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Training workshop and consultative meeting on
Forest Certification in India
19 May 2009, Taj Residency, Kochi

Introduction

Forest certification is a mechanism for forest monitoring, tracing and labeling timber, wood and pulp products and non-timber forest products where the quality of management from environmental, social and economic perspectives is judged against a series of agreed standards. It is a process that leads to the issuing of a certificate by an independent party, which verifies that an area of forest is managed to a defined standard.

Forest certification refers to two separate processes viz., forest management unit certification (FMU) and chain of custody certification (COC). Forest management certification is a process which verifies that an area of forest /plantations from where the wood, fiber and other non-timber forest products is extracted is managed to a defined standard. COC certification is a process of tracking forest products from the certified forest to the point of sale to ensure that product originated from a certified forest.

For buyers of forest products, the responsible sourcing is their adoption of policies and practices that reward suppliers using wood, fiber and other non wood forest products from well-managed forests or from recycled products and discouraging suppliers using it from unknown, illegal or otherwise controversial sources. There are several certification schemes in operation of which Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification is one of the most popular and credible certification schemes globally.

In order to meet the growing demand for forest certification in the global market, the Indian industry has to look for certified forests/plantations to source their raw materials. The increased demand for forest certification is likely to affect the economic prospects of many farm forestry/agro-forestry areas in India unless these areas are certified.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest recognized the need to promote forest certification in the country and constituted a committee to develop national forest certification system. The success of such systems largely depends on its credibility at both local and global contexts. The office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles is providing support to secure forest certification for wooden handicrafts sector. Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) has taken several initiatives to promote forest certification in the country. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has also introduced several programmes in the country to support wood and fiber industry in the country through Foreign Trade Policy and other schemes. Many state governments, including Kerala State have introduced programmes to promote responsible and sustainable use of forest products.

India has established strong policy and legal framework for forest conservation. The scientific management of forestry in India dates back to 1864. The forest management working plans in India follow several principles and criteria which are said to be the best in the world. However, forest certification in India is still at an infant stage and therefore the nation has not been able to make use of the benefits of forest certification. So far, India has secured one FSC Forest Management Unit Certificate (644 ha of rubber plantations in Tamil Nadu State) and a few COCs mainly by small and medium companies to meet export demand. But the situation is likely to change due to the increased demand for forest certification in the global market and the high growth of the Indian economy. The impact of such demand on forest based industries and growers, particularly those of small and medium scale enterprises (SME) in India will be severe unless they secure forest certification. To address this situation, there is a need to ensure adequate FMU certifications in the country.

In order to promote forest certification, WWF advocates a “step wise approach” and has developed suitable methods and tool kits which can be used by the forest and plantation managers and traders.

WWF-India is a partner in implementing a project “*Sustainable and Responsible Trade Promoted to Wood Processing SMEs through Forest and Trade Networks in China, India and Vietnam*” with the support of the European Commission. A major objective of this project in India is to build capacity among SMEs in wood processing sectors of Kerala, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh States in providing certified sustainable forest products to national and international markets.

Objectives

The objectives of the consultative meeting are to:

- ◆ Understand the scope for and limitations of forest certification in India
- ◆ Identify suitable approaches to promote forest certification
- ◆ Create awareness on credible forest certification and the benefits to the stake holders
- ◆ Build capacity among SME wood processors to provide certified forest products

Target Group: SME wood processors, forest and plantation managers, farm forestry/agro forestry growers, timber traders, (including wooden handicraft exporters), paper and pulp companies, retailers dealing with wood and non-wood forest products, NGOs, R & D institutions, Government, certification bodies, financial institutions, builders and architects.

Organised by: WWF-India in association with Project Associates and supported by European Commission

Date and Venue: 19th May 2009 (9.30 am - 5.30pm) at Hotel Taj Residency, Kochi, Kerala

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**GLOBAL
FOREST
& TRADE
NETWORK**

WWF is one of the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network in more than 100 countries. WWF-India is part of this network with secretariat at New Delhi

WWF's mission is to stop degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

For more details, please visit: www.panda.org

For details about WWF-India national office: www.wwfindia.org

The **GFTN** is a WWF's initiative to eliminate illegal logging and improve the management of valuable and threatened forests. By facilitating trade links between companies committed to achieving and supporting responsible forestry, the GFTN creates market conditions that help conserve the world's forests while providing economic and social benefits for the businesses and people that depend on them. Forest Trade Network –India was launched on 3rd December 2008.

For more details, please visit www.gftn.panda.org



“The ‘grow first, clean up later’ paradigm is being increasingly discredited and a SWITCH is needed from unsustainable to sustainable patterns of development.”

The EU is committed to helping Asia protect its environment and to finding a sustainable future for the region's growing economies. Environmental problems are rarely contained within national borders, which is why the EU has developed an approach to deal with them at regional level. The European Commission's [Regional Strategy Paper for EU-Asia Cooperation](#) (2007-2013) has identified the environment as a sector in need of major support.

The **SWITCH-Asia Programme** responds to the need for a change from unsustainable to sustainable patterns of development. The Programme encourages a cleaner and more energy efficient industry in Asia. It targets small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) due to their key role in development providing local employment, their high contribution to air and water pollution, and their difficulties in making the transition to a more environmentally sound mode of operation. The Programme addresses both sides:

Supply side: it promotes *new processes and technologies* in order to make business production more environmentally sustainable and efficient; **Demand side:** it supports *consumer's behaviour and choices* in use of goods and services that are more environmentally friendly.

Overall Programme Objective: To promote economic prosperity and poverty reduction in Asian countries through sustainable growth with reduced environmental impact by industries and consumers, in line with international agreements and processes.

GFTN - Switch Asia objective: By 2012, at least 600 SMEs in the wood processing sectors of China, India and Vietnam are applying sustainable production techniques and are providing certified sustainable forest products to national and international markets.