

Case 1: FSC in Ethiopia

Approved national FSC standards gives new and improved opportunities for sustainable community forest management in Ethiopia

Author: Forests of the World, 2025

Find project on OpenAid

PROJECT	Title:	Enhancing Forest Governance and Local Livelihoods in southwest Ethiopia
	Partner:	Ethio Wetlands and Natural Resources Association (EWNRA)
	Country:	Ethiopia
	Period:	2024

CHANGE	<p>The support from FoW, both financial and technical, has been pivotal in the development of an Ethiopian FSC Interim National Standard for forest management, with broad stakeholder involvement, support and adapted to PFM (Participatory Forest Management) areas managed by local communities. This gives communities access to FSC’s unique Ecosystems Services (ES) Procedure, recently revised with technical support from FoW technical experts, built to add value to important Ecosystem Services produced by forests via sponsorships of FSC verified claims. Taking into account the considerable value of ES such as water to millions of people in Ethiopia and beyond, unique and endangered Afromontane species and huge amounts of carbon stored in vegetation and soils, this is a potential gamechanger to communities struggling to make a living, while protecting the forests they are stewards for. Our ambition is to create a viable business case where ES claims pay for all the costs of certification and monitoring, thus providing the communities additional income by increasing the value of forest products such as wild grown Arabica coffee, and providing local jobs.</p>
--------	---

CONTEXT	<p>The southwest forest is the source of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) like honey, spice, coffee, among others. These NTFPs contribute in varying ways to the livelihood of the different ethnic and socio-economic groups, with better-off households more involved for income generation and the poorer households using them as part of their survival strategies. The forest area is one of the biodiversity hotspots in Ethiopia, and the genetic heart of Coffee (<i>Coffea arabica</i>), where wild coffee still grows in a large part of the forest. This area is of regional importance because of the Baro-Akobo Rivers, which rise in these forests, providing half of the flow of the White Nile at Malakal in Sudan, and one sixth of the flow of the Main Nile at the Aswan High Dam (Sutcliffe & Parks, 2001). The forests in this area are also of global significance in the sequestration of some 300 million tons of carbon dioxide / year, a major greenhouse gas sink (ENTRO, 2007).</p>
---------	--

CONTRIBUTION	<p>The PFM agreements and community management has its limitations and challenges, which impede an efficient protection and implementation of sustainable forest management, contributing to governance and livelihoods of the Forest Dependent Communities; particularly a general lack of sufficient benefits for the PFM groups, e.g. the reluctance to permit low impact sustainable timber harvest in natural forests of southwest Ethiopia, as an additional source of income and local employment for youth. The expectation is that FSC certification can create the enabling conditions for sustainable timber harvest, and that the certification of ES claims can add value to ensure increased socio economic benefits from PFM management.</p>
--------------	---

IMAGES



African Business



JHK

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTIVITIES

The bulk of work developing and field testing the draft Interim Standard was done in 2023, when a team of experts from FSC accredited Certification Body, Soil Association, Ethio Wetlands, Forest of the World, local authorities and representatives conducted a field test of the first draft in two PFM areas, in Masha and Nono Sale districts. The subsequent draft was then presented and discussed at workshops at different levels during 2024, and via virtual meetings with the experts engaged in the field test, to further improve and finalize the draft based on the feedback from FSC staff sitting in Bonn.

LESSONS

It is well known that engaging local farmers and communities in the process of developing complex and highly technical standards such as FSC forest management standards is difficult and requires extensive hands-on field work to create trust and understanding about the practical management activities. But another important lesson was that working closely with government at federal, regional and local level has been an important catalyst for ownership of both the process and the interim standard. This also triggered a renewed interest in the management of the remaining natural forests, including a renewed interest in community forest management and sustainable timber harvest, which is currently only possible at very limited levels for own consumption. However, FoW and partners are confident that both sustainable timber harvest and FSC certification of PFM areas will be piloted in the coming years, in close collaboration with governmental institutions and local communities.

EVI
DE
NC
E

The Interim National FSC standard was presented at a big event in Addis Ababa in December 2024, with participation from government, scientific community, civil society organisations, as well as international donors and NGOs: <https://ewnra.et/2024/12/13/ethiopias-interim-forest-stewardship-standard-launched-at-sherat-on-addis-to-drive-sustainable-forest-management/>
<https://fsc.org/en/newscentre/general-news/standard-for-ethiopia-to-boost-responsible-forest-management>

DO
MA
IN
S

Development strategy priorities:

Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability	X
Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights	-
Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights	-
Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights	-
Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability	X
Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work	-