



FSC Controlled Wood Risk Assessment for Switzerland

Evaluation of risks in relation to the procurement of uncertified timber from Swiss forests

Version 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

This national risk assessment, conducted by the FSC Working Group for Switzerland (FSC Switzerland), aims at evaluating the risks related to the procurement of uncertified timber to be used for FSC Mixed Sources products.

The assessment is limited to category 3 of the Controlled Wood categories, i.e. timber from uncertified high conservation value forests within the alpine region of Switzerland.

FSC Switzerland is conducting this risk assessment following a motion that was passed at its General Assembly on 13 March 2009, brought in by the Swiss Timber Industry Association (HIS).

FSC-PRO-60-002 is applied.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF RISK EVALUATIONS IN SWITZERLAND

For Switzerland, no comprehensive risk assessment has been carried out. Currently available analysis of the situation in Switzerland have, however, repeatedly shown that only the third of the five risk categories are uncertain: timber from uncertified, high conservation value forests. In addition, the uncertainties only apply for the alpine region of Switzerland. The relevant criterion here is that the entire Alpine region, including all neighbouring countries of Switzerland, are part of a WWF Ecoregion 200.

More information on this ecoregion can be found at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0501.html>, or under http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0501_full.html). The official risk register of the FSC at <http://globalforestrisk.nepcon.net/> confirms this provisional judgement.

It must be said that the concrete risks can not be narrowed down exactly. As potentially risky origins in terms of high conservation values, FSC states in its criteria for assessing risks:

Those forest, woodland, or mangrove ecoregions identified by World Wildlife Fund as a Global 200 Ecoregion and assessed by WWF as having a conservation status of endangered or critical. If the Global 200 Ecoregion comprises more than a single terrestrial ecoregion, an ecoregion within the Global 200 Ecoregion can be considered low risk if the sub-ecoregion is assessed with a Conservation Status other than "critical/endangered."

In the respective report by WWF on the Alpine ecoregion, it reads:

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Types and Severity of Threats

The foremost conservation concern in the Alps is the excessive fragmentation and loss of habitats and populations. This mainly threatens the permanence of large carnivores (who are naturally returning or are being reintroduced in the Alps). Moreover, Alpine conservation has to do not only with difficulties in protecting a rather large area, but also with the necessity of dealing with an area that is inhabited and exploited by man (through tourism, agriculture, and power plants/industry), as well as where the air and water pollution factor becomes more and more dangerous. Conservation policies must therefore deal with trends such as the decreasing importance of traditional agriculture, the high intensity of tourism, the expansion of urban centres and the development of commuter systems. This means that any conservation action must have many facets, including topics dealing with wilderness, education, and ecological networks.

Source:

http://www.worldwildlife.org/wildworld/profiles/terrestrial/pa/pa0501_full.html

This assessment of endangering of the attributes to be protected leads to the conclusion that the actual risks to the Alpine ecosystems are mainly originating from the abandoning of traditional agricultural activities, high touristic utilisation, enhancement of urban centres in the mountains and the development of infrastructure to manage the commuter streams.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF NON-CERTIFIED TIMBER FROM THE SWISS ALPINE REGION

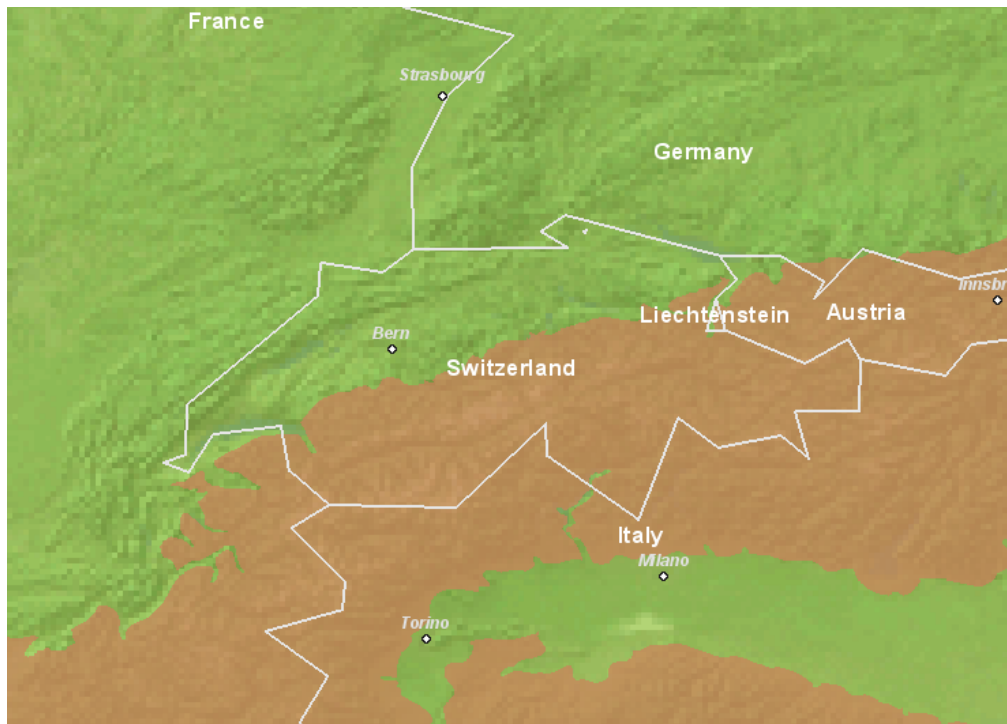
Objective of the risk assessment:

The objective of the risk assessment is to provide information to timber buyers, purchasing roundwood from non FSC certified forests in Switzerland, where further down the value chain, it is intended to use the timber for FSC mixed products. Thus, it is intended that these buyers do not need to make their own risk assessments under their company own controlled wood systems. The risk assessment fills the gap currently preventing to consider all non FSC certified timber from Swiss forests as coming from low risk origins.

Limitation of the risk assessment:

As mentioned above, the FSC risk register considers only non FSC certified timber from the Alpine region with regards to high conservation value forests as timber from sources with “unspecified risks”. All other origins within Switzerland and all other risk criteria classify Switzerland as „low risk“ origin. However, the risk assessment covers all types of forests in the Alpine region of Switzerland, i.e. natural forest, semi-natural forest and plantations.

The following map shows an overview of the delimitation of the assessed area:



Thereby, FSC Switzerland has to limit the assessment to the Swiss territorial part of the Alpine region. All other origins from the Alpine region outside Switzerland must be further assessed by the buying enterprises or the responsible National FSC representation.

The area thus includes the region between north of the southern border of Switzerland to France and Italy and the northern edge of the alpine mountains along the line from the Rhone delta to Lake Geneva – Thun – Lucerne – St. Gallen.

Legal framework:

The legal framework is by the nature of the subject very complex and includes legislation on infrastructure, nature and national heritage protection, environmental protection, agriculture and forestry.

The Alpine bow encompasses various countries, thus the international legal framework has to be considered first. The Alpine Convention is the international convention dealing with the protection of the unique alpine landscape. Although Switzerland has signed and ratified the Alpine Convention in 1998, the relevant Mountain Forest Protocol has been signed by the Swiss Government, but, because of objections by the Swiss Parliament, it has never been ratified. Thus, the Mountain Forest Protocol of the Alpine Convention does not apply to the Swiss part of the Alpine landscape.

We therefore have to limit our risk assessment with regards to the legal framework to the Swiss legislation around the management of the Alpine forests.

The Swiss forestry legislation (Law no. SR 921.0) and the respective Decree (SR 921.01) stipulate the following for **all** types of forests in Switzerland, including all mountain forest:

1. Ban on any conversion of forests to other use form (except when public interest overrules the forest owners interests, on which the forest owner has no direct influence)
2. Sustainability as overall forest stewardship principle
3. Harvesting of trees only allowed following approval by the lowest forest authority applicable to all types of ownership
4. Ban on clear-cutting

5. Additionally: Nature and national heritage protection legislation overruling forest owners interests in conservation areas of public interest

Implementation and legal execution:

This shows that the legal framework is already setting tight limits to the management of all types of forests and ownership.

The implementation and legal execution works on the basis of a dense, comprehensive and at all administrative levels well functioning forest service as mechanism of implementation and monitoring of legal compliance. In addition to the forest service's ground work, there are overarching monitoring mechanisms like the national forest inventory programme (LFI), which assesses the current status and any changes of the forests considering all functions (protection, production, conservation) every ten years. Statistically viable data are available for the entire Swiss forest as well as for defined regions, among others the Alpine forests (with its sub-areas "Pre-Alps", "Alps" and "South of the Alps"). Other regular monitoring instruments are the long-term forest ecosystem research LWF, the Sana-silva inventory on forest health SSI, the phyto-sanitary observation and reporting network (PBMD).

In addition to these national programs, there are also regional programs specifically for the mountain forests. The competence centre for mountain forest management (www.gebirgswald.ch) is specifically designed to protect the attributes of alpine forests, and was initiated by the federal government together with the Cantons within the Alpine region.

One of their most important publication is the study „Sustainability and success control in protective forests – “NaiS”, published in 2005. This publication aims at providing practical guidelines for the management of the mountain forests and is recognised as **the** mountain forest management handbook for sustainable forest management in the Alps. It goes, according to the opinion of experts in this field, way beyond the requirements for a sustainable forest management of the Alpine forests as prescribed in the Mountain Forest Protocol of the Alpine Convention. The “NaiS” handbook is currently also being further developed and adapted to the local conditions in the Alpine forests of France and Italy.

Measures for continuously maintaining or enhancing the high conservation values at the lowest forest authority level (forest range – Forstrevier):

According to the prescriptions of the Federal Office for the Environment, based on the NaiS handbook, any forest operations in protective forests must follow the following principles:

1. All operations must focus on the protection objectives
2. All operations must be focused to the relevant sites
3. All operations must be carried out at the right time
4. All operations must be in line with natural life cycles
5. All operations must be connected to a specific site, must be transparent, understandable and controllable
6. All operations must have its intended effect
7. All operations must be achieved with the most efficient and effective measures.

All those measures apply to any and all forest ranges, thus covering all administrative units in the Alpine forests. We therefore conclude that the forest range (Forstrevier) is the most appropriate unit considered as “District”.

Finally, it must be repeated that, according to the WWF conclusions for the Ecoregion 200 „Alps“, not the management of forests is the source of threatening the Alpine landscape, but other factors. Those factors (see above) in fact are a threat in regards to the integrity of the forest landscape itself.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Considering the assessment of threats for the Alpine region carried out by WWF and the fact that those threats do not directly originate from forest management operations, and further considering that the legal framework, the execution instruments of the authorities and the concrete forest management guidelines and handbooks being applicable at each and every lower forest authority level – the forest range / Forstrevier – we conclude that the entire Alpine region within the territory of Switzerland can be classified as „Low Risk“ in respect to the controlled wood standard.

Rodersdorf, 30 September 2009

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Summary table of the risk assessment:

FSC Category	FSC Indicator	Sources used	Justification	Administrative level of the risk assessment	Risk level
3. Requirements related to wood harvested from forest in which high conservation values are threatened by management activities	3.1 Forest management activities in the relevant level (eco-region, sub-eco-region, local) do not threaten ecoregionally significant high conservation values.	Alpine Convention, Swiss Forest Act and respective Decree, national forest inventory (www.lfi.ch), „NaiS“ Handbook (sustainability and monitoring of management of alpine protective forests)	<p><u>At monitoring level:</u></p> <p>National forest inventory with regional strata and other monitoring programmes under „Forest Monitoring Switzerland“</p> <p><u>At the level of forest management manuals and guidelines (e.g. NaiS):</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All operations must focus on the protection objectives 2. All operations must be focused to the relevant sites 3. All operations must be carried out at the right time 4. All operations must be in line with natural life cycles 5. All operations must be connected to a specific site, must be transparent, understandable and controllable 6. All operations must have its intended effect 7. All operations must be achieved with the most efficient and effective measures. 	federal and cantonal forest acts and decrees, cantonal forest service including its lowest administrative level, the forest range (district)	LOW

FSC Category	FSC Indicator	Sources used	Justification	Administrative level of the risk assessment	Risk level
	3.2 A strong system of protection (effective protected areas and legislation) is in place that ensures survival of the HCVs in the ecoregion.	Alpine Convention, Swiss Forest Act and respective Decree, national forest inventory (www.lfi.ch), „NaiS“ Handbook (sustainability and monitoring of management of alpine protective forests)	<p><u>At legislative level:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban on any conversion of forests to other use form (except when public interest overrules the forest owners interests, on which the forest owner has no direct influence) • Sustainability as forest stewardship principle • Harvesting of trees only allowed following approval by the lowest forest authority applicable to all types of ownership • Ban on clear-cutting • Additionally: Nature and homeland protection legislation overruling forest owners interests in conservation areas of public interest <p>At operational levels please refer to indicator 3.1</p>	federal and cantonal forest acts and decrees, cantonal forest service including its lowest administrative level, the forest range (district)	LOW