

Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) Forest Management Add-on

Take your sustainability commitment to the next level
with Preferred by Nature Certification FSC FM add-on.

30 years of
experience



100+ countries
where we
work



30+ million of certified
farm and forest
land



Our certification Standard is compared to other leading certification schemes to enhance your existing programmes by identifying and addressing any gaps. By thoroughly benchmarking the FSC Forest Management (FSC FM) Standard against Preferred by Nature's Sustainability Framework, we have pinpointed extra indicators to elevate your sustainability efforts. This add-on can easily be incorporated into your next audit, ensuring a smoother process with minimal disruption.

Preferred by Nature Certification in brief

Preferred by Nature developed the [Preferred by Nature Certification](#) to highlight the key sustainability factors we consider essential. This adaptable framework is organised into four key areas, each with specific criteria and indicators, and can be tailored to different commodities, regions and operational scales for precise application. It simplifies the complexities of sustainability, offering clear guidance for individuals and organisations striving for responsible practices, inspired by others working toward a sustainable future.

The Preferred by Nature Hummingbird Seal is awarded to products that meet the Sustainability Framework Standard. Our goal is to add value by recognising and supporting efforts within other sustainability programmes, aligning our approach with elements of these initiatives.



Benchmarking **summary**

To enable certified companies to fully benefit from their existing certifications, it is crucial to identify the differences between the key schemes and the Sustainability Framework. Any indicators within the Sustainability Framework that are not covered can be incorporated as additional requirements when organisations aim to use the Seal and demonstrate alignment with the Sustainability Framework. We have developed benchmarking guidelines for the Sustainability Framework and are currently performing comparisons with key certification scheme standards. This document presents the findings from benchmarking the Sustainability Framework against the FSC FM Standard.

About FSC

[The Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) promotes sustainable forest management globally through its stakeholder-driven standards. The FSC FM Standard includes ten [Principles and Criteria](#) (P&C) and International Generic Indicators (IGIs), which guide the development of national and regional standards used for audits. Independent Certification Bodies (CBs), accredited by [Assurance Services International](#) (ASI), verify compliance.

Forest managers meeting FSC requirements can market their timber as FSC-certified. Companies handling and processing FSC-certified materials for resale must obtain an FSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate, ensuring product traceability, integrity and some social compliance within the supply chain. We have conducted a benchmarking exercise of the Sustainability Framework against the sustainability-related criteria outlined in the [FSC CoC Standard](#), detailed in a separate document.

Preferred by Nature and FSC

Preferred by Nature has been involved with FSC certification for several decades, initially as a subcontractor to another accredited certification body, and since 2014, as an independently accredited certification body. We view FSC Forest Management certification as a high-bar sustainability scheme for promoting sustainable forest management. We firmly believe that FSC certification is instrumental in driving positive change across various regions through its rigorous certification process.

FSC offers three types of product claims and corresponding labels:

- **FSC 100%:** Indicates that all materials originate from FSC-certified forests.
- **FSC Mix:** Denotes products made from a blend of materials from FSC-certified forests and other sources. If the non-FSC material is not recycled, it must conform to the FSC Controlled Wood (FSC CW) Standard. We have also benchmarked the Sustainability Framework against the FSC CW Standard, as outlined in a separate file.
- **FSC Recycled:** Signifies products made from verified recycled materials.

As a member of ISEAL, an international umbrella organisation establishing best practices for sustainability schemes, FSC aligns with globally recognised standards and practices in the sustainability realm.

Among all FSC certification bodies, Preferred by Nature holds the largest share of FSC-certified forest area globally. We actively engage in the FSC community and participate in various technical working groups within the organisation.

As of January 2024, Preferred by Nature manages nearly 3,000 active CoC certificates and more than 350 FSC Forest Management (FSC FM) certificates, covering a total forest area exceeding 30,000,000 hectares.

We followed our **benchmarking procedures** to compare the Preferred by Nature Sustainability Framework with the FSC Forest Management (FM) Standard. Here's a summary of the process:

1

We compared the Sustainability Framework with the FSC FM Standard using the FSC's global Principles and Criteria (P&C) and International Generic Indicators (IGIs) as the basis. While acknowledging that national and interim standards may entail additional details, it was not feasible to compare against all national standards within the scope of this exercise.

2

The comparison was conducted at the indicator level, assessing the extent to which Sustainability Framework indicators align with FSC IGIs. The objective was to ascertain whether the intention of the criteria outlined in the Sustainability Framework is covered by FSC Standards. We acknowledge that there are differences in wording and how certain sustainability topics are addressed. Therefore, a perfect one-to-one match at the indicator level is not realistic.

3

It is also important to note that as a forestry specific standard, FSC may offer more intricate details in certain aspects compared to the Sustainability Framework. This benchmark highlights where the FSC Standard may have gaps compared to the Sustainability Framework, while acknowledging that similar gaps might exist when comparing the Sustainability Framework to the FSC Standards.

FSC FM Standard and the EU Deforestation Regulation

In addition to benchmarking the FSC Forest Management (FM) Standard against our full Sustainability Framework, we also assessed its alignment with key aspects of the [EU Deforestation Regulation](#) (EUDR), focusing on legality and deforestation-related definitions. The evaluation used the EUDR's definitions for legal timber harvesting, deforestation-free practices, degradation and sustainable forest management. Within the Sustainability Framework, we identified specific indicators that we believe correspond to these definitions, utilising them as a basis for our benchmarking process. It is important to note that the interpretation of the EUDR is that of Preferred by Nature and is not formally recognised by the European Council.

For assessing how the FSC FM Standard aligns with EUDR definitions of legality and deforestation-free practices, we also considered relevant FSC standards, including FSC Regulatory Module ([FSC-STD-01-004 V1-0](#)) and FSC Advice 20-007-24 from the FSC Directive 20-007 ([FSC-DIR-20-007](#)).

Our findings show that the FSC FM Standard addresses both the legality requirements and the deforestation-free concept as outlined in the EU Deforestation Regulation.

Benchmark hierarchy and categorisation of conclusions

The benchmark results for the Sustainability Framework and the FSC FM Standard are presented at the **criteria level**, utilising the colours as outlined in the Table on page 4.



Fully covered

All indicators within the Sustainability Framework are thoroughly covered, ensuring alignment with their intended goals. However, discrepancies may persist in the wording and structure of how these topics are articulated.

Considered to be covered by the benchmarked Standard.



Intent covered

The criterion's intention is adequately addressed. While variances or omissions may arise in individual indicators within a criterion, the overarching purpose of the relevant criterion is duly recognised in the benchmarked Standard.

Considered to be covered by the benchmarked Standard.



Partly covered

Essential components necessary to fulfil the criteria's intent are absent and should be given further consideration. We have pinpointed specific Sustainability Framework indicators that must be incorporated into the FSC FM Standard to ensure alignment.

Some aspects need to be verified in addition to the scheme requirements.



Missing

The core topic of the criteria is not covered in the benchmarked Standard. It is essential to employ the indicators outlined in the Sustainability Framework to verify compliance.

The topic needs to be verified in addition to scheme requirements.



Not applicable

The criterion is deemed not applicable to the sector or commodity covered by the benchmarked Standard. In certain cases, the topic may be pertinent only in exceptional circumstances, and in such instances, we may still classify it as not applicable.

Not applicable to the benchmarked Standard.

Benchmark results








The goal of the benchmarking exercise is to evaluate whether the overall **intent** of relevant criteria in the Sustainability Framework has been incorporated into the benchmarked Standard, rather than focusing on specific differences at the indicator level.





The Table on page 5 outlines the extent to which the FSC FM requirements are perceived to align with the Sustainability Framework requirements. This benchmark primarily focuses on interpreting the Sustainability Framework requirements in relation to forest management activities.













Benchmark results






Below is a condensed overview of the outcomes derived from benchmarking the FSC FM Standard. It is structured according to the criteria outlined in the Sustainability Framework, with an emphasis on identifying potential gaps.

No.	Sustainability Framework Principles and Criteria	Status	Remarks on coverage in FSC P&C and FSC IGI (FSC-STD-60-004 V2-1 EN) including the FSC EUDR Moule (FSC-STD-01-004 V1-0) and the FSC Directive on Forest Management Evaluations (FSC-DIR-20-007)
1	Management and business practices are responsible. <i>The benchmarking exercise evaluated 34 key indicators. Overall, it is evident that Principle 1 of the Sustainability Framework is closely aligned with FSC Standards.</i>		
1.1	Land tenure and management rights are secure.		All requirements have been addressed.
1.2	Management planning and operations are conducted responsibly.		The FSC Standard effectively encompasses the intent of this criterion, incorporating considerations deemed relevant for legal compliance by the FSC. However, areas where coverage may be partial or lacking involve specific mandates regarding the disclosure of information pertaining to business transactions.
1.3	Taxes and fees are paid.		All requirements have been comprehensively addressed.
1.4	Corruption, fraud and conflict of interest are avoided.		The criterion is partially covered. It lacks the requirement for the identification and declaration of conflicts of interest. Additional indicator: 1.4.3 Conflicts of interest are identified and declared.
1.5	Trade and procurement are responsible.		The essence of this criterion is effectively fulfilled. However, there is one indicator that remains indirectly addressed, specifically concerning the upkeep of contracts with suppliers and buyers.
1.6	Buildings, infrastructure and activities are developed and maintained in a responsible manner.		N/A
1.7	The quality of customers' and visitors' experience is continuously improved.		N/A
2	People's well-being and human rights are respected. <i>A total of 59 indicators underwent assessment. The benchmarking results indicate that the majority of requirements have been satisfactorily met, with particular emphasis on comprehensive coverage of issues related to child labour and community rights. However, a few areas have been pinpointed where certain aspects of the Sustainability Framework are not fully incorporated, specifically in regard to certain safety measures and the provision of employer-provided housing.</i>		

2.1	Human rights are respected.		<i>The intention of this criterion is addressed well. However, it is worth noting that certain requirements outlined in both the Sustainability Framework and the EUDR (2023) extend beyond the scope of Indigenous People's Rights and Workers' Rights, to which the FSC IGI is limited.</i>
2.2	Child labour is not present, and the employment of young workers is responsibly managed.		<i>All requirements have been addressed.</i>
2.3	Modern slavery, forced or compulsory labour do not occur.		<i>The intention of this criterion is well-covered, although some minor gaps were identified regarding specific indicators related to the prohibition of human trafficking and workers' rights to terminate their employment.</i>
2.4	Workers' rights are respected.		<p><i>Some critical aspects are absent regarding overtime limitations not exceeding 60 hours, rest periods and time off. Additionally, provisions concerning the privacy rights of workers, the treatment of migrant workers and the hiring process for seasonal workers are also not covered.</i></p> <p>Additional indicators:</p> <p>2.4.5 Overtime is voluntary and does not result in a work week exceeding 60 total hours, except under circumstances of shorter duration where additional labour is required.</p> <p>2.4.7 The privacy rights of workers are respected, including, but not limited to, whenever an employer gathers private information or implements employee-monitoring practices.</p> <p>2.4.10 Responsibilities towards workers are not avoided by hiring de facto permanent, long-time, full-time workers under seasonal or temporary contracts.</p> <p>2.4.12 Migrant workers are ensured equality of opportunities and no less favourable treatment than local workers.</p>
2.5	Discrimination does not occur.		<i>All requirements have been comprehensively addressed.</i>
2.6	Workers are remunerated in a responsible manner.		<i>We find that the intent of this criterion is generally well-covered, although some minor gaps were identified regarding direct payment to workers and the requirements ensuring that employer-provided services do not exceed market prices.</i>
2.7	Facilities, operations and activities are safe.		<p><i>Few aspects important for workplace safety are not directly addressed by the FSC IGIs. These include specific requirements for safety guards on equipment, provision of first-aid equipment and ensuring the safety of expectant and nursing mothers.</i></p> <p><i>While the FSC IGI broadly references the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work, it does not specifically address important issues such as the accessibility of first-aid equipment for forest workers and safety protocols for vehicles and utilities. While national standards may address these gaps, this summary focuses strictly on the FSC IGIs.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, the following indicator has been added.</i></p>

2.7		<p>Facilities, operations and activities are safe.</p> <p>Additional indicator:</p> <p>2.7.3 Indoor workplaces are hygienic, with adequate lighting, temperature, ventilation, sanitation, drinking water, sanitary facilities, as well as break facilities, and food storage.</p>
2.8		<p><i>This criterion overlooks several critical aspects. While the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work indirectly touches upon the issue of employer-provided shelter and housing, it lacks specific guidelines on accommodation, such as legal requirements and affordability. Moreover, requirements concerning the cost of employer-provided housing and access to essential services are notably absent. We acknowledge that in many cases, this topic may not be applicable to FSC forest management operations. However, there are instances, such as the establishment of long-term logging camps, where these requirements become relevant and should be considered.</i></p> <p>Additional indicators:</p> <p>2.8.3 If workers pay for employer-provided housing, the cost of housing is commensurate with the pay and comparable to similar housing in the area/industry.</p> <p>2.8.5 Where workers, and their families, live in employer-provided housing the employer ensures that they have access to medical, educational, social services.</p>
2.9		<p><i>The FSC Standard encompasses a comprehensive set of requirements aimed at ensuring gender equality in the workplace. This includes provisions such as a minimum of 6 weeks of maternity leave and provisions for paternity leave. There is a distinction with the Sustainability Framework, which stipulates 4 weeks of paid leave. However, upon examining all indicators in both Standards collectively, we have determined that the criterion's intention is still adequately addressed. Regarding the Sustainability Framework requirement to adhere to legal provisions for maternity leave, FSC Criterion 1.3 mandates compliance with all "applicable laws." Hence, the legal entitlement to maternity leave is considered covered under this provision. However, it is worth noting that the FSC's definition of "applicable laws" related to legal employment, as outlined in Principle 1, Annex A, 3.5, specifies that applicable legislation is limited to "personnel involved in harvesting activities," which may exclude other staff of a forest operation. We propose that this constitutes a gap in the FSC's definition of legality, which could potentially be enhanced. Taking into account the overall robust approach to gender equality issues and considering all indicators collectively, we conclude that the criterion's intent is adequately addressed.</i></p>
2.10		<p>The rights of Indigenous Peoples are known and respected.</p> <p><i>All requirements have been addressed.</i></p>

2.11	Communities are supported and their rights respected.		<i>All requirements have been addressed.</i>
2.12	Culture is respected and valued.		<i>The intention of this criterion is addressed. FSC's High Conservation Values highlight the importance of safeguarding sacred sites with spiritual and cultural significance. While there is an emphasis on Indigenous People's culture, there is relatively less detail on aspects encompassing the broader domain of local culture.</i>
3	Nature and the environment are protected. <i>The benchmarking study evaluated 47 indicators. While some indicators were not directly addressed, they were not necessarily applicable to forestry. The study's findings highlighted robust coverage of the protection of natural forests, other ecosystems and high conservation values. Additionally, it noted thorough coverage regarding the use of chemicals and measures to mitigate their adverse impacts.</i>		
3.1	Forests and other ecosystems are not converted.		<i>The FSC FM Standard explicitly prohibits the conversion of natural forests or High Conservation Value Areas into plantations or non-forest land uses. It delineates the threshold at which degradation is deemed to be conversion. Also, FSC's ADV-20-007-24 provides new guidance for certified clients, aligning with the EUDR. This includes rules on converting plantations to agriculture and addressing the degradation of naturally regenerating forests.</i>
3.2	Natural forests and other ecosystems are not degraded.		<i>The intention of this criterion is addressed within the FSC IGI. Legal requirements applicable to non-forest areas are partially addressed through the definition of 'Ecosystem Services' provided in the FSC glossary.</i>
3.3	Ecosystems and biodiversity values are identified and protected.		<i>All requirements have been comprehensively addressed.</i>
3.4	Chemicals are used responsibly with minimal negative impacts.		<i>FSC has a strong approach to chemical use, though the Sustainability Framework highlights the need for linking fertiliser use in plantations to detailed soil assessments. While these areas could potentially benefit from improvement, our overall assessment indicates that the FSC IGIs effectively address the intent of the Sustainability Framework concerning relevant issues.</i>
3.5	Waste is reduced and managed responsibly.		<i>FSC is found to cover the intention of this criterion. Although requirements regarding reduction, recycling and reuse are addressed to some extent, there are gaps that could need attention.</i>
3.6	Pollution is minimised or prevented.		<i>The intention of this criterion is addressed by the FSC IGI. However, indicators related to noise and light pollution are deemed "N/A" within the FSC Standard. Nevertheless, other requirements concerning land management to prevent pollution of nearby aquatic sources are thoroughly covered.</i>
3.7	Water resources are protected and used efficiently.		<i>All requirements have been comprehensively addressed.</i>

3.8	Soil is conserved and managed appropriately.		<i>The intention of this criterion is covered. Requirements concerning soil erosion are not directly included in the IGIs, but there are requirements related to preventing negative impacts on environmental values and soil is included in the FSC definition of environmental values. The management of plant and animal material for soil biodiversity is not directly addressed, but this is relevant only in certain cases.</i>
3.9	Animal welfare and health is secured.		<i>The criterion is deemed not applicable to forest management practices.</i>
4	Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. <i>The benchmarking study evaluated 8 indicators. Although some indicators were not directly addressed, it is important to consider the Principle within the broader context of sustainable forest management practices outlined by FSC. These practices typically have favourable climate impacts overall.</i>		
4.1	Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.		<i>The FSC Standard does not incorporate specific mandates for quantifying, reducing or offsetting greenhouse gas emissions. It is worth noting that some aspects of this may be partially addressed by the optional FSC module on ecosystem services, which also encompasses climate impacts. However, our analysis suggests that sustainable forest management operations adhering to the FSC requirements in their entirety, do not result in significant negative climate impacts. When FSC requirements are fully complied with and forests are managed sustainably, the overall intent of this criterion is effectively addressed.</i>
4.2	Climate change adaptation efforts are implemented proportionate to the risks.		<p><i>The FSC requirements currently lack direct mandates pertaining to climate adaptation considerations. This omission is particularly significant for forestry operations in various regions, especially where climate change is projected to affect the viability of species composition for sustainable forestry. The importance of integrating climate adaptation considerations is further underscored by the long-term nature of decisions regarding species composition, rendering stands vulnerable to climate change impacts, often extending decades into the future.</i></p> <p>Additional indicators:</p> <p>4.2.1 The key risks for operations resulting or potentially resulting from climate change are identified.</p> <p>4.2.2 Measures for climate change adaptation are implemented for areas of high risk and proportionate to the scale of the operations and anticipated social, economic and environmental impacts.</p>
4.3	Efforts are taken for GHG removal and ecosystem restoration as appropriate.		<i>While the FSC requirements may not comprehensively cover all the indicators, we believe that the intention of this criterion is addressed through the holistic approach of sustainable forest management practices outlined within the FSC Standard.</i>

Add-on indicators for FSC-certified forests

For foresters certified against the FSC Forest Management Standard interested in participating in the Preferred by Nature Certification programme, this section highlights the additional requirements. To initiate the add-on verification process, simply reach out to your dedicated task manager, who will promptly assist in planning the next steps.

Principle 1 Management and business practices are responsible.

Criterion 1.4 Corruption and conflict of interest are avoided.

Indicator 1.4.3 Conflicts of interest are identified and declared.

Principle 2 People's well-being and human rights are respected.

Criterion 2.4 Workers' rights are respected.

Indicator 2.4.5 Overtime is voluntary and does not result in a work week exceeding 60 total hours, except under circumstances of shorter duration where additional labour is required.

Indicator 2.4.7 The privacy rights of workers are respected, including, but not limited to, whenever an employer gathers private information or implements employee-monitoring practices.

Indicator 2.4.10 Responsibilities towards workers are not avoided by hiring de facto permanent, long-time, full-time workers under seasonal or temporary contracts.

Indicator 2.4.12 Migrant workers are ensured equality of opportunities and no less favourable treatment than local workers.

Criterion 2.7 Facilities, operations and activities are safe.

Indicator 2.7.3 Indoor workplaces are hygienic, with adequate lighting, temperature, ventilation, sanitation, drinking water, sanitary facilities, as well as break facilities and food storage.

Criterion 2.8 Employer-provided housing is safe and hygienic.

Indicator 2.8.3 If workers pay for employer-provided housing, the cost of housing is commensurate with the pay and comparable to similar housing in the area/industry.

Indicator 2.8.5 Where workers and their families live in employer-provided housing, the employer ensures that they have access to medical, educational and social services.

Principle 4 Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.

Criterion 4.2 Climate change adaptation efforts are implemented proportionate to the risk.

Indicator 4.2.1 The key risks for operations resulting or potentially resulting from climate change are identified.

Indicator 4.2.2 Measures for climate change adaptation are implemented for areas of high risk and proportionate to the scale of the operations and anticipated social, economic and environmental impacts.

The Preferred by Nature Certification offers the opportunity to attain the **Hummingbird Seal**, provided specific conditions are met. Complying with the Sustainability Framework indicators missing in your existing certification allows you to demonstrate your commitment through claims and display the Hummingbird Seal on your website and in promotional materials.

This showcases your dedication to practices beneficial to people, nature and the climate. Additionally, you can use the Seal for segregation marking to distinguish verified products as they traverse the supply chain (e.g., directly on product packaging, task orders, shipping documents, invoices; segregation marking cannot reach end users).

EXPLORE

Preferred by
Nature Certification



Searching for a partner with global experience and local presence?



Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and the climate.



Our approach combines sustainability certification services, projects, awareness-raising and capacity building.



With nearly **400 staff** and a network of consultants, we have operations on **six continents** and have the know-how and capacity to carry out **5,000+ audits per year**.



We have certified over **1 million farms and forest units** and contributed to the establishment of **100+ protected areas**.



We work with small businesses, large corporations, communities, Indigenous People, state forests and environmental NGOs - all of them are equally important to us.

Reach out to us to discuss your needs
and together we will explore the
possibilities:

<https://preferredbynature.org/contact-us>



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