

Verified Impact

FAQS

Frequently asked questions

Forest Stewardship Council



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Here are the answers to the most commonly asked questions about our Verified Impact framework.

1. Can you clarify what role the principle of additionality plays in FSC's Verified Impact and how it is measured?

The principle of additionality is explicitly included in the new version of the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure (ES-Pro), published on 1 January 2025. In simple terms, additionality means that the positive impact **goes beyond “business as usual” forest management**.

For Verified Impact, this principle is particularly important when there is a **sponsor** involved. In those cases, it must be demonstrated that the sponsor's contribution leads to conservation or restoration outcomes that would **not have occurred without that support**. This is assessed and confirmed by an independent certification body as part of the verification process.

2. Is there an aspect of complying with the European Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) within the ecosystem services approach you shared in your recent webinar with Concha y Toro?

FSC is actively working to align its certification system, including Ecosystem Services and Verified Impact, with EUDR requirements. The goal is to ensure that FSC certification can support companies in demonstrating deforestation-free and legal sourcing, and to promote the **recognition and acceptance of FSC by the EU** as part of companies' EUDR due diligence.

While FSC can provide important evidence and risk-mitigation tools, ultimate responsibility for EUDR compliance remains with the company.

3. When the management unit has the documentation ready, when is the best time to submit it to the certification body? Ideally, validation/verification would be done during the surveillance audit. What about additional cost?

The ideal timing depends on each case, but in many situations it is most efficient to **align the Ecosystem Services / Verified Impact audit with an existing FSC Forest Management (FM) audit**.

If the documentation is ready ahead of a scheduled FM audit, the certification body can plan to assess Ecosystem Services at the same time. This typically reduces additional cost and effort, because the auditor is already on site and only needs extra time rather than a separate visit. The exact cost impact will depend on the size and complexity of the project and should be discussed directly with the certification body.

4. What specific regulations in the FSC standard focus on preventing illegal logging and forest fires, particularly in tropical rainforests?

In the FSC system, we have national Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS), which can be found here: [Document Centre | FSC Connect](#)

- Each FSS has a country-specific indicator tailored towards Principle 1 – which requires compliance with laws in the country, and therefore prohibits illegal logging
- Regarding forest fires, the country-specific indicators can usually be found under Criterion 10.9. or 7.1.

5. How challenging is the process of achieving the FSC certificate for a non-forestry company?

The process requires significant learning, adaptation, and engagement, particularly for organizations not traditionally working in forestry. Despite the challenge, it is a highly rewarding journey.

6. Does the FSC Certificate help improve the livelihoods of local communities? How?

Conservation of the area adjacent to the vineyards has been improved, along with the ecosystem services they provide for the population.

7. How is Verified Impact information communicated to consumers?

We communicate the verified impact data in our sustainability reports, which are public and available to consumers. We also report on various national, regional, and global events on the environment and sustainability in which we participate, as well as in our communication campaigns.

8. For Concha y Toro, which ecosystem service was verified, and from which forest area?

The verified claim relates to carbon capture from the natural forests surrounding the vineyards.

9. Are there any set methodologies to verify social and environmental impacts?

FSC does not prescribe a single, rigid methodology for all projects, but the **FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure** provides guidance and examples on how to identify, measure, and verify different ecosystem services and related impacts.

Within this framework, forest managers (and, where relevant, partners such as researchers or consultants) can select appropriate indicators and methods for their context, which are then assessed by an independent certification body as part of the verification process.

10. Have you heard of FSC-certified cork, and do you use it for your wine bottles?

During our recent webinar with Concha y Toro, this specific question was not addressed in detail. In general, FSC also certifies cork as a forest product, and many wine producers use FSC-certified cork as part of their responsible sourcing strategies. Whether and how Concha y Toro uses FSC-certified cork depends on their internal sourcing decisions and would need to be confirmed directly with their procurement and packaging teams.

11. How many ecosystem services impact(s) were selected as start-ups for the Ecosystem Services claim, and how do you prioritize which to select?

The company began by verifying carbon impacts and plans to expand to other ecosystem services such as biodiversity in future phases.

12. What has been the most meaningful or unexpected benefit of including forests in a corporate sustainability journey – whether environmental, social, or business-related?

The most significant benefit is the deeper involvement in forest protection and the contribution this makes to addressing major environmental challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

13. Across the global sustainability landscape, where do you see companies gaining the most value from engaging with forest-related ecosystem services?

The main value comes from contributing to the protection of ecosystems that are fundamental to climate and biodiversity goals. Engaging with forest-related ecosystem services allows companies to:

- Contribute to **climate mitigation and adaptation** through carbon storage and regulation.
- Support **biodiversity and water resources**, which are critical for supply chain resilience.
- Strengthen the **credibility of their sustainability strategies and disclosures** with independently verified data.

In short, companies gain value by helping to protect ecosystems that are fundamental to their long-term business continuity, and to global climate and biodiversity goals.

14. From your experience, what misconceptions do companies often have about forest stewardship or ecosystem services, and how would you clarify them?

A few common misconceptions include:

- That ecosystem services are only about **carbon**, when in fact they also cover water, biodiversity, soil, recreation, culture, and air quality.
- That forest stewardship is only relevant for **traditional forest companies**, whereas many sectors indirectly depend on forest ecosystems through raw materials, water, and climate stability.
- That measuring ecosystem services is always **too complex or academic**. In practice, frameworks like FSC Ecosystem Services and Verified Impact are designed to make this more accessible and verifiable.

Clarifying these points helps companies see forests as a **strategic sustainability asset**, not just an environmental topic.

15. If you could give one piece of advice to a company looking to strengthen the credibility of its reporting, what would it be?

A key piece of advice is: **ground your claims in independent, verifiable evidence** – and be prepared for scrutiny.

That means working with robust standards and third-party verification (such as FSC and Verified Impact), being transparent about methods and limitations, and aligning reporting with recognised frameworks. It requires effort and a willingness to take on challenges, but it significantly strengthens trust with regulators, investors, customers, and civil society.