HANDBOOK ON
FOREST CERTIFICATION

Manmohan Yadav

Handbook on Forest Certification, a thorough research work, discusses in detail the concepts and approaches required to meet the desired international standards of forest certification. It covers those aspects of forest certification that are practised globally and need to be applied in the emerging context of forests in India. The book focuses on changing global perspective on forest resources, importance and need for sustainable management of forests, increasing consumer awareness, and dealing with preferences for certified forest products.

Drawing on a wealth of information provided by valuable studies across the globe, this book discusses sustainable forest management and forest certification and their impact on conservation and development of biodiversity. It is a comprehensive and detailed guide for forest managers, forest owners, practitioners, forest-based industries, academicians, students and researchers, consultants, and policy makers for the forestry sector in India and South Asia.

Key features:
- Discusses status of forest resources as well as sustainability and forestry
- Explains essentials of forest certification and process and forest certification schemes
- Dwells on the extent of forest certification and certified timber market and certification of non-timber forest products
- Presents framework for forest certification in India
- Assesses challenges and potentials of forest certification
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The Energy and Resources Institute
This book is dedicated to my parents
late Shrimati Chameli Devi and Shri Lilaram Yadav
Sustainable forest management (SFM), like the entire field of the forestry sector, is going through a paradigm shift, particularly in the light of growing trade/marketing and environmental awareness worldwide. This has necessitated the need to explore newer avenues for SFM and forest certification, both for marketers and for consumers alike.

Forest certification is a market-driven tool that on the one hand ensures sustainable management of forest and on the other hand provides premium price for forest products. The goal of credible forest certification systems is to ensure that forest products are derived from responsibly managed forests. The certification standards, criteria and indicators, and the chain-of-custody (CoC) enable the identification of forest products obtained through legitimate harvesting. This assures access to reputed retail chains and major markets, whereby the role and responsibility of committed forest owners and managers should be appropriately recognized and rewarded in this era of globalization. Thus, forest certification allows consumers to express environmental concern with a choice to select certified forest products from the market.

Forest certification involves (i) all the key sustainability criteria, (ii) provision for the full range of forest ecosystem services, (iii) compliance with forest and other laws of the land, and (iv) continuous improvement, adjustment and adaptation of the standards—principles, criteria and indicators—for assessing SFM in congruence with ever-changing environment. It also relates to eco-labelling and legality verification, thereby promoting ethical trade and market for timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), as well as socially responsible procurement policies and green consumerism.

Compliance with forest management certification standards, among other things, requires recording forest’s flora and fauna, identifying and monitoring areas with a high conservation value, deploying reduced impact logging (RIL), and building harmonious relationships with the local community, with due benefit sharing among all the stakeholders.
These factors bring intangible values to the certified forest management units (FMU), and so forest certification is one of the most effective tools for safeguarding biodiverse terrestrial ecosystems and combating climate change, desertification, forest degradation, and deforestation. Mainstreaming SFM and forest certification is at the top of the sustainability agenda, globally, nationally, and locally, because of benefit sharing through the payment of ecosystem services and carbon credits. Although it is hoped that the ensuing Cancun Climate Change Conference will arrive at an agreement on REDD and REDD+ with some mechanism in place to operationalize it, such an agreement would require the implementation of SFM principles and an international monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) mechanism. This implies that those countries that have already implemented SFM and developed their own forest certification systems would be the first beneficiaries, leaving other countries behind.

Although a number of forest certification schemes are in place around the world, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) are the two most prominent schemes at the global level with different operating modalities. Together these two international certification systems account for more than 451 million hectares of certified forests, which is 10.8 per cent of the total global forest area. As of 2015, individually, both the certification systems have 267 million hectares (58 per cent) under PEFC and 184.4 million hectares (42 per cent) under FSC as the certified forest area, with an estimated potential global industrial roundwood supply from certified forests amounting to 523 million m$^3$, which is about 29 per cent of the global roundwood production. Similarly, there are 16,361 (35 per cent) and 29,084 (65 per cent) CoC certifications under the two schemes, respectively. Though most forest areas in North America (36 per cent) and Western Europe (63 per cent) are certified, other regions such as CIS (6.6 per cent) and Asia (3 per cent) are also embarking on forest certification.

In India, the process of forest certification started quite early in 2001. However, the certification has gained momentum only in the past four years. As a result, there are 23 FM–CoC certificates and 377 CoC certificates issued under FSC logo and 24 CoCs under the PEFC system. These include 13 forest divisions in Uttar Pradesh (UPFC), 1 forest division in Maharashtra, rubber and bamboo plantations of TFDPC Limited, 2 private plantations (Group SLIMF) in Andhra Pradesh, 2 plantations in Tamil Nadu, 1 group plantation in Karnataka, 2 group plantations in Odisha, and 1 social forestry plantation in Madhya Pradesh. The total
certified area under these 23 FM–FSC certifications in India is about 811,322 hectares.

The efforts to develop a national certification scheme specific to India and its potential to seek recognition from PEFC can further expand the markets for forest certification in India.

This book comprehensively deals with the fundamentals and basic principles of forest certification and it will be valuable for students, researchers, forest managers, academicians, scientists, policy makers, exporters, consultants, and certification bodies who have interest in SFM, forest certification, and REDD and REDD+ mechanisms. It provides an opportunity to better understand and appreciate the efforts made towards improving trade and market mechanisms, leveraging sustainable management of forests and related resources, and promoting harmony between humanity, trade, and environment. Although an Indian National Forest Scheme is under discussion at the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, a framework for the same has been suggested for the benefit of all concerned stakeholders.
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