

PEFC 2017 Stakeholder Dialogue

Report by Pentti Linnama, IFFA Board member:

Xavier Noyon from PEFC introduced the current topics discussed in the European Union and what kind of challenges and opportunities they introduce to forest certification. It's probable that European Commission won't accept national certification schemes as part of FLEGT license but there might be some opportunities in RED II process for Chain of Custody certification. There is also discussion of certifications role in Green Procurement and EU Ecolabels.

VPA and FLEGT are used as tools for decreasing the amount of illegal loggings and timber imported to EU from third party countries. First FLEGT licenses under the VPA have been given to Indonesia. It should be remembered that FLEGT license shows only legality but not the sustainability of procurement. There has been request for the EU Commission to accept national standards and chain of custody schemes as part of FLEGT licensing, but Commission is reluctant to give status to market-based tool as legislation procedure. Apparently there is a similar system in Australia where forest certification is seen as guarantee of legality so we'll see if things in EU will develop to the same direction.

Green procurement and EU Ecolabel schemes are important from the directive on public procurement point of view. Apparently there is an ongoing revision of EU Green Public Procurement Guidelines and EU Ecolabels for paper products. Some problems have occurred when defining sustainable forest management (SFM) in EU level and also there are discussion and debate hierarchy between virgin and recycled fibers. Especially ENGO's and consumer organization are debating which is more sustainable and would want to apply the cascade principle.

At the moment there are discussion in the EU Council and Parliament about the new framework for a share and sustainability of renewable energy in the EU with the RED II directive. With the directive it will mandatory to prove sustainability of the biomass used for bioenergy production. PEFC is not providing information on carbon stock and removals but could offer the necessary data for the GHG criteria with chain of custody procurement

As conclusions for PEFC and EU there is need for creating more clear ways to show connection between carbon management and sustainable forest management. Depending on how RED II directive will be implemented there could be possibilities for PEFC standards to provide information of SFM in forest holding level. Also, using PEFC Chain of Custody procedure could be a good way to develop GHG evaluation tools for companies.

Monday 13.11. afternoon the PEFC secretariat introduced the topic of PEFC strategy for 2018-2022 to the seminar members. There is a need broadening the perspective with more systematic and holistic approach that also considers stakeholders more outside Europe and North-America. Global challenges like climate change and Sustainable Development Goals should be integrated to PEFC certification.

The current vision and strategy were highly relevant when they were developed but the world has changed since the adoption of these documents. New proposed vision and strategy are going to reflect the importance of forestry globally and forests importance for sustainable development. There is also a need to develop PEFC towards more information based system and create more value for all stakeholders. Interdependencies between sectors, actors and stakeholders should be searched and cooperation build on this. The strategy will be developed further during January-March and given to members in April.

Most of the discussion around PEFC forest certification is in Europe and North-America even though PEFC is a global forest certification system. For this reason, stakeholders from Asia, Latin America and Africa should have better opportunities to participate in the decision making process. Workshops were to identify PEFC secretariat's role to support and develop forest certification in these areas. In discussion there was also strong support for PEFC funded research center so this option should be looked more closely.

In Asia there is a strong need for increasing the communication of PEFC, since it's not that well known and recognized in the area. Cooperation with local authorities and high level ministerial meetings should be main priority. Linkages between VPA and FLEGT to forest certification should also be built. PEFC's advantage is how standardization system works secretariat should have pride and make the process viable to all forest owners and to all parts of production chain.

Latin American stakeholders were interested creating linkages with REDD+ and PEFC and thus creating brand recognition for both schemes. Emphasis should be on creating more value to forest products in the value chain since this would decrease deforestation and land use change sustainably. Market orientation should be increased and show consumers that they aren't just buying a product but also the ecosystem services that PEFC certification supports. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of bigger market access for small forest owners and cooperatives.

Stakeholders in Africa were mostly worried about forest degradation and economic viability. Their main question was how PEFC could help them achieve long-term sustainability of forest management in Africa? There are many local differences in Africa so there is a need for regional standard and strategies. The lack of accreditation offices is a problem so there is a need for innovation to solve this in cost-efficient way. PEFC's advantage is bottom-up approach so secretariat should concentrate on this. "Trees outside of Forest" are very important in Africa and standards should be further developed to include this in PEFC.

Swedish representative introduced Nordic countries ideas of PEFC potential to contribute to climate smart world with sustainable forestry. Paris Agreement highlighted the importance of sustainable forest management and forest role in mitigation and substitution. Forest have significant role also in SDG's. PEFC advantage is the holistic approach for sustainability and for this reason the Nordics want to incorporate the climate action to future strategy and work plan.

Tuesday 14.11. was dedicated to PEFC International office. Presentations were given on different topics such as group certification, ecosystem services, risk-based approach etc. Communication with different events and companies has improved and there has been constructive discussion with new potential partners. General Assembly on Wednesday 15.11. was uneventful and the document and selection of board members was approved by members.

Developing the approach for "Trees outside Forest" is ongoing and there are pilot projects and possible standard revision in 2018. Landscape approach in certification has been researched since the Bali convention in 2016. Different technologies to support certification are researched by the PEFC secretariat.

Several miscellaneous were shortly introduced. PEFC secretariat is developing electronic Assessment Tool for checking and comparing national PEFC standards which would help and streamline developing processes. Group certification standards is still on the working table and during December there will first publication and after that 60 days commenting time. In the future there might be a possibility to use risk-based approach in the group certification.

Sustainable forest management standards will be developed to strengthen the ecosystem service approach. Also, there is need to clarify some terms and language in international standards. For example,

there ongoing discussions whether to use “High Conservation Value” or “Primary Forest” and how these could be phrased some other way.

Thursday 16.11. was dedicated for presentations and discussion on SMART solutions in PEFC forest certification. Stakeholders see integrating technology as an important tool to increase value in certification. Researchers and companies presented some of their solutions for utilizing technology.

Cost-effectiveness and new ways how we can value and show the multiple benefits of forest management and forests. Technology can especially help communicating importance of forest certification to achieve the SDG's to customers.

Certification bodies should gather lots of information during the processes and they could provide this data and services to consumers, producers and to public. From the certifier and business side it would be good if they share their information straight with the certification bodies. One of the most important part would be mobile data gathering.

Thursday's presentations can be found from the link below.

<https://pefc.org/pefc-week-2017/presentations>