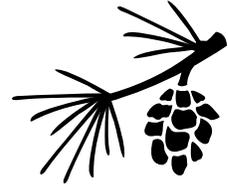


Background Fact Sheet

Comparing Certification Systems and C&I



Two Distinct Tools

As we strive to define and achieve sustainable forest management, different tools have emerged to help guide and measure forest management decisions and outcomes. Two of these tools, Criteria and Indicators (C&I) and Forest Management Certification, have relationships that are at times easily confused. This fact sheet strives to alleviate some of that confusion by defining the tools and clarifying their similarities and differences.

Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators

A seminar was held in Montréal, Canada in 1993 in order to identify measurable criteria and indicators for monitoring sustainable forest management. Worldwide experts in the sustainable development of boreal and temperate forests attended the seminar, and it was their hope that the development of C&I would facilitate the measurement of various aspects of forests, as well as monitor continued progress towards sustainable forest management. Now termed, *The Montréal Process*, this seminar developed seven criteria and 67 indicators that have been utilized in various forms by participating countries, including the United States, in an effort to quantify sustainable forestry.

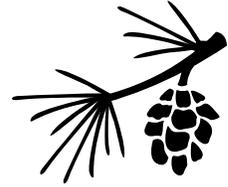
Forest Management Certification

Forest management certification is the process by which forest management practices are evaluated against a set of standards. It is a tool that benefits both landowners, in terms of market share, as well as consumers, who are assured that their purchase comes from a forest whose management meets certain standards.

These two approaches to achieving sustainable forest management share several commonalities, including their voluntary approach, their commitment to data collection and reporting, their inclusion of the three key elements of sustainability – social, economic, and environmental – and their contributions to society through enhancing our understanding of sustainable forest management. However, there are significant aspects that distinguish these approaches from one another, including scale, outcome, orientation, audience, and participation. A key difference is the fact that the C&I address conditions in a descriptive manner, while certification offers a prescriptive orientation.

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Comparing Certification Systems and C&I



Similarities between C&I and Certification (Derived from: Washburn, Block, 2001^{*})

Tracing most certification systems and C&I back to their roots, it becomes apparent that, although their objectives differ, they have several things in common:

- **Broad Goals:** Certification and C&I both incorporate a common broad goal of sustainable forest management.
- **Contribution to Society:** Both are intended to contribute to society's ability to understand conceptually, and achieve practically, sustainable forest management.
- **Key Elements of Sustainability:** Both incorporate elements of social, economic, and environmental considerations relevant to the sustainable management of forests – some of those common elements include biodiversity, water quality, forest cover, long-term impacts, and forest planning.
- **Focus on Data:** Both stress the notion of better and consistent data.
- **Approach:** Both are voluntary, non-regulatory approaches to understanding and facilitating sustainable forest management.
- **Use of C&I:** Certification assessments are gauged against standards that include criteria and indicators, specific to that certification system, as their framework.

Differences between C&I and Certification

Despite these common elements, there are several significant distinctions between C&I and certification systems.

- **Scale:** C&I are intended to be a framework for all forests, crossing ownership boundaries, while certification is intended for a single ownership or group of ownerships. The Montréal Process C&I are specifically intended for use at the national scale, but can be adapted to smaller regional and local applications.
- **Outcome:** The Montréal Process C&I contain no target standards or performance expectations, while certification's intent is to provide an assessment against performance standards.
- **Orientation:** The C&I address conditions and processes in a descriptive way, while certification addresses goals in a prescriptive way.
- **Audience:** The C&I are oriented toward the policy-making community as a framework for analysis within a country and comparison between countries, while certification is directed toward the marketplace in the interest of differentiating companies or landowners and the products that flow from their forests.
- **Participation:** C&I benefit from and rely on collaboration among public agencies and private organizations, while certification standards are set privately, without the influence of the federal government.

^{*} Michael P. Washburn, Nadine E. Block, Comparing Forest Management Certification Systems and the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators (October, 2001) 1, 7-8.