

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'être* 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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and Paper Association's Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) National Sustainable Forest Management System Standard. Concurrently there has been the development of over 70 separate national standard setting processes.

The New Zealand forest industry's strategy in response to this trend was VEP – the Verifiable Environmental Performance system. VEP is based on a report card that will be audited by an independent third party. It was deliberately developed as a New Zealand initiative to specifically recognise local conditions. The intention is that VEP can subsequently be linked to other international certification systems via the process of mutual recognition whereby each process recognises the other as offering an equivalent level of assurance. Indeed support for VEP from industry and other stakeholders was always contingent on it being able to achieve mutual recognition. It was felt at the time that alternative certification systems, such as FSC, might cause problems for New Zealand plantations.

Notwithstanding this concern, New Zealand's uptake of FSC certification has been reasonably high among the larger players and a number of smaller sawmills, and FSC certification of indigenous forestry in New Zealand has also been achieved. However this avenue is likely to be more difficult in the future with environmental groups now opposed to this approach because of concerns over consistency.

Against these developments, discussions began last year between the plantation industry and environmental groups on the establishment of a plantation forest standard and a working group was formed. The objectives were to establish a single platform for certification of New Zealand plantation forestry modelled on the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme (UKWAS). This is seen as building on the New Zealand Accord and the Forest Plantation principles. The intention is to provide consistency, clarity, and certainty, of requirements and performance. Compliance costs should also be lower than pursuing certification on a case by case basis. An added incentive is provided by the environmental groups expressing opposition to individual certification.

Like UKWAS, the plantation forest standard will be developed following FSC guidelines. By adhering to FSC rules, the expectation is that adherence to the national forest standard should almost guarantee FSC certification if a subsequent application is made. This is not to say that certification will necessarily be pursued, or that

if it is it must be FSC. In theory the standard could be used as the basis for achieving any other certification including VEP for example, although it is hard to see why FSC wouldn't be the option of choice given its international recognition.

It should be noted, however, that the VEP report card is intended to be applied to the pulp and paper, solid wood, and panels sectors. In this sense VEP potentially offers the industry an additional market edge which FSC does not as it is restricted to forest management.

Which brings us to Rotorua

Industry and non-industry stakeholders with an interest were invited to attend. Development of a standard under the FSC guidelines requires the formation of three chambers - economic, social, and environmental. The chambers were described, and attending stakeholders were asked to consider which of these they wished to participate in. In a nutshell, the outcomes of the workshop were as follows:

- The meeting agreed that a National Initiative process should proceed and that a National Initiative Working Group (NIWG) should be established to oversee the advancement and promotion of forestry certification in New Zealand, including the development of performance standards for plantation and indigenous forest management.
- A fourth chamber would be established for Maori landowners, organisations and individuals.
- Two technical committees would be established to develop separate performance standards for (i) plantation forestry management and (ii) indigenous forestry management, and that where and when appropriate these technical committees will work together on "common" performance issues (i.e health and safety). The future of the Indigenous Forestry Management Technical Committee is uncertain as the Environment Chamber have opted not to participate at this stage. A final response on their participation is expected from the Environment Chamber by late August, 2001.

Each of the three bodies - the overarching NIWG and the two Technical Committees are intended to be composed of 12 members – three from each of the four chambers as illustrated in Figure 1.

The industry and ENGO's were familiar with the process and clear on what their objectives were. For participants in the other chambers, however, the meeting presented the first opportunity to discuss the national standards proposal and at times there was a need for greater clarification. The linkage between plantation, and indigenous, forest standards development, for

