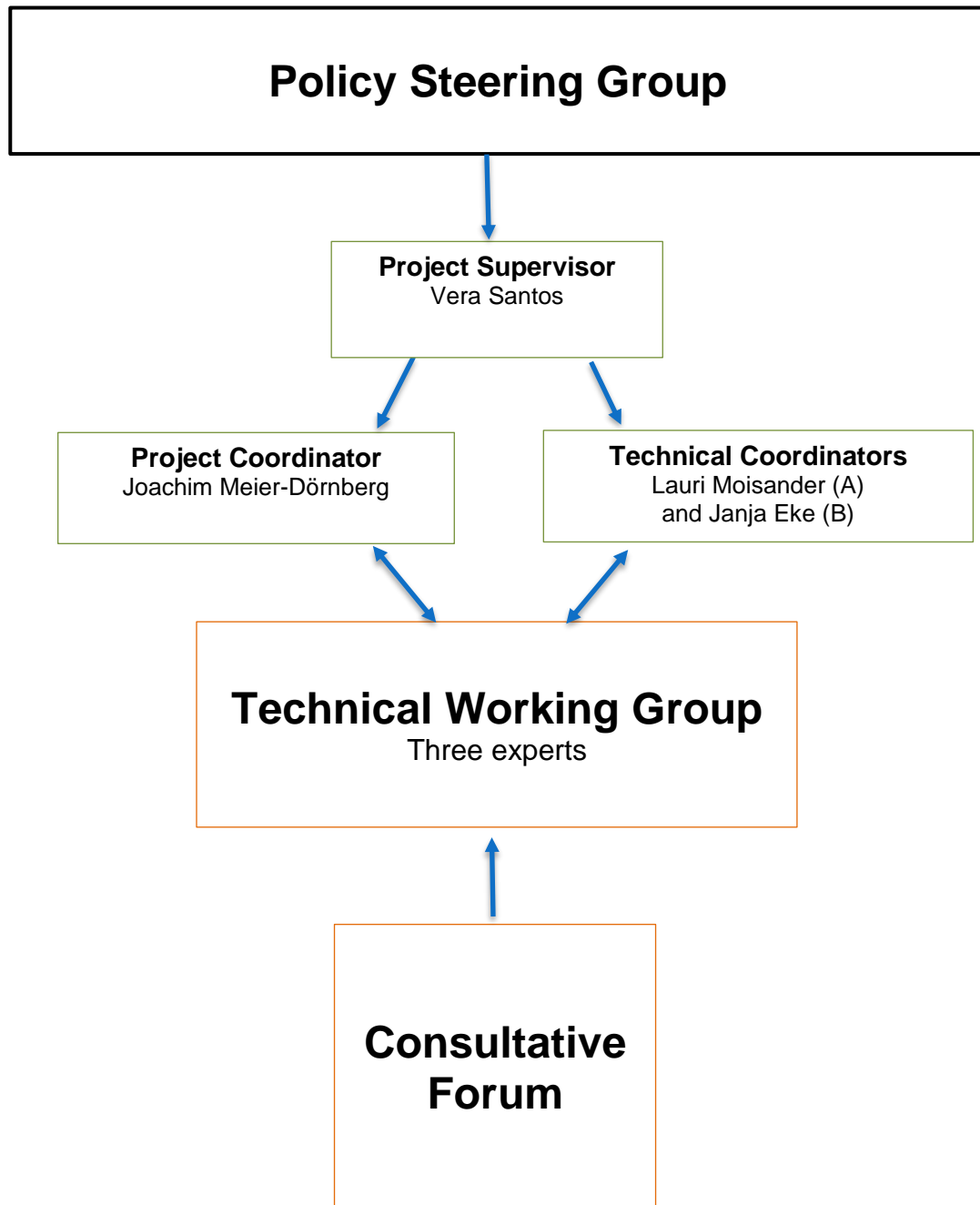
Annex 1: Glossary

For the purpose of this document, the terms and definitions given in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, and the following apply:

Consensus: general agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests. NOTE: Consensus should be the result of a process seeking to consider the views of interested parties, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. It need not imply unanimity (adapted from ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004).

Technical WG: a group of experts appointed by FSC with professional experience in the field of question, to advise and provide content related input to the development or revision of an FSC normative document.

Annex 2: Organogram



Annex 3: Estimated work plan

Nr	Leads	Project item	2021								2022											
			Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
1	PSG	ToR Approval PSG																				
2	PSG	TWG Approval PSG																				
3	TWG	Kick-off call																				
4	TWG	Bi-weekly online calls - Draft V1.0																				
5	TWG	1st long meeting (in person or online on four days)																				
6	PSU	Draft V1.0 for public consultation (60 days)																				
7	TWG	Analysis of 1st public consultation																				
8	TWG	Bi-weekly online calls - Draft V2.0																				
9	TWG	2nd long meeting (in person or online on four days)																				
10	PSU	Draft V2.0 for public consultation (30 days)																				
11	TWG	Analysis of 2nd public consultation																				
12	TWG	Bi-weekly online calls - Final Draft																				
13	TWG	3rd long meeting (in person or online on four days)																				
14	TWG	Approval of final draft by TWG																				
15	PSG	Approval of final draft by PSG																				
16	PSC	PSC recommendation to final draft																				
17	BoD	Approval of final draft by BoD																				
18	PSU	Publication																				