

WWF assessment of FSC regional Congo Basin and PAFC Gabon certification schemes

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WWF has published an analysis using the Certification Assessment Tool (CAT) that assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Pan-African Forest Certification (PAFC) Gabon and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Congo Basin certification scheme and standard.

Certification schemes have an important role to play in forest conservation, by enabling customers to choose products from forests that are managed in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible way.

To be effective, certification schemes need to have operational standards that are strong enough to deliver real positive impacts on the ground. And they need to have a strong governance structure and systems in place to ensure that the standards are applied.

WWF recently commissioned an independent, comparative assessment of both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) regional standard (FSC-STD-CB-01-2012-EN currently applicable to Forest Management Units (FMU) in Gabon), and the Pan-African Forest Certification (PAFC) Gabon standard and certification system.

The Certification Assessment Tool (CAT) Version 4 was developed by WWF to assess the credibility of certification systems and their standards for a range of commodities including timber. The assessment was undertaken by Terre Environnement Aménagement (TEREA), (<http://terea.net/en/>), an external environmental consultancy company specialized in the environment and sustainable management of natural resources.

The CAT is a formalized methodology to evaluate and compare standards and certification schemes. It assesses standard requirements and a scheme's governance, rules and procedures. The outcome is a better understanding of a certification scheme's strengths and weaknesses. WWF uses CAT assessments to help identify areas for improvement so these can be addressed as part of a scheme's efforts to further refine and strengthen their systems to require and enable good performance on the ground for the commodity production in question.

By highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in different schemes, the CAT enables WWF to monitor continuous improvements of certification schemes and their ability to deliver greater benefits for people and nature.

This CAT presents the results of the assessments of the core elements of both FSC regional Congo Basin standard and PAFC Gabon scheme and standard against the CAT indicators.

Previous similar assessments have been undertaken of the following schemes and standards: PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification), MTCS (Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme) and FSC V4 and V5.

More info [here.](http://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?246871/WWF-Forest-Certification-Assessment-Tool-CAT) (http://www.panda.org/wwf_news/?246871/WWF-Forest-Certification-Assessment-Tool-CAT).

FSC regional standard Congo Basin

Until recently FSC certification was the only responsible forest management scheme in the Congo Basin. The FSC Principles and Criteria provide an internationally recognized standard for responsible forest management. The standard assessed in this CAT was approved in 2012 by FSC and is applicable within the Congo Basin (CAR, Cameroon, DRC, Gabon and Congo) since 2014. It is based on the version 4 of the FSC international principles and criteria. More info [here.](https://africa.fsc.org/en-cd/certification/les-principes-et-critres-fsc) (<https://africa.fsc.org/en-cd/certification/les-principes-et-critres-fsc>).

PAFC Gabon

PAFC Gabon is a forest management and Chain of Custody certification scheme. It was developed at the beginning of the 2000's and was endorsed in 2009 by the PEFC. In 2012 the scheme underwent a major revision which was nationally adopted in 2013 and re-endorsed in 2014. The purpose of PAFC standard is to assess the legal, social, environmental and economic aspects of the administration of a managed forest in the Gabonese socio-cultural and economic context.

What does the results of the CAT assessment tell us?

The results of this CAT assessment indicate:

For PAFC Gabon:

- Very poor compliance with CAT requirements for certification and accreditation process of the scheme,
- Good compliance with CAT on the standard setting process and chain-of- custody requirements of the scheme,
- Good compliance with CAT for the forest management standard regarding “legality, tenure and use rights” and “worker’s rights”, “biodiversity” and “other good practice”,
- Very poor compliance with CAT requirements on the section “pollution, waste and GHG emissions” due to the absence of climate and GHG emissions requirements in the PAFC forest management standard.

For the FSC regional Congo Basin standard applicable in Gabon:

- Great compliance with the WWF CAT requirements for the standard setting process of the scheme,
- Great compliance with CAT on the environmental and forest management component of the standard,
- Poor compliance with CAT on the section “pollution, waste and GHG emissions”, due to the absence of climate and GHG emissions requirements in the FSC Congo Basin forest management standard.



WWF CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT TOOL V4.0

FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (FSC) STANDARD FOR THE CONGO BASIN

The CAT is a formalized methodology to evaluate and compare standards and certification schemes. The CAT evaluates the requirements of a certification scheme's standard and system strength – rules and procedures that regulate how the standard is implemented, assessed and governed.

The following document assesses the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard for the Congo Basin certification scheme - *FSC-STD-CB-01-2012-EN Congo Basin Regional Standard*.

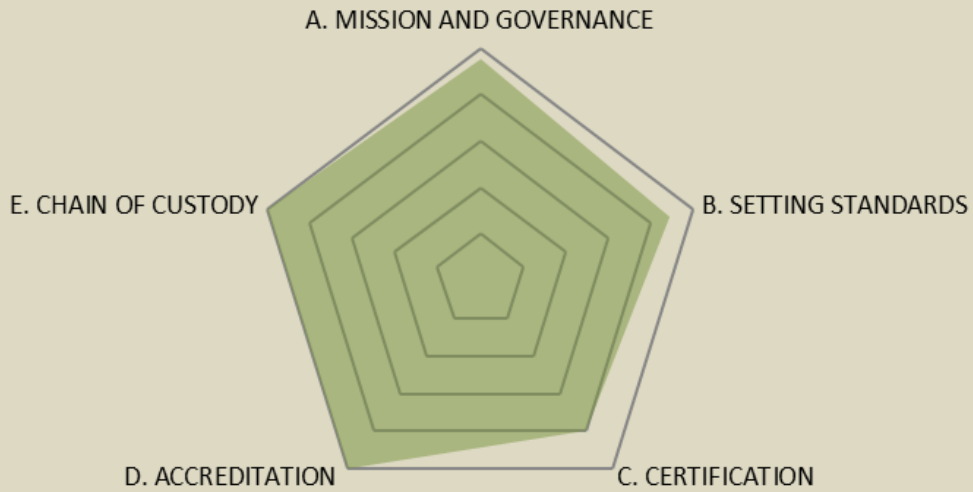
For more information on the CAT, see [here](#).

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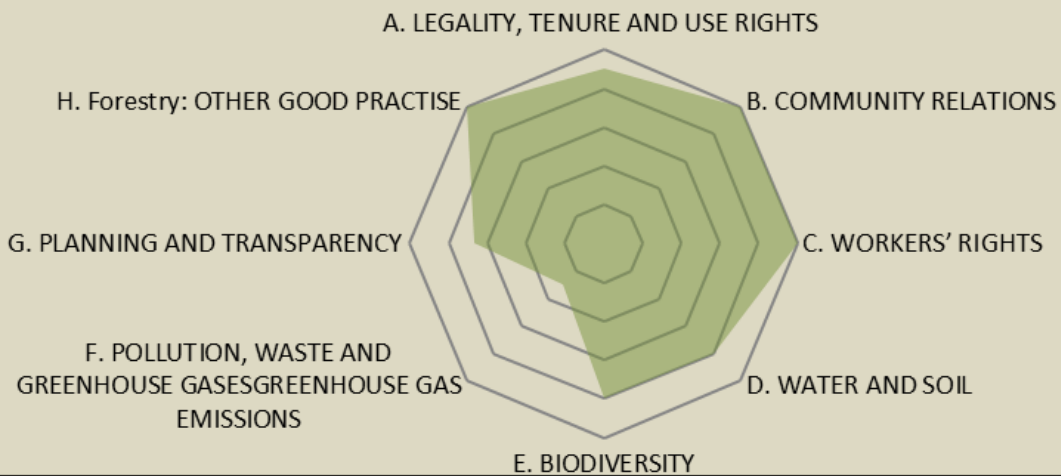
CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT TOOL (CAT) V4.0

FSC Congo Basin regional standard

Section I: Scheme Overview



Section II: Standard



PART I - SCHEME OVERVIEW

A. MISSION AND GOVERNANCE		FSC CONGO BASIN
1	The scheme is set up to continuously improve the social, environmental and economic benefits of producing a specific commodity or category of commodities. The long term social, environmental and economic impacts are defined and documented".	√
2	Scheme core normative documents, e.g. statutes, bylaws and principles and criteria (audit manual or comparable), are publicly available on a scheme website.	√
3	The scheme is a (full or associate) member of ISEAL.	√
4	The scheme has a resourced Secretariat with clearly defined staff and functions related to, at a minimum; finance, standard development, communication, membership/participant handling, quality assurance and complaints and the contact details are publicly available online.	√
5	The scheme is open to membership (and/or similar level of participation in governance) for all stakeholders who share the scheme's values and objectives.	√
6	Names and affiliation of members are publicly available on a scheme website.	√
7	Members and/or Participants are required to commit to scheme values and objectives through signing a Code of Conduct (or similar).	√
8	Member's Code of conduct requires legal compliance, adherence to ILO core conventions and Free Prior and Informed Consent and maintenance of High Conservation Values (HCVs) as defined by the HCV Resource Network.	√
9	Members from the private sector are required to develop and adhere to a time-bound plan towards certification and/or procurement of certified products, and report annually on progress.	-
10	Procedures are in place to suspend or terminate membership for gross violations of the Code of Conduct, i.e. against legal compliance, adherence to ILO core conventions and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and maintenance of High Conservation Values (HCVs) as defined by the HCV Resource Network.	√
11	The scheme's highest decision-making forum is, or is formally mandated by, the membership/scheme participants.	√
12	Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that no single interest group (economic, social or environmental) can dominate governance decision-making.	√
13	Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that non-economic sector constituencies collectively have (at least) the same governance decision-making power as economic sector constituencies.	√
14	Highest decision-making forum procedures ensure that constituencies representing economic, social and environmental interests have equal governance decision-making power.	√
15	Highest governance decision-making forum requires balanced participation of economic, social and environmental representatives.	√
16	Changes to core normative document require voting by the scheme members/participants.	√
17	Executive (secretariat) functions are overseen by a Board of Directors or Trustees composed of individuals mandated by voting among scheme members / participants.	√
18	Minutes of Board or Trustee meetings are publicly available.	√
19	There are procedures in place and clear time bound requirements for handling disputes and complaints by members / participants related to governance and executive functions.	√
B. SETTING STANDARDS		
20	There are defined procedures for appealing the handling of disputes and complaints related to governance and executive functions open to all members / participants.	√
21	Nationally applicable certification standard(s) constitute, or are adapted from, a set of internationally, regionally or nationally applicable principles and criteria (or equivalent).	√
22	The Principles and Criteria (or equivalent) address as a minimum: social and environmental impacts, workers' conditions and rights, community relations, environmental services, conservation of biodiversity and good management practices.	√
23	Applicable certification standards are (or were) developed in accordance with formally defined scheme procedures.	√

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24	Representatives of major economic, social and environmental interests are actively invited to participate in the development of nationally applicable certification standards.	√
25	Applicable certification standards are developed with a meaningful participation of economic, social and environmental representatives.	√
26	Applicable certification standards are developed by consensus or in processes where no single interest group can dominate decision-making.	√
27	Applicable certification standards taken in account the ISEAL Impact Code for the development and revisions.	-
28	Draft certification standards are developed in processes where input is solicited from scientific and technical experts.	√
29	Draft certification standards are subject to multiple rounds of public consultation.	√
30	Input received in consultations on draft certification standards is documented and there is report back on how issues raised are addressed.	√
31	Draft certification standards are formally approved by the scheme.	√
32	Applicable certification standards are publicly available on a website.	√
33	Applicable certification standards have auditable indicator(s) for each criterion.	√
34	Most indicators of applicable certification standards require an absolute level of performance (as opposed to merely relative improvement or the existence of a process).	√
35	Applicable certification standards clearly distinguish mandatory requirements from recommendations and guidance.	√
36	Applicable certification standards have separate requirements for small and/or medium sized management units and/or are formulated so as to take account of the scale and intensity of operations.	√
37	Applicable certification standards are revised at least every five years.	√
38	Applicable certification standards are developed and revised in full compliance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.	-
39	The scheme either applies the same certification standard in all areas of operation, or has procedures for developing and harmonizing national/regional interpretations.	√
C. CERTIFICATION		
40	The scheme either applies the same certification standard in all areas of operation, or has procedures for certification based on scheme principles and criteria (or equivalent) in countries that do not (yet) have national interpretations.	n/a
41	Producers are certified by independent third -party certification bodies operating in compliance with ISO requirements.	√
42	Producers are required to certify all (eligible) units under their control in accordance with a time-bound plan.	-
43	Searchable databases with names, sizes and locations of all certified units, including expiry dates, are publicly available on a scheme website.	√
44	Certification bodies post information about upcoming scheduled certification and surveillance audits on a common national and/or international scheme-operated website or mailing list.	-
45	Certification bodies are required to conduct annual or more frequent surveillance audits of certificate holders.	√
46	Certification bodies are required to proactively consult with affected stakeholders during both certification and surveillance audits.	√
47	Certification bodies are required take account of stakeholders' comments during certification and surveillance audits.	√
48	Certification bodies are required conduct risk-based auditing and surveillance.	√
49	Certification bodies are required to adjust the intensity of auditing and surveillance to match observations in the field.	-
50	Certification bodies are required to conduct unannounced audits in high risk contexts.	-

PART I - SCHEME OVERVIEW

51	Certificate holders are required to rectify non-compliances identified during certification and surveillance audits within a set timeframe that does not exceed one year.	√
52	Adequate sanctions are applied in situations where less severe (minor) non-compliances are not rectified in time.	√
53	Severe (major) non-compliances that are not rectified in time lead to suspension or termination of the certificate.	√
54	Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits (including dates, locations and scope of auditing, team composition, main findings and corrective action requests) are publicly available in a UN language on a website.	√
55	Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits (including dates, locations and scope of auditing, team composition, main findings and corrective action requests) are publicly available in a common local language on a website.	√
56	Summary reports of certification and surveillance audits are made publicly available within ninety days after completion of the audit.	√
57	Certificates are valid for no more than five years after which a new full certification audit is required.	√
58	Certification bodies implement formal and transparent, publicly available procedures for handling disputes and complaints related to certification and surveillance.	√
59	Certification and surveillance complaints procedures have clear deadlines.	√
60	Certification and surveillance complaints procedures include appeal mechanisms open to use by any affected party.	√
D. ACCREDITATION		
61	Certification bodies are accredited by an ISEAL member accreditation organization.	√
62	The accreditation organization(s) list(s) upcoming regular assessments and surveillance audits of certification bodies publicly on a website.	√
63	The accreditation organization provides mechanisms for stakeholder input during assessment and surveillance audits of certification bodies.	√
64	The accreditation organization verifies that certification bodies engage effectively with stakeholders during auditing and surveillance.	√
65	The accreditation organization conducts risk-based auditing and surveillance of accredited certification bodies.	√
66	Less severe (minor) non-compliances that are not rectified within the time set are escalated to severe (major) non-compliances.	√
67	Severe (major) non-compliances that are not rectified within the time set lead to suspension or termination of the accreditation.	√
68	Summaries of the accreditation assessments of certification bodies are publicly available.	√
69	Accreditation organizations implement formal and transparent, publicly available procedures for handling disputes and complaints related to approval and accreditation of certification bodies.	√
70	Certification and accreditation complaints procedures include appeal mechanisms open to any involved party.	√
E. CHAIN OF CUSTODY		
71	There are scheme procedures for monitoring custody and trade of materials from certified producers (regardless of Chain of Custody model).	√
72	There are scheme procedures for assessing risks related to the origin of materials in labeled products.	√
73	Certificate holders are required to manage critical control points along the supply chain with a scope and rigor that corresponds to the risks.	√
74	Certification bodies survey certificate holders' operation of chain of custody procedures.	√
75	Certification bodies survey certificate holders' use of claims, trademarks and labels, on and off products.	√

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76	The scheme either only allows for claims on products consisting of fully segregated materials, <u>or</u> requires that claims associated with products containing a physical mix of certified and non-certified materials are clearly distinguished, e.g. by use of terms such as 'mixed', 'proportion' or 'contains...'.	√
77	The scheme either only allows for claims on products consisting of fully segregated materials, <u>or</u> requires that products of mixed origins do not any contain any (focus commodity) materials defined as controversial', 'unacceptable' or similar.	√
78	The scheme requires that products labeled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials that are illegally harvested or traded.	√
79	The scheme requires that products labeled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials from areas where traditional or civil rights are violated.	√
80	The scheme requires that products labeled or otherwise claimed as certified do not contain any (focus commodity) materials from areas where HCVs (1-6) are threatened.	√

PART II - STANDARD

A. LEGALITY, TENURE AND USE RIGHTS

FSC CONGO BASIN

1	Producers are required to be legally defined entities.	√
2	Producers are required to have legal land tenure or title and valid resource use rights to use the management unit.	√
3	Producers are required to comply with all applicable local, national and international laws and regulations.	√
4	Producers are required to identify legal and customary rights of tenure, access and use of other parties that apply on the management unit.	√
5	Producers are required to uphold legal and customary rights of tenure, access and use of other parties, unless these rights are delegated through documented Free, Prior and Informed Consent.	√
6	Producers are required to respect the rights, customs and culture of indigenous peoples as defined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and ILO Convention 169 (1989).	√
7	Producers are required to engage with affected stakeholders and document measures taken to resolve disputes related to land tenure, access and use.	√
8	Producers are required to engage with affected stakeholders and document measures taken to resolve disputes related to water.	√
9	Producers are required to take measures against unauthorized or illegal activities and settlement on the management unit.	√
10	Producers are required to commit in writing not to offer or receive bribes or engage in any other form of corruption.	-

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

11	Producers are required to engage in dialogue with neighboring communities and individuals.	√
12	Producers are required to identify negative impacts from operations on communities and individuals.	√
13	Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on communities and individuals.	√
14	Producers are required to address grievances and provide fair compensation for negative impacts of operations on local communities and individuals.	√
15	Producers are required to assess potential impacts on communities and individuals, including impacts on food security and water availability, prior to any significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.	√
16	Producers are required to identify and respect sites of cultural and religious significance in the management unit.	√

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17	Producers are required to assess and maintain High Conservation Values (HCVs) category 5 (basic necessities for local communities) in the management unit.	√
18	Producers are required to support economic development by providing opportunities for local employment and provision of services.	√
19	Producers are required to actively engage in welfare programs, where relevant to the social context.	√
20	Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on the local economy and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.	√
C. WORKERS' RIGHTS		
21	Producers are required to respect the core ILO rights of workers as defined in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998).	√
22	Producers are required to ensure that children under the age of 15 (or higher if stipulated in national law) do not carry out productive work in the management unit.	√
23	Producers are not allowed to use forced or otherwise involuntary labor.	√
24	Producers are required to ensure that there is no discrimination at work and that workers are not subject to any form of corporal punishment, abuse, harassment or intimidation.	√
25	Producers are required to identify potential health and safety risks at work and take measures to avoid them.	√
26	Producers are required to ensure that workers are adequately equipped, instructed and trained for their tasks, including safe use and handling of chemicals.	√
27	Producers are required to respect workers' freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.	√
28	Producers are required to ensure that wages, working hours and leave comply with, or exceed, applicable legislation and sector minimum standards.	√
29	Producers are required to address grievances related to working conditions and workers' rights and to provide compensation for occupational injuries.	√
30	Producers are required to ensure access to safe drinking water, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	√
D. WATER AND SOIL		
31	Producers are required to identify water resources potentially affected by operations, in as well as outside the management unit.	√
32	Large scale Producers are required to assess the catchment context in order to identify key water risks or shared challenges.	-
33	Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from direct operations on water quality.	√
34	Producers are not allowed to create or aggravate situations of water scarcity.	-
35	Producers are required to maintain and to restore important water related areas including wetlands.	√
36	Producers are required to avoid or minimize run-off and siltation of watercourses.	√
37	Producers are required to take measures to minimize negative impacts from operations on soil resources.	√
38	Producers are required to avoid or minimize soil erosion.	√
39	Producers are required to maintain or improve soil quality.	√
40	Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on soil and water and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.	√
E. BIODIVERSITY		
41	Producers are required to identify and maintain biodiversity values, potentially affected by operations, in as well as outside the management unit.	√
42	Producers are required to take measures to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on biodiversity values.	√

PART II - STANDARD

43	Producers are required to assess potential impacts on biodiversity values prior to significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.	√
44	Producers are required to protect rare and threatened species and their habitats in the management unit.	√
45	Producers are required to assess and maintain HCVs category 1 (concentrations of rare and threatened species), 2 (large landscapes in a relatively natural state), 3 (rare and threatened ecosystems) in the management unit, and 4 (Basic ecosystem services in critical situations, including protection of water catchments and control of erosion of vulnerable soils and slopes.)	√
46	Producers are not allowed to convert native forest and/or areas of high above-ground carbon stocks to expand cultivation or plantations.	-
47	Producers are required to maintain or restore native vegetation along streams and watercourses.	√
48	Producers are required to take measures against any illegal or inappropriate hunting, fishing or collecting in the management unit.	√
49	Producers are not allowed to introduce or use invasive alien species in the management unit.	-
50	Producers are required to regularly monitor their impacts on biodiversity and to adapt management as necessary for improvement.	√
F. POLLUTION, WASTE AND GREENHOUSE GASE EMISSIONS		
51	Producers are required to implement integrated pest management practices that minimize the use of pesticides.	√
52	Producers are not allowed to use Hazardous chemicals (as defined by WHO 1A and B and the Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions).	-
53	Producers are required to document all application, handling, storage and disposal of agrochemicals and to ensure that procedures comply with good practice and/or manufacturers' recommendations.	-
54	Producers are required to take measures to avoid or minimize negative impacts of agrochemical use on human health and the environment.	√
55	Producers are required to respect a 500 m minimum application distance of pesticides, growth promoters and liquid fertilizers to natural ecosystems and areas of human activities, if applied by helicopter or airplanes.	-
56	Producers are required to take measures to increase resilience and reduce negative impacts from severe climate events.	-
57	Producers are required to estimate sequestration and emissions of greenhouse gases from the management unit.	-
58	Producers are required to take measures to reduce any net emissions of greenhouse gases from the management unit.	-
59	Producers are required to reduce waste through reuse, recycling or other environmentally appropriate utilization.	√
60	Producers are not allowed to expand cultivation or plantations on peat soils and/or areas of high below-ground carbon stocks.	-
G. PLANNING AND TRANSPARENCY		
61	Producers are required to continuously improve key practices and operations.	√
62	Producers are required to have management plans appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operation that demonstrate commitment to long-term social, environmental and economic viability.	√
63	Producers are required to ensure that management plans account for future water resource conditions (i.e., climate change, demographic shifts, projected use increases, etc.)	-
64	Producers are required to make summaries of their management plans publicly available on their website (large producers) or by a request (small/middle producers).	√
65	Producers are required to use independent expertise for assessing social and environmental impacts prior to significant intensification or expansion of cultivation or infrastructure.	√
66	Producers are required to make summaries of their social and environmental impact assessments publicly available on their website (large producers) or by a request (small / middle producers).	-

PART II - STANDARD

67	Producers are required to identify HCVs (all six categories) prior to significant expansion of cultivation or plantations.	√
68	Producers are required to participate in catchment governance mechanisms such as integrated river basin management plans.	n/a
69	Producers are required to make summaries of their HCV assessments publicly available on their website (large producers) or through a request (small / middle producers).	-
70	Producers are not allowed to expand cultivation or establish plantations at the expense of one or more HCVs.	√
H. Forestry: Other Good Practice		
71	Producers are required to regularly monitor and evaluate key economic performance indicators like yields, revenues and costs and take measures as necessary for improvement.	√
72	Producers are required to promote use of a diverse range of resources and services from the management unit.	√
73	Producers are required to ensure that products are not harvested at levels above sustainable yields.	√
74	Producers are required to ensure that tree cover is regenerated to pre-harvesting (or more natural) conditions after logging.	√
75	Producers are required to use tree species for regeneration that are well adapted to site conditions.	√
76	Producers are not allowed to use genetically modified trees in the management unit.	√
77	Producers are required to use management practices appropriate for the tree species, site conditions and management objectives.	√
78	Producers are required to use management practices in natural/semi natural forests that reflect natural disturbance regimes.	√
79	Producers are required to maintain high scenic landscape values.	√
80	Producers are required to monitor forest condition and take measures as necessary to maintain forest vitality and tree species composition.	√