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The Mandatory Forest Certification Scheme as a Tool for Sustainable Forest Management in Russia

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Contents

Abstract

The Certification Law in the Russian Federation regulates both voluntary and mandatory forest certification. The Mandatory Forest Certification Scheme (MFCS) was developed observing the principles, criteria and indicators of the Helsinki and Montreal processes, as well as the Russian list of criteria and indicators. Also the principles of the Forest Stewardship Council and the International Organization for Standardization Standard 14001 were used as reference. The scheme has been tested in five regions, and an auditing of a large North-American forest company will be carried out during the summer of 2001 in Karelia.

The mandatory scheme differs in some respects from the certification systems developed elsewhere. One of the major distinguishing features is that the set of criteria are presented in the form of 24 normative documents, including the Forest Code. In addition, the applicant of the MFCS certificate is the forest user, instead of the forest owner, which is the state in the Russian Federation.

The scheme is aimed to cover the ecological, economical, social and cultural aspects of sustainable forestry, and an independent certification body issues the certificate. The scheme includes third party auditing and provides the possibility for the state or public organizations to supervise forest loggings, and request non-scheduled auditing from the Forest Certification Center if deemed necessary.

The scheme is aimed to complement the Helsinki and Montreal processes by putting the general forest policy into action at the operational level in the *leskhozes*.

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The Mandatory Forest Certification Scheme as a Tool for Sustainable Forest Management in Russia

Valentin Strakhov and Pasi Miettinen

1 Introduction

The concept of forest certification was introduced in the early 1990s by environmental organizations, including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Forest certification is generally seen as a voluntary based, market-driven process where an independent third party verifies that the forests have been managed according to the agreed social, ecological, and economical criteria. The certificate aims to convince the consumer that production has caused neither the decline of forest resources nor a loss of biological diversity.

There has been lot of debate over how forest certification should be organized, how much it should cost, and who should pay for it. Another complicated question is the role public administration should play in developing the certification system. For example, the Australian Government (1999) has tried to initiate an intergovernmental process for developing certification schemes, whereas the original idea emphasized the market-driven, voluntary based approach where the standard for sustainable forestry is jointly developed with all interested parties. This approach still prevails particularly in the environmental administration reflected, for example, in the Ministry of the Environment of Finland, which gives priority to all relevant interest groups of the wood markets such as the forest industry, forest owners and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), instead of taking an active role itself in the development of certification (Ympäristöministeriö…, 1999).

The forest owners have tried to search for alternatives to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme both in Russia and in various European countries in order to promote competition in the certification markets. This has been one of the reasons for developing the Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC) system, which is based on mutual recognition of national certification schemes. In this case, forest certification is seen not only as a marketing tool, but also as a political tool for sustainable forest management, which is supported by the authorities responsible for forest resources. The Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry seems to have adopted this approach by actively promoting the development of a national certification system in Finland through committees and national forestry programs (Metsien…, 1997; Maa- ja Metsätalousministeriö, 1999). Also Bass and Simula (1999) conclude that "*government involvement is desirable in the process of developing and reviewing certification*",

although market-based certification should be able to operate without government intervention.

This paper describes how the Russian forest authorities have approached forest certification. Like any other certification of goods and services, forest certification is regulated by the Certification Law in Russia. The law stipulates that two governmental bodies, the Gosstandart[1] and the Ministry of Natural Resources[2], organize and implement the entire forest certification process — the so-called Mandatory Forest Certification Scheme (MFCS) — in accordance with the international prerequisites for valid certification.

MFCS provides a very interesting case study for researchers. However, only very limited information has been available hitherto about the MFCS in English, and this means that the MFCS has not been evaluated properly in an international context. For example, MFCS was not included in the Comparative Matrix of Forest Certification Schemes (CEPI, 2001).

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive description of MFCS, and to analyze how this system promotes ecologically, economically, socially, and culturally sustainable forestry in Russia.

2 Current Tools for Sustainable Forest Management

The forestry sector is steered by both legislative and strategic administrative tools in Russia, as illustrated in Figure 1. The Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as the Forest Code and legislation on nature conservation, provide the framework for legislative steering. State strategy for sustainable development is monitored by the Interagency Working Group on Sustainable Development, led by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Russian Federation. This group has been established to further the implementation of Agenda 21 and other agreements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

2.1 Legislation

The Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993 defines the division of state powers into legislative, executive, and judicial. Table 1 illustrates the hierarchy of norms that specifies which laws are the highest, that is which laws determine the content as well as the procedure of making lower norms (Suksi, 1997; Pappila, 1999).

[1] The State Committee of the Russian Federation on Standardization, Metrology, and Certification.
[2] Formerly the Federal Forest Service.

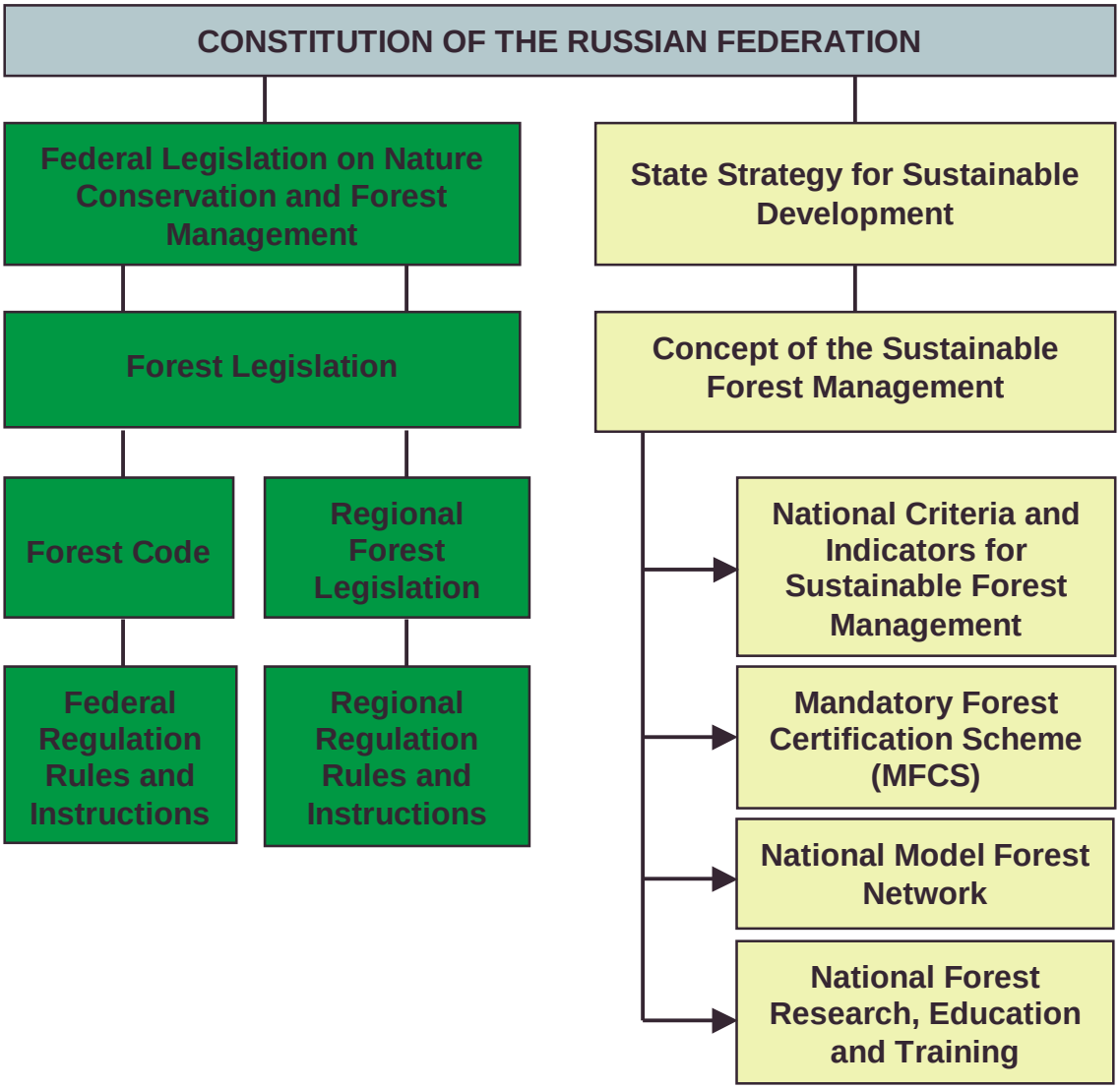

Figure 1: Steering of the forestry sector in the Russian Federation as described by Strakhov (2000b).

Table 1: Hierarchy of norms according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Suksi, 1997; Pappila, 1999).

Level	Norm
1	The Constitution of the Russian Federation.
2	Federal Constitutional Laws.
3	Generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties as defined in the Constitution (§15.4).
4	Federal Laws.
5	Presidential directives and orders (ukases).
6	Governmental resolutions and instructions for the implementation of laws and presidential directives.
7	Acts enacted by federal authorities, ministries, committees, etc.
8	Laws and acts enacted by the legislative bodies and other authorities of the federal subjects.

The Russian Federation consists of 89 regions, so-called subjects of the Federation (republics, areas, provinces, two cities of federal significance, an autonomous province, and districts), which also have legislative power. Some of the local forest laws, such as the forest law of Karelia, have had some inconsistencies with federal legislation (Pappila, 1999). The Constitutional Court is in the position to judge whether the regional law contradicts the Russian Constitution or federal laws. Some of the most important laws regulating forestry are:

- The Forest Code (Code No. 22-F3, 29 January 1997).
- The Water Code of the Russian Federation 1995.
- Law of Timber Auction Holding Regulations (Order No. 99, 11 August 1997).
- Law of Forest Competition Regulations for Assignments of Forest Stock Parcels for Leasing (Order No. 123, 30 September 1997).
- Government Resolution on Leasing of a Forest Parcel (No. 345, 24 March 1998).
- Regulations for Leasing Forest Fund Parcels (Order No. 55, 8 April 1998).
- Rules for Selling Standing Wood (Resolution No. 551, 1 June 1998).
- Instructions for Sanitary Cutting in the Russian Federation (Order No. 1458, 27 January 1998).
- Government Resolution on Minimum Payment Rates for Standing Timber Bought on Stump (Resolution No. 1199, 19 September 1997).
- Statute on Specially Protected Areas (Law No. 33-F3, 14 March 1995).
- Law on Environmental Protection (Law No. 2060-1, 19 December 1991; amendments in 1992 and 1993).
- Statute on Fauna 1995 (24 April).

- Statute on Ecological Ekspertiza (Law No. 174-F3, 23 November 1995).
- Ukase[3] of the President On Federal Nature Resources 1993 (No. 2144, 19 February).
- Ukase of the President On the Target-oriented Program for State Support of State Nature Zapovedniks and National Parks for the Period up to 2000 (No. 1032, 10 October 1995).
- Ukase of the President On the Structure of the Federal Bodies of the Executive Authority (17 May 2000).

2.1.1 Forest Code

The Forest Code was issued in 1997 and was based on the Principles of Forest Legislation of the Russian Federation that were defined in 1993. The principal concept in Russian forest legislation is the Forest Fund. The Forest Fund of 1178.6 million hectares (ha) covers all forests and all land allocated for forestry purposes. The Forest Fund is divided into forest land (882.0 million ha) and non-forest land. Forest land is land designated for forest growth and includes forested and unforested areas. Forested areas are areas covered by forests with relative stocking rates of 0.4 or more for young stands and relative stocking rates of 0.3 and more for other stands. Unforested areas are regions that are temporarily with no forests including burned areas, dead stands, sparse forests, unregenerated harvesting areas, and grassy glades. Non-forest land includes two land types: (1) areas that are not suitable for forest growth under current conditions (mires, rocks, tundra areas, sands, etc.); and (2) lands set aside for special purposes (roads, hayfields, etc.). The latest Russian inventory manual further divides forest land into non-closed planted forests, forest plantations and nurseries, and natural sparse forests, as reviewed by Nilsson and Shvidenko (1998).

The division of forests into categories is the basis for both the use and protection of forests. Articles 55–58 of the Forest Code define the different forest categories: Group I, II, and III. Article 114 stipulates which felling methods are possible in each category. More specific rules are given in regional regulations and instructions.

Group I forests are targeted mainly toward ensuring the environmental and social functions of forests. Since 1948, the share of Group I forests has increased from 2% to over 20%, mainly owing to new national parks, nature reserves and other protected areas (Kuusela, 1997). Group I forests occupy 234.6 million ha (21%) according to the latest statistics of the All-Russian Research and Information Center for Forest Resources (ARICFR). Group I forests are organized into 20 protection categories, all of which have their own cutting regulations. These protection areas include: forest belts along river banks and lakes, main railroad lines, and highways; anti-erosion forests; green belts of settlements and economic entities; and forests of national parks and nature reserves.

The Regulations on Final Felling of 1993 state that the main forms of wood harvesting in Group I forests are continuous cutting and selective cutting. Clear cutting shall be used only if no other harvesting method can ensure regeneration or if the forest has lost

[3] *Ukase* is a proclamation or order, having the force of law.

its protection character (Alvoittu, 1996). The allowed size of a clear-cut area depends upon the forest category, vegetation zone, and tree species. In the northern taiga, for example, the maximum size of a clear felling area in a Group I forest is 10–15 ha; in Group II it is 15–20 ha, and in Group III 50 ha (Myllynen, 1996).

Group II consist of protective forests near densely populated areas or forests in areas with insufficient forest resources. The aim is to maintain and improve the growth and regeneration of these forests; they are for commercial use, but with certain limitations. Group II is the smallest of the three categories; occupying only 6–7% of all forests (Kuusela, 1997). The total area of this Group is 64.0 million ha, according to the latest statistics of ARICFR.

Group III is the largest forest group, containing 71% of all Russian forests. The main function of these forests is the production of industrial wood (Nilsson and Shvidenko, 1998). At the beginning of the 1990s, it was estimated that 42% of Group III forests were under exploitation, 34% were so-called reserve forests (for future exploitation), and 12% were "out of reach" (Kuusela, 1997). The total area of Group III forests is 812.0 million ha, according to the latest statistics of ARICFR.

Specially protected forests, where only restricted forest use is possible (Forest Code, Article 55), can exist in all Groups (I–III).

2.1.2 The Water Code

The Forest Code and Water Code complement each other. Article 111 of the Water Code determines some additional protective zones around/along watercourses that have not been mentioned in the Forest Code. The Water Code prohibits final felling, whereas the Forest Code only limits the use of final felling at such sites in Group I forests (Pappila, 1999).

2.1.3 Law on Environmental Protection

The Law on Environmental Protection stipulates that the habitats of endangered species be protected. Article 65 prohibits all activities that might diminish the number or a habitat of a species mentioned in the Red Data Book of Rare and Endangered Species of Russia. Some federal subjects have their own regional Red Books (State Committee…, 1997). All land users must ensure that they take all necessary measures to protect these species. Paragraph 4 stipulates that the procedure to protect Red Book species is defined in other legislation. Article 64, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the Forest Code, prohibits the deterioration of the habitats of Red Book species, as reviewed by Pappila (1999).

2.2 International Agreements

As shown in Table 1, generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties have a very high ranking in the hierarchy of norms in Russia, surpassing even Federal Laws. Representatives of the Russian Federation have participated in all major international undertakings since UNCED in 1992, including the Helsinki process (Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe I, II,

and III) and the Montreal process. Russia has also signed and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Russian Federation has been implementing the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity both by revising the legislation and implementing a large scale Biodiversity Conservation Program. The following regulations have been passed:

- Ukase on State Strategy of the Russian Federation as regards Environmental Conservation and Providing for Sustainable Development 1993 (4 February 1994, No. 236).
- Ukase on the Concept of the Russian Federation's Transition to Sustainable Development 1996 (April, No. 440).
- Federal Law on the Ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity (17 February 1995, 16-FL).
- Federal Law on the Ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (4 November 1994, 34-FL).

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported the "Biodiversity Conservation in Russia" project, which was launched in 1997 and will end in 2002. The total Project cost is US$ 31.9 million. The project consists of three components: (1) a national strategy and action plan, (2) the development of protected areas, and (3) a regional Baikal component. The Country Report was issued in 1997 (State Committee…, 1997).

2.2.1 Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management

The transition to sustainable development has been enforced by various decrees and ukases in Russia (including Decree No. 440 of 1 April 1996; Order No. 559 of 8 May 1996; Instructions No. ВЧ-П9-43119 of 30 December 1996; and Instructions No. ВЧ-П1-30744 of 27 September 1997). In accordance with these documents and on the basis of the Forest Code, the Ministry of Natural Resources (formerly the Federal Forest Service) has developed a "Concept of Sustainable Forest Management", adopted by the IV Russian Foresters Congress in June 1998, and "Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in the Russian Federation" (Strakhov, 1997), which came into force in July 1998. These documents define the framework for the use, protection, control, and restoration of the Forest Fund at the federal level.

The national criteria and indicators system for sustainable forest management (SFM) takes into consideration the country-specific characters of Russia. It follows the Pan-European Criteria defined during the Helsinki Process (Third…, 1998) as regards forests of its European part and the Montreal List as regards boreal and temperate forests of the country as a whole (Santiago, 1995). The criteria for these undertakings are presented in Table 2. Ecological, economic, and political aspects of forestry development are an integral part of the nation wide strategy of sustainable development in Russia.

Table 2: Various sets of criteria for sustainable forest management.

Criterion Number	**Criteria for SFM of the European Forests, Helsinki Process** (Third…, 1998)	**Criteria for SFM of the Temperate and Boreal Forests of the Earth Montreal Process** (Santiago…, 1995)	**Criteria for SFM in the Russian Federation, Russian National List of the Criteria and Indicators** (Strakhov, 1997)
I	Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles.	Conservation of biological diversity.	Maintenance and conservation of the forests' productive capacity.
II	Maintenance of the forest ecosystem, health and vitality.	Maintenance of the productive capacity of forest ecosystems.	Maintenance of acceptable health and vitality of forests.
III	Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood).	Maintenance of the forest ecosystem, health and vitality.	Conservation and maintenance of forests' protective functions.
IV	Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems.	Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources.	Conservation and maintenance of the biodiversity of forests and their contribution to global carbon cycles.
V	Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water).	Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles.	Maintenance of social and economic functions of forests.
VI	Maintenance of other socioeconomic functions and conditions.	Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socioeconomic benefits to meet the needs of societies.	Forest policy tools for maintaining sustainable forest management.

2.3 Protected Areas

More than 20 different categories of protected areas are defined at the federal level in Russia (Table 3). Seven of them have the highest legal status, being declared by the Federal Law "On Especially Protected Nature Areas" (1995). These are *zapovedniks* (state nature reserves), national parks, nature parks, state *zakasniks* (partial or special nature reserves), nature monuments, dendrological parks and botanical gardens, and health restoring districts and resorts (Stepanitski, 1997). The share of specially protected

areas has increased constantly during recent years, and they have been estimated to constitute some 5% of the total forest resource areas in Russia (Sokolov, 1997).

Table 3: Protection categories of Group I forests according to Borissof (2000).

	Protection Categories as defined in the Forest Code (1997)
1	Restricted forest belts along river banks, lakes, reservoirs and other bodies of water.
2	Restricted forest belts that protect spawning grounds of valuable commercial fish stocks.
3	Anti-erosion forests.
4	Forest shelter belts along main railroad lines and major highways.
5	State forest shelter belts.
6	Pine forest belts.
7	Forests in desert, semi-desert, steppe, forest-steppe, and sparsely forested mountain areas having great importance for environmental protection.
8	Forests of green belts of settlements and economic entities.
9	Forests of the first and second belts of sanitary protection zones of water supply sources.
0	Forests of the first, second and third zones of sanitary protection districts of health resorts/mountain areas.
1	Particularly valuable forest tracts.
2	Forests of scientific and historical importance.
3	Natural monuments.
4	Nut-harvesting areas.
5	Fruit tree plantations.
6	Pre-tundra forests.
7	Forests of *zapovedniks*.
8	Forests of national parks.
9	Forests of natural parks.
0	Other reserved sites.

By the end of 1999, Russia established 99 *zapovedniks* with a total area of 33,170,258 ha and 35 national parks with a total area of 6,924,497 ha. About 75% of vascular plants of the Russian flora are represented in *zapovedniks* and national parks according to the Biodiversity Conservation Country Report (State Committee…, 1997). The law defines the purpose of *zapovedniks* and national parks as protecting unique and typical natural complexes and features, remarkable natural formations, as well as features and gene pools of plant and animal species. These areas can only be used for research and education.

2.4 GIS-based Forest Management Planning

Modern Geographic Information System (GIS)-based forest management planning has been developing rapidly during the last decade in Russia. The Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises have tailored specific systems for regional needs, using various commercial software (i.e., ARC/INFO-ARC/VIEW, MapInfo, Geograf/Geodraw, WinGis, Formap) (Kolström *et al*., 1999). A growing number of *leskhozes*[4] have computer facilities, even in remote areas (Miettinen, 2000). The Ministry of Natural Resources has launched a long-term program, intended to run until 2005 that will use the federal budget to introduce GIS for forest inventory and planning work. The aim is to replace the traditional forest accounting system with a continuous forest inventory, which enables maintenance of an up-to-date forest resource database. For example, information on specially protected sites can be added to the database as soon as their exact location is identified. The continuous forest inventory methodology is also more cost efficient, because expensive fieldwork can be targeted to the most relevant regions, which is particularly important when working with Russia's exceptionally large forest areas. In addition to traditional forest management planning, GIS has been successfully used for Landscape Ecological Planning (LEP) in Buryatia and Northwest Russia (Bech *et al*., 1999).

3 The Mandatory Forest Certification Scheme

3.1 Objectives

The mandatory certification of goods and services is a procedure in which an organization, independent from the manufacturer (seller, producer) and from the consumer (client), certifies in writing that the product meets the established requirements (Certification Law 1993; revised 1998). According to the Certification Law, mandatory certification seeks to develop favorable conditions for private and public organizations for:

(i) Producing and selling services and products in domestic markets of the Russian Federation;
(ii) Participating in international economic, scientific, and technical cooperation; and
(iii) Practicing international trade.

In addition, mandatory certification aims at:

(i) Assisting consumers in the choice of alternative products;
(ii) Protecting the consumer against the manufacturer's carelessness;
(iii) Controlling products' safety for the environment, life, health and property; and
(iv) Assuring product quality parameters declared by the producer.

[4] The regional representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources (total 1826, plus 35 national parks), who are in charge of managing and protecting forest resources.

The mandatory forest certification aims at convincing the consumer that the timber, which the logging company is selling, comes from a forest that has been managed and harvested in compliance with forest legislation and in harmony with the concept of sustainable forest management in Russia (Strakhov, 2000a).

3.2 Legislative Framework for Forest Certification

Russian law regulates commercial certification, both voluntary and mandatory. Mandatory certification is applied, when it is particularly stipulated by the acts of the Russian Federation (Article 7, Federal Law on the Certification of Goods and Services 1993). The Forest Code provides such stipulation (Article 71).

3.2.1 Certification Law

The Certification Law (Federal Law on the Certification of Goods and Services) was first issued in June 1993 (FL No. 5151-1); it was later amended on 27 December 1995 (No. 211-FL) and 2 March 1998 (No. 30-FL), and completed on 31 July 1998 (No. 211-FL). The law describes the procedure for mandatory and voluntary certification as well as the rights, responsibilities, and liabilities of the interested parties.

The Certification Law stipulates that the state management bodies and organizations should create the certification system. The certification system can include private enterprises and other organizations irrespective of their forms of ownership, and also public associations. The certification system should be subjected to state registration in the order determined by Russia's Gosstandart.

3.2.2 Legislative Framework for Voluntary Certification

The Russian environmental organizations support the certification scheme developed by the FSC. The Finnish forest companies and the Russian wood exporting companies are trying to develop a voluntary, PEFC-oriented certification scheme for Northwest Russia. Some 2 million hectares of forest land have been certified according to the FSC scheme to date, and an additional 1 million hectares are expected to be covered by the FSC by 2005. Regional FSC standards for the Khabarovsk region and the Republic of Komi are almost ready to be submitted for approval to the FSC in Mexico as reported by Ptichnikov and Voropaev (2000).

The Certification Law states that certification can have either a mandatory or voluntary character. Voluntary certification should be carried out under the initiative of the applicants (manufacturers, sellers, doers), and its purpose should be to assure the conformity of the product to the requirements of standards, specifications, prescriptions, and other documents determined by the applicant. Voluntary certification should be carried out under the conditions of a contract between the applicant and the certifying body. Voluntary certification of products subject to mandatory certifications should not substitute for mandatory certification.

The voluntary certifying body conducts certification of products, issues certificates, and grants the right to use the mark of conformity. It also has the right to suspend or cancel

the issued certificates. The voluntary certification system should be well organized and maintain the rules for certification, including rules for covering the costs. Voluntary certification can also be carried out within the framework of mandatory certification.

A system of forest certification can be deemed established only after its State registration duly in line with the "Procedures of Carrying Out the State Registration of Certification Systems and Signs of Conformity in Force in the Russian Federation" in the Gosstandart and the Ministry of Justice.

Currently no voluntary forest certification scheme meets the above-mentioned legislative demands. FSC certificates have been issued, for example, in the Altai region, but the certified products have been sold abroad.

3.2.3 Mandatory Certification of Forest Resources (Forest Code, Article 71)

Article 71 of the Forest Code states that "*Standing timber that is sold, and secondary forest resources are subject to mandatory certification. Mandatory certification of the aforesaid forest resources shall be organized and carried out by the Federal body of forest administration in accordance with the order established by the Government of the Russian Federation*".

3.2.4 Government Order "On Mandatory Certification of Standing Sale Timber and Secondary Forest Resources"

The government of the Russian Federation issued an order "On Mandatory Certification of Standing Sale Timber and Secondary Forest Resources" on 2 February 1998, and entrusted the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia to organize the preparation of the set of regulations in accordance with the Certification Law, with the participation of Gosstandart, the Ministry of Economics, and other interested federal bodies of the executive power. The order entrusts the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop the legal norms needed for forest certification, including the list of items subject to mandatory certification.

3.2.5 Temporary Regulations for Carrying Out Mandatory Certification of Standing Sale Timber and Secondary Forest Resources of the Russian Federation

"Temporary Regulations of Carrying Out Mandatory Certification of Standing Sale Timber and Secondary Forest Resources in Forests of the Russian Federation" was issued at the end of 1998. The regulations were developed by the Federal Forest Service[5] according to the order of Gosstandart (16 February 1994), and registered in the Ministry of Justice (21 March 1994). The interested ministries and agencies gave positive replies on the draft document, except for the Ministry of Economics. Nevertheless, the draft was examined and approved by the joint session of the Council

[5] Currently the Ministry of Natural Resources.

for Science and Technology of the Federal Forest Service and the Section of Timber, Pulp and Paper, and Woodworking Industry of the Council for Science and Technology of the Ministry of Economics.

3.2.6 Rules on the "System of Mandatory Certification of Standing Timber that is Sold and of Secondary Forest Resources"

Rules on the "System of Mandatory Certification of Standing Timber that is Sold and of Secondary Forest Resources" were published in November 1999 by the Ministry of Natural Resources. The rules aim to enforce the "Temporary Regulations of Carrying Out Mandatory Certification of Standing Sale Timber and Secondary Forest Resources in Forests of the Russian Federation" and to provide legal norms for the forest certification system. The book introduces a package of legal instruments for implementing mandatory forest certification including, for example:

- Temporary statutes defining the duties of the Central Forest Certification Body, Certification System's Council, Committee of Appeal, and the Forest Certification Centers;
- Statute of the sign of conformity to the system of mandatory certification;
- Tariffs and procedure of payment for the certification work;
- Requirements to be met by the auditors in the mandatory certification of standing sale timber and secondary forest resources;
- Guidelines and procedure for accreditation of the centers of mandatory certification; and
- Temporary forms used for the test certification procedure.

The preparation of the rules was based on the analysis of the international forest certification schemes, as well as of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Standard 14001 for environmental management systems. The standard legal acts that include ecological requirements in the sphere of forest use were determined in cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Ecology of the Russian Federation (Strakhov, 2000a).

3.2.7 Procedures for Imposing Fines for Breaking the Rules of Certification

Russian legislation has a legal tool for imposing fines for breaking the rules of certification. An Annex to the Instructions of the State Tax Service from 3 June 1993, No. IE4-04/84i, contains "Procedures of Delivering Orders and Imposing Fines by the Bodies of the State Committee of Standards of Russia in the Event of Breaking the Requirements Relative to Security and Rules of Certification of Goods, Work or Services" developed and approved by the Order of the State Committee of Standards on 24 February 1993, No. 50. Breaches that entail a fine under item 3.2.2 of the above procedures are: selling goods, doing work and services subject to mandatory certification without a certificate.

3.3 Scope and Ownership of the Certificate

The mandatory forest certification scheme is aimed to cover all aspects of the SFM related to ecological, economical, social, and cultural sustainability, so far as they are the responsibility of the forest user. The lease-holding, forest-logging company (forest user), who sells the timber, will be the owner of the certificate. From a geographical viewpoint, the forest area rented by the logging company becomes certified.

The standing sale timber and secondary forest resources are mentioned as the target of the mandatory forest certification in the normative documents regulating forest certification. The term "standing sale timber" is exclusively Russian origin and has its roots in the early history of Russian forestry, when forest land was classified as real estate. All the legal rights and norms established for real estate also covered forests. Forests were measured in hectares, and forest management was directed not only to care for the trees, but also the land. The timber was considered as movable property only after cutting had produced a commercial product (FFS, 1998).

3.4 Organization of Certification

The MFCS was developed by the Coordination Council, which empaneled specialists from ARICFR and the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, with the participation of experts from many scientific institutions of different Russian ministries and agencies, ecological NGOs, and other interested federal executive authorities (Strakhov, 2000b).

The organizational setup of the forest certification system will involve the Central Forest Certification Body, the Certification System's Council, the Committee of Appeal, and the Forest Certification Centers.

3.4.1 Gosstandart

In Russia, certification and standardization are administered and coordinated by the Russian Federation's Committee on Standardization, Metrology, and Certification (Gosstandart). This government agency represents the Russian Federation to the standardization bodies abroad, for example, the ISO and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). Gosstandart has issued approximately 22,000 GOST documents. Gosstandart participates in all stages of standards development, including proposal, preparation, committee review, inquiry, approval, publication, and distribution.

Gosstandart is empowered to control and supervise the Central Forest Certification Body, the Forest Certification Centers, and the forest user in their acting upon the rules for mandatory forest certification. In addition, Gosstandart is responsible for conducting the following tasks with the professional assistance of the Ministry of Natural Resources:

- Form the state policy on certification; establish general rules and recommendations on conducting certification in the territory of the Russian Federation and publish the official information on them;

- Conduct the state registration of the certification system and the marks of conformity;
- Decide about a mutual recognition of the certificates with international organizations; and
- Represent the Russian Federation in international certification organizations.

3.4.2 Ministry of Natural Resources and ARICFR

The Ministry of Natural Resources is in charge of managing 97% of the state forests in Russia. The functions of the former Federal Forest Service were transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources (Minpriroda) by a Presidential order in the spring of 2000 (Presidential…, 2000). The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for the design of federal forest policy and international cooperation; development and implementation of forest legislation; organization and coordination of scientific research, as well as for forest monitoring and inventory. The regional representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources, the *leskhozes*, which are in charge of managing and protecting forest resources, make practical-level decisions in forest management. They have the right to grant forest resources for short-term and long-term use (leasing) and to establish stumpage rates and leasing fees.

The role of the Ministry of Natural Resources in forest certification is defined in the Certification Law. It shall:

- Create the certification system and establish rules for conducting the certification;
- Identify the central bodies of the certification systems;
- Accredit Forest Certification Centers;
- Maintain the state register of the certified companies;
- Establish the rules of recognition for foreign certificates, marks of conformity, and the results of tests;
- Establish the rules for accreditation and licensing to conduct work on mandatory certification; and
- Examine the appeals on certification issues.

The Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises are steered directly by the Ministry of Natural Resources in Moscow. They are responsible for designing forest management plans for the *leskhozes*. They also produce cutting plans for forest users, at the expense of the client. There are 13 Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises and each is responsible for its own geographic region.

The Central State Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprise provides premises for the Central Forest Certification Body, and the regional offices of the Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises accommodate the Forest Certification Centers. The Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises and the *leskhozes* provide the forest management plans, the cutting plans, and other relevant documents for the forest certification auditors.

ARICFR is a legal entity of the Russian Federation and works under agreements with different bodies, including the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia. Its basic objective is to collect, manage, and disseminate information on Russian forest resources. The staff of ARICFR have taken a central role in developing the mandatory forest certification scheme.

3.4.3 The Central Forest Certification Body and the System's Council

The Central Forest Certification Body is responsible for organizing and coordinating the mandatory certification work and establishing the rules of the certification system. The positions of the Central Forest Certification Body and other stakeholders of the MFCS are illustrated in Figure 2.

The Central Forest Certification Body establishes the Certification System's Council and the Committee of Appeal. The Certification System's Council has representatives from forestry and forest industries, research institutes, and ecological NGOs. The System's Council is responsible for the practical implementation of the MFCS. Its responsibilities include:

- Organizing the MFCS functioning; coordinating the work of the Forest Certification Centers;
- Preparing the indicators to be confirmed in MFCS;
- Designing the procedure for evaluating the professional competence of the auditing experts;
- Participating in accrediting the Forest Certification Centers;
- Maintaining a register of the accredited Forest Certification Centers;
- Delivering information of the MFCS for the interested parties;
- Supervising the certification work; and
- Participating in international undertakings in the field of forest certification and cooperating with the forest certification systems abroad.

3.4.4 Committee of Appeal

The Committee of Appeal is responsible for handling the appeals made by the forest users (logging companies) regarding the performance of the Forest Certification Centers (FFS, 1999). The Forest Certification Centers must commit to the decisions of the Committee, and the cases cannot be re-handled at the Forest Certification Centers nor at the Ministry of Natural Resources. The applicant has the right to appeal the Committee's decision to the Ministry of Natural Resources or to the civil court (FFS, 1999).

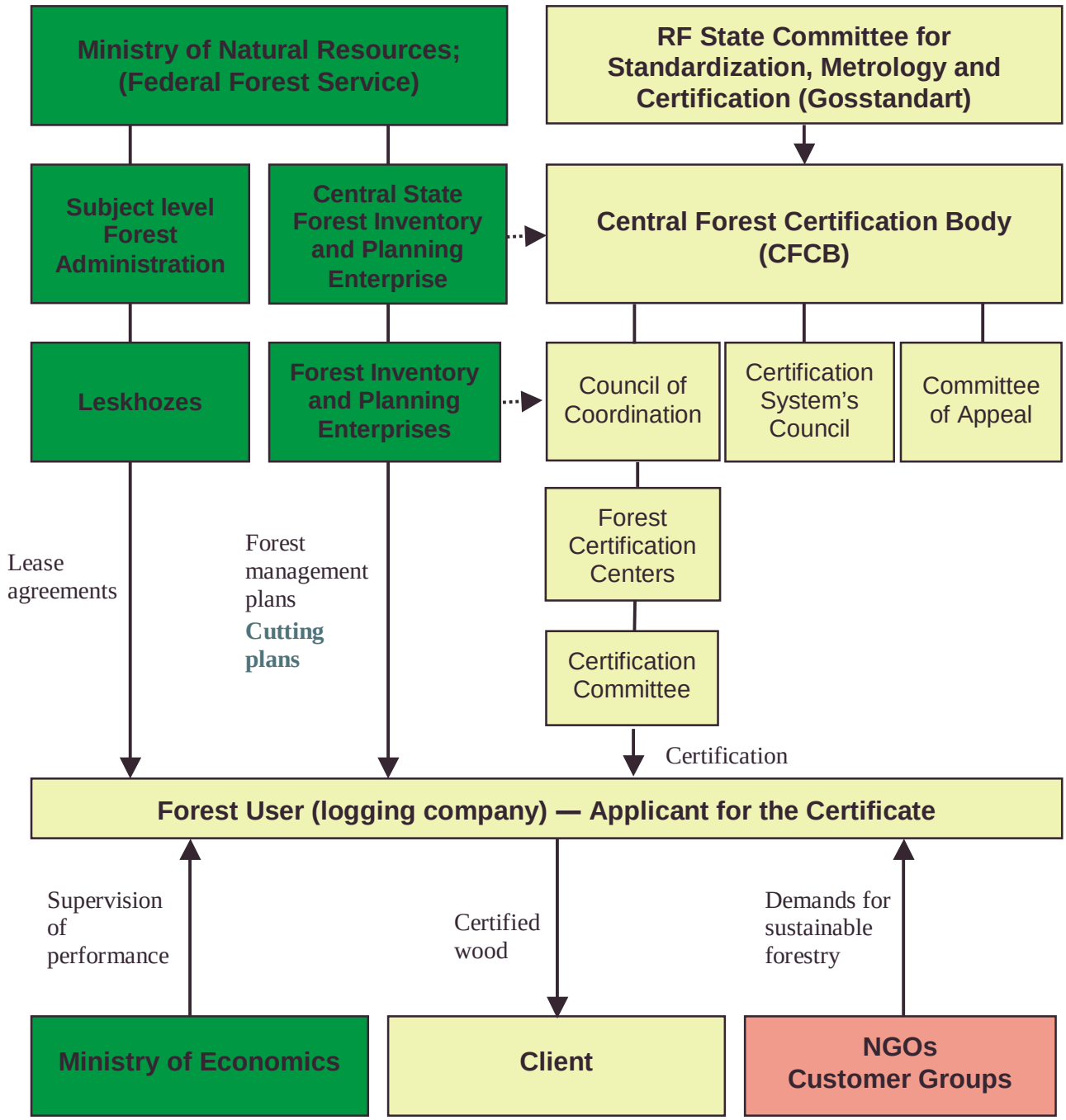

Figure 2: The organizational set up of the MFCS.

3.4.5 Forest Certification Centers

The Forest Certification Centers (certification bodies) are responsible for carrying out the certification. They are accredited by the Ministry of Natural Resources (accrediting body), supported by the professionals of Gosstandart and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The prerequisites for accreditation state that Forest Certification Centers must be independent of forest management units, forest users, and customers, and have a proven knowledge of how to exercise control of forest management and forest use. Forest Certification Centers must have permanent staff and they have to keep a register of the given certificates. Any interested party must have free access to familiarize itself with the register. The chief of the Forest Certification Center actually issues the certificate to the forest user.

Each Forest Certification Center has a Council of Coordination, which is responsible for supervising the daily performance of the Center and acting as an interlocutor between the Central Forest Certification Body and all interested parties, such as local people, environmental organizations, research institutions and the accrediting body (FFS, 1999).

3.4.6 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

The work plan for auditing should be approved by the chief of the Forest Certification Center. Interested parties (e.g., ecological NGOs) can participate in the implementation of the work according to the plan at their own cost, including the documentary analysis and the field inspection, if they are included in the Committee by the chief of the Forest Certification Center. In addition, if they are included in the Committee, the NGOs also have the right to participate in the off-schedule check-up, including documentary check-up and selective inspection on the cutting sites, or sites where secondary forest resources have been collected for commercial purposes (FFS, 1999).

3.4.7 Forest User

The forest user (logging company) is the applicant for the Mandatory Forest Certification. The user should sell only certified timber and mark it with the mark of conformity. The forest user has to specify the normative documents used as the basis of certification, and provide this information to the client. The user is also expected to inform the certification center about any changes in the performance of forestry practices since the auditing.

3.5 Financing

The state is responsible for financing all tasks related to organizing the mandatory forest certification. These include:

- Developing the rules for mandatory certification;
- Participating in international cooperation in the field of forest certification;
- Conducting research work on certification having a nationwide value;
- Handling state control and supervision of certification;
- Maintaining the state register on certification and accreditation; and
- Providing official information about the certification.

The forest user is expected to pay for the auditing work on mandatory certification. The Certification Law approves adding these expenses to the price of the product.

3.6 Criteria for Certification

The Certification System's Council is in charge of developing the certification criteria. This work is carried out together with forestry experts and representatives of forest industries and scientists engaged in environmental protection. Representatives of ecological NGOs may also be invited to participate in this work. The current, tentative set of criteria includes the 24 normative documents listed in Table 4.

The following criteria were distilled from the documents listed in Table 4. This list illustrates how the different aspects of sustainable forestry are taken into consideration in these documents.

Ecological Sustainability

1. Forest management practiced by the forest user must ensure the conservation of biological diversity in the forests (Forest Code, Article 54).
2. The forest user (lease holder) is expected to refrain from activities causing soil erosion or other disturbances to the natural environment and water courses (Regulations on Leasing Forest Fund Parcels, Order No. 55, 8 April 1998).
3. The forest user (lease holder) is expected to design a management plan for the leased forest land together with the environmental authorities (Regulations on Leasing Forest Fund Parcels, Order No. 55, 8 April 1998).
4. Final fellings are prohibited at the following sites belonging to Group I forests: restricted forest belts along river banks, lakes, reservoirs, and other bodies of water; restricted forest belts that protect the spawning grounds of valuable commercial fish stocks; anti-erosion forests; forest shelter belts along main railroad lines and major highways; state forest shelter belts; pine forest belts; forests in desert, semi-desert, steppe, forest-steppe, and sparsely forested mountain areas having great importance for environmental protection; forests of green belts of settlements and economic entities; forests of the first and second belts of sanitary protection zones of water supply sources; forests of the first, second, and third zones of sanitary protection districts of health resorts/mountain areas; particularly valuable forest tracts; forests of scientific and historical importance; natural monuments; nut-harvesting areas; fruit tree plantations; pre-tundra forests; forests of *zapovedniks*; forests of national parks; forests of natural parks, and other reserved sites (Forest Code, Article 114).
5. In mountain forests only such felling methods shall be used that safeguard the protective, anti-erosion, and water regulating significance of these forests (Forest Code, Article 114).
6. Habitats of endangered species must be listed in the plan for sanitary cuttings. (Instructions for Sanitary Cutting in the Russian Federation, Order No. 1458, 27 January 1998).
7. Collection of species listed in the Red Data Book is prohibited (Forest Code, Article 86).

Table 4: Normative documents used as criteria for mandatory forest certification.

	Name	Approved by
1	Forest Code of the Russian Federation	President of the Russian Federation, 29.1.1997, Decree No. 22-ФЗ.
2	Stumpage rules in the forests of the Russian Federation	Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation as of 1.6.1998, No. 551.
3	Instructions on the allocation and estimation of felling sites in the forests of the Russian Federation	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 15.6.1993, No. 155.
4	Sanitary regulations in the forests of the Russian Federation	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 15.1.1998, No. 10.
5	Fire prevention regulations in the forests of the Russian Federation	Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation as of 9.9.1993, No. 886.
6	Instructions on examination of felling sites, (resin) tapping sites, and sites allocated for harvesting of minor forest resources	Order of the USSR State Committee for Forests as of 1.11.1985, No. 130.
7	Instructions on preservation of young growth and undergrowth stands of economically valuable species by harvesting timber and receiving regenerated felling sites from loggers	Order of the USSR State Committee for Forests as of 28.12.1983, No. 147.
8	Final cutting rules in mountain forests of North Caucasus	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 7.5.1993, No. 115.
9	Final cutting rules in plain forests of the European part of the Russian Federation	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 31.8.1993, No. 226.
10	Final cutting rules in the Urals forests	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 30.9.1993, No. 259.
11	Final cutting rules in the forests of West Siberia	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 29.10.1993, No. 292.
12	Final cutting rules in the forests of East Siberia	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 30.3.1994, No. 70.
13	Final cutting rules in the forests of the Far East	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 30.7.1993, No. 201.
14	Directions on tending cutting in plain forests of European Russia	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 29.12.1993, No. 347.
15	Directions on tending cutting in mountain forests of North Caucasus	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 28.9.1993, No. 253.
16	Directions on tending cutting in the Urals forests	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 30.9.1993, No. 259.
17	Directions on tending cutting in the forests of West Siberia	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 29.10.1993, No. 292.
18	Directions on tending cutting in the forests of East Siberia	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 30.3.1994, No. 70.
19	Directions on tending cutting in the forests of the Far East	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 29.11.1993, No. 315.
20	Branch Standard ISO 56-97-93 “Tending cutting. Quality assessments”	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 22.11.1993, No. 310.
21	Regional instructions on reforestation	Federal Forest Service of Russia.
22	Regional regulations of harvesting minor forest resources	Executive authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation.
23	Regulations on leasing parcels of the Forest Fund	Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation as of 24.3.1998, No. 345.
24	Regulations on holding forest auctions	Order of the Federal Forest Service of Russia as of 11.8.1997, No. 99.

Economical Sustainability

1. Both forest use and forest management are prohibited without forest inventories and forest management plans (Forest Code, Article 74).
2. The forest user (lease holder) is expected to regenerate forests at the logging site according to forest management plans (Forest Code, Article 90; Regulations on Leasing Forest Fund Parcels, Order No. 55, 8 April 1998).
3. Applied forestry practices must be based on scientific research (Forest Code, Article 79).
4. Forest management practiced by the forest user has to ensure the productive functions of the forest and ensure an increase in the productivity of forests (Forest Code, Articles 54 and 88).
5. The forest user is responsible for protecting the forests from forest fires (Forest Code, Article 94).
6. The forest user must commit to the following activities in order to protect the Forest Fund (Forest Code, Article 99): (i) use methodologies and technology not threatening the sanitary condition of the forests; (ii) prevent the expansion of pests and forest diseases; (iii) inform the Ministry of Natural Resources of arising threats caused by pests and diseases.
7. Forest taxes must be paid for all types of forest use (Forest Code, Article 104).
8. The Ministry of Natural Resources defines the minimum rates of stumpage prices (rental charge paid by the forest user). Forty percent of this money must be paid to the federal budget, and 60% must be paid to the subjects of the Russian Federation (Forest Code, Article 106).

Social Sustainability

1. The citizens and NGOs may participate in promoting the sustainable utilization, conservation, and regeneration of the forests (Forest Code, Article 102).
2. The forest user (lease holder) is not allowed to cause harm to the health of the citizens (Regulations on Leasing Forest Fund Parcels, Order No. 55, 8 April 1998).
3. The forest user is not allowed to violate the rights of other forest users (Forest Code, Article 83).
4. Forest users using forests designated for cultural/recreational, tourism, or sports purposes shall develop and improve these parcels in order to preserve the forests and natural landscapes (Forest Code, Article 123).

Cultural Sustainability

1. Forest management practiced by the forest user must ensure the conservation of the historical, cultural, and natural heritage of the forests (Forest Code, Article 54).
2. Citizens have the right to freely enter and stay in forests and collect for their own purpose wild-growing fruits, berries, nuts, mushrooms, other food resources, medicinal plants, and technical raw materials; participate in cultural and recreational activities; and to hunt unless regulated by some other norms (Forest Code, Article 21, Article 86).
3. Leasing of parcels of the Forest Fund shall be done openly, taking into account the interests of the population living in the area (Forest Code, Article 35).

4. The use of the Forest Fund in the traditional settlements of indigenous minorities and ethnic communities shall secure the traditional way of life for these people (Forest Code, Article 124).

The number of orders and regulations (indicators) belonging to the 24 normative documents exceeds one thousand. In addition, there are more than 30 parameters related to the logging operation, which are inspected by the auditors. These parameters are listed in Attachment No. 10 of the Temporary Regulations of Carrying out Mandatory Certification (FFS, 1999).

3.7 Accreditation

Gosstandart of Russia and the Ministry of Natural Resources are responsible for establishing the rules of accreditation. The accreditation is based on the requirements set for the Forest Certification Centers. These requirements must be delivered to the interested parties if requested. The certified accreditation experts at the Central Forest Certification Body evaluate applications for accreditation. In cases where the experts approve the application, the applicant is subjected to an attestation program. The attestation includes a test certification, in which the applicant must demonstrate his ability to examine the documents and make justified certification decisions (FFS, 1999).

3.8 Auditing

The Forest Certification Center is expected to start treating the forest user's certification application within 15 days of its submission. Staff select a certification system and define the relevant legal acts for carrying out the certification. The applicant has the right to participate in the selection of the certification system — which can also be a voluntary based system, although voluntary certification cannot replace the mandatory one. A contract between the applicant and the Forest Certification Center should be signed, and the Forest Certification Center establishes a Committee for Forest Certification. The Committee includes employees of the Forest Certification Center and (depending on the decision made by the chief of the Forest Certification Center) representatives of research institutions and public organizations. The *leskhozes*, where the forest certification work is to be carried out, shall provide the Committee with the necessary technical documents on forest use and management (FFS, 1999).

The legality of the forest use is first examined using documentary analysis. The second step is to inspect whether performance in the field meets the information given in the documents. Random sampling during the inspection should cover at least 5% of the utilized forest area, including at least two logging sites (parcels). In addition, inspectors should survey a sample of logging sites that are 1–5 years-old, which were harvested earlier by the same logging company under conditions similar to those for which the certification is being sought. Finally, the production facilities of the forest user should be inspected so as to evaluate its technical ability to conduct sustainable forestry. These facilities include available technical and material resources, and qualified manpower and managing staff (FFS, 1999).

The results of the inspection are recorded in protocols, which are to be signed by the members of the Certification Committee. The forest user receives one copy of the protocols. The chief of the Forest Certification Center analyzes the protocols and makes the final decision about awarding or rejecting the certificate, and about possible preconditions. The certificate must be signed by the Forest Certification Center or by a notary (FFS, 1999).

The certified logging company may be subjected to off-schedule direct inspection, if such need arises from state or public control of forest use. A specific committee is nominated by the Forest Certification Center for such an operation. The committee collects and analyzes the information on certified timber, conducts a field inspection, and checks up on the use of the certificate. The results of the direct inspection are registered in an act.[6] This act is kept in the Forest Certification Center and copies are transmitted to the forest user and organizations that took part in the direct inspection. On the basis of the results of the direct inspection, the Forest Certification Center makes a decision on continuing, suspending, or terminating the certificate. The decision is forwarded to the Ministry of Natural Resources (Moscow), the regional *leskhozes*, and the Central Forest Certification Body (FFS, 1999).

The validity of the certificate ceases if it is deleted from the mandatory forest certification register. The certificate may be renewed, provided that any discrepancy has been corrected and confirmed — after repeated checks — by the responsible Forest Certification Center (FFS, 1999).

3.9 Experiences of the Test Certification

The rules for mandatory certification were tested in practice during 2000. Voluntary based testing was performed in the Arkhangelsk, Novgorod, and Leningrad regions, the Republic of Karelia and the Primorye Territory, supported by timber industry enterprises and local communities. The Forest Certification Centers were established in the testing regions, at the premises of the Forest Inventory and Planning Enterprises (Sevzaplesproyekt, Karellesproyekt, Sevlesproyekt, Dallesproyekt). The Central State Inventory and Planning Enterprise in Moscow was assigned to function as the Central Forest Certification Body by the chief of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Over 1 million m^3 of timber were certified at the Republic of Karelia and the Leningrad Region (Strakhov, 2000b).

Test certification indicated that the logging companies were interested in receiving the MFCS certificate. A large number of companies volunteered for the testing operation. One large, well-known Russian company did not meet the certification criteria, which led to public debate in the local press that injured the company's reputation. The company has now revised its management policy and put more investment into its staff in order to meet the MFCS criteria. The auditing of this particular company will be repeated during the summer of 2001.

[6] The term "act"means a special folder.

One major problem revealed by test certification relates to the question of responsibility: the quality of forest management is not only dependent upon the performance of the forest user (logging company), but also upon the quality of the forest management plan made by the forest inventory enterprises, and the allocation of cutting rights issued by the *leskhozes*. Thus, mistakes made by the Forest Inventory Enterprise or the *leskhoze* may hinder the forest user in meeting the certification criteria.

Another alternative for arranging certification could be a *leskhoze*-based approach. In this case, independent third party auditing could be extended to the forest management plans and the forest management practices carried out by the *leskhoze*. Finnish foresters have frequently suggested this approach. However, such a model would make it almost impossible to share the costs of auditing between the various interest groups. Thus, the Russian forest authorities do not support it.

The next important step in developing the MFCS will be the test auditing of a large North-American forest company during the summer of 2001. Passing the MFCS auditing has been set as a prerequisite for the company's application for an ISO 14001 environment management system.

Accepted MFCS auditing may also become a general prerequisite for PEFC or FSC certification in the future.

4 Discussion

The Russian Forest Code of 1997 is generally considered solid and well in line with the current international view about social, economic, and environmental prerequisites of sustainable forest management. However, Astemark (1997) and Gunther (1997) argue that the legal institutions in Russia lack the necessary facilities for controlling legislation and decrees, and that this situation enables a large gray zone between legal and illegal activities. Illegal loggings are also thought to be widespread, with one source reporting that total exports are double the official ones (Russian…, 1999). The introduction of a mandatory certification scheme that strengthens the control of legislation seems to be well justified under these conditions, even if the criteria do not bring any new requirements to forestry practices.

There are several reasons to believe that MFCS will be capable of improving the performance of the logging companies. These include:

- MFCS provides 'third party' auditing of logging company performance, which is a new feature in the supervision of forest legislation. Gosstandart, a permanent member of the world-renowned ISO, designs accreditation of the certification body (the "third party" Forest Certification Center).
- The mandatory scheme gives the state or public organizations the ability to supervise forest loggings, and request a non-scheduled audit of the logging site if deemed necessary. In addition, environmental organizations have the right to participate in the auditing procedure, albeit at their own cost.

- Test certification showed that failure to obtain the MFCS certificate might cause public debate and harm the company's image. Such a situation would drive the company to improve its performance and follow the law.

Ratified international agreements have an important role in promoting sustainable forest management in Russia, due to their high legislative status in the hierarchy of norms (Table 1). The criteria for sustainable forest management (Table 2) were designed to meet the demands of the Montreal and Helsinki processes, and they are aimed particularly at federal and subject-level forest policy. The criteria constitute a tool for a general followup of the development trends in the forestry sector, having only a limited influence at the *leskhoze* level. The MFCS is aimed to fill that gap. It is going to control forest use practice at logging sites, and put general forest policy into action at the operational level.

GIS-based forest management planning and forest certification are both modern tools for sustainable forest management. Up-to-date databases of forest resources serve as cheap and voluminous sources of information for auditing, and they also facilitate selecting inspection sites in the field. Regular and non-scheduled inspections of the databases will assist in maintaining their credibility.

The restructuring of the forestry administration caused a delay in the registration aspects of the MFCS. Thus, legal certificates cannot be issued yet, and the certification centers are temporarily closed. Only a few auditing operations will be carried out during the summer of 2001. However, the Ministry of Natural Resources is fully committed to developing the MFCS, and the registration of the scheme is only a question of time.

The existing structure of the MFCS makes it technically possible to link MFCS together with the FSC, or any other voluntary scheme, as described in sections 3.2.2 and 3.8. However, the Certification Centers cannot conduct FSC audits yet, because the FSC has not been formally registered in Russia. Nonetheless, the Certification Centers should become accredited by the FSC so they would be prepared to issue FSC certificates. Both the registration and accreditation would be very complicated and time-consuming procedures. In the last analysis, there seems to be very little political interest for such efforts.

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