

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT

Working Paper

Issue of convergence between different certification systems and Programs

*H.S Gupta and **L. Pradhan

ABSTRACT

Of late Forest managers/owners are getting confronted with a plethora of new standards of certification or verification schemes for different purposes, i.e for bio-mass, energy, CO₂ sequestration, organic process, labour, fair trade, legality, etc. This developing proliferation of standards has added lot of confusion and higher costs both for producers and the consumers. At the same time, it also entails the risk of unequal requirements applying to the various different systems. Hence, the certification system urgently requires harmonization and coherence if they have to achieve their intended credibility, efficiency, effectiveness and scope in forestry sector.

The expectation of the market is that the various processes and standards should evolve and improve over time, and the diverse/ disparate approaches currently used among forest certifying organizations will in all probabilities merge likely to coalesce into a common framework, minimizing confusion in minds of both the producer and consumers. While in different manners, the ATFS, FSC, and SFI systems include the fundamental elements of credibility and make positive contributions to forest sustainability, proponents of individual certification programs often promote their option as the best or only option. This has little to do with quality and everything to do with marketing and selling their program. No certification program can credibly claim to be 'best', and no certification program that promotes itself as the only certification option that can maintain credibility. Forest ecosystems are complex and a simplistic 'one size fits all' approach to certification cannot address all type of sustainability needs. Thus harmonization is the greater need of the hour in the forest certification domain. This paper highlights some of the important issues that need to be considered for harmonization of the certification schemes.

* Professor, Faculty Technical Forestry, IIFM ,Bhopal

** Research Associate, ICCF, IIFM, Bhopal