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## Forest Certification: A mechanism for sustainable forest management

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*Sustainable forest management is a global concern. Deforestation due to anthropogenic and nation's developmental activities, had led to environmental and ecological degradation. Meanwhile, due to the increased demand for certified forest products in the global market and the high growth of the world economy, it becomes necessary to have certified forest area. Moreover, the certification will attract more value and prices to the end products. Hence, the sustainability of the forest ecosystem is increasingly dependent upon sources of income beyond the sale of conventional products. Thus, forest certification is the new mantra to enhance the product positioning for a premium price on one hand and ensuring better forest management practices on the other hand.*

### INTRODUCTION

Deforestation due to anthropogenic and nation's developmental activities, had led to environmental and ecological degradation (Das *et al.*, 2016; Sarkar *et al.*, 2017a, b & c; Shinde *et al.*, 2017; Das *et al.*, 2019a & b; Sarkar *et al.*, 2019a & b; Shinde *et al.*, 2019a & b; Sarkar, 2019). Forest certification has emerged as one of the market mechanisms to give due recognition to and provide an incentive for sustainable forest management and thereby can reduce extreme pressure on forest by lowering the deforestation rate. It is a process that leads to the issuing of a certificate by an independent party, which verifies that an area of forest is managed to a defined standard. Standards are set by credible, independent organizations to ensure forest resources are managed in a way that promotes environmental, social and economic sustainability (Hughes *et al.*, 2008). Thus, it has a direct impact on trade of forest products.

Forest certification has its roots in the concern over rapid deforestation in tropical parts of the world during 1980s and 1990s. Because of this international concern, an effort was made in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, also known as the Earth Summit, to find solution to environmental and sustainable development issues. Nearly, 86000 hectares of forest was first certified in Mexico in the year 1991 followed by USA, Costa Rica, Netherland, Sweden and UK. After a slow starting phase, the number of countries where the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification is carried out, increased almost five-folds between 1995 and 1998 (Kern *et al.*, 2001).

### Objectives of Forest Certification

Following are some of the objectives of forest certification:

- 1) To improve the environmental, social and economic quality of forest management.
- 2) To ensure market access for certified products, particularly in 'eco-sensitive' markets with high environmental awareness.
- 3) To improve control of logging operations and reduction of illegal harvesting followed by higher recovery of royalties and taxes.
- 4) To increase transfer of funds to forest management.
- 5) To internalize of environmental costs in timber prices.
- 6) To encourage for investment in wood processing industries; improved productivity and cost savings in the production chain from forest to end-user.

7) To improve transparency in forest management and trade.

### Benefits of Forest Certification

The benefits of forest certification have been mentioned under the following sub-headings:

#### a) Market benefits

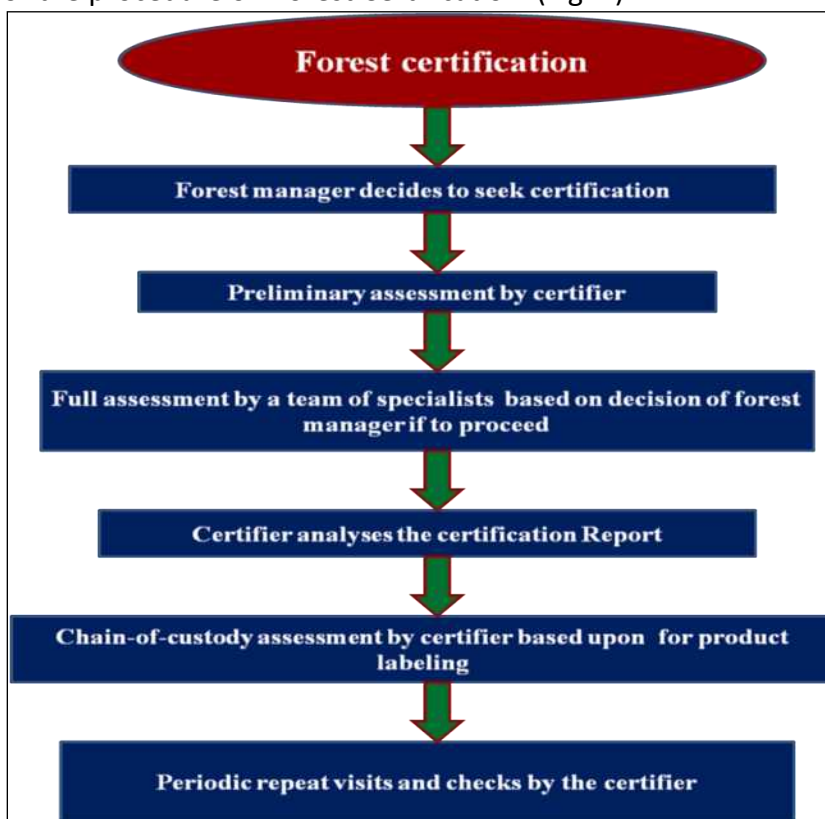
- (i) Certified products get the higher prices,
- (ii) It become very easy to access market for the certified products, and
- (iii) Branding of the products can be possible.

#### b) Non-markets benefits

- (i) The staff morale and operational efficiency get improved,
- (ii) The risk of being criticized by NGOs gets minimized, and
- (iii) An organizational image and identity in terms of good forest management are developed (Baharuddin and Simula, 1997).

### Steps of Forest certification

Following are the steps or the procedure of 'Forest Certification' (Fig. 1):



**Fig. 1: Steps for certification process**

### Status of Forest Certification

At present majority of the certified forests are from the developed countries, mostly in Europe and North America. The area certified under FSC certification was estimated at about 11441 m ha in 82 countries having a total of 977 certificates (FSC, 2008). There was an increase in total certified forest area of the world by 30.10 m

ha and estimated industrial roundwood production by 26.20 m<sup>3</sup> in the year 2005-06 (Kraxner *et al.*, 2008). High success rate of forest certification has been reported where corruption and illegal logging has come down because of receiving the strong and effective support from government in Bolivia (Ebeling and Yasue, 2008). So far, India has secured only one FSC forest management Unit certificate and the only management certificate is for one private rubber plantation of 644 ha in Tamil Nadu. After realizing the need of forest certification, MoEF had constituted a national government body to frame the policy guidelines on certification of timber and NTFPs (Anon., 2010).

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable forest management is a global apprehension. Due to the increased demand for certified forest products in the global market and the high growth of the world economy, it becomes necessary to have certified forest area. Thus, forest certification is the new mantra to enhance the product positioning for a premium price on one hand and ensuring better forest management practices on the other hand.

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