WWF Forest Certification Assessment Tool (CAT)
Frequently Asked Questions
15 May 2015

What is the purpose of the WWF Certification Assessment Tool (CAT)?
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 its systems and requirements. The ultimate objective is to enable better production on the ground for the commodity in question.

The CAT is designed to be used across commodities; v3 was developed for agriculture and forestry and includes one section (Part II: H), which is particular to forestry/agriculture.

More information is available in the factsheet.

The CAT will also identify which certification schemes are best equipped to achieve conservation goals and objectives: that is, which certification schemes are likely to deliver the best social and environmental impact at scale. CAT assessments will inform WWF's official position on reviewed schemes. However, WWF would consider additional factors and research before supporting and/or engaging in a certification scheme.

The CAT is a living document and will be updated regularly to address upcoming issues of importance.

How are CAT assessments conducted?
Assessments are conducted by independent third-party consultants with strong expertise in standards implementation. In the process of assessment and finalization of scores, all the assessed certification schemes are approached to respond.

Will other forest certification schemes be evaluated in the future?
Yes, it is likely that other forest certification schemes will be assessed in the future. The schemes will be contacted to review the scorings before WWF goes public with the result.

On what basis were the CAT indicators developed?
The CAT indicators are based on WWF's view that we need to make better choices for managing, using and sharing natural resources within the planet's capacity. This includes producing and consuming better and having more equitable resource governance.

The CAT criteria references the following documents and organizations:

- WWF Principles to actively endorse and recognize effective and credible standards and certification schemes
- ISEAL Alliance codes
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- Social Accountability Standard (SA 8000)
- International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Forest Certification Guide (FCAG)
- WWF/World Bank Biofuels Sustainability Environmental Scorecard
- HCV Network toolkit/resources.

The CAT v3 has been developed by a WWF working group, supported by external experts, including PwC. The CAT is a living document and will be updated regularly to address upcoming issues of importance (for example, the next version will put more focus on water management).

What are the limitations of CAT?
The CAT is solely based on the study of documents: it cannot directly verify implementation of better production practices and resulting reduction of negative social and environmental impacts in practice. However, the indicators to assess a standard's system strength can be seen as proxies for likelihood of field level implementation of a scheme's requirements.

What is WWF's position on credible forest certification?
WWF believes that responsibly managed forests are necessary for the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services, both on individual sites and within the wider landscape. Responsible forest management can be a critical and cost-effective conservation tool within larger-scale conservation strategies. WWF sees credible forest certification as one of the tools to:

- Promote socially, environmentally and economically responsible forest management
- Safeguard biological diversity in managed forests, including high conservation value forests
- Respect the ownership and use rights of local communities and indigenous peoples
- Provide a forum for dialogue between different stakeholders and establish frameworks for resolution of social conflict over use of forest resources
- Ensure transparency of both forest management and the forest products trade
- Provide a market mechanism allowing companies and consumers to identify and purchase timber and non-timber forest products from well-managed forests.

What are WWF's basic requirements for certification standards and schemes, applicable for all kinds of commodities and services?
A robust, effective and credible certification scheme must be based on the following criteria:
- Be consistent with, and support, the WWF Global Programme Framework
- Require compliance with relevant national and international laws and conventions
- Be developed in compliance with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and

Environmental Standards

- Focus on minimizing or eliminating important environmental and/or social negative impacts, as well as creating environmental, economic and social positive impacts, through the use and processing of the commodity/product/service
- Be science-based
- Require minimum measurable performance requirements and be in compliance with ISEAL's Impacts Code
- Be adaptable to national/regional conditions and needs
- Not allow GMOs, or, contain a non-GM option
- Comply with international frameworks for certification and accreditation
- Require meaningful and equitable stakeholder participation, considering economic, social and environmental interest groups, and provide means to have smaller producers and vulnerable groups engaged in the process
- Provide transparency in decision-making and public reporting on its certification
- Set high-levels for scheme rigour
- Require independent third-party certification and accreditation
- Require truthful claims, and where applicable, traceability
- Include accessible complaint and appeal mechanisms
- Be committed to continuous improvement.