



Forest Stewardship Council®  
**Global Strategy**  
2021–2026

Demonstrating the value and benefits of forest stewardship



**FORESTS<sup>TM</sup>  
FOR ALL  
FOREVER**

# About this document

The essence of an effective strategy is to consolidate big ideas while building common ground around a vision of what success would look like in years to come. Based on this understanding, we chose the name Global Strategy instead of Global Strategic Plan as it was called for the period 2015-2020. The strategy outlined in this document aims to provide the direction for FSC to build specific plans and projects to achieve the ambition we have set. These specific plans will be further guided by motions approved by the General Assemblies and policies and other decisions made by the board.

# Acknowledgements

This document would not have been possible without the members and global staff of FSC, including network partners, who have enormously contributed to its contents. This has happened despite all the challenges that the year 2020 put in front of us all. Through responses to two public consultations and participation in virtual dialogues and webinars, these groups have contributed to making the Global Strategy what it is, and for this we are extremely grateful.

A number of people have taken a deeper role in strategy development, and we would like to acknowledge their contributions. As elected representatives of the membership, the FSC Board of Directors took the leadership role in developing *The Global Strategy 2021-2026* with the support of the Board Strategic Planning Committee (BSPC), and the strategy team at FSC International.

We are also grateful for the inspiration and outside perspective provided by our external advisors, including the Boston Consulting Group, Torsten Kurth, Dr Robert Nasi, Dr Nancy Bocken, Marshall Perry, Darrel Weber, Minnie Degawan, Dr Chris Elliott, Dr Jeannette Gurung, Anita Normark, Enrica Porcari, Cecile Ndjebet, John Laidlow and Caren Holzman.

# Foreword

This new Global Strategy has taken its point of departure from the previous *Global Strategic Plan 2015-2020*, and the overall ambition of the organization and its vision for 2050 are unchanged. At the same time, however, new ideas from membership and staff have been incorporated in many places, and as a result, we believe the strategy is fresh, inspiring and much improved in clarity and precision.

In the six years covered by *The Global Strategic Plan 2015-2020*, FSC surpassed the plan's "20 by 2020" objective. With about a quarter of the global industrial roundwood volumes originating in FSC-certified forests, FSC has become a force for responsible forest management. We take pride in this success, but we acknowledge that we have not yet overcome the core challenge identified in our 2015-2020 Global Strategic Plan: Incentives for forest destruction still outweigh the incentives for forest stewardship in many parts of the world. Achieving our mission and the future we want – Forests for All Forever – still requires substantial effort and renewed energy.

*The Global Strategy 2021-2026* has many new elements such as a strong focus on provision of impact data as part of FSC's value proposition to certificate holders and stakeholders. It also puts additional emphasis on the use of modern technology to support the integrity of the FSC system. It points out that FSC can lead solutions development to global forest-related agendas like the fight against climate change and the loss of biodiversity, through the creation of partnerships and alliances with like-minded organizations. On this basis, we can work with governments, forest managers, stakeholders and others to deliver solutions with real impact on the ground.

As the basis for taking on these new strategic directions, *The Global Strategy 2021-2026* reaches back into the roots of who FSC is as an organization. It reconfirms our commitment to promoting forest stewardship as the way to enable resilient forests that create environmental, social and economic value and benefits. The strategy takes pride in FSC's multi-stakeholder governance system and the global network of partners. It identifies FSC's core strength of being a community for co-creation: we convene members and other partners from diverse interests to set global benchmarks for forest stewardship and deliver significant results for the forests and the people who depend on them.

We are excited and proud to present this new *Global Strategy 2021-2026* to our members and stakeholders, and we look forward to work with them to deliver solutions that matter for people and nature all over the world.



**Barbara Bramble**  
Board Chair



**Al Thorne**  
BSPC Chair

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# Fostering forest stewardship

We are at a defining moment for the world's forests, and for our organization. Global agendas increasingly recognize the role of forests in enabling and maintaining life. Without healthy and resilient forests, we will lose the fight against climate change and against the alarming loss of biodiversity. In addition, we will be unable to contribute to the transformation to a circular and bio-based low-carbon economy with responsibly produced goods and services. We know this, but forest conversion and degradation continue, extraordinary forest fire events occur all over the world, major social issues related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples and workers are daily challenges, and discrimination based on gender and ethnicity continues. While this situation may appear overwhelming, we know that forest stewardship, including sound efforts towards protection, conservation and restoration as well as active management for forest products and services, can be an important factor in addressing these challenges by making forests more resilient.

Over the years, FSC has enabled multi-stakeholder processes globally and nationally to define responsible forest management standards that are implemented by certificate holders and drive change on the ground. FSC's standards promote accountability and yield positive impacts.

This is an important contribution, but we are missing solid data on the social, environmental and economic impact of forest certification, and the value of forest stewardship is not yet sufficiently recognized. Growth in certified area is too slow, and most of the world's forests are still not certified according to FSC's standards. We need to increase our efforts for certification of tropical forests, forests managed by smallholders and communities and other forests around the world that have significant potential to create value and benefits and contribute to addressing global challenges.

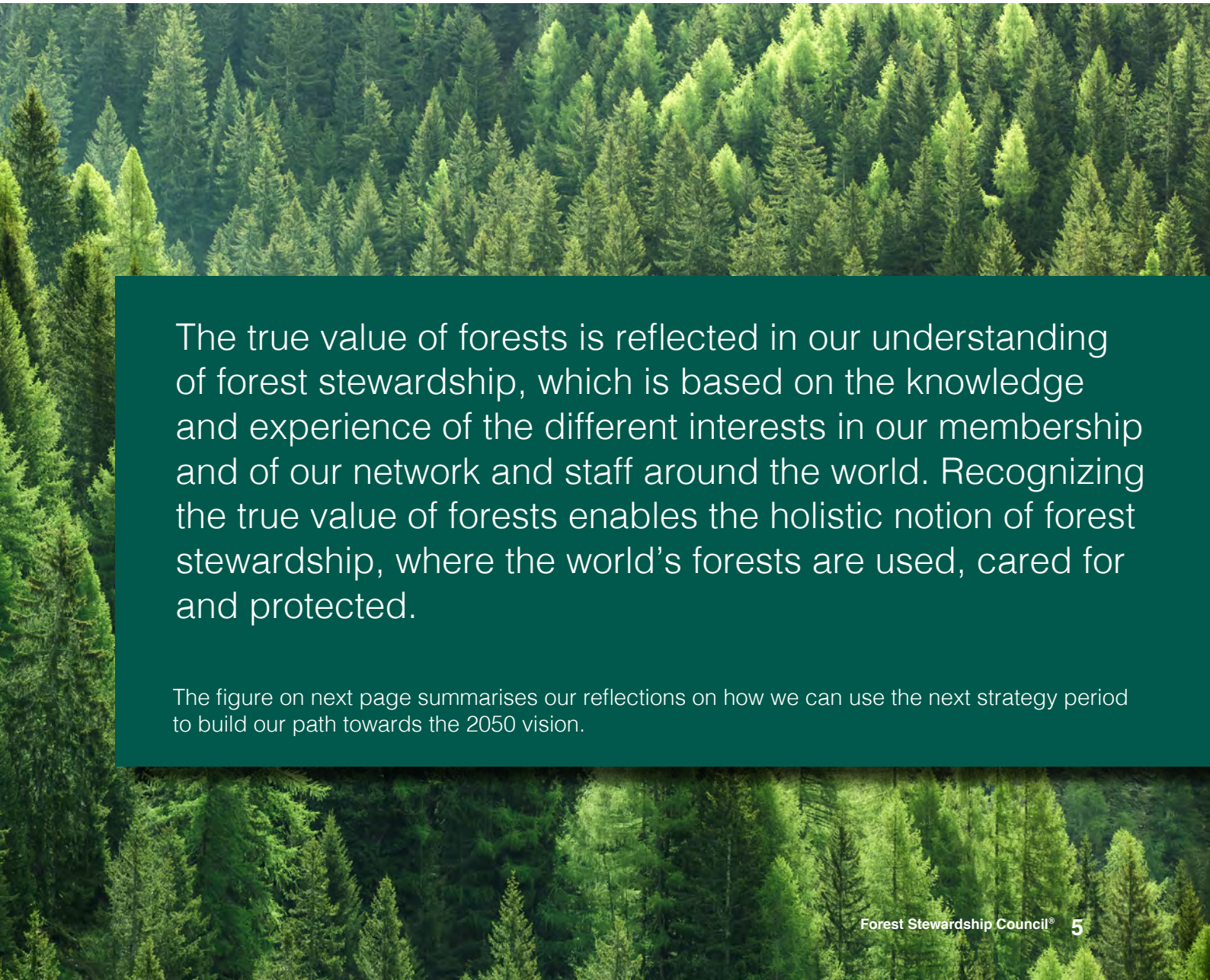
We strongly believe that forest certification has been – and remains – a powerful solution, but it cannot stand alone. Efforts to keep forests as forests are needed from many actors in society. FSC has a role in such efforts, and we will increasingly work in alliances with other actors with similar goals to augment and spread our solutions and achieve the necessary results.



# The 2050 vision: The world FSC will be part of creating

To achieve our 2050 vision of resilient forests sustaining life on Earth, the world's forests must be treasured for the value and benefits they provide. They are vital ecosystems housing most of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, they are the life-support systems for hundreds of millions of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and they are a crucial basis for the necessary shift to bio-based and low-carbon circular economies.

Resilient forests embody the true economic, social and environmental value of forests. This value is holistic and evolves over time. For FSC, true value is captured in forests managed in accordance with our Principles & Criteria (P&C) for forest stewardship. The P&C express the meaning of forest stewardship to ensure that forests are managed in ways that are socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate, and economically viable.

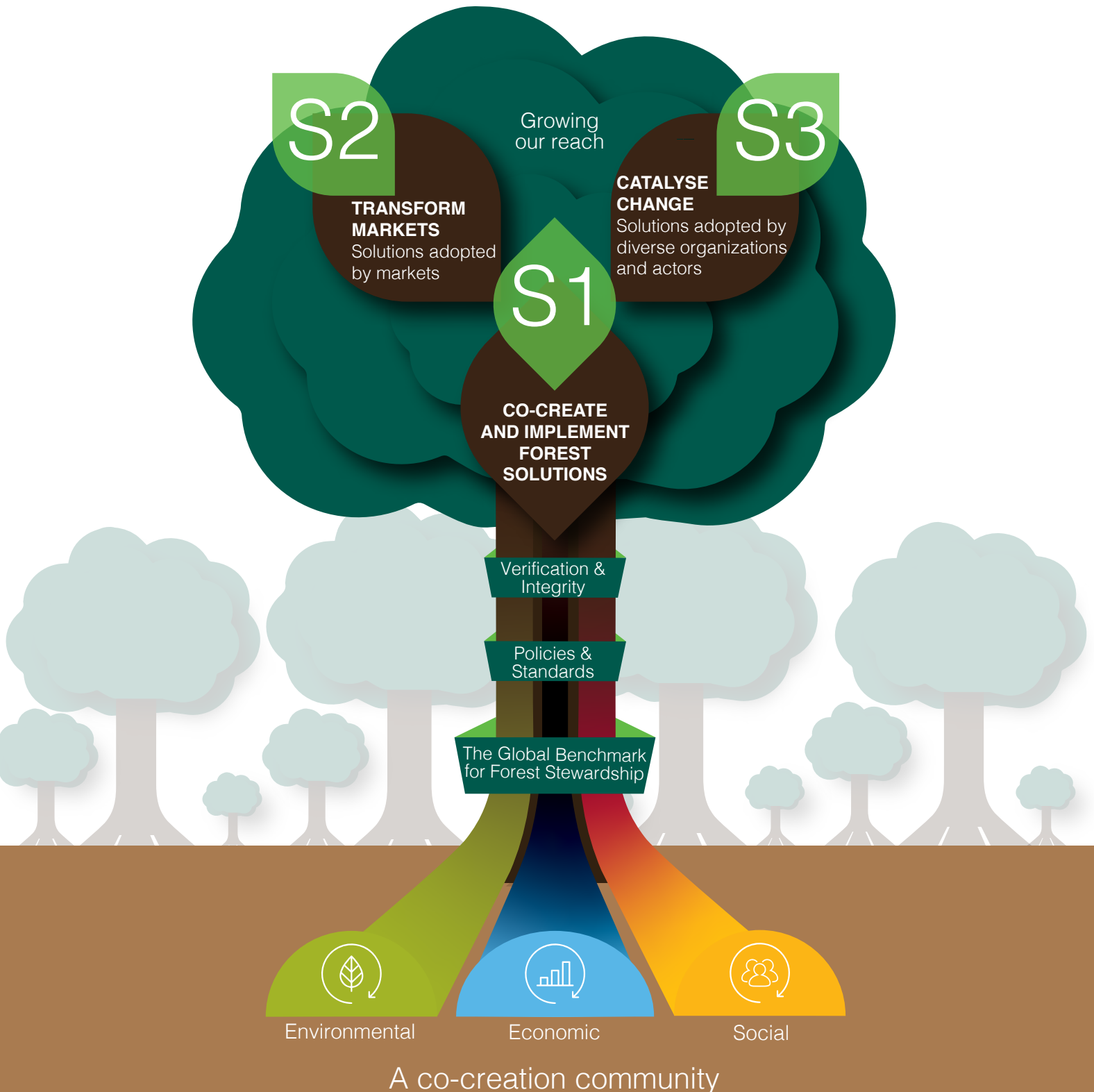


The true value of forests is reflected in our understanding of forest stewardship, which is based on the knowledge and experience of the different interests in our membership and of our network and staff around the world. Recognizing the true value of forests enables the holistic notion of forest stewardship, where the world's forests are used, cared for and protected.

The figure on next page summarises our reflections on how we can use the next strategy period to build our path towards the 2050 vision.

# The 2050 vision: Resilient forests sustain life on Earth

A new forest paradigm is realized, where the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide.





## Achieving our 2050 vision

As a community for co-creation, FSC brings together diverse stakeholders from economic, environmental and social perspectives in a balanced organizational structure to define a global benchmark for forest stewardship. This benchmark is expressed in our Principles & Criteria (P&C), from which we derive forest solutions attracting markets and diverse organizations and actors to adopt them and thereby grow the reach of FSC.

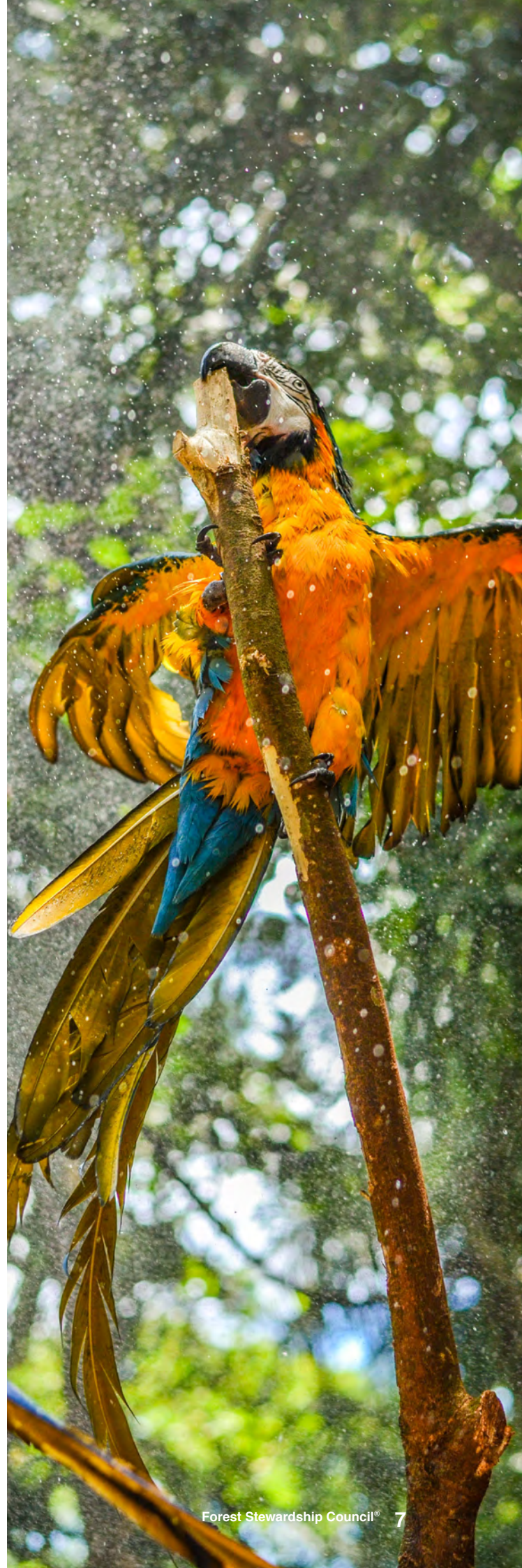
Forest certification – based on policies and standards and the verification and integrity mechanisms we have created – has been the leading solution derived from the P&C. It has enabled market recognition of the value and benefits encapsulated in wood from responsible forestry.

Recently, FSC has added other dimensions by enabling claims for the provision of ecosystem services. **By 2026, FSC will have further spread these forest solutions and been part of developing new ones that express the value and benefits of forest stewardship in terms that can be adopted and supported by society.**

Growing the reach of FSC through enhanced forest certification and other solutions will enable recognition of the true value of forests and its incorporation into society. This will support the following long-term outcomes towards our 2050 vision:

- enhanced relevance of market mechanisms, products and services that work in favour of forests and the landscapes they are part of;
- improved integration and leverage of forest stewardship by forest governance systems, policy and regulation; and
- increased actions reflecting a sound understanding from people and institutions of how their lives are interlinked with the world's forests.

This is the essence of *The Global Strategy 2021-2026* and builds the basis of three underlying strategies.



# FSC's core strength: Anchored in membership engagement and a global network of partners

Working together across diverse interests and finding solutions that deliver change on the ground are FSC's core strength and the basis for our ability to help transform forest management. FSC has the ability to create great ideas and ensure they are implemented on the ground.

## FSC's core strength: Co-creation of solutions

We convene members and other partners from diverse interests to set a global benchmark for forest stewardship and deliver results that matter for the forests and the people who depend on them.



FSC's General Assembly of Members is the organization's ultimate decision-maker on defining assets like the statutes and the Principles and Criteria. FSC's members elect the international Board of Directors to represent them in making strategic decisions for the organization.

This strategy is based on the understanding that to achieve our 2050 vision it is crucial to engage and revitalize our membership at global, regional and national levels. We will continue to:

- work with members in the co-creation of FSC solutions to complex forest-related issues;
- promote effective and engaging dialogue and information-sharing with members; and
- increase collaboration opportunities across the membership through a systematized approach with discussion forums, virtual dialogues and national, regional and global meetings.

For our member-based organization to function at local and global levels, FSC has built a decentralized network that enables us to co-create forest solutions all over the world. To enable the achievement of the intended outcomes of this strategy, FSC will strengthen this network in the coming years. The FSC network is a diverse global community of individuals and organizations that work together to further the principles of FSC and achieve our mission. It embraces a bottom-up, voluntary and member-based approach.

Priorities for FSC's global, regional and national presences and associated investment and fundraising will be set based on where FSC can achieve the greatest impact towards the 2050 vision.

FSC will increase its focus in regions and countries that have:

- significant areas of high conservation value and Indigenous cultural landscapes;
- high potential in mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity; and/or
- high potential to responsibly meet local and global demands for forest products.

Within these parameters, the main focus will be on regions and countries with the best potential for impact in the short- or long-term through:

- certification for forest management with demonstrated social, environmental and economic impact;
- support for forest stewardship by Indigenous Peoples, local communities and smallholders;
- adoption of solutions to global environmental, social and economic challenges; and
- creation and maintenance of market demand for FSC products and services.



# Growing our reach: FSC's 2026 objective

FSC's 2026 objective aims to create momentum towards the 2050 vision through certification and work in alliances to contribute solutions to the world's major forest challenges.

**Growing our reach:** The value and benefits of forest stewardship will be demonstrated in 300 million hectares of FSC certified area, of which 50 million hectares are natural tropical forests and areas managed by smallholders.

By 2026, from the current level of about 220 million hectares, 300 million hectares will be certified to FSC's standards, with systems in place to demonstrate the creation of social, environmental and economic value and benefits and to ensure supply chain integrity. Inside this overall area, FSC will double the certification of natural tropical forests and areas managed by smallholders, communities and Indigenous Peoples to a total of 50 million hectares.

These results will be augmented by FSC solutions developed to help halt deforestation, grow the world's forest area and improve its quality, including forest conservation as well as restoration of degraded or converted areas to more natural conditions. In this way, FSC will contribute to addressing global goals and challenges, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

# Overview of *The FSC Global Strategy 2021–2026*

## OUR MISSION

*Forest For All Forever*

FSC will promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world forests.

## OUR 2050 VISION

*Resilient Forests Sustain Life on Earth*

A new forest paradigm is realized, where the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide.

## OUR CORE CHALLENGE

Economic and governance systems in many parts of the world incentivize deforestation and forest degradation, weakening the value proposition of forest stewardship.

## OUR CORE STRENGTH

*Co-creation of solutions*

We convene members and other partners from diverse interests to set a global benchmark for forest stewardship and deliver results that matter for the forests and the people who depend on them.

## 2026 OBJECTIVE

*Growing our reach*

The value and benefits of forest stewardship will be demonstrated in 300 million hectares of FSC-certified area, of which 50 million hectares are natural tropical forests and areas managed by smallholders.

S1

### CO-CREATE AND IMPLEMENT FOREST SOLUTIONS

Adapt our system to address global challenges and expand relevancy

S2

### TRANSFORM MARKETS

Enhance the market for forest products and services

S3

### CATALYSE CHANGE

Work and engage with key actors to drive FSC solutions

## STRATEGIES

# Three strategies, twelve goals and twenty-four intended outcomes

*The Global Strategy 2021–2026* follows three approaches to ensure certification remains relevant and becomes available to a wider pool of stakeholders:

- **Unleash the potential of forest certification** by improving user relevance and increasing the value and benefits created to all those involved in forest stewardship. This includes both our current certificate holders and those forest managers, smallholders and communities who are not currently certified.

To achieve this, we will invigorate certification to improve the value proposition of certification for timber production and to complement it with incentives for certification of other forest products and services.

- Promote market uptake of products and services from forest stewardship by **working with market actors to deepen the understanding of the value and benefits provided by the forests** these products and services come from.

- **Develop alliances with other actors** to integrate the value of forests more fully in land-use decisions and deliver positive results on the ground that go beyond our normal management unit boundaries.

These three approaches are translated into three closely interlinked strategies, each with a set of four goals setting the direction for FSC in the years to come. The 12 goals are fully complementary and work together towards the 2026 objective.



# S1

## Strategy 1

### CO-CREATE AND IMPLEMENT FOREST SOLUTIONS

- 1.1 Engage members and stakeholders to drive change as a community for co-creation of solutions
- 1.2 Streamline policies and standards towards outcome orientation
- 1.3 Enhance verification and integrity
- 1.4 Expand the reach of FSC and its relevance in the fight against climate change and loss of biodiversity

# S2

## Strategy 2

### TRANSFORM MARKETS

- 2.1 Advance FSC in value chains that have the highest potential for contributing towards our 2050 vision
- 2.2 Accelerate the market uptake of FSC-certified products and ecosystem services
- 2.3 Unleash the power of data to demonstrate positive outcomes
- 2.4 Scale up benefits for Indigenous Peoples, communities, smallholders and workers

# S3

## Strategy 3

### CATALYSE CHANGE

- 3.1 Advance the mission through stronger alliances, coalitions and partnerships
- 3.2 Increase FSC's relevance for governments
- 3.3 Leverage sustainable finance/investment for forest stewardship
- 3.4 Accelerate awareness of the value of forests



Strategy 1  
**Co-create and  
implement forest  
solutions**

S1

We will invigorate certification to drive the spread of forest stewardship by making it attractive, usable and viable for potential users. We will protect our credibility and demonstrate impact through using modern technology, and together with our members and partners, we will co-create solutions to forest-related challenges.



# Strategy 1 Goals

## 1.1 Engage members and stakeholders to drive change as a community for co-creation of solutions

Inspire and be inspired by new and existing members and partners to co-create local and global forest stewardship solutions to current forest related challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, gender inequity and violation of the rights of workers, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, while responsibly delivering forest products and services to the world.

Intended outcomes:

- Based on approved policies for membership and network development, FSC's membership is increased, strategically revitalized and empowered as an agile and inspired community to conceive forest stewardship solutions to key issues that matter for forests and the people who depend on them;
- FSC members, network partners, staff, certificate holders and external stakeholders are convened in initiatives to co-create and implement local forest stewardship solutions that drive change on the ground while contributing to FSC's global mission.

## 1.2 Streamline policies and standards towards outcome orientation

Streamline policies and standards to make them easier to understand and implement consistently. Reduce complexity and reflect risk, while ensuring credibility and enabling more focus on desired outcomes delivered through good performance. Streamlining includes enabling easy access to FSC requirements for all, clarity in requirements and their relevance to given geographical and socio-economic conditions.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC requirements are easily accessible to all who need them through modern technology and data management practices that enable all types of stakeholders to retrieve and consult them at any time;
- New FSC policies and standards are based on clear and consistent principles of streamlining and outcome-orientation. They ensure high integrity, credibility and balance global consistency with local adaptability. They are risk-based, clear, relevant, reliable, user-friendly and efficient, and demonstrate and communicate positive changes.

## 1.3 Enhance verification and integrity

Use modern technologies and control mechanisms to provide sound data to ensure verification of outcomes and impacts and overall system integrity.

Intended outcomes:

- Enhanced verification, integrity and data mechanisms ensure high-quality forest management assessments and strengthened supply chain integrity;
- FSC has implemented new ways to monitor performance with reliable data at the forest and landscape level. The data adds value to FSC certification for certificate holders and provides important and meaningful information to stakeholders.

## 1.4 Expand the reach of FSC and its relevance in the fight against climate change and loss of biodiversity

Work with FSC certificate holders, rights holders and stakeholders to develop FSC solutions that are relevant for climate change and related global challenges in the landscape when opportunities for success are favourable.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC certification and the ecosystem services procedure have been made directly relevant to the policy and market demand for climate change and biodiversity solutions, enabling certificate holders to demonstrate their climate change performance and contribution to national and international sustainability objectives;
- Based on its current policies and standards, FSC has contributed to the development of widely used norms for forest landscape restoration and the creation of connectivity in the landscape that generate significant environmental benefits, while adding value to certificate holders and to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



## Strategy 2 **Transform markets**

# S2

We will foster market uptake of FSC to drive outcomes on the ground and greater value to certificate holders, supporting the shift to bio-based and low-carbon circular economies. Through improved data and powerful communications, we will highlight the social, environmental and economic value and benefits of FSC-certified forests and their products and services. We will work with market actors to enhance and satisfy demand for certified products and services, focusing on sectors with greatest opportunity for impact to achieve the 2050 vision.

# Strategy 2 Goals

## 2.1 Advance FSC in value chains that have the highest potential for contributing towards our 2050 vision

Remove market barriers and foster uptake of FSC certification in value chains that are strategically important for short and long-term social, economic and environmental outcomes in forested areas globally.

Intended outcomes:

- Value chains with the greatest potential for impact towards the 2050 vision are identified and prioritized for direct intervention to improve the value proposition of FSC for forest managers;
- Uptake of FSC certification is increased in the prioritized value chains, particularly in tropical and high conservation value forest regions.

## 2.2 Accelerate the market uptake of FSC-certified products and ecosystem services

Strengthen local, regional and global markets for FSC certified products and ecosystem services.

Intended outcomes:

- Demand for FSC-certified products and ecosystem services is increased in high priority geographical areas and sectors through marketing and communications initiatives with key partners;
- Value chains, including value chains for non-timber forest products, are developed through marketing and communications initiatives in key sectors, incentivizing the implementation of FSC solutions by smallholders and Indigenous Peoples.

## 2.3 Unleash the power of data to demonstrate positive outcomes

Generate and use verified impact data on the well-being of FSC certified forests and the people who depend on them as well as the certified businesses.

Intended outcomes:

- Impact data is captured and translated into robust data proof points that identify the environmental, social and economic value created by FSC certification, focusing on strategic forest regions.
- Based on data made available and accessible by FSC, staff, network partners, certificate holders and consumers are engaged in initiatives to encourage uptake of FSC forest certification and FSC certified products and ecosystem services.

## 2.4 Scale up benefits for Indigenous Peoples, communities, smallholders and workers

Work locally, regionally and globally to develop market solutions that create direct social and economic benefit for Indigenous Peoples, communities, smallholders and workers.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC has created models for initiatives that increase access to markets or investments in forest products and services delivered by Indigenous Peoples, local communities and smallholders, and promoting gender equity and diversity.
- Businesses deliver on their commitment to local and global sustainability agendas by adhering to FSC social values through certification, benefiting workers, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including gender and diversity perspectives.



## Strategy 3 **Catalyse change**

# S3

Following up on increased efforts in the past few years, we will work with diverse organizations and stakeholders to increase the recognition of the value and benefits of forests and FSC's role as the most credible validation of forest stewardship. We will expand and invigorate our partnerships and alliances as efficient ways to contribute to global agendas and boost results on the ground. We will deliver on our mission, create results that matter to our members and partners, and seek opportunities in the broader landscape where we can achieve results without increasing burden on the FSC system and our certificate holders.

# Strategy 3 Goals

## 3.1 Advance the mission through stronger alliances, coalitions and partnerships

Create strategic alliances with like-minded organizations to achieve critical, mission-relevant results that deliver benefits to certificate holders, to forests and to the people who depend on them.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC has engaged in visible alliances and partnerships to create impact by promoting forest certification and forest landscape solutions that protect the environment and respect the rights and improve the livelihoods of people depending on them. Partners may include governmental and intergovernmental institutions, companies, environmental and social NGOs, trade unions, gender equity organizations, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, funders, investors and others;
- FSC has demonstrated impact through these alliances and partnerships in the form of improved forest and landscape stewardship in priority locations.

## 3.2 Increase FSC's relevance for governments

Influence governments to advance their plans and policies through forest stewardship on the ground.

Intended outcomes:

- Local or national governments choose to endorse and incorporate FSC in their policies, strategies and plans for procurement of forest products, enabling and supporting responsible forest management;
- Local or national governments incorporate FSC solutions in their forest policies and territorial planning, and use FSC certification in the management of forests under their control, in order to achieve targets related to national or international agendas such as nationally-determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, restoration and biodiversity commitments, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## 3.3 Leverage sustainable finance/investment for forest stewardship

Strengthen the links between FSC, certificate holders and the investment community to promote FSC as a solutions provider to reduce climate change and biodiversity loss and to strengthen forest restoration and conservation.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC provides verified impact data, including data related to carbon, biodiversity and social issues to the investment community. Forest management certificate holders are rewarded for the carbon sequestration and other benefits they deliver;
- FSC is recognized as the most credible validation of forest stewardship, and private and public investors require the use of FSC certification and other FSC solutions in projects they finance.

## 3.4 Accelerate awareness of the value of forests

Work with partners to demonstrate the social, environmental and economic value of forests under forest stewardship, and the value of products and services from these forests.

Intended outcomes:

- FSC's label and brand are increasingly recognized for the outcomes demonstrated, and this is measurably reflected in the actions and behaviours of society as the way to protect the true value of forests;
- A holistic approach to forest stewardship is promoted in compelling narratives by opinion-makers using FSC certification and solutions as the go-to example of success.

# Implementing the strategy based on multi-year operational planning and measurable indicators

The updated global strategy sets the direction and the intended outcomes for FSC until 2026 as agreed by the board after a two-year long process, including two rounds of consultation and global dialogues with the FSC membership.

In accordance with its mandate, the board will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the global strategy and the multi-year operational planning, annual priorities and corresponding budgets that will be developed. This oversight will include any re-prioritization needed to implement motions approved by the General Assembly or necessitated by resource constraints, regulatory changes or market disruptions.

Accountability to the membership will be ensured through annual progress reporting from the secretariat and the board against measurable indicators developed for the objective and the intended outcomes of the global strategy.





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