

Forest certification in the Far East, Russia.

History, condition, problems and ways of their solution.

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Purpose of the report:

- to inform about certification developments in the Far East
- to denote existing problems
- to offer next steps (follow-up)
- to receive fundamental support of conferee

History of development:

Within the bounds of WWF Germany project the meeting of enterprising group, consisting of representatives of some Khabarovsk state and social organizations was held in June of 1998 year. **At the meeting**

Tasks (aims):

- to create regional working groups
- to develop criteria and detectors of sustainable forests management and regional standards (FSC)
- to create center of forest certification as institutional basis for process development in the region
- to carry out practical adaptation of regional standards (FSC) project within the bounds of pilot enterprise certification
- to replicate positive experience in other entities of the Far East region

Achievements:

- Khabarovsk regional working group of voluntary certification was organized in August of 1998 year.
- "Criteria and detectors of sustainable forests management" was carried out in October of 1999 year.
- Center of forest certification was established in December of 1999 year.
- Draft standards (FSC) for Khabarovsk kray was developed in October of 2000 year.
- The center of forest certification carried out practical approbation and revision of draft standards from November of 2000 up to June of 2001 year.
- Interregional constituent conference was held. The Far East working group of voluntary forest certification was regimented. Conferees approved and accepted the fifth version of regional standard project {LPS} for the Far East in 31st June of 2001 year.

Modern condition. What is the progress in?

The process of forest certification development is beyond one entity of the Far East region. On the Far East department of Russian representatives' (WWF) initiative draft standard (FSC) discussion was held at round tables in Amursky and Jewish autonomous region. During practical project approbation in the Far East agreements were held in kray as well as regional level. Nowadays the Far East certification-working group consists of representatives of nine Russian Federation entities.

- 1) Together with WWF another international organizations such as Fund of Rokfeller brothers and also Russian timber merchants ("Terneiles" public corporation) began to finance the process.

- 2) New organizations, especially logging enterprises, are involved in the process.
- 3) Administration of the Far East regional entities supports the development of voluntary forest certification.
- 4) First of all regional organizations play active role in process development especially in forest certification center.

Center founders are:

- The Far East association of non-wood forest products utilization
- Khabarovsk fund of wild animals
- The Far East institute of forestry (DalNIILX)
- Social organization "Ecodal"

Purpose of activity:

To advance well-founded ecologically, profitable socially and viable economically forest management in the Far East, Russia.

Main aims and work directions:

- to initiate the process of voluntary forest certification in the Far East.
- to carry out independent ecological audit and certification
- to raise the level of logging enterprises and forestry specialist's skills
- to take part in development, practical approbation and certification improvement of regional standards
- to establish connection with ecologically sensitive markets of forest products in countries of ATP
- to provide informational and advice support to voluntary forest certification

Results of activity for 1.5 years.

- Four educational courses on the program "Sustainable forest management and utilization in the forests of the Far East" were held. 70 representatives of logging enterprises and forestry specialists were taught.
- Ecological audit of logging activity of "Terneiles" public association was carried out to prepare enterprises for certification in tenancy of Melnichniy and Terneiskiy floristries. As a result of this work practical project approbation of regional standards (FCS) for the Far East was realized successfully.
- Informal club " Club of responsible forest managers ", consisting of 8 key enterprises of the Far East forestry was created. Two meetings of club members were held.
- Two informational bulletins, advocating the ideas of sustainable forest management, market development of forest certified production and also development of voluntary forest certification in a region, Russia and in the world.
- Three center experts were taught by the program of audit ecological preparing in accordance with standard requirements ISO 14012.

Present situation. Unsolved problems.

1) Yet the process of forest certification hasn't the support on the federal level.
-work on introduction of the obligatory system of certification is still in progress on the federal level. In this connection the representatives of the authorities, at best, neither hinder this process nor support it.

2) National and regional initiatives, not registered in FSC
-according to the rules accepted in FSC, for registration of national and regional initiatives to be realized, not less than 50% of working groups members are to be members of this organization. At present only 2 Russian organizations are the members of FSC. (The Russian GreenPeace and the Far East Association of pulp forest production)

3) Lack of national and regional normative basis of voluntary forest certification
-projects of national framed and regional FSC standards for the Far East are on the level of being developed. For them to be accredited in FSC, national and regional initiatives, officially registered are to offer them.

4) Non full correspondence of problems to be solved and existing institutional basis for the process developing in the region
-as it was mentioned above, FSC is the institutional basis in the region. The Centre structure and its logistical basis are very weak. Since Oct. 2000, The Centre exists only due to self-supporting activity, which gives no opportunity to work on developing of the structure, preparation of the personnel and logistical and methodical basis improvement. We just survive.

5) In 2001, WWF practically terminated the process of certification financing in the Far East.

6) The Far East enterprises have no practical reasons for participating in the process.

Reasons of poor motivation

1) The Asian Pacific Region market (mostly in regard of Japan) still hesitates in regard of certificated products .

Japanese and Chinese importers of the forest production begin to show interest in certificated products, though buying not certificated production. On the side of importers interested in certification the scheme of economic stimulation (long term contracts, more profitable prices, forest direct investments) was not worked out. Vagueness in preference of certification systems (FSC, ISO, PEFC)

2) Prices on foreign companies' forest management certification services are higher than business solvency of many timber cutting enterprises in the region.

-basing on the experience in certification by FSC system in Russia we may state that enterprises interested in it never paid for this procedure on their own account. Certification began to be possible only providing total or partial procedure payments at grunts account (modal forest "Priluzie", the Novgorodsk and Archangelsk oblasts) or foreign partner.

3) Managers' mentality and qualification in many enterprises do not allow to overcome the inertia and management style and to begin working for perspectives.

4) Existing system of higher and additional professional education doesn't take into account the matter of forest certification

- the educational program of the Forest Certification center is the only one of its kind in the Far East, but it requires methodical finishing and technical facilitating.

5) Existing division of responsibility between government forest management and forest users makes the procedure of certification fulfillment of FSC principles requirements and regional standards more complicated.

- example: natural forest management and forest use audit realized on the territory of rented areas of Terneiles. (PLC). (correspondence to forest legislative bills and regional standards) showed that 80% of all shortcomings are the realm of forest management authorities responsibility (forestry, forest companies).

They are not interested in removing these shortcomings. Absence of neither market nor administrative key factors gives no opportunity to make them.

6) Provide forest complex enterprises with information in regard of sustainable forest management, voluntary forest certification development and contemporary trends in forest production regulated by no system.

-there are no organizations in the Russian Far East, specializing in dissemination of the information. As it was mentioned above, the Forest Certification Center prepared and disseminated two newsletters in 2000 under the support of grants from WWF. In 2001 the center had no finance means for this work to be continued, though such information is to be disseminated systematically- at least one per a quarter.

Further steps:

First of all we are to coordinate efforts of all organizations interested in it (regional, national, international, commercial, charitable). The conference organized by «The Forest Trends» with its activity gives a great opportunity for such coordination.

Priority direction:

- 1). Further development of regional certification standards
 - the working group is to take into account remarks and additions stated during the conference and round table discussions in the Amurskay oblast
 - the text of the standard requires continueing work . At present it does not include some important and obligatory chapters (preface, introduction, status and context)
 - in connection with geography widening of standard use it is necessary to realize additional works on the standard approbation within different forest and vegetation conditions.
- 2) Stimulation by economic methods of certified forest production market development.
 - it is extremely important for forest consumers interested in sustainable management development and trade to stimulate this process in the Far East
 - the government is to praise efforts of organizations directed to certification via forest resources supplying on privilege conditions as well as the system of other economic spurs.
- 3) Supplying FSC with technical support in order to accreditate in the Forest
 - working out of a block of documents (directions, provisions, institutions, etc.) needed for accreditation
 - personnel and experts certification procedure training
 - logistical basis development
- 4) Development of additional professional educational system on preparation of their own auditors
 - methodical and technical facilitating of the program “Sustainable Forest Management and Forest use in the Far East, Russia”
 - working out the training program for local audit personnel
- 5) Sytematical advice support of the forest certification development
 - dissemination of newsletters and other special publications
 - seminars and consultations.

Conclusion:

All these directions are closely connected with each other and require systematic approach. They can be successfully developed only in frames of the complex project on the condition of consolidated financing combining efforts of different organizations. The idea of this project was worked out by the Forest Certificate Center together with the “Woodmark co.” and can be presented to organizations, interested in it.