



Implementing criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management

Regional Workshop in

Zagreb, Croatia 26-27 March 2013

Recommendations

The background and objective of the workshop (WS) was to define and understand the various aspects of the implementation of criteria and indicators (C&I) at the national level; to share experiences and identify regional issues for the Western Balkans; and to propose recommendations on C&I implementation in the region. The WS was structured across 3 Working Groups (WG) according to applications listed in the working definition¹, developed under the Implementing Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management in Europe (CI-SFM) project.

- Working Group 1 focused on policy (application 1 and 4),
- Working Group 2 focused on monitoring and reporting (application 2 and 3), and
- Working Group 3 focused on the environment (application 5).

Results² from the WS confirm that there are only limited and/or indirect applications of C&I throughout most of the Western Balkans region (excluding the case of Slovenia that was brought forward as a positive example). It also demonstrates a general lack of awareness as regards the implementation of C&I at the national level. Noted examples of C&I applications were certification (e.g. FSC) or international and national reporting (e.g. FAO, UNECE or by relevant ministries or through forest management plans).

From the discussions in the WS (both in the initial WGs and from the final discussion) some major issues were raised. Given the lack of C&I applications and considering the specific needs of the Western Balkans region, these are primarily related to the institutional and governance-related problems and/or barriers concerning the various applications of C&I, and not the C&I set directly. These are as follows:

¹ The CI-SFM working definition is available [online](#).

² Proceedings are published on the [workshop's website](#).

- The most commonly noted issue throughout all WGs **was a lack of interest** for C&I amongst policy-makers, interlinked with a **lack of awareness and/or knowledge** at all governance levels (from the general public to stakeholders and policy-makers). This highlights the need for **raising interest and to make C&I attractive**, from the top to bottom. It was noted that if the current negotiations for an LBA were to be successful this might remedy the lack of interest for C&I implementation amongst policy-makers. Also pressure from the EU-level may help to address this issue (e.g. drive for accession).
- Connected to the previous issue is the need for **capacity building**. This is again a problem at all governance levels, ranging from a **lack of human capacities** amongst relevant national institutions (e.g. Ministries in charge of C&I implementation) to stakeholders (e.g. NGOs and research institutes). One suggestion (as a bottom-up approach) was to disseminate relevant information (adjusted to the target audience), including clear and positive case examples that demonstrate the benefits of C&I applications. Future WS's organised by FOREST EUROPE could in part facilitate this process, namely, by incorporating more **capacity-building elements** into their workshops (e.g. provide training and to utilise WS participants networks to distribute information). Another, top-down, suggestion was to lobby so that international organisations (such as FAO) exerts more pressure on policy-makers to develop capacities in relevant institutions.
- The lack of a clear institutional setup and a pervasive lack of capacities is the main problem facing C&I implementation in the Western Balkans region. This is however a complex issue that can not be resolved through improved interest and capacities alone, but it requires improved **horizontal and vertical coordination and communications** (e.g. cross-sectoral communication), resolving **legislative issues and jurisdiction** (e.g. address who collects and have access to data), **stakeholder involvement** (e.g. tackling different perceptions of C&I and improving the understanding of indicators), **complementarity of C&I sets** (e.g. reduce reporting overload, harmonise definitions and data collection to ensure the involvement and data demand of other sectors), and **financing mechanisms** (e.g. establishing Forest Information Systems), etc.

All the above-noted issues provide a generic regional overview as regards the difficulties in implementing C&I. The absence of clear C&I applications in the Western Balkans region makes it difficult to provide concrete recommendations for how to improve the implementation of C&I. The integrated recommendations are thus rather generic and focused on how C&I implementation may be fostered throughout this region.