Executive Summary

This report discusses the possibilities for applying forest certification in the community-based forest management model as proposed by SFDP. The consultant assessed the costs and benefits of forest certification as well as the technical requirements, notably those for management plans.

The consultancy was carried out from 22 November till 2 December 2002.

The Social Forestry Development Project Vietnam has the objective to improve the living conditions of the local population in the Song Da region in accord with a stabilisation of the ecology. SFDP has developed and tested several methodologies to promote community forestry in the provinces of Son La and Lai Chau since 1999. So far, the methodologies have been tested separately in different areas and under different socio-economic conditions.

Since 2002, SFDP selected two communes as model areas to implement the SFDP community forest management concept at the administrative level of a commune. The selected model communes comprise the area of Chiang Hao commune, Yen Chau district, Son La province and Muong Pon commune, Dien Bien district, Lai Chau province. The project is currently in its 4th and last phase (1/2002 – 12/2004).

Certification proves to be a useful tool to guide the forest managers in achieving sustainable forest management. Knowing the requirements of the standard, the forest manager has the possibility to evaluate his management and obtain clear directions and instructions on forest management aspects that require improvement. Certification also provides authorities with a valuable monitoring tool ensuring that the natural resource base is sustainably managed while at the same time a higher productivity of the forests is guaranteed.

A review of the project shows that currently the benefits of an external assessment by an accredited certifier do not outweigh the costs for the smallholders. Premiums are only paid for forest products in the international market, and the products and volumes produced are for the most part small and for self-subsistence use or local market only. This situation is not expected to change in the next few years. Furthermore, the managed areas are too small (< 10,000 ha) which makes the cost of the evaluation per produced unit relatively high.

However, certification provides a tool for monitoring and improving forest management and as such serves as a guide for achieving sustainable forest management. It will provide all involved parties with the assurance that fulfilling the standard requirements ensures a sustainable and optimal yield. As such, the certification process could be used to:
a. prove and monitor the sustainability of forest management by small scale forest owners.

b. provide a framework for determining and monitoring the sustainability of interventions.

In the local context of SFDP this means concretely, that certification allows to prove that local smallholders are able to manage natural resources sustainably, and this would pave the way for further land and resource allocations. It would also reveal in which areas of management the smallholders still need assistance. Certification would also form the basis for determining the level of controlled use of forest products (e.g. fire wood, bamboo shoots) by the local population without destroying the resource base.

An external evaluation in the form of a certification simulation would allow the project to prove that the "commune forest management model" ensures sustainable forest management by smallholders. The evidence that villagers are able to carry out a sustainable management of the natural resources allocated to them, could form a basis for further land allocation at the village level.

The framework of the project design is adequate and provides for the fulfillment of all certification requirements under the FSC system. Now the framework has been determined, it will be necessary to detail and implement the procedures of the remaining aspects of the SFDP forest management planning process. These are notably: the forest management plan (see Annex 3), the forest inventory or resource assessment (including measuring the standing stock in the field).

The speed with which the systems are adopted will determine whether the commune forest management model can become fully operational before the end of the project period. The consultant considers that institutionalisation at the local level is feasible within the project period, seen the openness and dedication of the counterpart.

Furthermore, the responsibilities flowchart as discussed with the local counterparts needs to be approved by the relevant authorities to ensure continuous support to the villagers beyond the project period and to allow the counterparts to better prepare themselves for their tasks.

It is considered that the current available time frame for developing the technical systems for implementing these activities is sufficient. However, the actual operationalisation will depend upon the acceptance and institutionalisation of the proposed systems by the different players. The speed with which the systems are adopted will determine whether the commune forest management model can become fully operational before the end of the project period. The consultant considers that institutionalisation at the local level is feasible within the project period, seen the openness and dedication of the counterpart.

Review of the proposed management plan system shows that the system is well adapted for the use by smallholders. The consultant considers that the management plan cannot be seen separately from an adequate monitoring system which feeds back data into the development of the management plan. It is therefore crucial that an adequate monitoring system is being set up to monitor forest activities and that a resource assessment takes place before the development of the management plan.

Other points that still need improvement in the management plan are: the description of the silvicultural system with guidelines based on ecological considerations, as well as considerations of how the ecological values of the forest can be maintained and improved.

The consultant recommends to the project to carry out a certification simulation towards the end of the project period as a way of proving that the project objectives are met as an example of how community forest management could function in Vietnam. It is expected that the acceptance, and thus replication of the "commune forest management model" will be greatly enhanced if the project can prove that its "commune forest management model" meets the requirements of an internationally recognised certification system.

The availability of a nationally endorsed standard is of crucial importance for a swift introduction of certification as a tool for sustainable forest management in Vietnam. To facilitate future access to international markets it is recommended that the adopted Vietnamese standard is compatible with an internationally recognised system, such as FSC.

Therefore it is highly recommended that all actors in the Vietnamese forest sector give support according to their abilities (e.g. provide input to the standards based on SFDP project experience) to the Vietnamese working group that is developing a standard according to the FSC requirements.

For the implementation of an effective national/regional monitoring system based on certification standard requirements, the set-up of a national monitoring body preferably within existing structures is highly desirable.

The consultant considers group certification to be most appropriate for smallholders if commercial volumes would become available. The actual certification of smallholders is an activity that is beyond the project time schedule. It is suggested to give a leading role to the Vietnamese working group in helping to set up a suitable group certification scheme for the project province, as well as other interested parties in Vietnam.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The consultant would like to thank all SFDP personnel and counterparts for their hospitality during the visit, and for their open and helpful responses to all the questions. Special thanks go to Binh Voite and Nguyen Manh Ha for the pleasant cooperation, the logistical arrangements, support and translations during this visit.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT AND THE SHORT TERM ASSIGNMENT

The Social Forestry Development Project Vietnam has the objective to improve the living conditions of the local population in the Song Da region in accord with a stabilisation of the ecology. SFDP has developed and tested several methodologies to promote community forestry in the provinces of So’n La and Lai Chau since 1993. So far, the methodologies have been tested separately in different areas and under different socio-economic conditions.

Since 2002, SFDP selected two communes as model areas to implement the SFDP community forest management concept at the administrative level of a commune. The selected model communes comprise the area of Chiang Hao commune, Yen Chau district, So’n La province and Muong Pon commune, Dien Bien district, Lai Chau province. The project is currently in its 4th and last phase (1/2002 – 12/2004).

The expert was asked to assist the project in assessing the technical requirements, costs and benefits in applying forest certification in the context of community-based forest management as proposed by SFDP.

As part of the ToR, the following tasks were defined:

1. Explore potential benefits of certification for smallholders
2. Introduce and discuss criteria for certification to relevant authorities and stakeholders involved, and define their roles and duties to be fulfilled within this process
3. Assess existing management plans towards their eligibility for certification
4. Assess the present policy framework, technical and organisational aspects to successfully trade certified products
5. Assess involved costs, training needs and personnel input for additional activities necessary for certification

For the consultant's complete Terms of Reference, please see Annex 1.

2 INTRODUCTION TO FOREST CERTIFICATION

Although certification in itself is not a new phenomenon, certification for forest management has only been existing since the beginning of the 90s. At that time, the general public had become aware that, through their consumption of wood products, they contribute to forest depletion. Therefore more and more people started to demand products that came from well-managed forests. In response to this demand many different labels appeared on forest products and many of these claims were irrelevant or misleading.

The slow progress made by the different intergovernmental processes to halt forest destruction, made a group of timber users, traders, and representatives of environmental and human-rights organisations decide to bundle their efforts and interests to improving forest conservation. They confirmed the need for an honest and credible system for identifying well-managed forests as acceptable sources of forest products. Their meetings resulted in the founding of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) in Mexico in 1993. In 1994 a definitive set of principles and criteria for forest management were approved by the membership.

For the first time, the 3 necessary elements for certification: accreditation, evaluation system and a standard were turned into an operational system. The standard specifies the requirements for forest management, or in other words what the forest manager has to do. The evaluation system defines how the evaluation has to be carried out and how the results of the standard evaluation have to be interpreted to decide whether the forest passed or failed the test. The evaluation is carried out by the certifier. The highest level is accreditation where the rules and procedures by which the certifier is bound are being determined. This turned certification into a tool to effectively determine the sustainability of forest
management, including environmental, social and economic aspects. Nowadays it is widely accepted that the main characteristics of a certification scheme are that it is

- voluntary, independent or third party,
- technically consistent, and
- non discriminatory.

The main incentive and the driving force behind forest certification is the use of a label that gives certified forest owners a competitive advantage in high priced international markets in North America and Western Europe. Here the demand for certified timber is higher than the supply and this results in higher prices and/or better contract conditions. However, there are other benefits that can be as attractive, such as image building, access to public or private financing, and an internal monitoring possibility.

The consultant therefore would like to distinguish between internal and external review. An internal review is a review against a standard carried out by people or an organisation that has an interest in the forest management, such as personnel of the forest enterprise, their client or their financing agency. An external review is carried out by an independent specialised organisation, and this is the commercial form of forest certification.

An internal review helps the forest management to assess their current situation and to determine what still needs to be done to achieve sustainable forest management. It serves as a “task list” with activities to be ticked off when they have been done. An internal review based on an internationally recognised standard allows the forest enterprise to prepare for a commercial certification in the future. As such the internal review serves as a tool to improve and monitor forest management and to determine the sustainability of a project design and approach.

In many cases where production aims at self-sufficiency or local markets or where no significant volumes are to be expected in the near future, one can save the cost of an external review while at the same time receive the assurance that one is eligible for certification if wished.

It is expected that this will become an important aspect as Vietnam is gradually opening up its markets and seeks increasingly more access to international markets. Recently Vietnam started negotiations with membership countries of WTO as a first step towards membership of WTO. China experienced after its WTO entry that access to the high priced international markets was not as easy as expected. Many countries have production standards for products, whether they are locally produced or imported. China found that their production standards in many cases do not meet these international standards and is therefore now facing export problems. The wood producing sector in Vietnam can anticipate these problems by ensuring that their forest management complies with internationally accepted standards.

In this light, the work of the Vietnamese working group for forest certification is deemed important. This working group is developing a national standard based on the internationally recognised standards of FSC. The latest draft standard dates from January 2001 and recently the working group resumed work after having received funding from the Ford Foundation. It will be of utmost importance for Vietnam to ensure that this standard is being finalised and endorsed by FSC as soon as possible so it can serve as the guidance document for forest management in Vietnam.

3 METHODOLOGY

The consultant carried out a thorough review of the project by means of reviewing documentation, interviews and field visits to gain insight in the project procedures and activities. The management activities were compared with the requirements of the FSC generic standard of GPA and it was determined in how far these are being met by the project. This resulted in a list of strengths and weaknesses together with recommendations which can be found in Chapter 4.4.

In order to determine the marketing opportunities and enabling organisational structure the consultant carried out several interviews, and looked at the products and volumes to be expected from the project sites.

For an itinerary of the consultancy, kindly refer to Annex 2.

4 FINDINGS

The findings below are structured according to the tasks specified in the Terms of Reference.

4.1 Potential benefits for smallholders

To make an external review or commercial certification cost effective, it is accepted that the scope of the certificate covers at least 10,000 ha. Of course, this is dependent upon the value of the species produced and the productivity of the forest, but it gives an initial ballpark figure.

The model communes of SFDP comprise a total land area of around 10,000 ha each. However, existing forest and land classified as forest comprises only a small percentage out of the total (19% in the case of Muong Pin commune). Currently, the project communities manage up to a few hundred ha each. Most of these forests are secondary forests with a low to medium density, and limited harvestable volumes to be expected in the near future. The villagers’ interest in the forest is to obtain products for their daily existence, such as firewood, construction poles etc. An eventual surplus will be sold in the local market.

These circumstances make commercial certification currently not interesting for the project area. However, SFDP is currently in the process of refining the tested forest management process. In this stage of the process it is very valuable for SFDP to receive guidance on which aspects still need to be included in the management system in progress. During the rest of the consultancy, the consultant therefore concentrated her work on the use of certification as a tool for achieving sustainable forest management and a sustainable forest management model.

Furthermore, Sơn La province is the first province to allocate a large amount of existing natural forest (250,000 ha so far) to the local population. Sơn La province is therefore a forerunner in allocating natural resources to the local level and all eyes are set for Sơn La. The availability of a functional model for community forest management will provide a big incentive for more land allocations in Sơn La, but also in other provinces of Vietnam. This would allow more smallholders to have access to and benefits from available forest resources. For SFDP, the fact to be able to say that their community forest model is certifiable and therefore sustainable, is expected to have a huge impact on the replicability and acceptance of the “commune forest management model” even at national level. Last but not least, it will make it easy for the villagers to become certified in the future when more substantial volumes are expected to become available.

4.2 Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the certification process

One of the basic requirements in the FSC standard is that the roles and responsibilities of those involved are clearly defined. For some parts of the SFDP forest management planning process this is already the case, such as the LUPLA process. However, other parts are still under development and a division of tasks has not yet been agreed upon.

Therefore, the consultant together with project staff and counterparts discussed the different stakeholders’ tasks in the different steps of the proposed forest management planning process. Basic considerations during the discussions were: the continuation of activities beyond the project period, available resources and expertise of the different players, as well as the existing mandate of the different counterparts. An important role was given to the forest owners (local villagers) at all stages of the forest management process. Forest owners are not only involved in all stages of the process, including inventory and implementation, but can be considered the main actors supported by the counterparts during the different stages of the forest management process.

The discussions resulted in the following graph (see Graph 1), which is now subject to further discussion and formal approval.

Technical support to villagers is key in this process and needs to be ensured beyond the project period. According to the discussion on 27 November 2002 this will be mainly the role of Forest Protection and DARD with full support of Forest Development. It will be essential to have the responsibilities of the different agencies approved as soon as possible.

SFDP will provide facilitation and technical expertise to make the developed system operational.
4.3 Assessment of existing management plans towards their eligibility for certification

The consultant determined first to which part of the SFDP forest management planning process which requirements of the FSC standard should be applied. This resulted in Graph 2 (see next page) and proved that the SFDP forest management planning process incorporates in its framework all the relevant principles of the FSC standard. In other words, the management planning process provides already an adequate framework for a sustainable forest management model. In the next paragraph an overview will be given of the main strengths and weaknesses of the SFDP forest management planning process per principle to allow the project staff to work goal oriented towards complying with all certification requirements.

In the FSC system the requirements of Principle 7 concern management plans. However, the data that are obtained through resource assessments and monitoring form the basis for the management plan. These requirements are stated under Principle 8 in the FSC certification system. For this reason, the evaluation of management plans is intrinsically linked with the monitoring system in place. To be able to determine whether the management plans are eligible for certification, it is therefore necessary to look at the requirements for the monitoring system as well.

The main four points resulting from this review were:

Description of silvicultural system with guidelines based on ecological considerations

The management goal is being determined by the villagers. The management system is being defined based on the (range of) products that they want to obtain from their forests. The management system currently determines the number of storries in the forest and the preferred tree species. The description of the current situation foresees volume data for the different production classes (firewood, construction etc.). The annual activity plan describes how many m³ of each production class can be harvested.

The amount to be harvested is based on general guidelines from the ministry that determines which percentage of the stock for each density class can be harvested annually. However, these guidelines do not take account of the actual resources available at stand level, the long term management goal nor the potential of the site and eventual ecological considerations. Although, field visits showed that villagers implicitly do include these considerations when determining their annual cut (e.g. Then Luong village determined to harvest only a fraction of their allowed m³ for this year, since they felt they would otherwise be ‘overharvesting’), currently no rationale or written guidelines exist to back up such decisions.

Graph 2

In January 2001, Björn Wode and Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Lung evaluated several demonstration plots and extracted silvicultural guidelines for the different management types. These were then turned into technical fact sheets by Björn Wode. These technical fact sheets form a good basis for the silvicultural system of the management plan, since they describe very clearly which activities are required in each phase of the development of the forest towards its final goal. If the management plan would include a link to these fact sheets and describe the current phase of the forest to know which activities are to be carried out according to the fact sheet, then this requirement would be fulfilled.

Monitoring system

Currently no monitoring system is in place to determine the impact of the activities on the development of the stands. Also no growth data for different forest types are available in Vietnam. One of the priorities of SFDP for the year 2003 should be to propose, test and negotiate a monitoring system and a field based resource assessment in which growth rates, stock and yield estimates are being determined in a more differentiated form. Without these data, it will be impossible to determine the actual situation of the forest and therefore the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC). The AAC is one of the prime parameters to determine whether the management system guarantees a sustainable yield of the forest. Further monitoring of ecological values including flora and fauna assessments deserve attention in the system to be set up.

System for revision of management plan

At the end of the management plan period, there is a need to feed in data about the (changed) forest situation due to forest activities and growth, as a basis for the new management plan. Apart from this, it will be necessary to review new or changed legislation and newly available technical insights and determine their impact on the revision of the management plan.

The main task for SFDP will be to determine how and by whom this information is being gathered and assessed and made available for their inclusion in the new management plan.

Maintenance and restoration of ecological values

In sustainable forest management the forest is seen as an ecosystem where trees form the main but not only components of the system. Other components of the flora and fauna as well as abiotic factors like soil form an integral part of the ecosystem forest. The forest manager is therefore required to take account of these other components in the management of their forest. In this respect other ecological values apart from trees need to be given attention. This includes the identification and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species as well as the conservation or restoration of representative samples of existing ecosystems in their natural state. In forest areas classified as protection or special-use forest where any interventions are legally prohibited, endangered species are implicitly conserved. However, no specific provisions are made to promote the protection of endangered species. The management plan should include provisions for appropriate management of the entire ecological value of forest sites. A first step would be to include an assessment to determine which ecological values (notably rare and endangered species) are present during the initial resource assessment. The results with consequent actions could then be included in either the management plan or the forest protection regulations.

General considerations

The above mentioned points require a drastic change in current practices and entail foremost a change from passive to active forest management. Unlike before, the basis for forest management will not be the short term use of available resources, but an active steering to achieve and guarantee the desired products and functions in the long term. This will optimise the use of resources, but requires also a larger input and above all a familiarisation with this concept at all levels of the forest sector.

Much progress has been made within the project area with the introduction of management plans developed and used by farmers. After a trial phase one can consider the concept to be ready for wider application, apart from a few minor changes. Now the next step is to introduce participatory resource assessments. Therefore SFDP has invited Peter Branney, an expert in this area to review the possibilities for participatory resource assessments and to set up a monitoring system for production forest.

It is not expected that the available E&D plots will provide enough information to make reliable AAC calculations. In the beginning it will be necessary to make conservative estimations based on yield data from other areas, inside and outside Vietnam. The establishment of new E&D plots as foreseen in the Annual Plan of Operation for 2003 will be a further step to obtain long-term data on the growth and impact of the forest management regime applied.

Therefore, the introduction and operationalisation of the mentioned points; management plan, resource assessments and identification of growth rates to determine the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), through the commune forest management model are indispensable to gain experience with this new approach to forest management and prove its viability. As such the commune forest management model does not only serve the project communes, but is an important aid to facilitate the discussion about community based forestry in Vietnam. The implementation and acceptance of the approach on a larger scale will require a substantial mediation process with different actors. This should be considered to be SFDP’s major challenge.

In Annex 3 a detailed overall of the evaluation results is given.

4.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the SFDP forest management planning model by FSC Principle

Principle 1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND FSC PRINCIPLES

Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.

Main strengths:

- Compliance with laws and FSC principles.
- Provision of guidelines for management.
- Identification of growth rates to determine AAC.
- Monitoring system for impact assessment.
- Revise and update management plans periodically.
- Resource assessments for participatory planning.
The project works closely together with government institutions, that are familiar with the existing legislation.

Developed systems are approved by the authorities and/or included in provincial legislation.

The land certificates provide the legal basis for long-term land use rights and create a commitment from the farmer and thus ensure protection.

Main weaknesses:

- District counterpart staff is not fully aware of all the regulations concerning their mandate.

Principle 2: TENURE AND USE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.

Main strengths:

- Land tenure is secured through the Redbook certificates.
- Land is owned by local communities. (Notice: Land can be allocated to communities, groups of households or individuals!)
- A comprehensive and participatory land use planning process avoids land conflicts and ensures that villagers are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Main weaknesses:

- None.

Principle 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected.

Main strengths:

- Local and indigenous people are the target group of the project and are the main decision makers as owners and users of the forest land.
- The villagers play an important role in every aspect of the management process.
- Expertise for informed, independent decision-making is brought down to grass root level.

Main weaknesses:

- None

Principle 4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND WORKERS' RIGHTS

Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.

Main strengths:

- Villagers take their own decision and decide on the benefits of the forest products among themselves.

Main weaknesses:

- Health and safety during forest activities is yet to be ensured through the development of guidelines and training.
- Training and support to the villages needs to be ensured beyond the project period through the official approval of the proposed responsibilities chart.
- The Redbook certificates are user rights of the land during 50 years. It is not clear whether and under which conditions this certificate can be withdrawn, and what kind of dispute resolution system exists to appeal such decisions.

Principle 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST

Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.

Main strengths:

- Forest products will be directly used by the local population. Management model aimed at optimising benefits for the local population.

Main weaknesses:

- No existence of guidelines to minimise waste associated with harvesting and avoidance of damage to other forest resources (e.g. Reduced Impact Logging).
- No local processing facilities, and dependence upon middle-men for the sales of products for the local market.
- AAC should be calculated based on growth rates, stock and yield estimates data.

Principle 6: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest.

Main strengths:

- No chemicals are being used in the forest management.
- No biological agents and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) are being used.
- Large-scale reafforestation is mainly realized through natural regeneration.
- Afforestation emphasises the use of indigenous species and mixed plantation.

**Main weaknesses:**
- A system to assess environmental impacts needs to be developed.
- Environmental considerations in terms of establishment of conservation zones, restoration of ecological functions etc. within the production forests have been given little attention so far (except for watershed protection).
- A system to avoid inappropriate hunting and trapping should be developed. So far, this is mentioned in the village forest protection and development regulations as something to be done, but concrete activities to enforce these regulations need to be further specified.
- Written guidelines to control erosion, protect water resources and minimize forest damage during harvesting (e.g. for directional felling, skidding etc.) need to be further developed.

**Principle 7: LAND-USE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A management plan -- appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations -- shall be written, implemented, and kept up to date. The long term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated. The forest management plan is integrated into the overall land-use planning and is based on periodical inventories.

**Main strengths:**
- Management plan developed by villagers, based on their needs.

**Main weaknesses:**
- Currently the discussion about the desired long term forest type, its function and desired species composition takes place separately from the discussion on the forest management plan, and no clear link is established with the management plan (Training manual No. III.1). However, planned activities depend much on the functions the forest has to fulfil and the desired species composition necessary to fulfil these functions.
- The description of the silvicultural system and the associated activities should be included in the management plan.
- The rationale for the annual harvest should be based on data from resource assessments.
- Guidelines for appropriate harvesting techniques (directional felling, skidding etc.) need to be developed.
- A system for the regular revision of the management plan needs to be defined, including how monitoring data are being considered while revising the management plans.

**Principle 8: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

Monitoring shall be conducted -- appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management -- to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.

**Main strengths:**
- The "commune forest management model" foresees the development of a database for monitoring data. Counterparts will support the villagers in interpreting and updating of monitoring data.

**Main weaknesses:**
- Consistent and replicable monitoring systems need to be developed, including data on yield of forest products, changes in flora and fauna, growth rates and regeneration of the forest, environmental and social impacts and costs and efficiency of forest management.
- A system to incorporate the results of monitoring into the revision of the management plan needs to be defined.
- For the labeling of certified forest products it will be necessary to develop a system that allows to track the products back to the certified forest (currently optional, but relevant in future).

**Principle 9: MAINTENANCE OF HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS (HCVF)**

Management activities in high conservation value forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach.

**Main weaknesses:**
- The national working group or another entity have not yet defined which Vietnamese forest ecosystems are considered HCVF forests. When this has been defined, an ecological inventory should take place in project area to determine whether any forests contain some of the HCVF attributes.

**Principle 10: PLANTATIONS**

Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1 - 9, and Principle 10 and its Criteria. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.

**Main weaknesses:**
- A system for the regular revision of the management plan needs to be defined, including how monitoring data are being considered while revising the management plans.

**Notice:** Since 2002 afforestation is also part of the forest strategy of SFDP but the main focus is on natural forest management. This assignment concentrated on the forest management planning process for natural forests as proposed by SFDP.

4.5 Provisions to facilitate future certification

The ToR requested to assess the requirements for the successful trading of certified products. In the foregoing paragraphs it has been explained that commercial certification is not interesting in the SFDP project situation at this moment, since the costs of commercial certification outweigh the benefits. Premiums are only paid for forest products in the international market, and the products and volumes produced are for the most part small and for self-subsistence use or local market only. The trading of certified products is thus not relevant at this stage. However, provisions in the "commune forest management model" for future certification will greatly facilitate actual certification. These provisions lie foremost in the organisational aspects of the forest management. In the foregoing paragraphs the technical aspects of forest certification, notably the management requirements have been extensively discussed, and the consultant would like to concentrate here on discussing enabling organisational aspects for community forestry certification in the SFDF project situation.

Within FSC a special system for small forest owners has been developed, called group certification. It allows several forest owners to group under a single certificate and as such make certification more cost effective. The land tenure type is not important; every small forest can be included in a group. Meanwhile even groups with different tenure types within one group (communal and private) have been certified in many countries of the world. However, group certification requires an entity to be the contact person and 'manager' of the
group. This requirement does not pose serious limitations apart from the fact that the ‘manager’ has to be a juridical person or a legal entity.

The group themselves determines the degree in which they cooperate. Some groups market their timber centrally or have a common management plan, others only have monitoring procedures to ensure that all the members abide by the Principles and Criteria (P&C). In Annex 4, an overview of functioning of a group certification scheme, including the group certification requirements is given.

Group certification would be very appropriate in the project area situation. Groups could be formed on commune or district level, depending upon the most convenient administrative arrangement. It is highly recommended to have either SARD or the Forest Protection Unit taking the role as a group entity, since they are already involved and have personnel working in the village forests. The degree of cooperation among the different participants needs to be discussed with the villagers themselves.

At this moment the consultant does not see any obstacles within the existing structures for the establishment of a group. As group certification is a relevant activity only in medium term, and making the community forestry model operational is a higher priority for the project at this moment, the consultant does not propose any action at this time.

4.6 Proposed additional activities for certification

This consultancy has aimed at providing SFDP with an overview of activities required to ensure the certifiability of the “commune forest management model”.

As stated earlier, the current situation is not favourable for an external review since the costs will outweigh the benefits.

However, to provide assurance towards donors, policy makers etc. that the “commune forest management model” is indeed certifiable, the consultant advises that a simulation of a certification assessment takes place towards the end of the project period. If carried out by assessors not involved in the project implementation, a positive evaluation will provide credibility to the “commune forest management model” and allow project staff to prove that project objectives have been met. An additional advantage for Vietnam would be that the project at the same time shows that sustainable management of natural resources by local communities is feasible and this result can pave the way for further land and natural resource allocations to local communities in Vietnam. Being certified will at the same time heighten the chances for replication of the “commune forest management model” in other parts of Vietnam.

The following input would be required for such a simulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION</th>
<th>Working-days international</th>
<th>Working-days national</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees international auditor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing questionnaire and guidance to national auditor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees national auditors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>To be carried out before field visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD ADAPTATION</th>
<th>Working-days national</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees international auditor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN AUDIT</th>
<th>Working-days national</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees international auditor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees national auditor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel days international</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel days national</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERTIFICATION REPORT</th>
<th>Working-days national</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fees international auditor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees national auditor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Working-days national</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7 General considerations for Vietnam

Certification is a tool to improve management practices and internal monitoring and control. In turn, better management practices result in a higher and sustainable productivity of the forest.

Vietnam is being confronted with a rising demand for forest products while at the same time the natural resources base is declining. Through the 5 million ha afforestation target and setting logging quota, Vietnam is trying to reverse this trend.

The adoption of a certification system would provide Vietnam with a suitable tool to maintain and improve their natural resources. Within the FSC certification system one is required to calculate an Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) based on the management objective and concrete data as the stock, growth rates, and yield estimates. The determination of the AAC forms an adequate basis to ensure a sustainable yield, and if coupled with regulations such as low impact logging it assures to avoid damage to the remaining stand.

Controlled logging based on the requirements in the certification standard would allow Vietnam to maintain and improve its natural resource base while optimising the productivity of this resource.

The adoption of a standard compatible with an internationally recognised system as FSC, would facilitate at the same time access to future markets. The users of the system will know that they fulfill international requirements and will be able to obtain the certificate easily if desired. Already an increasing interest of foreign investors and wood buyers is noticeable. The current demand for certified produce is higher than the offer. Several wood buyers are out prospecting for certified wood and this has resulted in the first certification exercises. The stable political situation in the country and the low production costs make Vietnam an interesting country for the production of wooden products for export markets. The availability of certified materials would only add to that interest.

The national working group on forest certification is developing a Vietnamese standard following the FSC procedures. The development is in an advanced stage and field testing of the standard is expected in the near future.

Last but not least, a nationally adopted certification standard would outline the requirements for national and donor funded forestry projects in the country. As such, the standard will give valuable guidance to any forestry project to be carried out within the country. The FSSP (Forest Sector Support Programme) could provide the ideal platform for the determination of the standard and operationalisation of such a system.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 General

Certification proves to be a useful tool to guide the forest managers in achieving sustainable forest management. Knowing the requirements of the standard, the forest manager has the possibility to evaluate his management and obtain clear directions and instructions on forest management aspects that require improvement. Certification also provides authorities with a valuable monitoring tool ensuring that the natural resource base is sustainably managed while at the same time a higher productivity of the forests is guaranteed.

5.2 Benefits of certification

A review of the project shows that currently the benefits of an external assessment by an accredited certifier do not outweigh the costs for the smallholders, since the managed area is too small (< 10,000 ha), and the products and volumes produced are small and for self-subsistence use or local market only.
However, certification provides a tool for monitoring and improving forest management and as such serve as a guide for achieving sustainable forest management. It will provide all involved parties with the assurance that fulfilling the standard requirements ensures a sustainable and optimal yield.

An external evaluation in the form of a certification simulation would allow the project to prove that the commune forest management model ensures sustainable forest management by smallholders. The evidence that villagers are able to carry out a sustainable management of the natural resources allocated to them, could form a basis for further land allocation at the village level.

5.3 Certifiability of community forestry project design

The framework of the "commune forest management model" design is adequate and provides for the fulfilment of all certification requirements under the FSC standard. Now the framework has been determined, it will be necessary to detail and implement the procedures of the remaining aspects of the SFDP forest management planning process. These are notably: the forest management plan (see annex 3 for the complete results of the management plan review), the forest inventory or resource assessment (including measuring the standing stock in the field, determine yield estimates, growth rates and abiotic factors determining the future stand), guidelines for harvesting and other forest activities (including harvesting techniques, thinnings, and health and safety) and a monitoring system to determine the impacts of the activities on the forest stand.

Furthermore, the responsibilities flowchart as discussed with the local counterparts needs to be approved by the relevant authorities to ensure continuous support to the villagers beyond the project period and to allow the counterparts to better prepare themselves for their tasks.

It is considered that the current available time frame for developing the technical systems for implementing these activities is sufficient. However, the actual operationalisation will depend upon the acceptance and institutionalisation of the proposed systems by the different players. To achieve this, SFDP can only play a facilitating role through the provision of expertise, training and awareness building at different levels (local, regional and national). The speed with which the systems are adopted will determine whether the commune forest management model can become fully operational before the end of the project period. The consultant considers that institutionalisation at the local level is feasible within the project period, seen the openness and dedication of the counterparts.

5.4 Management plans

Review of the proposed management plan system shows that the system is well adapted for the use by smallholders. The consultant considers that the management plan cannot be seen separate from an adequate monitoring system which data feed back into the development of the management plan. It is therefore crucial that an adequate monitoring system to determine the impact of the activities is being set up to monitor forest activities and that a resource assessment takes place before the development of the management plan. It is foreseen that this system will be further developed during the short term assignment of Peter Brannen in April 2003.

Other points that still need improvement in the management plan are: the description of the silvicultural system with guidelines based on ecological considerations, as well as considerations of how the ecological values (flora and fauna biodiversity) of the forest can be maintained and improved.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The consultant recommends the project to carry out a certification simulation towards the end of the project period as a way of proving that the project objectives are met and as an example of how community forest management could function in Vietnam. It is expected that the acceptance, and thus replication of the "commune forest management model" will be greatly enhanced, if the project can prove that its "commune forest management model" meets the requirements of an internationally recognised certification system.

The availability of a national endorsed standard is of crucial importance for a swift introduction of certification as a tool for sustainable forest management in Vietnam. To facilitate future access to international markets it is recommended that the adopted Vietnemese standard is compatible with an internationally recognised system, such as FSC. Therefore it is highly recommended that all actors in the Vietnamese forest sector give support according to their abilities (e.g. provide input to the standards based on SFDP project experience) to the Vietnamese working group that is developing a standard according to the FSC requirements.

For the implementation of an effective national/regional monitoring system based on certification standard requirements, the set-up of an internal monitoring body preferably within existing structures that have representation at local levels is highly desirable.

The consultant considers group certification to be most appropriate for smallholders if commercial volumes would become available. The actual certification of smallholders is an activity that is beyond the project’s time schedule. It is suggested to give a leading role to the Vietnamese working group in helping to set up a suitable group certification scheme for the project province, as well as other interested parties in Vietnam.

7 LITERATURE (SELECTED)

Community forest management plan of Then Luong Village, Chiang Dong District

Wode, Björm and Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Lung (2001): Experiment and Demonstration Plots – Results and Silvicultural guidelines, Consultancy Report No. 25.

 Ibid, Silvicultural Technical Fact Sheets Annex 3 – 6 Consultancy Report no. 25


SFDP (July 2002): Methodology for Commune Forestry Extension Worker – reference material. 1st draft


Wode, Björm (2002): Methodology for participatory forest inventory - Trainer guide, first draft


ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

for an International Short-Term Expert on Forest Certification

Objectives

The main objective of the consultancy is to evaluate the suitability and to propose further necessary requirements of the proposed community-based forest management strategy of SFDP for forest certification.

Background

In Vietnam Principles and Criteria (P&C) for sustainable forest management have been recently compiled by the Vietnam FSC Working Group based on the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. In the coming time all forest owners, i.e. state forest enterprises, local communities and individual households whose forest management satisfies the National P&C can apply for forest certification.

Organisation

The consultant will work for the project for 9 days in November 2002. Logistic and technical support will be provided by the project. The expert will work in close co-operation with the international and national experts of SFDP.

Detailed Tasks

The expert will assist the project in assessing the technical requirements, costs and benefits in applying forest certification in the context of community-based forest management as proposed by SFDP.
The consultant will:

1. Explore potential benefits of certification for smallholders
2. Introduce and discuss criteria for certification to relevant authorities and stakeholders involved, and define their roles and duties to be fulfilled within this process.
3. Assess existing management plans towards their eligibility for certification
4. Discuss the present policy framework, technical and organisational aspects to successfully trade certified products
5. Assess involved costs, training needs and personnel input for additional activities necessary for certification
6. Write a short report covering the above mentioned issues and present preliminary findings to the project staff and counterparts

- Applicability of forest certification in the context of community-based forest management in the project area is assessed and documented in a short report (max. 20 pages excluding Annexes).
- Presentation of the consultancy findings and future recommendations to project management and a small group of relevant partners and colleagues

Annex 3 - Evaluation of Management Plan according to FSC requirements

### 7. MANAGEMENT PLAN - A management plan - appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations - shall be written, implemented, and kept up to date. The long term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.

#### 7.1. The management plan and supporting documents shall provide:

- management objectives;
- description of the forest resources to be managed, environmental limitations, land use and ownership status, socio-economic conditions, and a profile of adjacent lands;
- description of silvicultural and/or other management system, based on the ecology of the forest in question and information gathered through resource inventories.
- rationale for rate of annual harvest and species selection;
- plans for monitoring of forest growth and dynamics;
- environmental safeguards based on environmental assessments;
- maps describing the forest resource base including protected areas, planned management activities and land ownership;
- description and justification of harvesting techniques and equipment to be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Outstanding issues/recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1. The management plan gives information on the management objectives.</td>
<td>Will be determined by farmer through a management goal poster. OK</td>
<td>Recomm: During the process the potential of the site in terms of climax species and thus production possibilities is not sufficiently taken into account. This depends on soil, climate etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2. The management plan gives a description of the forest resources to be managed, environmental limitations, land use and ownership status, socio-economic conditions, and a profile of adjacent lands.</td>
<td>The management plan includes info on: forest function with location and owner, adjacent lands. The socio-economic conditions are described in the participatory needs assessment (amount and function) Environmental limitations are e.g. erosion risk.</td>
<td>Action: Include environmental limitations in the plan. Evaluation of possible limitations could be based on the criteria for determining the forest types (protection class, production) according to the national criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.3. The management plan gives a description of silvicultural and/or other management system, based on the ecology of the forest in question and information gathered through resource inventories.</td>
<td>Resource inventories are planned after the land allocation phase, but currently no long term management system with activities is defined as such in detail.</td>
<td>Recomm: Refer to the fact sheets to get a good overview of the silvicultural system chosen and point out in which phase that particular stand is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.4. The management plan gives a rationale for rate of annual harvest and species selection.</td>
<td>Currently the annual harvest is based on demand and current stock. However, the AAC is not being calculated and existing national regulations do not take management goals into account. Currently insufficient data on growth data are available.</td>
<td>Action: Gather and monitor growth dynamics of new and existing E&amp;D plots to obtain data for determining AAC (based on management goal, growth rates and existing stock).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.5. The management plan gives provisions for monitoring of forest growth and dynamics.</td>
<td>An inventory/monitoring system will be developed in 2003.</td>
<td>Recomm: A 5 year inventory is sufficient, together with documentation of activities. Use E&amp;D plots for obtaining first estimates of growth and yield data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.6. The management plan gives environmental safeguards based on environmental assessments.</td>
<td>Only for timber, other fauna and flora not included.</td>
<td>Action: Carry out environmental assessments. Recomm: Make this assessment after land allocation; when a complete resource assessment is being carried out. The regulations on protection forest form a basis for determining the status of a forest area (less critical, critical protection forest etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.7. The need for fire management and control has been evaluated and is included</td>
<td>If a forest protection plan has been developed, yes.</td>
<td>Action: For afforestation and forests close to agricultural land a fire management plan and control should be available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.8. A plan to fight fire is available</td>
<td>See above</td>
<td>Action: Technical guidelines need to be developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.9. Plans for the identification and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species are available.</td>
<td>Currently no systematic inventory takes place. Only general recommendations are given in the Forest Protection and Development Regulations</td>
<td>Action: Guidelines need to be developed based on the national regulations on protection of animal and plant species.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.10. Maps describing the forest resource base including protected areas, planned management activities</td>
<td>Photo mapping is used in selected places. Alternatively an accurate cadastre map needs to be used. OK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and fragility of the affected environment. Monitoring procedures should be consistent and replicable over time to allow comparison of results and assessments of change.

Forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.

Changing environmental, social and economic considerations.

8.2. Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

8.1. The frequency and intensity of monitoring should be determined by the scale and intensity of forest management operations as well as the relative complexity and fragility of the affected environment. Monitoring procedures should be consistent and replicable over time to allow comparison of results and assessments of change.

8.1.1. All activities within the forest management area are recorded.

Through annual work plans. OK

8.1.2. An appropriate (to be specified) monitoring procedure is documented in the management plan and implemented.

Is under development.

8.1.3. Monitoring programs are documented in the management plan and implemented to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.

See above.

8.1.4. There is evidence that the compared results of different monitoring aspects are used to improve or correct measures in forest management.

Too early to be applicable.

8.1.5. Trained staff members have been assigned to implement the monitoring procedures.

Once developed, forest protection and SARD staff will be trained.

8.2. Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

8.1. The frequency and intensity of monitoring should be determined by the scale and intensity of forest management operations as well as the relative complexity and fragility of the affected environment. Monitoring procedures should be consistent and replicable over time to allow comparison of results and assessments of change.

8.1.1. All activities within the forest management area are recorded.

Through annual work plans. OK

8.1.2. An appropriate (to be specified) monitoring procedure is documented in the management plan and implemented.

Is under development.

8.1.3. Monitoring programs are documented in the management plan and implemented to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.

See above.

8.1.4. There is evidence that the compared results of different monitoring aspects are used to improve or correct measures in forest management.

Too early to be applicable.

8.1.5. Trained staff members have been assigned to implement the monitoring procedures.

Once developed, forest protection and SARD staff will be trained.

8.2. Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1.1</td>
<td>All activities within the forest management area are recorded.</td>
<td>Through annual work plans. OK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2</td>
<td>An appropriate (to be specified) monitoring procedure is documented in the management plan and implemented.</td>
<td>Is under development.</td>
<td>Annex monitoring system to forest management plan, or refer to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>Monitoring programs are documented in the management plan and implemented to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.</td>
<td>See above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.4</td>
<td>There is evidence that the compared results of different monitoring aspects are used to improve or correct measures in forest management.</td>
<td>Too early to be applicable.</td>
<td>System needs to be developed. This could be done by the development of the proposed inventory data base in the SFDP process flow chart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.5</td>
<td>Trained staff members have been assigned to implement the monitoring procedures.</td>
<td>Once developed, forest protection and SARD staff will be trained.</td>
<td>Forest protection should ideally play an important role here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2. Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1.1</td>
<td>All activities within the forest management area are recorded.</td>
<td>Through annual work plans. OK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2</td>
<td>An appropriate (to be specified) monitoring procedure is documented in the management plan and implemented.</td>
<td>Is under development.</td>
<td>Annex monitoring system to forest management plan, or refer to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>Monitoring programs are documented in the management plan and implemented to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.</td>
<td>See above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.4</td>
<td>There is evidence that the compared results of different monitoring aspects are used to improve or correct measures in forest management.</td>
<td>Too early to be applicable.</td>
<td>System needs to be developed. This could be done by the development of the proposed inventory data base in the SFDP process flow chart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.5</td>
<td>Trained staff members have been assigned to implement the monitoring procedures.</td>
<td>Once developed, forest protection and SARD staff will be trained.</td>
<td>Forest protection should ideally play an important role here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2. Forest management should include the research and data collection needed to monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1.1</td>
<td>All activities within the forest management area are recorded.</td>
<td>Through annual work plans. OK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2</td>
<td>An appropriate (to be specified) monitoring procedure is documented in the management plan and implemented.</td>
<td>Is under development.</td>
<td>Annex monitoring system to forest management plan, or refer to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>Monitoring programs are documented in the management plan and implemented to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.</td>
<td>See above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.4</td>
<td>There is evidence that the compared results of different monitoring aspects are used to improve or correct measures in forest management.</td>
<td>Too early to be applicable.</td>
<td>System needs to be developed. This could be done by the development of the proposed inventory data base in the SFDP process flow chart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.5</td>
<td>Trained staff members have been assigned to implement the monitoring procedures.</td>
<td>Once developed, forest protection and SARD staff will be trained.</td>
<td>Forest protection should ideally play an important role here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 8.2. Yields of all forest products harvested are recorded.

**8.2.1.** Yields of all forest products harvested are recorded.  
Is stated in annual work plan. OK

**8.2.2.** Information on growth rates, regeneration and condition of the forest are available.  
Will be gathered through the forest inventory and E&D plots. OK

**Recomm:** Incorporate the E&D plots in the flow chart, since it is an important source of input for the management plan and system.

**8.2.3.** Composition and changes in the flora and fauna are monitored.  
No system available currently.  
**Action:** Define a system to monitor changes in flora and fauna.  
**Recomm:** This aspect could be included in the 5 year inventory cycle.

**8.2.4.** Statistics on accidents, training opportunities and staff fluctuation should be recorded and analyzed to get information on social implications of forest management.  
Accident statistics are not available.  
Other indicators are not applicable here since forest management done by villagers themselves.  
**Action:** SARD should keep statistics on accidents to determine when a safety training should be implemented.

**8.2.5.** Costs of all forest management activities are recorded and evaluated to judge productivity, and efficiency of forest management.  
Currently not the case. However, not crucial to achieving good forest management.  
**Recomm:** It is highly recommended for model replication purposes to continue providing an overview of the work load for the different actors and costs involved in the system. In this way it is easier to set off benefits against extra work load. This could be done once by SFDP project staff.

**8.2.6.** Forest management actively supports forestry or related research activities on their territory.  
Not applicable on this small scale. Can only contribute by providing demonstration plots.  
**Action:** Maintenance of the demonstration plots has to be ensured beyond the project period. Permanent Sample Plots under national management are preferable.

### 8.3. Documentation shall be provided by the forest manager to enable monitoring and certifying organisations to trace each forest product from its origin, a process known as the "chain of custody."

**8.3.1.** There is a documented procedure to identify all products leaving the forest operation. This procedure should be sufficient to also trace a product back to its origin.  
No Chain of Custody system available at the moment.

**8.3.2.** There is a documented procedure to identify all products leaving the forest operations.

**8.3.3.** All products sold by the forest operation as certified are recorded with: product type, quantity or volume, date, FSC license number, customer, and information on forest gate. This is backed up by evidence in the bookkeeping system (invoices, bills of lading, orders etc.).

### 8.4. The results of monitoring shall be incorporated into the implementation and revision of the management plan.

**8.4.1.** There is a documented procedure on how to incorporate monitoring results into the implementation and revision of the management plan.  
No procedure available at this moment.  
**Action:** Procedure needs to be developed. See also Above

**Monitoring results are analyzed and prepared for further consideration.**  
**Inventory results are planned to be analyzed by forest protection.**  
**Action:** Need to convince and prepare forest protection for this new task.

### 8.5. While respecting the confidentiality of information, forest managers shall make publicly available a summary of the results of monitoring indicators, including those listed in Criterion 8.2.

**8.5.1.** A public up-to-date written document summarizing all relevant information on the results of monitoring can be made available on request.  
Not important for achieving good forest management.

**8.5.2.** A procedure on how to handle public requests for information on monitoring results is in place.  
See above
1. INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to facilitate the evaluation and certification of a group of forest properties under the stewardship of a single independent legal entity. It serves as the basis for the development of this document.

1. BACKGROUND

In addition to the single forest management unit certification, FSC developed a system called "group certification" to allow small landholdings to participate in a certification scheme in a cost-saving way. The procedural basis for this system is the FSC document "GROUP CERTIFICATION: FSC GUIDELINES FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES" issued in July 1998.

This document, together with the Group Certification Discussion Paper of the German FSC Working Group, serves as the basis for the development of this document.

1. INTRODUCTION

This document is designed to facilitate the evaluation and certification of a group of forest properties under the stewardship of a single independent legal entity. It is referred to as 'group certification.'

These guidelines distinguish between a 'group entity' and 'group members':

1. The group entity is the entity that applies for group certification, and holds any group certificate that is issued (the individual members do not get a certificate). The group entity is responsible to GFA Terra Systems for ensuring that the requirements of the GFA Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards are met in the forest lands covered by the certificate. The group entity may be an individual (e.g. a 'resource manager'), a co-operative body, an owner association, forest management company or individual, or other similar legal entity with management responsibilities.

When a group entity is a membership organization, such as an association of forest owners, membership of the organization does not always mean membership of the group certificate. A forest owner or manager may choose not to join, or may be removed from, a group certification scheme, but may remain a member of the organization.

2. The group members are the forest owners or managers and are responsible for implementing any requirements of group membership. Members of a group do not hold individual certificates, but as long as they comply with all the requirements of group membership, their forest lands are certified by a single forest management certificate under the group certification scheme.

Responsibilities are divided between the group entity and the group members. The group entity will always be responsible for the basic administrative requirements of the scheme and may also be responsible for some of the forest management requirements.

The actual division of responsibilities will differ greatly between different group certification schemes. In some schemes the group entity may take on almost all the responsibilities for forest management, including management planning, harvesting, marketing and sales. 'Resource Manager' certification often takes this form. In other cases the group entity will do little more than administer the group certification scheme, with the individual members taking responsibility for all forest management activities. The kind of scheme that is appropriate will depend on local circumstances. The aim of these guidelines is to ensure that all schemes meet certain basic requirements.

This division of responsibilities between the group level and the member level is central to group certification. It is reflected in the sampling that is carried out by GFA Terra Systems, in the structure of the certification report, in the specification of conditions on which certification may be based, in the issue of 'Corrective Action Requests', and ultimately in the possible withdrawal of the certificate.

The basis of group certification is that the forest area of each member of the group must comply with all the requirements of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards. Administrative and policy requirements of forest stewardship that are relevant to the whole group (e.g. management planning, inventory and monitoring) may be implemented at the 'group' level or by individual group members. Requirements that are implemented in the forest (e.g. maintenance of habitats, streams, species diversity) must be satisfied within each property member on an individual basis, appropriate to the size and complexity of the forest area concerned. Responsibilities for meeting criteria may not be 'traded' between different members or properties, e.g. with one member meeting all conservation objectives whilst another does not meet any.

2. PREREQUISITES FOR GROUP CERTIFICATION

Group certification presupposes that the responsibilities for certification (management according to the GFA Standards for Forest Stewardship as well as the organisational responsibilities at evaluation and monitoring and the communication with GFA Terra Systems) are partially transferred to the group representation (management of the group or other authorized body) and are only partly been aware by the single group member. The distribution of responsibilities between group representation and single members has to be clearly fixed in the contract and clearly demonstrated in a written 'group management system'.

The group representation is responsible to GFA Terra Systems that all forests belonging to the group members are managed according the GFA Standards for Forest Stewardship.

The minimum number of members before constituting a group is three. Further group entity requirements are listed in detail below.

Fig.1: Example for a group management scheme and one possible division of responsibilities

3. GROUP ENTITY REQUIREMENTS

1. Authority of the group entity.
a. In order to be eligible to apply for group certification, the group applicant must be an independent legal entity or an individual acting as a legal entity.

b. The group entity's responsibilities, for example with respect to management planning, monitoring, harvesting, quality control, marketing, processing, etc., shall be clearly defined and documented in a written "group management system".

c. The group entity shall be contractually responsible to GFA Terra Systems for ensuring that the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship are fully implemented by all members of the group.

d. The group entity shall be responsible for ensuring that any conditions on which certification is dependent, and any corrective actions issued by GFA Terra Systems thereafter, are fully implemented.

e. The group entity shall have the authority to remove members from the scope of the group certificate if the requirements of group membership, or any corrective actions issued by GFA Terra Systems, are not complied with.

f. The group entity shall have sufficient legal and management authority and technical support to implement the responsibilities specified above.

2. Group membership requirements and responsibilities.

a. The group entity must have clear rules regarding eligibility for membership of the group certificate.

b. The group members' management responsibilities, for example with respect to management planning, monitoring, harvesting, quality control, marketing, processing, etc., shall be clearly defined and documented.

c. If new members can join the certified group after a certificate has been awarded, the group entity shall have clear, documented procedures for this. It is recommended that new group members must complete a probationary period or initial inspection before any products from their forest area are eligible to enter into a certified chain of custody, and hence to carry the FSC Logo. (Note: the annual "growth rate" of members should not exceed 50%).

3. Informed consent of group members.

a. The group entity must provide each group member with documentation, or access to documentation, specifying the relevant terms and conditions of group membership. The documentation shall include:

   i. Access to a copy of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship to which the group is committed;

   ii. Explanation of certification process;

   iii. Explanation of GFA Terra Systems'; and FSC's, rights to access to the group members' forests for the purposes of evaluation and monitoring;

   iv. Explanation of GFA Terra Systems'; and FSC's, requirements with respect to public information;

   v. Explanation of any obligations with respect to group membership, such as:

      a. maintenance of information for monitoring purposes;

      b. use of systems for tracking and tracing of forest products;

      c. requirement to conform with conditions or corrective actions issued by GFA Terra Systems;

      d. any special requirements related to marketing or sales of products covered by the certificate;

      e. other obligations of group membership; and

   i. Explanation of any costs associated with group membership.

   Note: In some groups, it may be sufficient to provide individual members with a summary of these items, provided that full documentation is readily available on request at the group offices.

   b. A 'consent form' or its equivalent must be signed by each group member or the members representative who voluntarily wishes to join the certification scheme. The consent form:

      i. acknowledges and agrees to the obligations and responsibilities of group membership;

      ii. agrees to membership of the scheme for the full period of validity of the group certificate; and

      iii. authorises the group entity to apply for certification on the member's behalf.

   Note: If provision of such written documentation and consent is considered inappropriate for any reason, then the reason must be documented, together with an explanation of another means by which the group members have been fully informed as to their obligations as group members, and their consent has been obtained. These means may include meetings and newsletters.

   The group entity, in consultation with GFA Terra Systems, will decide whether consent should be provided by the owner or by the manager. Typically, the form will be signed by a person who is directly responsible for most of the decisions and operations, and can also answer for the activities that he or she does not directly implement. In some cases, the operational manager may be the manager of the group entity.

4. Group records.

a. The group entity shall be responsible for maintaining the following records up to date at all times:

   i. List of names and addresses of group members, together with date of entry into group certification scheme;

   ii. Maps of all forest areas included in the group certification;

   iii. Records demonstrating landownership of group members;

   iv. Evidence of consent of all group members, preferably in the form of a signed 'consent form';

   v. Relevant documentation and records regarding forest management of each group member (e.g. management plans, summary information regarding silvicultural system, management operations, volume production);

   vi. Records demonstrating the implementation of any internal control or monitoring systems. Such records shall include records of internal inspections, non-compliance identified in such inspections, actions taken to correct any such non-compliance;

   vii. Relevant documentation regarding production and sales; and
vii. The date of leaving of any group members, and an explanation of the reason why the member left the group.

ix. The group entity must record the turnover of group membership, by keeping records of members joining and leaving the group (background: to monitor the long-term commitment to the FSC Principles and Criteria).

Note: The amount of data that is maintained centrally by the group entity will vary from case to case. FSC recommends that in order to reduce costs of evaluation by GFA Terra Systems, and subsequent monitoring by FSC, data be stored centrally wherever possible.

b. The same documentation shall be archived for at least 5 years.

5. Certification costs

a. The group entity shall be fully responsible to GFA Terra Systems for paying all the costs of evaluation and monitoring throughout the period of validity of the certificate. The group entity may divide these costs amongst group members as it deems appropriate.

b. The group entity may not issue sub-licenses for use of the FSC Logo or other FSC Trademarks.

6. If a group member joins or leaves either the group or the group certification scheme, the group entity shall inform GFA Terra Systems within one month.

4. GROUP MEMBER REQUIREMENTS

The acceptance of the FSC must be expressed by the group members in written form (e.g. by signing the contract to participate in the group certification scheme). The members are finally responsible for the implementation of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards in their forest management units. They are responsible for the documentation of all implemented measures and the implementation of pre-conditions and conditions from the certification report. Details on the sale timber has to be reported to the group entity. It must be clearly stated in the contract between the single members and the group entity which responsibilities are transferred to the group representation.

5. THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The certification process follows the steps described in the GFA Terra Systems Certification Handbook, Paragraph A1. Different from the "normal" procedure, the main assessment of a group consists of two major parts: the assessment of the group entity and the inspection of a sample of group members (details on the sampling of multiple forest areas are described in the following section).

1. Assessment of Group Entity

The group entity shall be assessed against the "Checklist for the Assessment of Group Entities" provided in Annex 1.

2. Assessment of Group Members

Every single member of the group is evaluated to ensure full compliance with all the requirements of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards. Strengths and weaknesses among group members cannot be "traded".

Sampling of multiple forest areas within a single certificate

Note: "separate forest areas" for the purposes of sampling in a group certification scheme are defined as separate ownerships.

Level of sampling in the initial and subsequent evaluation visits:

For large populations of group members (defined as more than 30 members), the sampling intensity (here: number of samples) will be defined and explained by the evaluation team. This figure should be based on their experience to determine the required level for a sufficient evaluation. As a reference figure, the evaluation team should target at 20% of the group members during the initial and the four subsequent visits (= 100% over the five years-contract period). For smaller populations (defined as less than 30 members) sampling should normally ensure that at least one third of separate forest areas are visited by at least one evaluation team member during the initial evaluation and about 15% of members annually during the subsequent visits (= 100% over the five years-contract period).

Case-specific deviations from the above explained instruction on sampling intensity have to be clearly explained by the evaluation team and have to be recorded in the certification report. If the intensity of sampling has to be changed in the course of an evaluation visit due to unexpected circumstances, the team leader should immediately contact the GFA Terra Systems certification department for further clarification and decision. If such contact is not possible as can be proved, the team leader is authorised to make a decision on how to continue with the evaluation. This has to be recorded in the certification report.

Sampling levels must be based on a clearly justified stratification by the evaluation team in terms of:

a. geographic homogeneity (e.g. forest type); and/or,

b. management homogeneity (e.g. silvicultural system, management system, personnel involved in aspects of management).

The level of sampling within each stratum should be determined and clearly justified in the certification report, in terms of:

a. potential environmental or social impacts of operations within the stratum (operations/sites with a high potential impact must receive a high level of sampling);

b. the quality and proven strength of monitoring systems, data and records implemented by the applicant for certification. (Data provided by such an internal monitoring system may supplement site visits by the evaluation team.)

Membership of a group certification scheme implies no special reduction in the requirements for sampling and monitoring, based only on group membership. Lower levels of sampling must be justified by either a reduction in the level of uncertainty as the result of a group's internal monitoring procedures, or the special homogeneity of the group itself (e.g. a single forest type, a single resource manager, etc.). Such considerations have little impact for groups of diverse properties managed by diverse individuals. FSC does not expect such groupings to provide significant benefits in terms of reduced requirements for sampling. However, these considerations will have a major impact for groups of relatively uniform properties managed within a uniform framework.

As for all operations, inspections at each separate forest area shall ensure that a sufficient variety of sites and operations (e.g. current harvesting, recent harvesting, recent replanting of regeneration, etc.) are visited to provide an adequate factual and observational basis to reach a certification decision.

The evaluation team leader should determine the extent to which a team should divide its resources in terms of time and personnel between separate forest sites. The basis for this division and the methods for ensuring consistency in observations must be described in the certification report.

The annual monitoring visit of members

The monitoring schedule shall include a rotation that ensures that different forest areas are visited in different years. Monitoring should be stratified, following the same guidelines as apply to initial sampling (see above).

Selection of forest areas for monitoring should concentrate on those areas where problems are more, rather than less, likely to occur. In general, every property in the group shall be visited by the staff of the group entity or GFA Terra Systems at least once within the period of the validity of the certificate (normally five years). Proposed deviations from this guideline must be explicitly justified (for example for groups consisting of very many small properties). In such cases monitoring shall include a random element, so
7. THE CERTIFICATION DECISION

When a certificate covers multiple forest areas, the initial evaluation report must specify a proposed monitoring schedule, which complies with these guidelines. The integrity and strength of any internal group monitoring system may be considered when determining the monitoring schedule to be implemented by GFA Terra Systems.

Monitoring takes place at least annually. GFA Terra Systems considers more frequent monitoring when the potential environmental or social impacts of management are considered especially far reaching, or when large numbers of separate forest areas are involved.

It may be appropriate to vary the sampling numbers according to the different kinds of criteria and indicators being monitored. In complex situations, the techniques of Multiple Criteria Analysis would be helpful. Further work is required, to determine efficiently the monitoring requirement of managers, group entities and certification bodies. The evaluation team may select a certain number of samples for full evaluation, and another set of samples for evaluation of selected elements. If so, the sampling system must be clearly explained and justified.

Very small properties: GFA Terra Systems is permitted to make special allowances for smaller properties (< 30 ha, suggested for Germany by the German FSC Working Group), provided it is satisfied that the group entity is maintaining the quality required. In these cases, the smallest properties may form a separate stratum for sampling purposes, with a lower sampling intensity than other strata. The size limits used implementing this policy will be determined with guidance from the FSC national initiative and from any relevant national regulations or laws.

6. THE CERTIFICATION REPORT

In addition to the requirements for reporting specified in Part A.3 of the GFA Handbook, the report on a group certification shall include the following:

1. a clear description of the division of responsibilities between the group entity and the group members;
2. a clear demonstration that any responsibilities for implementation of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards at the group entity level (e.g. management planning, inventory, monitoring) were complied with;
3. a clear demonstration, for each of the group members evaluated, that each group member complied with all of the requirements of the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards, except those already complied with at the group level;
4. an explicit description of the monitoring schedule that will be implemented GFA Terra Systems.

Note: It is recommended that certification reports are structured in a way which reflects the sampling strategy used. One clear way is to follow a structure, in which a section of the report would demonstrate compliance with the basic group requirements, a section would demonstrate compliance of those elements that apply to all group members and which are implemented at the group level, and further sections would demonstrate compliance with the requirements for the individual group member for each group member sampled.

7. THE CERTIFICATION DECISION

The GFA Terra Systems Certification Decision Board gives the final judgement on whether or not a certificate will be awarded to the group, based on the information from the certification report, the assessors recommendations, the peer-reviewers comments and their own experts opinion.

In addition to the decision process described in the GFA Terra Systems handbook, the following regulations are considered in a group certification scheme:

1. Failure at time of initial evaluation:
   - If group entity is not yet operational and penalised with at least one pre-condition.
   - If group entity is operational, but less than three members remain, that are not penalised with at least one pre-condition.
2. Failure at time of subsequent monitoring:
   - 'Group failure' may lead to corrective actions, suspension or withdrawal of the group certificate, and may be caused by:
     a. failure to fulfill a 'group entity' responsibility, such as administration, planning, records, etc.;
     b. failure of the group entity to ensure that group members comply with a condition or corrective action issued by GFA Terra Systems;
     c. failure to fulfill group member responsibility(s), sufficient in number, extent and/or consequences to demonstrate that the group entity's responsibility for monitoring or quality control has broken down;
   - 'Member failure' may lead to corrective actions, suspension or expulsion of a group member and may be caused by a failure of an individual FSC Principle at the level of an individual group member (an expulsion system has to be developed by the group entity within their group management system).

Definition of 'Group failure':
The group entity as the certificate holder is responsible for every group member that they meet the GFA Terra Systems Standards for Forest Stewardship or applicable FSC-endorsed regional/national Standards. If a certificate is awarded under corrective action requests, the group entity is responsible for the implementation of these conditions. If no such action is taken by the group entity, the group certificate might be suspended or withdrawn.

Suspension or withdrawal of the certificate might be caused by:
- Failure to fulfill basic group entity responsibilities, like group management, record keeping, administration of the group etc.;
- Failure of the group entity to ensure the implementation of conditions related to the certificate by the group members.
- Other failures, sufficient in number, extent or consequence that demonstrate the of the group entity is unable to fulfil their responsibilities.

The number as well as the seriousness of member failures may each contribute to group failure: many minor failures, or few major failures may both suggest a breakdown in the group system for quality control, and may be considered sufficient reason to withdraw a group certificate.

8. PARTIAL CERTIFICATION

Group certificate holders or holders of a single certificate may also manage, own, or be otherwise involved with the management of other forest areas that have not been certified, or do not meet the FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship.

If somebody with a certain degree of responsibility for the management of many separate forest areas applies for certification of only a subset of areas, the following guidelines will be applied:

a. The applicant for certification must make a full disclosure of all forest areas over which the applicant has some responsibility, whether as owner (including share or partial ownership), manager, consultant or other responsibility. The disclosure has to be documented in the certification report.

b. When the evaluation does not include all the forest areas in which the applicant is involved, the applicant must explain the reasons for this, and the reasons must be documented in the certification report.
c. GFA Terra Systems will decide, on the basis of readily available information, whether stewardship of the forest lands not covered by the certificate compromises the applicant or certificate holder’s demonstration of a long-term commitment to adhere to the FSC P&C (Criterion 1.6) and for evaluating whether this results in a serious failure, by the applicant or certificate holder, of FSC Principle 1. If GFA Terra Systems concludes that this does result in a serious failure of Principle 1, then a certificate shall not be issued, or a condition or corrective action request shall be specified. If a condition or corrective action request is not complied with, an issued certificate shall be withdrawn.

d. When the evaluation does not include all the forest areas in which the applicant is involved, GFA Terra Systems will make an explicit statement in the certification report explaining the special controls that are in place that ensure that there is no risk of confusion being generated as to which activities or products are certified, and which are not.

e. As for all certificates, GFA Terra Systems will ensure and control that all use by the certificate holder of GFA Terra Systems’s name and logo, and the FSC name and Trademarks, are pre-approved by GFA Terra Systems.

ANNEX 1
GFA Terra Systems Checklist for the assessment of group entities *

(* Note that in the original checklist significantly more space is provided for documenting detailed answers)

The Group applying for certification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Certification Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person (name and position)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lead Assessor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliated Assessor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GFA Terra Systems Checklist:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>CAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name and address of the certification group:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is the responsible person for the implementation of the group certification scheme (name and position)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation for FSC certification?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why group certification?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship to state forest service?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy of FSC documents on group certification available?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation on “Group Management System”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A | Responsibilities of the GE | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-requisite: is group entity an “independent legal entity”?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a written document on the group management system (with clear description of responsibilities, the internal monitoring and control mechanisms; organisation chart). Copy for GFA Terra Systems has to be provided.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there sufficient legal and management authority and technical support to implement the responsibilities specified?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and qualification of staff at GE?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the contract between GE and member sufficient and legally binding?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the GE ensure and control that any conditions on which certification is dependent, and any corrective actions issued by GFA Terra Systems thereafter, are fully implemented by the members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of the GE under which circumstances single members or the group as a whole can lose the certificate or the right to use it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B | Membership | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who can join the group (e.g. individuals, municipalities, any forest owner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the criteria and mechanisms to decide on a new member?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the criteria and mechanisms to decide on the exclusion of group members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What rules regarding the use of the certificate and the sale of timber apply to members who join the group after the awarding of a certificate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the group certification system and the contract clearly describe the distribution of responsibilities between the GE and the members? Explain:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities GE:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the GE monitor the members?</td>
<td>Describe procedure:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the criteria for sampling (internal monitoring and control)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a documented procedure for internal monitoring and control. (Copy for GFA Terra Systems has to be provided)</td>
<td>Who is responsible?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the GE ensures and control the correct log use by the members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**C Information of members**

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a documentation package for interested potential members according the FSC regulation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check and describe content:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do declaration of membership give clear statements on responsibilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are 'consent form' or equivalents filled out and signed by each member?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Get copy for GFA Terra Systems).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**D Communication and documentation**

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you inform your members e.g. in cases of changes of rules?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of information channel and means of information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is responsible for the communication with GFA Terra Systems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a standardised or formalised way of information (e.g. automatic copies of relevant correspondence or quarterly updates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a written “Group Certification Policy”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Get copy for GFA Terra Systems).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a common strategy for marketing of certified timber?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you handle complaints?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe procedure and mechanisms:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have an internal penalty system in case of violation of group rules?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a group administration system with files of all members (incl. all relevant information):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are files kept for at least 5 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe responsibility and storing place:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>