A Response

The multiple stakeholders National Initiative Meeting, Rotorua, May 2001

Chris Perley and Euan Mason

The debate over the setting of New Zealand-applicable Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards has been the source of concern to some members for about a year. Central to this concern has been the possible exclusion of sustainable management initiatives within indigenous forests through the preparation of plantation forestry standards, apparently at the request of a number of environmental organisations. The early result of some of this work was analysed by Dr Euan Mason in the last issue of the New Zealand Journal of Forestry.

It is perhaps best to be frank about some common interests between the more preservation-orientated environmental organisations and the more utilitarian portions of the forestry industry. The Institute has a broader agenda than either of these perspectives.

Chris Perley and Euan Mason represented the NZIF Council at the Rotorua meeting. Councillor David Rhodes was also present, as were a number of Institute members acting in other capacities.

Council had considered the NZIF's position prior to the meeting, and to this extent we were prepared. Our position related to three broad principles:

- That it was desirable for any standard setting to consider all forestry issues in an integrated manner, where the parts are not treated in isolation from the whole. This includes the social, economic and environmental "parts", and the indigenous and planted "parts".
- That any process developed should not be exclusive of other parties, especially from their achievement of legitimate sustainable management objectives.
- That any technical standards should be grounded in science.

Several weeks prior to the Rotorua meeting the NZIF Council made it plain that while it supported the idea of the initiative, it was concerned about the separation of exotic plantation from indigenous forest standards. This was reported in a newsletter sent to every member. It was also raised at the Annual General Meeting in Auckland and there was an opportunity for people to discuss the NZIF position there.

One could argue that we could have done more homework about the nature of the process, but this was an inaugural meeting and most participants were learning how the FSC process works. We were no less prepared than many other participants. Our uncertainty relating to our chamber membership was related to the definitions provided of the chambers.

The definitions provided at the meeting were as follows:

"The economic chamber is for those with a commercial interest in forestry and forest products, e.g., producers, certification bodies, forest owners, dealers, retailers, manufacturers, consulting companies.

The environmental (sic) and is limited to non-profit, non-governmental organisations and individuals dedicated to biodiversity and environmental conservation or studies, with a demonstrated commitment to environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable forest stewardship.

The social chamber is for indigenous

organisations and social movements and individuals involved in such organisations which are active in the promotion of environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable forest stewardship."

Though a case could be made for the Institute's attendance in any one of the chambers, as a non-profit organisation it appears to suit the latter chambers rather than the economic chamber. We have an interest across the whole range of forestry issues, and it is perhaps unfortunate that broadly focused organisations such as the Institute are made to join narrowly focussed chambers by the FSC process.

There was opposition to the NZIF (and others) presence in the environmental chamber from some environmental organisations when each group separated into chambers to discuss the Forest Standard proposal. Those opposing NZIF representatives included a joint Forest and Bird, Native Forest Action, and Federated Mountain Clubs representative, a World Wildlife Fund representative and a Greenpeace representative. Guy Salmon from Ecologic defended our attendance, even when first Euan Mason and then Chris Perley offered to withdraw (Euan left to attend the Social Chamber).

Not expecting that some in-depth consideration of the NZIF's raison d'etre would be an agenda item, none of the NZIF representatives had the constitution available, though some relevant elements of the NZIF's Forestry Policy (ratified at the 2001 AGM) were presented. The upshot of the discussion was that NZIF attended the Social Chamber for the next break-out, and our future participation in this chamber has been confirmed through subsequent developments (see David Rhodes' article; this issue).

The Environmental Chamber returned a split vote with regard to how the national initiative should address indigenous forestry certification, with Ecologic and NZIF endorsing the provision for indigenous standards within the national initiative, and the three other environmental organisations in opposition. The Social, Maori and Economic chambers all came back supporting the indigenous forestry initiatives. The NZIF position was therefore in accord with the consensus of the other representatives in attendance. It also appeared to be the majority view that any standard setting be as much in parallel as possible to ensure complementarity.

It is quite wrong to imply that our support for certification is for only economic gain. NZIF is in favour of certification for a considerably wider range of reasons than those that are only economic or market related.

It is difficult to see how the NZIF position represented "a complete lack of industry support from the NZIF". The Institute supports the FSC process and professional management of all our forests for all their values, plantation and otherwise.

The correspondent suggests that the NZIF's arguments, "came close to derailing the entire national initiative process." The NZIF naturally responded to points raised during the debate, and there was support for our positions within the room. Like many involved in the proposal for the first time we also had a number of questions related to process. The alternative would have been to say nothing when important principles were at stake concerning wider forestry concerns, some of which have the potential to have a negative impact on many of our members. The FSC process is all about debate, and failing to respond when these principles were jeopardised would have derailed the National Initiative.

National Forest Standard(s) process outlined

David Rhodes

A workshop was held in Rotorua May 20-22 to initiate the development of a New Zealand forestry standard. For those who haven't had direct involvement I have set out my personal observations on what has led up to this, and what the intentions are.

Certification of forest management and labelling of forest products is a growing phenomenon worldwide. Increasingly timber suppliers and their customers are demanding environmentally sound products. Certification provides consumers with a guarantee in the form of a written certificate from an independent third party that the products they are purchasing come from well-managed forests. Environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOs) and the private sector are using certification to reach environmental goals through market initiatives. The main focus for companies seeking certification is, however, market acceptance and market access. Around the world there are now five key certification systems operating. These are the two international systems, ISO 14001 Environmental Management System and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) label, and the three "regional" initiatives, the Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC), the American Forest

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