

***A Dialogue on Forest Certification:
Lessons Learned and Maximizing Potential***

Convened by The Forests Dialogue

**October 16-18, 2002
Geneva, Switzerland**

In Collaboration with Yale University's Program on Forest Certification

With financial support from:
The Nature Conservancy
World Business Council on Sustainable Development
Yale's Program on Forest Certification

***Forest Certification:
Lessons Learned and Maximizing Potential***

A meeting convened by The Forests Dialogue (TFD)

Objective

The Forests Dialogue will convene a facilitated dialogue among stakeholders/leaders in forest certification to take stock of the impact the forest certification movement has had on forests, enterprises, markets, stakeholders, and policy, and to look forward to ways in which certification can better achieve the goal of sustainable forest management. The dialogue will assist participants in assessing the following:

- **Are the underlying issues that led to the development of forest certification as a tool for assessing “good forestry” being addressed by certification?**
- **What has been the impact of certification on those issues?**
- **Is certification helping to realize forestry’s role in sustainable development?**
- **Are there other tools that are appropriate, in addition to certification, to assure sustainable forest management around the world.**
- **How can the future potential of certification be best realized?**

Dates: October 16-18, 2002

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Venue: To be announced

Conclusions and findings from the dialogue will be documented by the Secretariat for The Forests Dialogue and made widely available.

RATIONALE

After ten years of rapid development, many countries are adopting forest certification, affecting forest management and forest stakeholder relations. The last few years have seen a proliferation of certification systems – Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) on an international scale, along with another twenty-plus national approaches. In addition, some long-standing initiatives to improve forestry, e.g. American Forest and Paper Association’s Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), have developed third-party certification systems. Until recently, these systems stood apart from one another, with no effort to foster dialogue among them. There are now mutual recognition initiatives underway, which have not been universally endorsed.

Within the context of all this activity, there is no broadly accepted, neutral means to share the considerable learning gained from the experiences of the various certification systems or to assess whether they achieve their purposes. This meeting aims to help to address that need.

APPROACH

Three outputs are proposed for a thoughtful and candid dialogue process:

- *Independent assessment* of the impacts of certification;
- *A structured dialogue process* among certifiers and stakeholders *to share learning* about these impacts;
- *A 'milestone' document*, developed by participants, assessing the first decade of certification and setting out an agenda for the next ten years.

Obtaining Independent Evidence Of Certification's Impacts

In spring 2001, the International Institute of Sustainable Development produced a series of studies on the impact of FSC certification on community producers, larger companies, supply chains and national policy, with a focus on several countries in the southern hemisphere. We will supplement these studies and develop original reviews of the other major systems such as the PEFC, Indonesian Ecolabelling Institute's (LEI) certification initiative, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and others. The Forests Dialogue has commissioned these reviews through the Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry's Program on Forest Certification.

These reviews will cover certification's interactions with the problems and potentials of forests, stakeholders, markets and policy. The reports will recognize that certification is just one tool among many, which positively influence sustainable development. The reports will juxtapose and evaluate certification against criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, credibility, and integration with other instruments for improving forestry. The studies will be reviewed and approved by TFD prior to its use in the Dialogue described below.

Structured Dialogue Process

Following the preparation of the studies, a three-day facilitated dialogue will be convened. The independent studies mentioned above will be presented as a starting point for participants to take stock of certification's progress and impacts. Next, multi-stakeholder working groups will use break-out sessions to address the lessons learned as well as the challenges arising from these studies and from the participants' own experience. Finally, the entire dialogue group will reconvene to discuss and assimilate the results of the breakout sessions. This will provide a forum for consensus on what has been learned and the opportunities that exist to improve the use and effectiveness of certification systems in the future.

The Forests Dialogue concept is designed to create "neutral ground" for discussions to promote sustainable forest practices worldwide. Care will be especially taken to avoid a "promotion, evaluation and defence" approach, or "ranking" of the individual certification systems. For this reason, a skilled facilitation team will be used. By fostering a non-combative climate, participants can work constructively while taking a forward-looking approach to 'stock-taking' i.e. shared learning, challenges and agendas – where can we be confident of the value of certification in tackling forest problems and potentials, and where are there major forest challenges that should be more effectively addressed by means other than certification.

The final sessions of the certification meeting in Geneva will be used to identify key challenges and develop shared agendas for action.

Publication of a Synthesis of Learning, with an Agenda for Shared Action

This document will be coordinated by TFD's Secretariat using the above two outputs. If warranted it will be published under TFD's name by Yale's Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry (the host of the Secretariat) with paper and web-based versions.

PARTICIPANTS

A maximum of 35 leaders in forestry certification, selected from certifiers, large and small forest products companies, forest owners groups, environmental and social NGO's will participate in this dialogue. Selection of participants is based on the individual, not organizational representatives, seeking a broad representation of experience and perspective, balanced regionally, and across stakeholder categories.. Some funds will be available to assist participants with financial constraints.

Logistics

TFD's Secretariat and the facilitation firm, the Meridian Institute, jointly coordinate the dialogue. Once individuals confirm participation with Meridian they will be sent the formal agenda, background papers and necessary logistical information for the meeting.

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