September 2014
LATEST NEWS ON THE FSC® OCP

OCP is not mandatory

FSC has listened to stakeholders' concerns about introducing a mandatory system to verify claims, based on a centralized database. As a result, the OCP will no longer be mandatory for all certificate holders to use. It will be a tool provided by FSC to support chain of custody certification and verification of FSC claims. Other methods for meeting CoC requirements will be accepted as well.

A new CoC standard will close the gap in the system

There is still a gap in the current FSC CoC system, which is being addressed in the new version of the CoC standard. The standard will introduce new criteria for all certified companies to demonstrate that FSC claims made between trading parties are the same.

As a result, the OCP is no longer a requirement but will continue to be a tool to support chain of custody certification and verification of FSC claims. Other methods, such as integrated IT systems, manual comparison made by external third-parties, or alternative platforms developed by external parties, will be acceptable as long as they demonstrate that CoC requirements have been met. It will be up to ASI and the certification bodies to determine whether a system is robust enough to meet the new criteria.

FSC remains committed to closing this gap in the current CoC system, while being more flexible in accepting other methods that credibly address this gap.

How does this new approach stop deliberate fraud in Asia and other regions?

The revised CoC standard will become effective at the beginning of 2016. During this transition period, FSC will work with ASI to develop criteria on what constitutes credible means for transaction verification. This could include risk-based approaches and sampling mechanisms to address high-risk regions and/or products, and to ensure that these types of inaccurate claims do not continue.

2015 will be a year for evaluation and feedback

Many certificate holders have questioned whether there is a need for the OCP at all. The depth of data needed to answer this question in detail is not available today. However, we have qualified estimates and a growing number of cases where FSC-certified products are discovered to carry the FSC label when they should not, costing affected businesses millions to remove the offending products from the shelves.

FSC is committed to map the full extent of the problem in 2015. We are dependent on support and collaboration from our certificate holders to do so.

OCP will reduce CoC burden for small- and medium-sized organizations

Along with helping FSC certificate holders to automatically fulfil the new CoC requirements, the OCP will also help CHs to reduce the administrative burden of being CoC-certified.

It is the intention that the upcoming CoC standard can be divided into informational requirements (e.g. list of certified suppliers, volumes of FSC inputs) and assurance requirements (e.g. segregation of materials, demonstrated competence of staff). While assurance requirements will require the expertise of auditors, all informational requirements will automatically be met for certificate holders that use the full OCP. The goal of this exercise is to save paperwork, direct audit costs (as the auditor will only have to check reports from the OCP and not if the informational systems are adequate or meet the CoC standard) and staff time in preparing for the audit.

Especially for small- and medium-sized organizations, this new approach to CoC certification is expected to reduce costs and day-to-day compliance challenges.

Data security and data ownership

The OCP meets full international security standards. To answer stakeholder concerns, a security center has been developed on ocp-info.fsc.org. We encourage all stakeholders with concerns to visit this page, which explains in full how the OCP handles security issues. In summary:

- The certificate holder maintains data ownership at all times.
- FSC will NOT collect statistical information or generate intelligence based on certificate holder data.
- FSC is not allowed to access or harvest any certificate holder data from the OCP. As a result FSC cannot see full supply chains or any other data, which has been uploaded by certificate holders.
- Certificate holders can opt to provide permission and access to their certification body to review OCP data and records. They are not granted access by default.
- Customers and suppliers of certificate holders will only have access to information that certificate holders share with them, based on FSC claims and change of legal ownership.
- FSC will not require a certificate holder to upload full data sets. The use of the OCP is voluntary.
- Historic Futures and the OCP have been certified according to the ISO 27001 standard, a standard for establishing, implementing, maintaining and continuously improving information security.

Join the OCP test

FSC still encourages all certificate holders to test the OCP and provide us with feedback on the platform. Currently close over 300 businesses are testing the platform and more are joining the test every day. The more certificate holders that join the test, the better the feedback will be to enable us to design a tool that meets certificate holders' needs.

Keep updated

To ensure that all interested certificate holders are able to keep informed about OCP developments, we have created a newsletter, which will be sent to subscribers periodically.

Sign up for the newsletter at: ocp-news@fsc.org

Online Claims Platform - Connections Worth Protecting