



SECOND DRAFT  
Forest Stewardship Council®  
**Global Strategy 2021–2026**

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Delivering  
**Forests For All Forever**  
Realizing the true value of forests

## Introduction

The essence of an effective strategy is to consolidate big ideas while building common ground around a vision of what success looks like in years to come. Based on this understanding, we have chosen the name Global Strategy\* instead of a Global Strategic Plan. The strategy outlined in this document is intended to provide the direction to build specific plans and projects developed to achieve that ambition. These specific plans will be guided by board-decided policies and articulated in an operating plan and related annual priorities.

## Where we come from: the 2015-2020 Strategy

The Global Strategic Plan (GSP) 2015–2020 provided a clear direction and level of ambition for FSC and became a strong reference point for the organization. It created a basis for measurable objectives and outlined a vision in which the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide.

In the period of the Global Strategic Plan 2015-2020, FSC surpassed the plan's "20 by 2020" objective. With about a quarter of the global industrial roundwood volumes originating in FSC-certified forests, FSC has become a force for responsible forest management. We take pride in this success, but we acknowledge that we have not yet overcome the core challenge identified in our 2015-2020 Global Strategic Plan: Incentives for forest destruction still outweigh the incentives for responsible forest management in many parts of the world. Achieving our mission and the future we want – Forests for All Forever – still requires a substantial effort and renewed energy.

## Promoting responsible forest stewardship as a land-use option to help solve global crises

We have reached a defining moment for the world's forests, and for our organisation. Global agendas increasingly recognise the role of forests in enabling and maintaining life, and as a major tool to help mitigate global challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and the social and gender injustice and inequity related to both. At the same time, forest products are increasingly important as renewable materials that can be a main factor in enabling the bio-based and circular economy which the world needs to develop.

FSC's concept of responsible forest stewardship, including protection, conservation and restoration as well as management for forest products and services, can provide important contributions to solving global crises. But FSC cannot tackle these challenges alone. Efforts are needed by many actors in society, and increasingly we need to work in alliances to create incentives that make a holistic approach to forest management attractive.

Most of the world's forests are still not certified according to FSC's standards for responsible forest stewardship, notably tropical forests and forests managed by smallholders and communities. We strongly believe that certification has been – and remains – a powerful solution, but its reach is still too limited to be able to address the extent of the challenge.

## The 2050 Vision: The world FSC will be a part of creating

To achieve our 2050 vision – of healthy forests recognised by society to be sustaining life on Earth – the world's forests must be treasured for their intrinsic values as vital ecosystems within the wider landscape. This will contribute to Indigenous Peoples' livelihoods, healthy communities and gender equity, while driving towards the necessary shift towards bio-based and circular economies.

The true value of forests is holistic and evolves over time. For FSC, this true value is embedded in our Principles & Criteria (P&C) for responsible forest stewardship. The P&C express the meaning of responsible forest stewardship that can ensure that forests are managed in ways that are socially

beneficial, environmentally appropriate, and economically viable. The P&C can create forests of true value, worthy of societal recognition.

The true value of forests is reflected in our understanding of forest stewardship, which is based on the knowledge and experience of the different interest groups in our membership and of our network and staff around the world. Recognising the true value of the forests leads to the holistic notion of responsible forest stewardship, where the world's forests are used, cared for and protected in good stewardship.

## Realizing the true value of forests – how to achieve our vision

The Global strategy 2021-2026 is based on an analysis of how change has occurred since our inception, as well as the level of change and core mechanisms needed now to achieve the 2050 Vision. Figure 1 summarises these reflections and captures how our core strength of being a community of co-creation can help us build our path towards the 2050 vision.

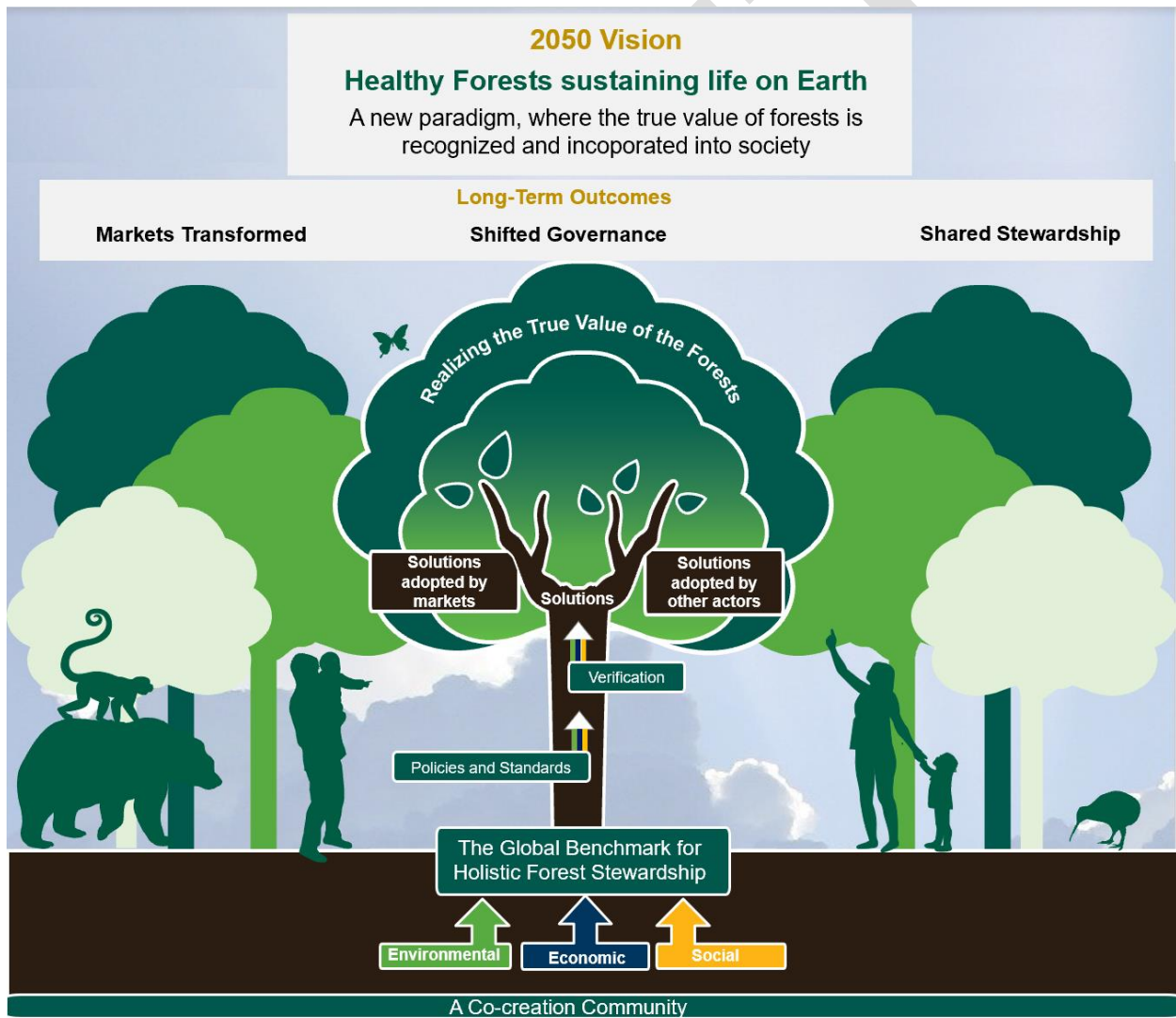


Figure 1. Realizing the True Value of the Forests

■ **The roots consist of** a community for co-creation bringing together economic, environmental and social perspectives in a globally tripartite organizational structure that defines a benchmark for responsible forest stewardship, expressed in our Principles & Criteria.

■ **The trunk** includes the policies and standards and the verification mechanisms FSC has developed. The **branches** represent solutions attracting markets and society towards responsible forest stewardship. This altogether represents a concrete ability to translate the benchmark into tangible outcomes.

■ **The canopy** is where the true value is realized by society. Wood certification is one solution to get the true value adopted by society, and recently FSC has added other dimensions through the certification of Ecosystem Services. **It is evident that by 2026, FSC must have further spread these forest solutions and been part of developing new ones that express the true value of forests in terms that can be adopted and supported by markets and other actors in society.** This is the essence of the FSC Global Strategy 2021-2026 and builds the basis of three underlying strategies.

#### **Co-Creation:**

We convene members from all chambers to create real outcomes that address important issues for everyone.

We work with partner organizations to further develop ideas and ensure that outcomes are spread and delivered on the ground

### **FSC's core strength: Anchored in membership engagement and a global network of partners**

Co-creation across diverse interests and finding solutions that create incentives for change on the ground are FSC's core strength and the basis for our ability to help transform how forests are managed. Our core strength has resulted in a certification model for forest management and wood products, used all over the world, and in transforming the forestry sector and the markets for wood products. Together with the inspiration that has led to adoption of FSC solutions in other sectors, this has made FSC a pioneer in sustainability.

#### **FSC's Core Strength**

FSC is a global community for co-creation, based on a governance system that brings diverse people together across interests to jointly define and promote the global benchmark for responsible forest stewardship. FSC creates solutions for markets and society, manifesting the benchmark on the ground.

FSC's General Assembly of members is the organization's ultimate decision-maker on core defining assets like the statutes and the Principles and Criteria. FSC's members elect the international Board of Directors to make strategic decisions for the organization.

This strategy is based on the understanding that in order to achieve our 2050 Vision it is crucial to engage and revitalize our membership at global, regional and national levels:

- We will work with members to co-create FSC solutions to complex forest-related issues;
- As a basis for this, we will promote effective and engaging dialogue, communication and information-sharing with members; and
- We will increase exchange and collaboration across the membership through a systematized approach of permanent engagement in discussion forums, virtual dialogues and national, regional and global meetings and solution forums.

For the member-based organization to function from local to global levels, FSC has built a decentralized structure of Network Partners that enable us to co-create forest solutions all over the world.

The FSC network consists of partners that work together to further the principles of FSC and achieve our 2050 vision. The FSC network is a diverse global community of individuals and organizations that believe

in and contribute to FSC's mission of *Forests For All Forever*. It embraces a bottom-up, voluntary and member-based approach.

In the coming years, FSC will strengthen its network to engage in local action to enable the achievement of the 2026 objective.

Priorities for FSC's global, regional and national presences and associated investment and fundraising will be set based on where FSC can achieve the greatest impact through its engagement.

FSC will increase its focus in regions and countries that have high potential for impact on natural tropical forests and other forest types where there are:

- High numbers of indigenous peoples, local communities and smallholders managing forests,
- Significant areas of forest with high conservation value,
- Forests that play a major role against climate change and protecting biodiversity, and/or
- Forests that have the potential to responsibly meet the growing demand for responsible forest products.

Within these parameters, the main focus will be on regions and countries with the best potential for:

- Certification for forest management,
- Adoption of solutions to global environmental, social and economic challenges,
- Creating and maintaining market demand for FSC products and services.

We will use sound data and information to achieve these priorities while remaining open to new ideas.

## **Growing our impact: FSC's 2026 objective**

FSC's 2026 objective aims at creating momentum towards the 2050 vision through certification and work in alliances to contribute solutions to the world's major forest challenges.

**Growing our impact: 300 million hectares certified in accordance with FSC's definition of forest stewardship, with demonstrable impact for all actors in the certified area and the wider landscape.**

By 2026, from the current level of about 210 million hectares, 300 million hectares will be certified to FSC's standards, with systems in place to demonstrate the creation of social, environmental and economic value on the ground. Inside this overall area, FSC will double the certification of natural tropical forests and areas managed by smallholders, communities and indigenous peoples to 50 million hectares together.

By 2026, FSC will have co-created and promoted solutions for growing the world's forest area and improve its quality, including forest landscape restoration, afforestation and reforestation. FSC will work in alliances with certificate holders, indigenous peoples, communities, trade unions and other stakeholders in all regions of the world to refine and spread these solutions and ensure positive impact for climate, biodiversity and people in the wider landscape. In this way, FSC will contribute to addressing global goals and challenges, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

## Overview of the FSC Global Strategy 2021–2026





## Three strategies, twelve goals and twenty-four intended outcomes

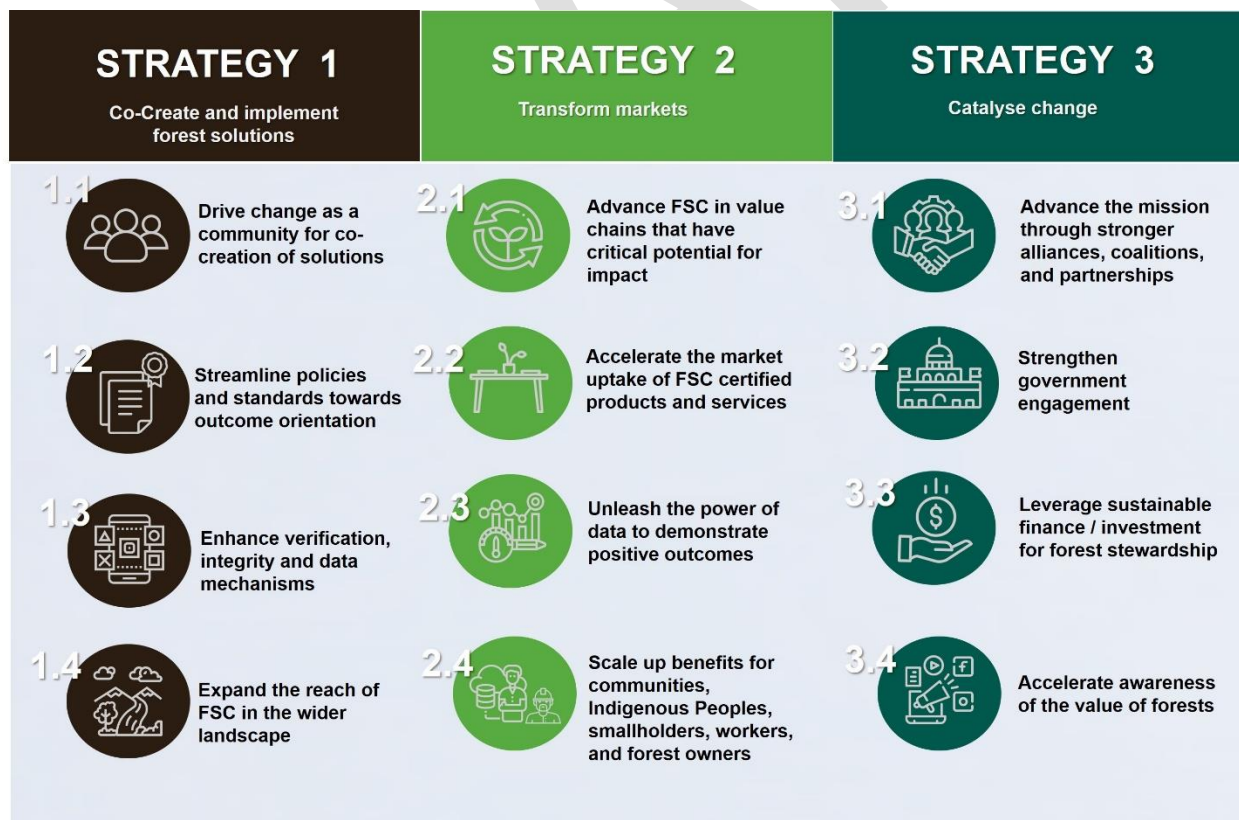
The Global Strategy 2021–2026 follows three approaches to ensure certification remains relevant and becomes available to a wider pool of stakeholders:

- Improve user relevance, and demonstrable impact to **unleash the potential of forest certification and provide benefits to all those involved in forest management**. This includes both our current certificate holders and those tropical forest managers, smallholders and communities, who are not currently certified.

This will require invigorating certification to capture the potential of certification for timber production and complement it with new incentives for certification of other forest products and services.

- Promote market uptake of products and services from responsible forest stewardship by **working with market actors to deepen the understanding of the true value of the forests** these products and services come from.
- Develop alliances with other actors** to integrate the value of forests more fully in land-use decisions and deliver positive results on the ground that go beyond our normal Management Unit boundaries.

These three approaches are translated into three closely interlinked strategies, each with a set of four goals setting the direction for FSC in the years to come. Altogether, the 12 goals are fully complementary and adaptable to different contexts and stakeholders.



## Strategy

# 1

## Strategy 1. Co-create and implement forest solutions

We will invigorate certification to drive the spread of responsible forest stewardship, by making it an attractive, usable and viable land-use option.

We will articulate and demonstrate how responsible forest stewardship contributes to global goals and challenges, and how it serves the transition to a bio-based and circular economy. FSC solutions will be co-created to ensure high credibility and increased relevance and accessibility to forest managers including key groups and sectors such as workers, Indigenous Peoples, communities, smallholders and managers of protected areas.

### Goals



#### 1.1 Drive change as a community for co-creation of solutions

Co-create forest management solutions to current forest related challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and rights and equity problems faced by indigenous peoples and local communities, while meeting global demand for forest products and services.

##### Intended outcomes:

- FSC's membership is revitalized as an agile and inspired community co-creating forest management solutions for communities and smallholders and relevant to topics like NTFPs (non-timber forest products) and forest landscape restoration.
- FSC members, network partners, staff, certificate holders and external stakeholders are convened in initiatives to co-create and implement forest solutions that drive change on the ground.



#### 1.2 Streamline policies and standards towards outcome orientation

Streamline policies and standards to reduce complexity and reflect risk, while ensuring credibility, and to focus less on rules and more on outcomes delivered through good performance.

##### Intended outcomes:

- FSC's policies and standards (the normative framework) are streamlined, ensuring high integrity, relevance, reliability, user-friendliness, efficiency and an appropriate balance between global consistency and local adaptability.
- FSC's policies and standards are risk-based and outcome-oriented, allowing the demonstration of performance as well as positive changes on the ground.



#### 1.3 Enhance verification, integrity and data mechanisms

Use modern technologies and control mechanisms to provide sound data to ensure verification of outcomes and system integrity.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Enhanced verification, integrity and data mechanisms ensure high-quality forest management assessments, strengthened supply chain integrity and improved monitoring of outcome at forest and landscape levels.
- FSC has implemented new ways to monitor performance that increase our credibility through reliable data while lowering the cost of demonstrating conformance with our standards.



#### 1.4 Expand the reach of FSC in the wider landscape

Work with FSC certificate holders, rights holders and stakeholders to expand the influence of FSC solutions in the wider landscape beyond FSC certified forest management units.



**Intended outcomes:**

- FSC and partners co-create solutions for forest landscape restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and for just transition, at a scale to demonstrate a positive contribution to global goals such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, while ensuring increased relevance to key groups, challenges and sectors.
- FSC solutions are used in landscapes of high importance for human livelihoods and well-being, such as Indigenous Cultural Landscapes, mosaic landscapes or urban forests, and used to sustain forests of the highest value for climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation, while adding value to the Indigenous Peoples and local communities depending on them.



## Strategy

# 2

## Strategy 2. Transform markets

We will promote market uptake of products and services from responsible forest stewardship to drive outcomes on the ground. Through improved data and communications, we will demonstrate delivery of social, environmental and economic value from responsibly managed forests. We will work with market actors to tap the potential of existing demand drivers and promote sourcing preferences for FSC in new sectors.

### Goals



#### 2.1 Advance FSC in value chains that have critical potential for impact

Remove barriers for the uptake of FSC certification in value chains that are strategically important for social, economic and environmental outcomes in forested areas globally.

##### Intended outcomes:

- The most critical value chains leading to increased social and environmental forest benefits are identified, and targeted interventions in these value chains drive higher uptake of FSC certification
- FSC certification in critical value chains support the creation of a bio-based and circular economy.



#### 2.2 Accelerate the market uptake of FSC-certified products and services

Strengthen local, regional and global markets for FSC certified products and services.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Marketing initiatives with key partners boost demand for FSC-certified products and ecosystem services in high-priority geographical areas and sectors.
- Marketing and communications initiatives in key sectors support the development of local markets for products from smallholders and indigenous peoples and incentivize them to implement FSC solutions.



#### 2.3 Unleash the power of data to demonstrate positive outcomes

Compile existing FSC data and generate new data to demonstrate improvements to the well-being of forests and the people who depend on them.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Emerging market interest in impact verification of forest management is captured and translated into robust data delivery systems to clearly identify the environmental, social and economic value created by FSC certification.
- FSC makes data available and accessible in ways to enable certificate holders to optimize their business strategies and meet the needs of stakeholders.



#### 2.4 Scale up benefits for communities, Indigenous Peoples, smallholders, workers and forests owners

Work locally, regionally and globally to develop market opportunities and ensure they lead to benefits for communities, indigenous peoples, smallholders, workers and forest owners.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Increased opportunities for market development of FSC certification and other FSC solutions translate into benefits for the people who depend on forests for their livelihood and well-being, including indigenous peoples, local communities, smallholders, workers and forest owners.
- Businesses demonstrate their commitment to local and global sustainability agendas, including just transition, by adhering to FSC social values and workers' rights through certification.

## Strategy

# 3

## Strategy 3. Catalyse change

We will work with diverse organizations and actors in society to increase the recognition of the true value of the forests. We will expand and invigorate our partnerships and alliances as efficient ways to contribute to the demands of society and to global agendas and boost results on the ground.

### Goals



#### 3.1 Advance the mission through stronger alliances, coalitions and partnerships

Create stronger alliances with like-minded organizations to achieve critical, mission-relevant results that deliver social, environmental and economic value to the people, who depend most on the forests and their products and services.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, trade unions, international forest, climate, biodiversity and restoration partnerships and other relevant actors leads to increased demand for FSC certification and solutions, responsible consumption of forest products, and related positive impacts.
- FSC is a global alliance-builder with governments, companies, civil society and others, promoting solutions for the wider landscape that protect the environment and respect the rights and improve the livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities, while enabling the provision of responsibly produced goods and services to growing markets.



#### 3.2 Strengthen government engagement

Engage with governments to advance the mission through responsible forest stewardship on the ground.

##### Intended outcomes:

- Local or national governments in several regions choose to endorse and incorporate FSC in their strategies and plans of forest management and procurement of forest products, enabling and supporting responsible forest management on the ground.
- Local or national governments in several regions choose to use FSC solutions to achieve targets related to national or international agendas such as nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement, restoration and biodiversity commitments, and the Sustainable Development Goals.



#### 3.3 Leverage sustainable finance/investment for responsible forest stewardship

Strengthen the links between certificate holders and the investment community.

##### Intended outcomes:

- FSC is recognized by investors as offering the most credible validation and verification tool to demonstrate the value created through responsible forest management, including forest landscape restoration and conservation.
- FSC provides access to verified impact data, including carbon, biodiversity and social issues, and this has become part of the value proposition in FSC certification and solutions.



#### 3.4 Accelerate awareness of the value of forests

Work with partners to demonstrate the social, environmental and economic value, including but also beyond the marketable timber products, of forests under responsible forest stewardship.

##### Intended outcomes:

- FSC's label and brand are increasingly recognized and measurably reflected in the actions and behaviours of society as the way to protect the true value of forests.
- A holistic approach to forest management is promoted in compelling narratives by opinion-makers using FSC certification and solutions as the go-to example of success.

## **Implementing the strategy - development of the operating plan and annual priorities**

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The updated Global Strategy sets the direction for FSC for the period until 2026 as agreed by the board after a yearlong process including two rounds of consultation with the FSC membership. Further strategic direction will be set by motions approved by the General Assembly and by strategic board decisions during the period of the strategy.

Achievements towards the intended outcomes will be monitored by the FSC International secretariat and FSC Network Partners and regularly reported to the board for decisions of course correction or other changes needed. Reporting will also be available to the FSC membership.

Annually, the secretariat will develop an operating plan laying out how the Global Strategy will be implemented through a range of operational initiatives carried out by staff in FSC International and the FSC Network.

The first operating plan will be ready in November 2020 together with a set of publicly available annual priorities for FSC which will be presented to the board for formal approval together with the annual budget. After that, the operating plan and corresponding budgets will be updated annually.