

# HCVs in Natural Resource Certification

## HCV HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE *resource network*



The High Conservation Value (HCV) framework is a valuable, flexible conservation tool with practical applications in natural resource management, land-use planning, the design of responsible purchasing and investment policies and conservation advocacy. The HCV approach was developed in the context of FSC forest certification but is relevant to all kinds of ecosystems and habitats.

The High Conservation Value Resource Network is a network of organisations and individuals using the HCV approach, including: forest owners and managers; suppliers, buyers and certifiers of sustainable timber, palm oil, soy, and non-timber forest products; international development agencies; and environmental and social NGOs. The Network promotes practical conservation by supporting collaboration, providing information on the evolving usage of HCVs, and ensuring that a consistent approach to HCVs is understood and applied throughout the world.



### How does certification work?

Natural resource certification enables producers to demonstrate to consumers that their products are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.

Certification is a voluntary, market driven approach, whereby producers agree to comply with a widely recognized **standard** drawn up by an independent body, and to be assessed against this standard by an accredited auditor (the Certification Body). Certified companies can label their products and make certain claims about their performance.

### Development of the HCV framework

The HCV concept was introduced for forest management certification by the **Forest Stewardship Council** (FSC, 1999), to define forest areas of outstanding importance - **High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF)**. The HCVs include all critical biological, ecological social and cultural values.

The HCV framework requires that land use managers must *identify* any HCVs that occur within their forest management units, *manage* them in order to maintain or enhance the values identified, and *monitor* the success of this management. Within natural forests, appropriate HCV management may range from complete protection to careful extractive uses such as

selective logging, depending on the specific context.

In order to help forest managers apply the HCV concept in practice, WWF and IKEA supported the development of a global 'HCVF Toolkit' (Proforest 2003). The Toolkit helps to define HCV forests and provides guidance on identifying, managing and monitoring each type of HCV.

The global guidelines can be used in any forest system, but need expert interpretation. Stakeholder groups in a large and growing list of countries have therefore developed National Interpretations of the HCVF Toolkit. The toolkits and many more supporting materials such as 'Good Practice Guidance' (ProForest 2008) for forest managers, and for practitioners and auditors, have also been produced and are available from the HCV Resource Network website: [www.hcvnetwork.org](http://www.hcvnetwork.org).

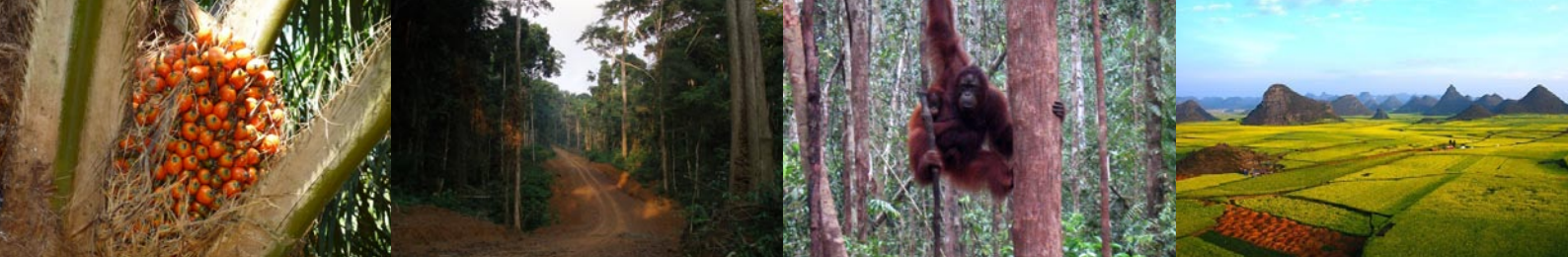
### HCVs in forest certification

To date, FSC has issued certificates for sustainable forest management covering 110 Million Ha of forest lands in 81 countries. The number and quality of HCV assessments carried out for certification purposes has steadily increased. In addition to FSC, the **Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC)** has also adopted HCVF in its standard.

Certification is a voluntary approach, whereby producers agree to comply with and be assessed against a widely recognized standard. It enables them to make verifiable sustainability claims.



[www.hcvnetwork.org](http://www.hcvnetwork.org)  
[info@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:info@hcvnetwork.org)



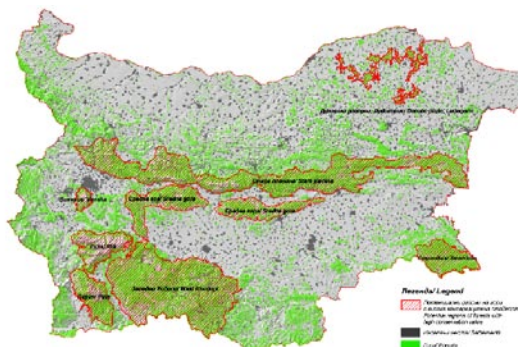
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*Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship*

**“Principle 9: Maintenance of high conservation value forests:** Management activities in **high conservation value forests** shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a **precautionary approach.**”

Case studies, good practice guidelines and support for users are appearing at an ever increasing rate. The adoption and national interpretation of HCVs has been driven variously by timber and pulp companies (for privately managed forests worldwide), national governments (for public forests, particularly in Romania and Bulgaria), and international conservation NGOs.

Increasing numbers of landscape-level HCVF maps are being produced to help forest managers make informed site-level decisions.



HCV Forests in Bulgaria, © WWF

**HCVs in agriculture and carbon certification**

The value of the HCV framework has been recognised by other certification schemes for agricultural commodities. Major palm oil producers, buyers and social and environmental NGOs convened the **Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)** to agree on a set of sustainability Principles and Criteria, including HCV protection (RSPO Standard 2007).

RSPO members account for about 40% of the global production of Palm Oil, and RSPO-certified oil became available in 2008.

*RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production.*

**RSPO Criterion 5.2:** The status of rare, threatened or endangered species and **high conservation value habitats** if any, that exist in the plantation, that could be affected by plantation or mill management, shall be identified and their conservation taken into account in management plans and operations.

**RSPO Criterion 7.3:** New plantings since November 2005, have not replaced primary forest or any area required to maintain or enhance one or more **High Conservation Values.**

HCV areas are also singled out for protection in the **Basel Criteria** for Responsible Soy Production, the **Round Table on Responsible Soy (RTRS)**, the **Round Table on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB)**, the **UK Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO)**, the **Dutch Cramer Commission** for Sustainable Production of Biomass, and the **Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) Standard** for carbon projects.

**Safeguards:** *The HCV Resource Network Charter specifies Principles of Application for the use of the HCV approach. These require legal compliance and respect for tenure, customary rights and consent procedures; prevent any conversion activities which could adversely affect HCVs, and require rigorous and balanced stakeholder consultation prior to any other conversion; and call for responsible management of other (non-HCV) biodiversity and environmental values.*

**HCVs in Purchasing and Investment Policies**

Natural commodity buyers and retailers who have HCV-specific product sourcing policies or certification requirements include Tetra Pak, Staples and IKEA (for wood products), Cargill, BP Biofuels, Asda (part of WalMart) and Tesco (for vegetable oils).

Major investors including the International Finance Corporation (IFC), HSBC, ABN AMRO, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America have also specified that they will not finance companies or projects that damage HCV Forests.

