



Riga

February 18, 2020

On further promotion and development of the FSC FM standard in Latvia

Dear Mr. K. Carstensen!

As you know, in April of last year (2019), the group work on development of the FSC FM standard of Latvia was unexpectedly terminated for the representatives of the economic and social chamber due to the representatives of the environmental chamber leaving thereof. The FSC office in Bonn and you were informed thereof.

Any definite and understandable by us progress in continuation of the standard development has not been noticed by February 2020, placing many Latvian forest owners interested in sustainable management (thus – in certification) of the forest, in a temporary situation with many questions and desire to act but with nothing more than silence instead of any answers and explanations! I would like to emphasize that the certification as a process is taking place in Latvia; the forest owners are interested but they do not clearly understand the rules! Sustainable management of the forest is in no doubt connected with the long-term planning!

Members of the Forest Certification Council of Latvia (FCCL) in Latvia manage an area of 1,9 mil. ha. The FCCL as an organization is an international member of the FSC; our members – the Forest Sphere Workers Trade Union of Latvia, JSC “Latvian State Forests” (state forest manager) are also international members of the FSC. Both the state forest managers and the union in the current unclear situation have difficulties in speaking about any further plans. I would like to point out that around 200,000 persons are employed or related to the forest sector in Latvia.

In the course of time we have understood that the FSC European Office is interested in resolution of the situation, but any visible and understandable results (actions) have not yet been produced. As you know, in 2019 we were advised on establishing the FSC representative office in the Baltic States, which for some time was managed by Indrek Talsep from Estonia. Until then information from FSC International was received by the representatives of FCCL in segments, as the appointed temporary representative of the FSC in Latvia was not able to handle or did not know how to handle normal communication with the companies and forest owners interested in the certification. As we can see from the current and past events: Establishing a representative office in the Baltic States was a mistake, as the decision was made without consulting the representatives of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and also without discussing the situation with the forest sector representatives in each country.

In December, Indrek Talsep during the FSC meeting in Riga announced that he would leave the position of the FSC representative in the Baltic States. And that's it. We have not received any information on further actions or plans of FSC International since December 2019. We would like to emphasize once again that the situation is unclear and not understandable to the members of both the FSC and also the FCCL.

The members of the Forest Certification Council of Latvia are concerned regarding the progress of the situation, more specifically, lack of any progress.

What is currently going on in the Baltic region? What is the opinion of FSC International in Bonn regarding the situation? Will development of the FSC FM standard be continued? How and when? We do not understand how it is possible in the FSC system not to inform FSC international members in the relevant countries regarding any plans of the Organization.

It was stated at the meeting of December 2019 that the help for development of the FSC FM standard would be received from a certification company selected by the FSC. It has not happened! The Forest Certification Council of Latvia, taking into account the experience, understanding and interest of its members is willing to undertake an initiative and ask the environmental, social and economic chamber to continue work on development of the standard. We are also willing to regain the status of the FSC representative office in Latvia, as the goal and experience of us and our member organizations in sustainable forest management is the best in Latvia.

Latvia is one of the richest countries in terms of forests in Europe, and our forest management traditions have developed through the generations. The situation with chaotic and confusing development of the standard is not acceptable to the sector, and the matter requires actions and a solution. The standard needs to be developed for it to be acceptable to all three FSC chambers, and its requirements understandable and enforceable. Blackmailing by one chamber in respect of other chambers regarding the FSC principles, by terminating work and leaving development of the standard to which five years have been dedicated is not acceptable.

Not only the members of the organization but also the representatives of the forest sector ask their questions to us, the Forest Certification Council of Latvia, so we address you to get a clear and specific answer.

Looking forward to hear from You,

Sincerely Yours

Forest Certification Council of Latvia:

Māris Liopa, Chairman of Forest Certification Council of Latvia,
Member of FSC International

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