
[FSC continues to lose credibility](#)

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was established in 1993 to certify “socially beneficial, economically viable and environmentally appropriate” management of forests. In 1996, the FSC approved the possibility of certification for monoculture tree plantations, a decision that has been the target of harsh and growing criticism, as millions of hectares of plantations have been granted the FSC label (see the editorial in WRM Bulletin 163). Subsequently, the FSC decided to align itself with the “carbon market”, certifying areas of forest and/or plantations used for the sale of so-called carbon offset credits, calculated in accordance with the amount of carbon supposedly stored by the trees. In so doing, the FSC became actively involved in a false solution to the problem of climate change, helping to guarantee increased profits for large pollution-generating companies (see “Brazil: The case of Plantar – the FSC at the service of the sale of carbon credits” in WRM Bulletin 163).

FERN is an NGO that monitors the European Union’s involvement in forests, coordinates European NGO activities in this area, and defends the rights of forest peoples. In a statement issued 2 June 2011, FERN announced that it was terminating its FSC membership.

In 2009, FERN had issued a statement noting that the FSC “has increasingly certified large-scale monoculture tree plantations and forest operations that do not even meet its own Principles and Criteria.” FERN added at that time that it would withdraw from membership in the FSC under certain circumstances, primarily if the FSC did not reverse its practice of certifying large-scale monoculture fast-growing plantations, and if it became actively involved in the “certification of forest carbon”.

This June, FERN’s observation that the FSC will inevitably “continue on the path of aligning itself with carbon offset standards and issuing certificates concurrently or jointly with carbon offset certificates” motivated the NGO to formally dissociate itself from the FSC, in order to maintain its own credibility.

FERN’s decision, in the meantime, signifies a further loss of credibility for the FSC, which has lost yet another important member from among its affiliated environmental organizations. We will stress once again what we stated in the editorial of our bulletin in February of this year: “What is needed is a critical assessment of what certification has actually achieved over the years: the weakening of the struggles of local communities for their rights and natural resources and the strengthening of corporations that promote excessive consumption as a means of boosting their own profits. The time has come to pursue new paths that do not include certification” (WRM Bulletin 163).