

Reply

Response to Comments of Ben Gunneberg

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Abstract: An unreferenced statement on page 608 is challenged as being incorrect. FSC and PEFC are competitors and issues on the differences between the programs are often arguable. We do agree that a small portion of the statement could have been more clearly stated, but the intent of the statement was essentially correct. The original article contained 80 references and not every sentence could be referenced. We include 18 additional references below to strengthen and clarify our statement.

Mr. Gunneberg commented on our recent article “Natural Resources Management: Life Cycle Assessment and Forest Certification and Sustainability Issues” [1] and characterized the following statement on page 608 as incorrect: “A *fundamental difference between FSC and PEFC is the stakeholders. While FSC was founded mainly by environmental groups, PEFC had strong forest industry and trade groups among its founders. This is one reason FSC is not a member of PEFC. Both the ATFS and SFI are recognized by PEFC as acceptable standards*”. We do agree that the phraseology of the second sentence in the statement could be improved.

The first sentence of the statement is that stakeholders represent a fundamental difference between FSC and PEFC. Besides the original article, the Mr. Gunneberg cites only one source that is not from PEFC itself; that is a UNECE/FAO report [2]. His comment quotes page 114 of that report: “There is a fairly clear split in Europe between large State and industrial ownerships on the one hand, which tend to adopt FSC certification, and small non-industrial private ownerships on the other, which tend to adopt PEFC certification”. That quote likely challenges a later sentence, but it also clearly supports the difference between stakeholders. That same report on the same page noted that in 2008 PEFC adopted an action plan that included “establishing a ‘stakeholder forum’, comprising a whole range of

international organizations supportive of sustainable forest management”, while in 2007 FSC was trying to improve access to “small forest owners and indigenous people, communities, and other non-industrial owners”. Stakeholder issues are crucial to both organizations and this report does not suggest similar stakeholders.

A key reference to that UNECE/FAO report states: “There is a dispute among environmental and industry groups regarding the relative merits of these forest certification schemes” [3]. This difference in stakeholders is pronounced in North America and that history is part of that same report: “By the mid-1990s, the US and Canadian certification programs chose to join the new FSC system as FSC-accredited certifiers.... The vast majority of industrial forestry companies in North America, however, initially rejected the idea of certification under the FSC. In the United States, the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA) responded by launching its own ‘Sustainable Forestry Initiative’ (SFI), which set out broad principles of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) that all of its members were required to support” [3]. PEFC recognizes SFI as an acceptable standard [4]. This dispute between stakeholders is the fundamental difference we addressed.

Other authors addressed this same difference: “Even though there is a relatively high degree of commonality between many forest certification standards and schemes, it is clear that there are also differences. For some stakeholders these differences appear to be fundamental—as past international dialogue has shown. Differing views have been expressed by organizations representing private forest owners, industry and trade, and social and environmental NGOs” [5]. It is clear that “certification is driven by the intents and incentives facing different groups, which range from global to local, private to public, and objectivity to extreme subjectivity” [6] and that “the interests and views of the people behind the respective certification schemes mainly drove forest certification standards that have been elaborated over the last ten years” [7]. “As a matter of fact, these standards vary considerably, reflecting the diversity of stakeholder views and local conditions” [7].

We would agree the second portion of the second sentence could have been phrased better. The first part of that sentence states that FSC was founded mainly by environmental groups. That was a generalization; more accurately, “by 1992, ongoing frustration with domestic and inter-governmental efforts to address deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics led many transnational environmental groups, led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), to spearhead a coalition of environmental and socially concerned NGOs, select retailers, governmental officials, and a handful of forest companies to create the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)” [3].

FSC was formed in a stormy environment one author described as: “Some environmental and indigenous groups were angry that industry representatives had been invited to attend and were eligible to vote. They worried that industry would take control of the FSC and dilute its standards and perpetuate business-as-usual forestry” [8]. These groups saw the draft principles and criteria as being too industry-friendly and “eventually a compromise was reached: an organizational structure designed to preclude industry dominance was approved” [8]. Two chambers were created: one for environmental and social interests and one for economic interests. Seventy-five percent of the voting rights went to the environmental and social interest chamber. “These developments were closely monitored by the mainstream forest industry... and in the early 1990s many industry leaders were convinced of the strategic necessity to spearhead development of alternative industry-friendly certification schemes” [8]. Our generalization stressed this environmentalist/industry conflict.

The second portion of the second sentence states that PEFC had strong forest industry and trade groups among its founders. Mr. Gunneberg notes that PEFC was established by small- and family forest owners and that PEFC represents the interests of forest stakeholders from all sectors of society. We can't disagree with Mr. Gunneberg on this point. Our intent was to stress the private sector/forest production inclination of PEFC relative to FSC. PEFC was a private sector initiative and established to provide an alternative to FSC [9].

Until the mid-1980s European forest industry was mainly concerned with fair treatment in the tropical timber market and saw forest certification as a way to level the playing field. This changed when the forest certification spotlight started focusing on European forestry operations [10]. "These developments led to a series of reactions among many traditional members of the traditional European forestry community, and particularly among smaller landowners who saw themselves as disadvantaged in the FSC system and who also resented its implied criticism of their traditional stewardship. ... PEFC emerged, holding organizational meetings in 1998 and coming into official existence in 1999. ... Perhaps it is most aptly characterized as a growing international network of nationally based certification programs which are centered primarily on forest landowners but also draw in other production oriented stakeholders" [10]. We focused on the important aspect of the timber production orientation of PEFC; forest industry was not the best way to say that. Small family forest owners were certainly the crucial element of PEFCs founding.

However, many of these small family owners were members of timber production-oriented associations. One author noted PEFC was a "production-based scheme" and that "in 1998 and 1999, European forest owners' associations joined together to create the Pan-European Forest Certification (PEFC) scheme to facilitate the mutual recognition of national schemes and to provide them a common eco-label" [11]. There is a blurred line between timber production-based forest owners' associations and forest industry. One author noted the same blurred line; "In 1998 the Pan-European Forest Certification (PEFC) Initiative was launched by national forest owner and forest sector interest groups of several European countries" [12]. Another author noted that PEFC, "from the start, the program was explicitly designed to address forest managers' criticisms of the FSC" and that its origin derived from "landowners (and some industry)" [13]. Note that both citations use the original name of PEFC; it has undergone a name change and is now the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes.

Our characterization of strong forest industry groups among PEFCs founders resulted somewhat from what happened soon after the founding. "Following the emergence of the FSC, landowner groups in several European countries, the USA and Canada, launched alternative industry schemes, which from 1999 onwards gradually moved under the umbrella of an international organization called PEFC. PEFC began as a European organization but became a truly global umbrella organization for the assessment and mutual recognition of industry-sponsored national forest certification standards after 2003 when it expanded to other continents" [14].

The third sentence addressed fundamental differences between FSC and PEFC; mainly both were formed by different stakeholders. There are a number of fundamental differences between FSC and PEFC and surely one is divergent philosophies of the founding groups [15]. "The non-governmental FSC is strongly influenced by environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO)" [16] and the founders of PEFC were "strongly antagonistic" towards FSC's more costly environmental

performance standards and strong ENGO membership [6]. Stakeholder differences form the basis of many fundamental conflicts between the two systems [17]. The fourth sentence merely states that PEFC recognizes both the ATFS and SFI. This is true [18].

Mr. Gunneberg also finds a second statement misleading. He notes that PEFC has similar goals to FSC and both systems generally address many of the same issues. Which system performs better in terms of various standards is addressed in the literature [14,16,17,19-22]. We did not intend to imply that PEFC does not have similar or better standards than FSC in many areas. We merely listed some areas that are considered FSC strengths [19,20]. Both FSC and PEFC are adapting and improving their systems. PEFC agreed on a new mission statement in 2007 with a “significant switch in strategic direction from forest production to market access” [2] and FSC is implementing a new global strategy with improved “access to FSC certification for small forest owners” [2]. We recognize the two systems are competitors and our article addressed contentious issues. We listed strengths of both systems in various places in the article; if one reads the article in its full context, that statement is not particularly misleading.

Mr. Gunneberg did give us the opportunity to strengthen our original article with his comment and this response. The three articles present a better picture of the two systems. He comment did allow us to better describe the background of the two systems. We appreciate the opportunity to do that.

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