



Date 2019-02-01

## Letter to key-stakeholders

Dear dear Sir or Madam,

we are reaching out to you today to explain our position and dispel any erroneous interpretations that could derive from a documentary about FSC that is to be broadcast on ARD on February 4, 2019.

Although the film raises some important issues that we have started to investigate seriously, we consider that not all are accurate, and many segments are intentionally biased to portray FSC through a damaging and negative angle.

As the transparent organization that we strive to be, during 2018 we collaborated fully with the two journalists who produced the documentary. We offered them unparalleled access to important events such as FSC's General Assembly held in Vancouver in October 2017 or the annual Certification Body meeting in Bonn as well as interviews with FSC members, FSC auditors, certificate holders, stakeholders and myself as you have surely seen in the film.

However, we were dismayed to see how the information the journalists gathered was used in such an imbalanced and counterproductive way with the sole intent of creating as much reputational damage to FSC as they could. Rest assured that many segments of the film are not representative of FSC's mission nor its results in ensuring responsible global forest management and we have produced a fact-check document about the different allegations that you can view here: <https://www.fsc-deutschland.de/preview.statement-und-faktencheck-arte-film.a-1251.pdf>

Our forest management audits worldwide are strict, and they are all governed under the same Principles and Criteria that make us the most stringent and trustworthy responsible forest management certification scheme in the world.

As a voluntary certification scheme, it is not always an easy task to ensure that no deforestation or illegal logging happens on a global basis. Sometimes, we are confronted with specific difficulties and a void of legislative measures in countries where governance is low and corruption high. We have identified these countries as high risk in our supply chain and are

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increasing our efforts at policing and acting through our Supply Chain Integrity team, carrying out unilateral efforts to identify and kick out of our system those companies that purposefully commit fraud.

These efforts include active and permanent transaction verification of many FSC supply chains to ensure that the products companies sell match the volume of FSC-certified product they claim to have purchased. For example, in Ukraine alone, during 2018 we suspended over 30 certificate holders for fraudulent use of our certification.

As mentioned, we have taken some segments of the film very seriously and we are already looking at addressing and correcting the alleged illegalities shown. For example, we have begun a wide-ranging investigation on the Vietnamese companies that the film portrays as purchasing illegal timber from Cambodia and processing it to sell as FSC-certified finished products. Rest assured that if any of the conclusions from this investigation prove that the allegations in the film are accurate, these companies will face immediate termination of their FSC certificates.

We are also ramping up our efforts at identifying illegal timber trade in regions such as the Amazon and our Supply Chain Integrity team has begun a global project with the prestigious Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew in London to collect samples of a wide range of wood species that we will use in wood identification and isotope testing to considerably increase our scrutiny on potential cases of illegal logging and timber trade.

We are also starting some very important new measures that we expect to roll-out during 2019, including fully digitalized maps of FSC-certified forest concessions in an effort to ensure greater transparency around the FSC certified areas. These maps will be made publicly available for stakeholder scrutiny.

While FSC certification is constantly improving, it has already had a major impact in addressing the many challenges that affect forests around the world. These impacts are made possible by FSC's democratic governance, where all our members have equal say in the development of our standards, policies, and procedures.

I would like to share some examples of how FSC certification is indeed making a difference for forests and people on the ground, contrary to the claims raised by the ARTE documentary:

- The camp of Ngombe, in the rainforests of the Congo Basin, became a thriving community under FSC certification with a hospital, police station, library and school built for its 8,000 residents. Through the work of FSC certificate holder, Industrie Forestière d'Ouessou (IFO) and featured in the SWR/Arte documentary, the community now sees 100 per cent access to clean running water, electricity and healthcare, while



ensuring the forest is managed in such a way that it will remain viable for generations to come.

- A documentary by Arte in 2016<sup>1</sup> showed how an FSC certified forest concession (again IFO) employed a big team of social workers to involve the Indigenous Peoples in Free Prior and Informed Consent to identify important or sacred trees and ensure they were not harvested. This is a direct positive impact of FSC's requirements from its Principle 3.
- Also in the Congo Basin, FSC-certified concession CIB Olam is supporting an important health project in the Republic of Congo called Project Bwanga, that enables access to healthcare and medicine to remote Baka forest communities.
- In other regions such as the boreal, data from the Swedish National Forest Inventory shows that FSC certification has contributed significantly to several key indicators for biodiversity in Swedish forests. When compared to the Swedish Forestry Act, FSC's greater positive impact on biodiversity is evident in the increased amount of conservation areas and woodland key habitats; and increased retention trees, high stumps, and deciduous forests.
- According to WWF-Russia, compliance with the FSC requirements also ensures the conservation of biodiversity during logging. Specifically, FSC is the most effective mechanism for the identification and conservation of HCVF, including IFL. FSC-certified companies in Russia have allotted more than 13.8 million hectares of HCVF, 7.5 million hectares being completely withdrawn from forest management.
- FSC-certified Brazilian plantation company Klabin has dedicated resources to preserving the Atlantic Forest and repopulate them with endemic species. In the 1990s the company launched a tapir reproduction project in the Samuel Klabin Ecological Park, to help increase the number of animals in the wild. In July of this year, three tapirs were released into the wild in Rio de Janeiro, a state where tapirs have been extinct for over a century. Other Brazilian plantation companies such as Suzano and Fibria are also very active in natural forest conservation.

These examples, only a sample of many more, are due to the FSC rules and normative framework.

<sup>1</sup> <https://tv5.ca/a-la-reconquete-des-forets?e=ipxepc3xouv5x>



Your engagement and support of FSC has enabled these, and countless other success stories worldwide and is vital to ensuring sustainable management of the world's forests. We thank you and we trust that you will continue working with us to uphold FSC's mission.

Should you have any further questions concerning the documentary, please do not hesitate to contact me directly through any of the options listed below my signature.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kim Carstensen'.

Kim Carstensen  
*FSC Director General*

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