



FSC Certification for maintaining ecosystem services, Tanzania

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Short title: FSC Certification for maintaining ecosystem services, Tanzania

Key Message: Forest certification provides a mechanism to support livelihoods whilst maintaining essential ecosystem services. Initially benefits were mainly gained by big players in the northern forestry sector but now opportunities are opening up for local communities in lesser-developed countries.

Reviewer: Elizabeth J. Z. Robinson

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What was the problem?

With 25 percent of the world's productive forests now certified, forest certification schemes have generally been heralded a success in raising standards in the global supply of wood and paper products. Demand for certified forest products exceeded available supply for some time and led to some schemes simply certifying the status quo without any significant improvement in forest management on the ground. The majority of certified forest is still in the northern hemisphere, notably North America and Europe, where biodiversity is relatively low, forest management issues less complex and the costs of certification can be relatively easily met. In contrast, only 5 percent of the total permanent forest estate in tropical countries is certified as sustainably managed. Certification has been criticised for not adequately addressing the issue of land tenure that is an underlying problem in many highly forested countries. A further challenge is competition from the huge market for cheap wood products in emerging and rapidly developing economies where consumer demand for certified timber has not yet developed.

Forest management and chain of custody timber certification is potentially an important means to raise the value of timber for local communities involved in production as well as demonstrating sustainability to the end users. As yet the livelihoods of local communities involved in timber production have not benefited significantly from forest certification in many parts of the world but this is beginning to change. The problems faced by smaller producers in improving forest management, the traceability of timber and access to markets are increasingly being addressed. This is partly in response to the growing awareness of the needs of small producers and also the growing demand for legally and sustainably sourced timber of a wider range of tree species.

What was done to solve it?

In April 2009, some of the world's poorest people achieved international recognition for responsible forest management and an opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty through

selling responsibly harvested timber for musical instruments. Two communities in Tanzania, working through the Mpingo Conservation Project, obtained the first FSC certificate for community-managed natural forest in Africa. It has been estimated that this achievement brought revenue of US\$ 1,800 to the villages, half of which was used to pay forest patrols and management activities (creating jobs and boosting the local economy) and the other half to build new houses. Communities with more than 7,000 hectares of forest are expected to earn more than US\$100,000 per year from this scheme (Ball, 2010).

The main timber that will be harvested and sold for the international market by villages in the Kilwa region of Tanzania is African Blackwood or Mpingo (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*). This is a slow growing tree with heavy black timber that occurs scattered in the miombo woodland, which is highly prized for making clarinets, oboes and bagpipes. The woodwind musicians using these instruments tend to live in developed countries and are ideal customers to ethically marketed products due to their relative wealth and liberal outlook (Davies et al. 1995). Moreover, compared to the cost of the wood, the final sale price of most blackwood instruments is very high and translate the slightest increase in an instrument's sale price into large premiums for community forest managers.

It is anticipated that FSC certification will enable communities to earn more than TSh 25,000/- (roughly \$19) per log compared to 100/- (\$0.08) they received before the start of the Mpingo Conservation Project (Global Trees Campaign 2010, Mpingo Conservation Project 2009). Besides the premium on certified wood also the fact that communities are organising themselves for managing the forest and are gaining access to legal markets for this specific type of wood can explain this steep increase in revenue.

Which ecosystem services were examined? And how?

Forest management and chain of custody timber certification is potentially an important means to raise the value of timber for local communities involved in production as well as demonstrating sustainability to the end users. As yet the livelihoods of local communities involved in timber production have not benefited significantly from forest certification in many parts of the world but this is beginning to change. The problems faced by smaller producers in improving forest management, the traceability of timber and access to markets are increasingly being addressed (FSC for smallholders, see URL: <http://ic.fsc.org/smallholder-support.152.htm>). This is partly in response to the growing awareness of the needs of small producers and also the growing demand for legally and sustainably sourced timber of a wider range of tree species.

The costs of forest certification in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) include the direct costs of a forest assessment with both an initial assessment and then annual audit fees together with indirect costs arising from the results of the audit such as the need for increased forest monitoring, additional management planning, increased inventory, and changes in harvesting methods. In addition, Chain of Custody Certification requires the direct costs of getting chain-of-custody certified including the initial and annual audit fees and costs in response to audit recommendations such as additional space to separate products, and staff training to ensure separation of products. There have been concerns that certification may discriminate against small forest owners or community-owned enterprises who cannot afford the up-front costs of the process. This is recognised by FSC which is working to address the cost and procedural barriers to certification faced by “smallholders” such as woodlot owners, family forests, small private forests, community forestry operations, and non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvesters (FSC for smallholders, see URL: <http://ic.fsc.org/smallholder-support.152.htm>).

What policy uptake resulted from examining the ecosystem services?

The Mpingo Conservation Project helped villagers to develop sustainable forest management plans in accordance with Tanzania's system of Participatory Forest Management. This grants them secure tenure over the valuable timber resources, but with illegal logging widespread, there is a need to differentiate the timber produced from well-managed community forests from other sources if the local producers are to receive a fair price. This is why FSC certification is so important.

However, this certification scheme requires monitoring through quantitative assessment, which can be challenging due to the low literacy levels in the local communities. In this case, since the local communities carry out the project, they should also collect data and perform the analysis and interpretation. For now the latter two tasks rely on outside experts, but as communities members become more experienced, materials will be developed to help them interpret their results.

With the Mpingo project manager's support, two biological monitoring programs have been put in place in the certified zones (Ball, 2010):

1. Forest integrity is tracked through permanent sample plots that are monitored annually. Basal area is the primary quantitative indicator and is supported by visual records obtained through controlled photographs at specified locations.
2. Biodiversity is monitored by the forest patrols that also combat unauthorized logging. The data collected concerns large mammals and birds species indicative of non-degraded forest. Those species were selected by experienced ornithologists from the UK and Tanzania following a technical baseline study.

Even though it could have been driven by forces external to the projects (e.g. natural fluctuations in local population), the Kikole villagers stated that since the human pressure in the forest has lessened, patrol teams have noticed more wild animals (elephants, monkeys, baboons, etc.) in the vicinity (Ball and Wilder, 2007). Some of those species (especially elephants and monkeys) being sometimes considered as pests by farmers, this stresses the need of a calibrated management response such as population control, compensation schemes or participatory processes to tackle the challenges raised by this positive effect on biodiversity.

Lessons learned

The small steps taken in Tanzania show what can be achieved through forest certification given support from the international community. The Project opted for a group certificate scheme which allows costs to be shared between members, and which is easily expandable to include other communities and forests. In stark contrast is the illegal logging of endangered rosewoods in Madagascar, some of the timber destined for musical instrument manufacture and the majority for markets in East Asia where there is scarce demand for well-managed timber. The frameworks for international trade in timber from sustainable sources are now in place, policies, mechanisms and partnerships have been developed; increasing participation in local decision-making by local producers and consumers can help to guarantee increasingly successful outcomes.

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