

INDUS TREE CRAFTS FOUNDATION

Member Inclusion Policy



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1. Introduction:

- The Member Inclusion Policy for the FSC® Forest Management Group Certification project managed by the Indus Tree Crafts Foundation outlines the principles, criteria, and procedures for the inclusion of members in the group certification. The policy is designed to ensure that the membership process is transparent, equitable, and aligned with the goals of sustainable forest management as stipulated by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards. This policy applies to all potential and existing members, which currently include 539 farmers organized into five Mutual Benefit Trusts (MBTs) across 67.9 hectares of private plantation land in the districts of Chikmagalur, Shivamogga, and Hassan in Karnataka.

2. Objectives:

- The primary objective of the Member Inclusion Policy is to foster a participatory approach that enables farmers and landowners to benefit from FSC certification. The policy seeks to ensure that all eligible individuals who meet the requirements for responsible forest management have the opportunity to join the certification group.
- Additionally, the policy aims to strengthen the internal governance of the Mutual Benefit Trusts, ensuring that the process for including new members is fair, transparent, and based on mutual consent.

3. Eligibility Criteria:

- To be eligible for inclusion in the FSC FM Group Certification, potential members must meet the following criteria:
 - a) Ownership and Land Use:**

The applicant must own or have legal rights to the land intended for inclusion in the certification. The land should be utilized for sustainable forest management practices that are consistent with FSC standards. Eligible land includes private plantations, with no natural or converted forest land being eligible.
 - b) Commitment to FSC Principles:**

The applicant must demonstrate a commitment to adhering to the FSC Principles and Criteria, which include maintaining high conservation values, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring the social and economic well-being of workers and local communities.
 - c) Compliance with Legal Requirements:**

The applicant must be in compliance with all relevant local, state, and national laws, including those related to land ownership, labour rights, and environmental protection.
 - d) Participation in MBTs:**

The applicant must be willing to actively participate in the Mutual Benefit Trusts (MBTs) associated with the group certification. This includes attending meetings, contributing to decision-making processes, and adhering to the collective agreements made by the MBTs.

e) Capacity for Sustainable Management:

The applicant must demonstrate the ability to manage their land sustainably, with adequate knowledge, resources, and commitment to implementing the management practices outlined in the FSC certification standards.

4. Application and Inclusion Process:

- The process for including new members in the FSC FM Group Certification involves several steps:

a) Application Submission:

Interested individuals must submit a formal application to the MBT associated with their geographical area. The application should include relevant documentation, such as proof of land ownership, a description of current land use practices, and a declaration of commitment to FSC standards.

b) Screening and Verification:

The MBT will conduct an initial screening of the application to ensure that it meets the eligibility criteria. This may involve field visits to verify the applicant's land use practices and assess their capacity for sustainable management.

c) Onboarding and Training:

Once approved, the new member will undergo an onboarding process that includes training on FSC standards, sustainable management practices, and the roles and responsibilities of being part of the certification group. The new member will also be integrated into the MBT's decision-making processes.

d) Ongoing Monitoring and Support:

After inclusion, the new member's compliance with FSC standards will be monitored regularly by the Indus Tree Crafts Foundation. Ongoing support, including technical assistance and capacity building, will be provided to ensure that the member continues to meet the requirements of the certification.

5. Rights and Responsibilities of Members:

- All members of the FSC Forest Management Group Certification have the right to participate in the governance of their respective MBTs, access support and resources provided by Indus Tree Crafts Foundation, and benefit from the collective certification. Members are also responsible for maintaining compliance with FSC standards, contributing to the collective decision-making process, and supporting the sustainable management of the group's forest resources.
- Indus Tree Crafts Foundation shall not issue any kind of certificates to their members that could be confused with FSC Certificate.

6. Authorized Signatory:

Name: Ms. Remya Devan

Designation: Project Manager

Indus Tree Crafts Foundation



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