FOREST CERTIFICATION FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST ENTERPRISES IN BRAZIL'S WESTERN AMAZON: LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CERTIFICATION AND HOW TO IMPROVE THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

By

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2005
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by

Shoana S. Humphries
This is dedicated to my family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking the families of Peixoto, Porto Dias, and São Luis do Remanso for graciously inviting me into their homes and generously sharing their time and information. I am also very grateful to the staff of CTA and EMBRAPA in Rio Branco, Brazil, for supporting and helping to facilitate my work.

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By

Shoana S. Humphries

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Chair: Karen Kainer
Major Department: Forest Resources and Conservation

In recent decades community forest management has been a popular strategy in programs aimed at assisting local populations to conserve their forests and improve their livelihoods. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification is being recommended for community-based forest enterprises (CFEs) as a way to improve market access for their products. However, certification has proved more difficult for CFEs than expected, and few certified operations have achieved its highly anticipated market benefits. This has led to questioning of certification’s compatibility with CFEs. This study investigates perceptions of certification for three CFEs in Brazil’s western Amazon. The specific objectives were (1) to determine the negative and positive aspects of certification as perceived by community members, their principal support organizations, and other key stakeholders; (2) to identify the relative importance of these perceived negative and positive aspects, (3) to analyze the differences in perceptions between actors, and (4) to
identify actors’ suggestions for improving the certification process for CFEs. Data were collected through structured interviews and a review of pertinent documents.

Overall, the most positive aspects were economic and social, and the most negative aspects concerned the certification process and, to a lesser extent, the associated economic expenditures. The perceived importance of these aspects varied among the informants. For example, the community members typically scored the positive aspects higher and the negative aspects lower than the support organizations. This is likely due to differences in the roles and vantage points of these actors. The recommendations for improving the certification process included (1) simplify the certification standards and procedures for CFEs, and (2) better prepare certifiers to work with CFEs. In general, the informants agreed that the positive aspects of certification outweighed the negative ones. This stands in sharp contrast to communities in other parts of Latin America that are contemplating dropping certification.

Brazil has made increasing its number of certified CFEs a priority, and has taken important steps towards this end. Two particular enabling conditions may have helped the operations in this study overcome common constraints for CFEs: (1) membership in a regional producers group, and (2) strong political, technical, and financial support from the state government.

These three operations serve as important references for the rest of the Brazilian Amazon, as well as the globe. Their experiences highlight the need to adapt the certification process for CFEs and demonstrate that obtaining market benefits is possible. A wider application of certification in CFEs stands to benefit communities, forests, and consumers.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In recent decades community-based forest management has been a popular strategy in programs aimed at helping local populations to conserve forests and improve their livelihoods (Amaral and Amaral Neto, 2005; Bray et al., 2005). While forest certification under the guise of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is being promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and donors as a way to encourage and recognize sustainable community-based forest enterprises (CFEs), as well as improve market access for their products (MMA and Gov. of Acre, 1999; WWF, 2002; Carrera et al., in press), case studies of certified CFEs present mixed results (Irvine, 1999; Nittler and Nash, 1999; Madrid and Chapela, 2003; Molnar, 2003; Bray et al., 2005; May, in press). The FSC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit, international, membership-based organization whose Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship are used as the basis for independent, third-party certification of forest management operations around the world. To date over 50 million hectares have been certified in 66 countries on public, private, and communal properties (FSC, 2005b).

However, perhaps because certification was not originally intended for small, non-industrial operations (Bass et al., 2001; Butterfield et al., 2005), few CFEs have been certified, and many that have are experiencing difficulties retaining it (Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001). The obstacles posed by the certification process for community-based forest enterprises (CFEs) and the disparities in the benefits realized have led some scholars, practitioners, and communities to question the
practicality and utility of third-party certification for these operations (Markopoulos, 2003; Fonseca, in press), calling for a more detailed evaluation of the actual impacts of certification and the certification process on these communities and their operations (Nussbaum and Simula, 2004; Carrera et al., in press). As Molnar (2003, p. 30) concludes based on her extensive review of certified community-based timber operations, “It is timely to pose the question of whether and how forest certification supports community forestry. . . .”

This research aims to address this information gap through an investigation of three CFEs in Brazil’s western Amazon. Following this brief introduction, the next chapter examines the negative and positive aspects of FSC certification and the relative importance of these aspects from the perspectives of community members, their principal support organizations, and other certification stakeholders involved in two of the three operations. The third chapter presents observations and recommendations from the actors in all three communities regarding the certification process for CFEs, and what the FSC, certifiers, local associations, and others could do to improve it. This thesis has been organized such that the second and third chapters are two individual and fully structured papers. Each one of these two chapters has its own discussion and conclusions section, while chapter four summarizes the main findings of the entire study.
CHAPTER 2
NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS OF FOREST CERTIFICATION FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST ENTERPRISES

Introduction

In recent decades community-based forest management has been a popular strategy in programs aimed at helping local populations to conserve forests and improve their livelihoods (Amaral and Amaral Neto, 2005; Bray et al., 2005). Nearly one-fourth of the forests in developing countries is currently owned and/or controlled by low-income forest communities (White and Martin, 2002). Land is being rapidly devolved to communities (Agrawal, 1999; Stone and d' Andrea, 2001; White and Martin, 2002), and this is expected to continue into the future (Molnar, 2003). In the past these communities were often perceived as threats to conservation efforts, but more recently governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses are seeking them out to implement community-based forest management. Nevertheless, there are few examples of successful, long-term, sustainable forest enterprises involving communities. This is due in part to the complexities of the socio-political and environmental contexts in which communities exist, and the difficulties in linking communities with markets (Schmink, 2004).

While forest certification under the guise of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is being promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and donors as a way to encourage and recognize sustainable community-based forest enterprises (CFEs), as well as improve market access for their products (MMA and Gov. of Acre,
1999; WWF, 2002; Carrera et al., in press), case studies of certified CFEs present mixed results (Irvine, 1999; Madrid and Chapela, 2003; Molnar, 2003; Bray et al., 2005; May, in press). The FSC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit, international, membership-based organization whose Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship are used as the basis for independent, third-party certification of forest management operations around the world. To date over 50 million hectares have been certified in 66 countries on public, private, and communal properties (FSC, 2005b).

However, perhaps because certification was not originally intended for small, non-industrial operations (Bass et al., 2001; Butterfield et al., 2005), few CFEs have been certified, and many that have are experiencing difficulties retaining it (Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001). As of May 2005, 89 CFEs had been FSC certified, representing only 12.7% of the total 698 FSC certificates in the world and 4.2% of the total area certified (FSC, 2005a). While these absolute numbers may not seem impressive, they represent a 75% increase over the 51 operations that were certified in August 2001 (Molnar, 2003). The Americas have taken the lead in pursuing certification of CFEs, with 91% of the currently certified operations (FSC, 2005a).

The costs for these operations to get certified have been significant, and the benefits realized from certification have varied greatly. The costs, which have largely been paid by outside interests (Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001), include the direct costs paid in fees to the certifier and the indirect costs incurred from bringing management practices into compliance with the certification standards. The market benefits of certification are reported to be a key motivation for pursuing certification (Bass et al., 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001; Quevedo, in press) and
include (1) price premiums—the most highly anticipated market benefit, yet most elusive (Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001; Molnar, 2003), (2) access to specialized market niches for certified products, which is more common (Irvine, 1999; Molnar, 2003), and (3) maintaining access to current markets (Markopoulos, 2003). The non-market benefits are indirectly related to certification and typically involve social, environmental, and technical impacts, such as improved organization of local associations (Markopoulos, 2003) and improved image and prestige of operations (Markopoulos, 2003; Fonseca, in press).

The difficulties for CFEs in obtaining and maintaining certification and the disparities in the benefits realized have led some scholars, practitioners, and communities to question the practicality and utility of third-party certification for these operations (Markopoulos, 2003; Fonseca, in press), calling for a more detailed evaluation of the actual impacts of certification and the certification process on these communities and their operations (Nussbaum and Simula, 2004; Carrera et al., in press). As Molnar (2003, p. 30) concludes based on her extensive review of certified community-based timber operations, “It is timely to pose the question of whether and how forest certification supports community forestry. . . .”

This research aimed to address this information gap by examining local actors’ perspectives on the negative and positive aspects of FSC certification for two CFEs in Brazil’s western Amazon. Specific objectives were (1) to identify the negative and positive aspects of certification as perceived by community members, their principal support organizations, and other key certification stakeholders, (2) to assess the relative importance of these perceived negative and positive aspects of certification, and (3) to
analyze the differences in perceptions between the two operations, as well as between the local associations, support organizations, and other stakeholders.

**Study Area**

Until 1992, the state of Acre was not accessible year-round by road. This delayed linkage to the rest of the country helps explain why mining, cattle ranching, and large-scale Amazonian colonization projects had less impact in Acre than in other parts of the basin (Kainer *et al.*, 2003), and why as of 2003 only around ten percent of Acre had been deforested (Lentini *et al.*, 2003).

The region has been marked by struggles over competing land uses, mainly small scale agriculture and extractive activities versus large-scale cattle ranching (Azevedo and Freitas, 2003). In the 1970s and 80s, the local forest-dwelling rubber tappers in eastern Acre organized themselves into a strong social movement to fight for legal rights to forested land they had traditionally inhabited (Keck, 1995). In 1985, they joined forces with other allies to form the National Rubber Tappers Council and to propose establishment of extractive reserves (RESEXs) dedicated to sustainable livelihoods (Schmink and Wood, 1992; Keck, 1995).

Initially, conservation-oriented land settlements in Acre (including RESEXs and other multiple-use reserves) focused on non-timber forest products. Because of the historical struggle to prevent forest loss, timber management and the accompanying tree felling, has been a controversial proposal in Acre (Azevedo and Freitas, 2003), especially in RESEXs (Kainer *et al.*, 2003; Stone, 2003). When a handful of community-based timber management projects were initiated in the 1990s by state governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, they were met with much resistance.
A new self-proclaimed “Forest Government” was voted into power in Acre in 1999, and re-elected in 2002, and has gradually changing societal perspectives of timber management. The governor, who is a forester, embraced small-scale, sustainable timber production as part of a larger forest-based development plan to improve the management and commercialization of a variety of forest products in order to diversify and improve income, help make standing forests more attractive than alternative land uses, and to stem rural-urban migration (Kainer et al., 2003). Timber was seen as especially important for rubber tappers, whose traditional income base of rubber and Brazil nut had long been economically unstable (Schmink and Wood, 1992) and insufficient (Brown and Rosendo, 2000; Azevedo and Freitas, 2003). The government also pledged to encourage FSC certification as a way to make forest products more competitive in national and international markets (MMA, 2000).

As of August 2004, there were 18 CFEs in Acre—on target for the state goal of 21 by the end of 2004 (Marcelo Fernandes, personal communication). As of May 2005, four of these operations had received FSC certification of a total of seven certified CFEs in the entire country (FSC, 2005a), and at least five more in Acre were in the initial stages of certification (IMAFLORA, personal communication; Carlos Ovidio Duarte Rocha, personal communication). Parallel to these efforts, a Community Forest Producers Group was formed in 2002 to help market the products of these growing operations (CTA, no date). At least eight of the CFEs in Acre were participating in this organization in August 2004, which met monthly to discuss production schedules, commercialization issues, and collective organization of wood sales to buyers, mainly in São Paulo (CTA, personal communication).
This research focused on two of these operations located in Acre: Porto Dias and Peixoto, which attained certification in 2002 and 2003, respectively (IMAFLORA, 2005) (Table 1). These operations were chosen because they were among the first CFEs to obtain certification in Acre, and they have several notable differences in their livelihood systems and types of land tenure, organization, forest operations, and experiences with the certification process.

First, the two operations have different legal designations which are related to their distinct livelihood systems. Peixoto is legally designated as a PDA, a settlement model based on agricultural colonization (Cunha dos Santos, 2002; Stone, 2003), which supports livelihood systems centered primarily on ranching and small-scale agriculture. Porto Dias is designated as a PAE, an “agroextractive settlement project,” which is a settlement model based on extractivism of forest products, principally rubber and Brazil nuts.

Second, the two principal support organizations working with the local associations have very different missions and project objectives. EMBRAPA, the principal support organization for the Peixoto project, is a national, government-funded research institution. It approached the project as an experiment in community forestry and low-impact operations, and promoted the project as an additional source of income for farmers. The Porto Dias project works with CTA, an NGO that focuses on social and environmental issues in forest-based communities. CTA approached the project as a way to improve local livelihoods, while conserving forests and maintaining the PAE designation for the settlement.
Table 1
Similarities and differences between the two operations involved in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land tenure / Livelihoods</th>
<th>Peixoto</th>
<th>Porto Dias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal designation</td>
<td>colonization settlement project (PAD)</td>
<td>agroextractive settlement project (PAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement size (ha)</td>
<td>378,395</td>
<td>22,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average landholding size per household (ha)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive activities</td>
<td>Permanent agriculture for subsistence and for markets, cattle-raising</td>
<td>Brazil nut, rubber, subsistence agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>APRUMA (Association of Rural Producers in Forestry and Agriculture)</th>
<th>ASPD (Association of Rubber Tappers of Porto Dias)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of households involved in operation</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle support organization</td>
<td>EMBRAPA (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation), a federal research institute</td>
<td>CTA (Center for Amazonian Workers), a Brazilian NGO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Forest operation                                            |                                                                     |                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|                                                                     |                                                  |
| Year management initiated                                   | 1996                                                                | 1995                                              |
| Year harvesting began                                       | 1997                                                                | 2000                                              |
| Area under timber management (ha)                           | 680 (17 x 40 ha)                                                    | 2,400 (8 x 300 ha)                               |
| Felling cycle (years)                                       | 10                                                                  | 25 - 50 (five properties are harvested each year) |
| Mean annual harvest (m³)                                    | 340 - 680 (17 families x 4 ha x 5 - 10 m³/ha)                      | 800 (8 families x 10 ha x 10 m³/ha)              |
| Timber extraction method                                    | animal traction                                                     | tractor or skidder                               |
| Timber processing                                           | portable sawmill; processing equipment for carpentry               | band saw; new facility for producing small, value-added products |

| Certification process                                       |                                                                     |                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|                                                                     |                                                  |
| Year certified                                              | 2003                                                                | 2002                                              |
| Standards used                                              | FSC-approved Standards for Amazon dry land forests and the new FSC Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) Streamlined Procedures | FSC-approved Standards for Amazon dry land forests |
| Pre-conditions received                                     | 0                                                                   | 2                                                  |
| Conditions received                                         | 12                                                                  | 31                                                 |

Third, the management regimes developed by the principal support organizations and local associations differ. The Peixoto project was designed to be a low-impact operation that utilizes a portable sawmill to cut logs into boards in the forest, and an ox and cart to transport the boards to the road. The Porto Dias project, which has much larger annual harvest units, contracts operators to use rented tractors and trucks to skid logs and transport them to a sawmill.

Finally, the certification procedures used differed among the two operations. Peixoto, because it was a smaller, lower impact operation, was evaluated for certification with the FSC’s new Small and Low Impact Managed Forests (SLIMF) Streamlined Certification Procedures. The SLIMF Procedures were designed for smaller and less intensive operations with the goal of reducing the costs of certification and applying standards that are more appropriate for these operations. Porto Dias, in contrast, was evaluated for certification with the same procedures and standards used for large-scale industrial operations.

Given these differences, I hypothesized: (1) Porto Dias actors would perceive the social benefits to be the most important positive aspects of certification; (2) Peixoto actors would perceive the economic benefits to be the most important positive aspects of certification; and (3) the most important negative aspects of certification for both operations would be economic costs.

Methods

Data on the two certified CFEs were collected through face-to-face, structured interviews (Bernard, 2002) centered on a questionnaire and a review of documents from the principal support organizations and the certifying body. The interviews were
conducted from June to August 2004 in Acre, Brazil. Documents reviewed included reports, articles, and presentations related to the operations.

**Structured Interviews**

The questionnaire was developed to guide structured interviews with community members participating in the CFEs (hereafter referred to as *manejadores*), the principal support organization for each operation (the outside organization that has played the most significant role in each community’s CFE), and other stakeholders in FSC certification. First, a preliminary version of the questionnaire was prepared to guide the interviews with the *manejadores* in Peixoto and Porto Dias, who are organized into local associations known as APRUMA (Association of Rural Producers in Forestry and Agriculture) and ASPD (Association of Rubber Tappers of Porto Dias), respectively. This version was then revised based on preliminary interviews with *manejadores* in one operation and a focus group in the other, as well as discussions with the principal support organizations. The questionnaire was then applied to 76% of the *manejadores* in Peixoto and 87% in Porto Dias. Those not interviewed were unavailable for personal reasons, except one individual who refused to be interviewed.

For each CFE, the *manejadores* were notified that the researcher would be visiting their settlement and requesting interviews with them. The interviews were conducted with one *manejador* at a time and took between 45 minutes and two hours. In almost all cases, the researcher visited the house of the *manejador* and in a few cases, interviews were conducted in Rio Branco. In all but two cases, the primary and formal participant in the operations, or *manejador*, was male.

Finally, the questionnaire was further adapted to be used with the principal support organizations and broader stakeholders in certification. With regard to the principal
support organizations, interviews were conducted with three representatives of EMBRAPA and two representatives of CTA, who work with the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias, respectively. The other stakeholders in certification interviewed included: one representative of a donor organization, WWF, which has paid the certification fees for several CFEs in Acre, as well as provided funding for courses, meetings, and travel related to certification and community forest management; two representatives of the State Secretary of Technical Support and Extension of Acre (SEATER), which is providing technical support to several of the CFEs in the state; two representatives of the State Secretary of Forests (SEF), which helps develop and implement the state government’s policies on community forest management and is providing funding for the initial certification of several CFEs in the state; and one representative of the certifier involved in all three CFEs, the Institute of Forestry and Agricultural Management and Certification (IMAFLORA), which is a formal partner of the U.S.-based Rainforest Alliance’s SmartWood Program.

**Major Research Themes**

The structured interviews focused on three major research themes: (1) the perceived negative and positive aspects of certification; (2) the relative importance of each aspect; and (3) reflections on certification. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to illuminate the negative and positive aspects of certification to date from the perspective of the manejadores themselves, their principal support organizations, and other stakeholders in certification. The positive and negative aspects could include economic, environmental, social, and technical changes related to pursuing or receiving certification, as well as aspects of the certification process itself. The relative importance of these items was then ascertained to understand which of the aspects were perceived to
be most positive and negative. The final topic of interest was the respondents’ reflections on certification.

**Perceived negative and positive aspects of certification**

The *manejadores* and their principal support organizations were asked to free-list (Bernard, 2002) the negative and positive aspects of certification to date for their respective operations. The other stakeholders interviewed were asked to free-list these contrasting aspects of certification in general.

**Relative importance of each negative and positive aspect**

Information from the free-listing exercise was organized into a master list of positive and negative aspects for each operation, such that each operation had its own master list. Subsequently, a color-coded card was created for each item; negative aspects were written on yellow cards and positive aspects on blue (Figure 1). Illustrations were drawn on each card to visually present these aspects for respondents with little to no reading skills. Using these cards and the questionnaire, informants evaluated each cost using a three-point Likert-type scale (Bernard, 2002) as follows: “very bad” = 2, “bad” = 1, or “not a cost” = 0. Likewise, the categories for benefits were: “very good” = 2, “good” = 1, or “not a benefit” = 0. As each cost and benefit was evaluated, the reason for the evaluation result was also queried.

The quantitative data generated by these Likert-scale responses for each negative and positive aspect were analyzed. The average scores were determined first by organization, then by operation, and finally, when applicable, across all four organizations to determine an overall average score. Relative importance of the items was then deduced based on two primary considerations. First, the intensities of the perceived negative and positive impacts were considered, based on the average scores for
each organization. For example, the number of negative aspects that scored above a 1.0 was tallied. Next, the aspects perceived to be the most negative and the most positive (i.e., those with the highest average scores) were identified for each organization and then compared among the two organizations in each operation, across operations, and overall.

![Fig. 1. Examples of color-coded, illustrated cards developed from the free-listing exercise and used during interviews. A) This card represents the negative aspect, “Both the certification standards and the auditors are hard to understand.” B) This card represents the positive aspect, “Certified wood has a better price.”](image)

The same procedures were used to analyze the relative importance of the negative and positive aspects by category (while recognizing that these are not categories with firm boundaries): economic, social, environmental, technical, and specific to certification. The “specific to certification” category represents negative and positive aspects related to the process of obtaining and maintaining certification. Next, average scores for each category were calculated for each organization and overall. Finally, these scores were analyzed for each organization and compared among organizations for each operation, across operations, and overall. This evaluation of relative importance was not performed for the group of “other stakeholders” because there was not sufficient time to generate original master lists of negative and positive aspects for them.

**Reflections on certification**

The *manejadores* and the principal support organizations for the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias were asked a series of reflective questions about certification and
the certification process. The guiding questions included: (1) Is certification worth it? (2) Should the operations currently certified continue with certification into the future? and (3) Would you recommend certification to other communities?

Results

Perceived Negative and Positive Aspects of Certification

Peixoto and Porto Dias

**Negative aspects.** There was little overlap in the perceived negative aspects of certification identified by the organizations (Table 2). The actors in the Peixoto operation (APRUMA and EMBRAPA, the local association and the principal support organization, respectively) identified mostly economic and technical negative aspects (11 of 13 total negative aspects), while more negative aspects specifically related to the certification process (7 of 10 total items) were identified by the actors in the Porto Dias operation (ASPD and CTA, the local association and the principal support organization, respectively), which had more difficulty obtaining certification. In fact, all of the negative aspects identified by ASPD specifically concerned the certification process. No environmental negative aspects were identified. Also of note is that CTA was the only organization that identified a negative social aspect of certification.

**Positive aspects.** In contrast to the negative aspects, there was more overlap in the perceived positive aspects of certification identified by the organizations in general, and specifically between the local association and its principal support organization in each operation (Table 3). The most common type of positive aspect identified was economic.
Table 2
Negative aspects of certification for the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias identified by APRUMA, EMBRAPA, ASPD, and CTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative aspects</th>
<th>Peixoto ²</th>
<th>Porto Dias</th>
<th>APRUMA</th>
<th>EMBRAPA</th>
<th>ASPD</th>
<th>CTA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification is expensive to obtain and maintain</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is too expensive for many buyers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is more expensive to produce</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delays in receiving money from distant buyers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of certified wood is more complicated</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market not as good as expected</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates more dependency on partner organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and financial donors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registering wood for chain-of-custody takes time</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and is difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processed wood must be high</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater pressure to do good management</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only wood from the CFE can be sawn in the CFEs sawmills</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on where wood can be sawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specific to certification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification is a new and complex process</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both the certification standards and the auditors are hard to understand</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many conditions to meet in one year</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions will be difficult for community to meet</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditors lack experience with communities in the Amazon</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certifiers are very distant from the community</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise visits are bad ³</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification could be lost due to the actions of others</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² "✓" indicates that this organization identified the corresponding negative aspect. No negative “environmental” aspects were identified.
³ This negative aspect was mentioned as an additional item during the relative importance evaluation exercise.
### Table 3
Positive aspects of certification for the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias identified by APRUMA, EMBRAPA, ASPD, and CTA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive aspects</th>
<th>Peixoto a</th>
<th>Porto Dias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRUMA</td>
<td>EMBRAPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASPD</td>
<td>CTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project is better known</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is easier to sell</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better price</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better price</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confidence in contracts</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to new markets</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It differentiates the product b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association members are more motivated</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved organization of the Association</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of the work of the Association</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater credibility with state agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government supports the project because it is certified b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater use of personal safety equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technical</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved management practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better control of equipment used in forest management</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easier to get approval from IBAMA when an operation is certified b</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The forest has more value</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More effort to reduce damage to the forest</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better management of trash</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a “√” indicates that this organization identified the corresponding positive aspect. No positive aspects for the “specific to certification” category were identified.
b This positive aspect was mentioned as an additional item during the relative importance evaluation exercise.

### Other stakeholders

**Negative aspects.** One representative of SEF (State Secretary of Forests) previously worked at CTA and was involved in the certification of the Porto Dias operation. He noted that the demands of certification, such as monitoring, made ASPD more dependent on CTA and other outsiders. He also indicated that the decision to
pursue certification came from outside the community, and neither the *manejadores* nor CTA fully understood its implications at the time.

The representative of WWF identified two negative aspects of certification. First, the fees charged by IMAFLORA are very high; WWF has helped cover these costs for several CFEs. Second, the pursuit of certification represents very significant risks for communities as they are making large investments of time and effort to get certified without any guarantees regarding future profit.

**Positive aspects.** The two representatives of SEATER identified the green seal’s indication of quality and product distinction as positive aspects of certification. Other benefits of certification identified by at least one of the representatives were: certified products command better prices, certification provides access to new markets (one stated that certification serves as a “type of passport” that permits access for forest products to new markets), certified products are easier to sell, and certification is a type of guarantee. In addition, one representative suggested that certification is creating a new type of business culture, one in which companies and communities work together to both sell wood and conserve the forest. He also indicated that certification is creating awareness among local loggers that they will not be able to continue business as usual for much longer, which could have many types of positive impacts.

One representative of SEF cited dual benefits: certification guarantees meeting specific production guidelines and contributes to improving the image of forest product operations. He also indicated that the pursuit of certification is in itself an educational process, and the certification of industrial operations could contribute a lot to environmental education in the forest products sector. Finally, he asserted that
certification levels the playing field among countries such as Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia with respect to competition in the international wood products market.

The representative of IMAFLORA reiterated a few positive aspects of certification identified by others: improved self-esteem of the *manejadores*; better visibility for operations; improved social organization, citing for example the requirements for clear rules and responsibilities for local association members; and, in the long-term, improved profitability. Several benefits not voiced by the other informants included better access to information, events, and training; improved motivation to manage conflicts (i.e., if parties to a dispute share a higher goal of certification, this can persuade them to resolve conflicts); and stimulation of cultural changes in terms of recognizing the importance of maintaining forests for a better quality of life. He also mentioned that in the long-term improved awareness of issues addressed in the certification standards could lead to other environmental and/or health benefits, such as better management of refuse.

The WWF representative interviewed enumerated two principal positive aspects of certification for communities, both economic. The first was remuneration for certified products, although he emphasized that higher prices are not guaranteed, and it was only in the previous year that certified CFEs in Acre finally secured higher prices. Second, the green seal differentiates products in the marketplace by indicating that the operation of origin is socially and environmentally responsible. In addition, he said the fact that the products are from communities helps to further differentiate them. He added that WWF, as a conservation organization, benefits from the CFEs they support because these operations are managing their forests well.
Relative Importance of Negative and Positive Aspects

**Negative aspects.** For both operations, principal support organization scored the negative aspects higher than did the local association in the majority of cases. In Peixoto, APRUMA (the local association) had only one negative aspect with an average score of 1.0 (a 1.0 representing a “bad” aspect and a 2.0 a “very bad” aspect) (Table 4), while EMBRAPA (the support organization) had five negative aspects with an average score of 1.0 or higher. For the operation in Porto Dias, ASPD (the local association) scored six items between 1.0 and 1.5, while CTA (the support organization) scored all of the items between 1.0 and 2.0. Also notable is that the actors in Porto Dias (the agroextractive settlement) had higher average scores for their top ranked negative aspects than the actors in Peixoto (the colonization settlement).

The “specific to certification” category was perceived to be the most important, scoring relatively high for three of the organizations (between 1.2 and 1.6) and receiving the highest overall average score (1.1) (Figure 2). While “economic” was the second highest scoring category overall (0.9), in general this category scored relatively low on average (0.6 to 0.7) for three of the four organizations; CTA was the exception with an average of 1.5. The “technical” category also scored relatively low overall. Finally, “social” aspects scored very high (2.0) for CTA, but relatively low for ASPD (0.7), while EMBRAPA and APRUMA did not identify any negative social aspects of certification for the operation in Peixoto. Negative “environmental” aspects were not evaluated by organizations in either operation because none were identified on the master lists.

**Positive aspects.** In contrast to the negative aspects, the local associations typically had higher scores than the support organizations for the positive aspects. For Peixoto, APRUMA (the local association) scored all of the positive aspects between 1.2
and 1.8 (with 1.0 representing a “good” aspect and 2.0 representing a “very good” aspect) (Table 5). EMBRAPA (the support organization) scored nine of eleven items between 1.0 and 2.0. For Porto Dias, ASPD (the local association) scored all of the items

Fig. 2. Relative importance of the negative aspects (0 = “not a negative aspect,” 1.0 = “bad,” and 2.0 = “very bad”)

Fig. 3. Relative importance of the positive aspects (0 = “not a positive aspect,” 1.0 = “good”, and 2.0 = “very good”)
Table 4.
Average relative importance score for each negative aspect by organization and averaged across all organizations (overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative aspects a</th>
<th>Peixoto bc</th>
<th>Porto Dias</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRUMA</td>
<td>EMBRAPA</td>
<td>ASPD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions will be difficult for community to meet (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many conditions to meet in one year (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification is expensive to obtain and maintain (Ec)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certifiers are very distant from the community (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates more dependency on partner organizations and financial donors (S)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both the certification standards and the auditors are hard to understand (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification is a new and complex process (STC)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification could be lost due to the actions of others (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditors lack experience with communities in the Amazon (STC)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registering wood for chain-of-custody takes time and is difficult (T)</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market not as good as expected (Ec)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of processed wood must be high (T)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only wood from the CFE can be sawn in the CFEs sawmill (T)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is more expensive to produce (Ec)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on where wood can be sawn (T)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delays in receiving money from distant buyers (Ec)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is too expensive for many buyers (Ec)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of certified wood is more complicated (Ec)</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater pressure to do good management (T)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a The negative aspects are coded to indicate its category as follows: (STC) = specific to certification, (Ec) = economic, (S) = social, (T) = technical; b Ranking: 0 = not a cost, 1 = bad, 2 = very bad; and c A “—” indicates an item that was not evaluated because it was not on the master list for the corresponding operation.
Table 5
Average relative importance score for each positive aspect by organization and averaged across all organizations (overall)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive aspects of certification (^a)</th>
<th>Peixoto (^b,c)</th>
<th>Porto Dias</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRUMA</td>
<td>EMBRAPA</td>
<td>Avg. Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to new markets (Ec)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better price (Ec)</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of the work of the Association (S)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project is better known (Ec)</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater credibility with state agencies (S)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater use of personal safety equipment (S)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association members are more motivated (S)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The forest has more value (Env)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved management practices (T)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confidence in contracts (Ec)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More effort to reduce damage to the forest (Env)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified wood is easier to sell (Ec)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better management of trash (Env)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved organization of the Association (S)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better control over equipment used in forest management (T)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The positive aspects are coded to indicate its category as follows: (STC) = specific to certification, (Ec) = economic, (S) = social, (T) = technical.

\(^b\) Ranking: 0 = not a benefit, 1 = good, 2 = very good.

\(^c\) A “—” indicates an item that was not evaluated because it was not on the master list for the corresponding operation.
between 1.4 and 2.0, and CTA (the support organization) scored all but one between 1.0 and 2.0. Also, surprisingly, as they did for the negative aspects, the actors in Porto Dias tended to score the positive aspects higher than the actors in Peixoto.

Overall, “economic” and “social” positive aspects consistently scored relatively high for all four organizations, receiving average scores of 1.7 and 1.5, respectively (Figure 3). Positive “environmental” aspects scored relatively high for three of the four organizations. While “technical” aspects also scored high for three of the four organizations, EMBRAPA did not recognize any “technical” benefits of certification. There were no positive aspects identified on the master lists for the “specific to certification” category (which pertains to the process of obtaining and maintaining certification), therefore none were evaluated by organizations for either operation.

Reflections on Certification

Is certification worth it?

Almost everyone interviewed with the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias responded positively to the broad question: “Is certification worth it?” The exceptions were the two representatives of CTA, who replied that in some respects it is, and in others it is not.

For the operation in Peixoto, two of the three representatives of EMBRAPA interviewed reasoned that actual and potential price increases and market access were benefits that make certification “worth it,” even with all of the costs involved in the certification process. One also stated that certification could improve the organizational aspect of the operation. All 13 manejadores interviewed from APRUMA asserted that certification is indeed worth it. Almost half of the manejadores (six or 46%) cited better price as their principal justification, and five (38%) reasoned that certified wood is easier
to sell. Other advantages cited in favor of certification included the guarantee that their wood would be sold in a legal manner, access to new markets, and increased recognition of APRUMA. One respondent outlined several disadvantages of certification, such as not being allowed to hunt in the timber management area, but still agreed it is worth maintaining. In addition, two people also stated that certification is worth continuing, to see what benefits it could bring in the future.

In Porto Dias, the manejadores cited the following reasons for their response that certification is worthwhile: access to new markets, better price for wood, recognition of the ASPD and the community, learning more about forest management, and improved safety. The first response was mentioned by two people and the rest by one each. One person stated that if they did not have certification, they would not have a way to sell their wood; it is worth it because they have a market. He also declared that the time is going to come when it will be impossible to sell wood without certification. The representatives of CTA articulated positive and negative aspects of certification in response to “Is certification worth it?” They noted that there was strong donor and state government support for certification, and that the operation in Porto Dias and CTA would not have access to this support if they were not involved in certification. Indeed, both CTA and EMBRAPA stated that their main incentive for encouraging these operations to pursue certification was because donors were offering badly needed project funds to community forest management projects willing to become certified. However, the CTA representatives also observed that certification places a lot of responsibility on the community and that some of the demands of certification are impossible for the community to comply with alone (e.g., controlling land invasions). Furthermore, they
also identified an important contradiction in the goals of certification--while it supposedly strives to guarantee the independence of small-scale operators, the 31 conditions (or corrective action requests necessary for maintaining certification) received by Porto Dias actually exacerbated community dependence on support organizations for technical and financial assistance. Finally, one CTA representative concluded that certification is costly and complicated, and not that important. She also said that they were going to study other, less expensive ways to recognize community efforts to manage their forests sustainably.

**Should the operations currently certified continue with certification?**

There was general agreement among all respondents that the two operations should continue with certification for the next five years, with the only deviations coming from two *manejadores* in Peixoto who responded “maybe.” When asked about a ten-year timeframe, one EMBRAPA respondent changed his response to “maybe” as well.

For the Peixoto operation, one EMBRAPA representative stated that maintaining certification would be difficult for APRUMA, mostly due to the social dynamics between members, but that they should continue with it. The other two EMBRAPA representatives said that the decision to continue with certification should depend on how the market changes over time. The *manejadores* from APRUMA were more adamant about the necessity to maintain certification, with five saying that it should continue in the long-term. Two further clarified that certification should be maintained even if APRUMA had to pay for it. One stated that if certification were lost, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get it back. He affirmed that they should maintain certification for 10 years or more, and added that if possible, this work should continue for the rest of their lives. One of the two who responded that “maybe” they should
continue with certification said APRUMA should have a better idea of the difficulties of certification at the end of five years, and could decide at that time.

Similarly, the manejadores in Porto Dias were resolute that certification of their operation should continue indefinitely. However, the representatives of CTA were less committed to continuing certification into the future. They agreed that certification should be continued for now, and one related that ongoing pressure from the state government and the wood buyers was incentive to continue with certification into the future.

**Would you recommend certification to other communities?**

All respondents for the operations in Peixoto and Porto Dias unanimously concurred that they would recommend certification to other communities. EMBRAPA reasoned that certification could help with organization and product marketing, the latter being especially important for operations with low production volume. In APRUMA, one maneijador said that he and fellow manejadores were proud of having successfully completed the difficult certification process and that recommending certification was one of the first things they did when speaking to other communities. Three manejadores also asserted that other communities should have the same benefits they had attained. Another pointed out that if other communities got certified, it would increase the volume of certified wood, which would be good for everyone.

Reasons cited by manejadores in Porto Dias for recommending certification included that certified wood was easier to sell due to a higher demand (two people), certified wood had a better price (one), and that the use of personal safety equipment was important (one). However, one person indicated that in his experience, other communities were not interested in certification because of the amount of work involved
and the fact that wood sales took a long time to complete. Two others qualified their response with the condition that the community members must make an effort to understand certification (one) and become well trained (one). One representative of CTA also recommended that communities not pursue certification until they had at least one year of experience in managing forests for timber production.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

This study was designed to illuminate stakeholder perceptions of the negative and positive aspects of FSC certification for community-based forest enterprises (CFEs). While international conservation organizations, governments, and donors are increasingly promoting FSC certification for CFEs, there is limited understanding of how local actors (both communities and their local support organizations) perceive certification, and how these perceptions might vary across different operational contexts.

The research methods were specifically designed to tap into these local perceptions. The community members and representatives of their support organizations were asked to identify specific negative and positive aspects of certification in their own words, instead of using outsider-imposed categories. This not only more accurately captured the perceived negative and positive aspects, but also made the relative importance scoring exercise easier for the participants since base-line responses came from them. By eliciting the relative importance of the perceived contrasting aspects, instead of simply listing these items, a more informative analysis of the local perceptions regarding certification was provided. In addition, interviews were conducted with the *manejadores* and their principal support organization representatives separately. This facilitated independent responses from both groups of actors, allowing support organizations and
individual *manejadores* to be frank in their responses. It also permitted comparisons between these two groups.

**What Are the Most Important Negative and Positive Aspects?**

While a wide range of negative aspects were identified, not all of them were perceived to be important. As hypothesized, economic costs of certification were found to be one of the two most important negative aspects of certification, while the major preoccupation with the certification process was unanticipated. Negative social aspects were not a concern for most of the stakeholders, with the exception of CTA, a local NGO. No negative environmental aspects of certification were perceived.

Many of the negative aspects of certification identified in this study have been identified as barriers or constraints for CFEs seeking certification. For example, several studies have voiced concern over the high costs of certification and the burden these will present communities when they assume this expense (Irvine, 1999; Bass *et al.*, 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001). The direct costs of certification (or fees paid to the certifier) were approximately US$ 11,420 for Porto Dias for the pre-audit visit and initial assessment (Mauricio Voivodic, personal communication) and US$ 2,000 for each annual audit. For Peixoto, the costs were US$ 9,200 for the pre-audit visit and initial assessment (Mauricio Voivodic, personal communication). These values are similar to what CFEs in Mexico ($12,000), and Honduras ($12,000) paid for initial assessments (Molnar, 2003), more than what CFEs in Guatemala paid for initial assessments (around $5,000) (Soza, 2003), and significantly lower than Molnar (2003) reports for a certified CFE in Bolivia ($47,425).

In contrast to the negative aspects, almost all of the positive ones identified were perceived to be important. As hypothesized, economic benefits were perceived to be the
most important positive aspect of certification for Peixoto, but the local association also scored other types of benefits highly. Also as hypothesized, social benefits scored highly on average for Porto Dias, but the local association scored other positive aspects more highly. Overall, economic and social benefits were perceived to be the most important positive aspects of certification across the stakeholder groups. This is not surprising since the principal motivation for pursuing certification for both operations in this study was market benefits, as has been observed for other certified CFEs studied (Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001). In addition, several studies of other certified operations have highlighted the importance of social benefits, including improved image of the local association and operation, and resulting greater credibility with governments, for example in Mexico (Markopoulos, 2003; Fonseca, in press) and Guatemala (Carrera et al., in press).

When asked if certification was worth it, most stakeholders interviewed affirmed that it was, and that the certified operations should maintain certification into the future. Furthermore, both the manejadores and representatives of the principal support organizations stated that they do or would recommend certification to other communities.

**How Did Perspectives Among the Stakeholder Groups Differ?**

The explicitly comparative approach to this study revealed that the perspectives of stakeholders differed by operation, as well as between the local association and its support organization within each operation. The other stakeholders in certification offered some unique perspectives as well. The two principal differences were: 1) the actors in the Porto Dias operation scored both the negative and positive aspects of certification higher than their counterparts in Peixoto, and 2) the local associations scored
the positive aspects higher and the negative aspects lower than their principal support organizations.

The seemingly paradoxical result that actors in Porto Dias scored both the negative and positive aspects higher than their counterparts in Peixoto is consistent with several differences between the operations and their experiences with certification. Regarding variations in negative aspects, the bulk of these identified by the actors in Porto Dias pertain to the “specific to certification” category, and they scored these much higher than the Peixoto actors scored the negative aspects identified for their operation. Possible explanations for this include disparities in experiences with the certification process, which was much more burdensome for the Porto Dias operation for several reasons.

Because the Porto Dias operation uses heavy machinery and outside labor to remove logs from the forest, while the operation in Peixoto uses animal traction and local labor, the Porto Dias operation was scrutinized more closely during the certification process for environmental impact and labor issues, and given conditions (or corrective action requests necessary for maintaining certification) concerning these issues. Also, because the inhabitants of Porto Dias have a long history of gathering non-timber forest products and hunting, the manejadores were required to document and monitor the use of these resources in addition to the standard impact monitoring of timber harvests; these were not issues in the agriculturally-oriented Peixoto. Third, because Porto Dias was only the second CFE to get certified in the country, the certifiers did not have much experience or guidance in the certification of CFEs at that time. During the certification process APRUMA was held to the same standards as large industrial operations, and received more than 30 pre-conditions and conditions from IMAFLORA. The operation
in Peixoto, in contrast, was evaluated according to the newly drafted FSC SLIMF Streamlined Certification Procedures, and it received no pre-conditions and far fewer (12) and less onerous conditions. While these factors help explain why the certification process was much more difficult for the Porto Dias operation than the Peixoto operation, it is worth noting that a perception existed that the certification process results were unfair for Porto Dias, given that its inhabitants had traditionally maintained and utilized the forest for the sustainable harvest of non-timber forest products, while the inhabitants in Peixoto had traditionally cleared forest for agriculture and pasture.

Other reasons why the actors in Porto Dias scored a wider range of types of positive aspects (environmental, social, and technical) of certification higher than their counterparts in Peixoto (who scored “economic” aspects the highest) may include differences in livelihood systems, motivations for implementing timber management, and support organizations. The manejadores in Peixoto are colonists whose livelihoods are primarily focused on cattle production and the sale of agricultural products. The motivation for implementing timber production was to complement these sources of income in areas they were not allowed to deforest legally. EMBRAPA, the support organization for Peixoto, approached the project as an income generation initiative and placed great emphasis on technical capacity. In contrast, the livelihoods of the manejadores in Porto Dias have long depended on intact forests for the harvest and sale of non-timber forest products. In addition to providing an increasingly significant source of income for them, timber production, due to the value it adds to the forest, helped justify their forest-based economy which is under constant threat. One of the most critical threats has been a movement by some residents to convert the legal status of the
settlement from an “agroextractive settlement project” to a “colonization settlement project,” which would involve sweeping changes to the way land is divided and how the settlement is managed. CTA, the support organization for Porto Dias, approached certification as a way to bring critically needed infrastructure to the settlement (which lacked a permanent road) and provide income, while also conserving the forest and helping to maintain the current status of the settlement. CTA had increasingly emphasized improving the organization of the local association and intensifying technical training, particularly after the initial certification assessment. Based on these differences, it is not surprising that the actors in Peixoto perceived “economic” benefits to be the most important, while their counterparts in Porto Dias also scored highly the other types of benefits (social, technical, and environmental). Richards (1997) and Schmink (2004) have emphasized that it is precisely these non-market benefits of forests that communities often value most highly.

The higher optimism of the local associations regarding certification compared to their principal support organizations was evident in the former’s typically lower scores for negative aspects and higher scores for positive ones. This finding appears to be consistent with the suggestion of Bass et al. (2001) that the subsidizing of certification costs by donors has led communities to underestimate the economic costs and overestimate the economic benefits of certification. In our study, the support organizations have been responsible for paying the costs of certification and proving compliance with certification standards. At the same time, they have received few of the direct economic and indirect social, environmental, and technical benefits (e.g., more effort to reduce damage to the forest, improved organization of the local association).
Therefore, based on their vantage point, it is not surprising that economic costs figured most prominently for the support organizations and the positive aspects of certification less so. Similarly, from their contrasting vantage point, perhaps the manejadores were unable to accurately evaluate the economic costs, but were in a better position to evaluate the other non-economic negative and positive aspects (i.e., environmental, social, and technical).

**What Are the Implications for the Certification of Community-Based Enterprises?**

Many studies, including this one, have indicated that the economic costs of certification for CFEs have been substantial and the certification process has proven difficult. However, efforts are underway by certifiers and the FSC to make the process less expensive and cumbersome, and Brazilian organizations have taken a leading role in this endeavor. IMAFLORA has taken several steps to reduce the costs for CFEs in Brazil, including: creating the Social Fund for Certification to help subsidize the direct costs of certification (fees paid to IMAFLORA), developing the Volunteer Auditors Bank of specialists to perform certification of CFEs at no cost or at significantly discounted rates (also see Azevedo and Freitas, 2003), and printing a booklet specifically aimed at informing community members about certification (the booklet is available in Portuguese at [http://www.imaflora.org/arquivos/cartilha_comunidades.pdf](http://www.imaflora.org/arquivos/cartilha_comunidades.pdf)). The FSC has also developed, as mentioned, new Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) Streamlined Certification Procedures and FSC-Brazil has composed new SLIMF forest certification standards--which representatives of CFEs, NGOs, and governmental organizations helped to develop (FSC - Brazil, 2004).

The results of this study show that application of the SLIMF Procedures in Peixoto may have reduced the perceived importance of the negative aspects of certification for
the local association and its support organization. However, the results cannot be
divorced from the fact that Peixoto also had a smaller scale and lower intensity operation
than Porto Dias. Nonetheless, expanded efforts to streamline the certification process,
such as certification standards specifically for SLIMF operations, may be key to
achieving widespread FSC certification of CFEs globally. See Humphries (2005) for
detailed analysis of the certification process in the two communities involved in this
study.

While many non-economic benefits of certification were perceived to be important,
the economic benefits proved very important. In fact, higher prices for wood related to
access to the certified market may be the only way for these operations to achieve
economic viability given the disadvantages they face of unfavorable economies of scale
(i.e., high cost per unit volume), distance from major markets, and stiff competition with
illegal wood. On the other hand, the difficulty of meeting the certification standards
(even those concerning documentation and monitoring) and paying certification fees
may doom these CFEs to indefinite dependence on support organizations. Time will tell
if the process can be simplified enough to make the standards and costs manageable for
local associations, or if a permanent relationship with support organizations will be
acceptable. Moreover, new models may emerge to address these problems and/or new
solutions for obtaining good prices for wood may be found.

This study revealed differences in perceptions between the local associations and
their support organizations. Differences in perspectives on the importance of the positive
versus the negative aspects of certification could lead to conflict between local
associations and support organizations over whether or not to make certification a
priority. Support organizations may not want to commit to securing funding and providing technical assistance to meet certification standards if they do not think the positive aspects outweigh the negative ones.

This study also revealed significant differences between CFE operations in the perception of negative and positive aspects of certification, likely due to the different contexts under which the CFEs are operating. Accommodating differences among CFEs in livelihood and land tenure systems, motivations for implementing timber management, and types of management regimes will likely continue to be a challenge for the FSC and certifiers. Our study provides some insight into how these differences might affect operations and their perceptions of certification. Differences in CFEs’ perceptions of economic costs and benefits could also complicate cooperative efforts in wood sales or cost sharing. However, no evidence of these types of conflicts was found in this study.

Two important enabling conditions distinguish the CFEs in this study from other CFEs globally, and perhaps have contributed to their success, especially with regard to economic benefits. First, both operations in this study were members of the Community Forest Producer Group, which as of August 2004 included at least eight local associations with certified and non-certified CFEs in Acre, as well as several non-governmental and federal and state organizations. The Group benefited its members in three principal ways (Francisco de Assis Correa Silva, personal communication): 1) it provided a forum to discuss certification, including the process, costs, and benefits; 2) it provided a platform for the members to confront problems or propose change as a group, for example in dealing with IBAMA, the federal agency that approves forest management plans; and 3)
most importantly, it facilitated wood sales to ten members of the Brazilian Buyers Group, a consortium of buyers of certified wood in São Paulo.

According to the *manejadores* and their principal support organizations, both the Porto Dias and Peixoto operations had difficulties selling wood in the local and national markets prior to this São Paulo connection. The proliferation of illegal wood drives down local wood prices (Freitas, 2004) and previous buyers had refused to pay for wood received (EMBRAPA, APRUMA, CTA, ASPD, personal communications). In contrast, the buyers in São Paulo had become regular customers, purchasing the majority of the harvest from Porto Dias and Peixoto in 2003, and additionally from several other communities in 2004. Although they were paying the same price for the certified sawnwood as the going rate in São Paulo for non-certified sawnwood (about R$ 800 or US$ 338 per cubic meter) (EMBRAPA, CTA, personal communications), this was at least 400% more than the standard price a community could receive in the local market (between R$ 100 - 200 or US$ 42 - 85 per cubic meter) (EMBRAPA, CTA, personal communications). In addition, these buyers accepted the lesser known species and small quantities that communities offered, and were reportedly more forgiving than the industry norm with regard to quality (CTA, personal communication).

This type of arrangement could diminish many of the constraints CFEs have traditionally encountered in their relationships with wood products markets, such as distance to certified markets and limited capital, production capacity, processing technology, and marketing skills (Aguilar, 2000; Bass *et al.*, 2001; Quevedo, in press). Similar efforts at organizing the different actors in community-based forestry are also underway in Mexico (Fonseca, in press) and Guatemala (Carrera *et al.*, in press).
Fonseca (in press) reports that an alliance of 12 CFEs in Mexico has helped to market members’ products, offered aggregated volumes of products for sale, and created new product designs.

In this study, though some of the *manejadores* and representatives of the principal support organizations argued the price should be higher and cautioned against assuming this marketing arrangement would last forever, most agreed that the higher prices and access to the São Paulo market represented major benefits of certification for the local associations. Of course, it remains to be seen if the added market benefits of certification will outweigh the economic costs and other negative aspects of certification in the future for the local associations in Porto Dias and Peixoto, especially when they must pay for certification themselves. Indeed, for many CFEs studied to date, due to an inability to attain and maintain market benefits related to certification (Irvine, 1999; Bass *et al*., 2001; Molnar, 2003), the added economic benefits of certification do not exceed the costs. The Petén region of Guatemala, where very few FSC chain-of-custody certified operations exist, is a good example (Soza, 2003; FSC, 2005b; Carrera *et al*., in press). Fonseca (in press) reports some CFEs in Mexico are questioning the value of certification for this reason.

Another relatively unique enabling condition for the communities in this study is the high level of support for community forestry and certification by the state government of Acre. Bass *et al*., (2001) reported that government involvement in the certification of CFEs studied has been minimal due to disinterest in community forestry. In contrast, the current government of Acre has ambitious goals for augmenting the number of CFEs in the state and is both offering technical assistance and paying for some of them to get
certified through the FSC system (Marcelo Fernandes, personal communication; Carlos Ovidio Duarte Rocha, personal communication). Strong governmental support of community forestry and certification has also helped foment the certification of CFEs in Mexico (Fonseca, in press) and Guatemala (Soza, 2003), the countries with the highest numbers of certified CFEs (FSC, 2005a).
CHAPTER 3
IMPROVING THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST OPERATIONS: STAKEHOLDER REFLECTIONS FROM THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

Introduction

While Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification is being promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and donors as a way to encourage and recognize sustainable community-based forest enterprises (CFEs), as well as improve market access for their products (MMA and Gov. of Acre, 1999; WWF, 2002; Carrera et al., in press), few CFEs have been certified to date. The large difference in the number of certified industrial versus community-based operations has been credited to the fact that certification was not originally intended for small, non-industrial operations (Bass et al., 2001; Butterfield et al., 2005). Several researchers have identified aspects of the certification process that are particularly challenging for CFEs, and have recommended changes (see Irvine, 1999; Bass et al., 2001; Thornber and Markopoulos, 2001). However, very few studies have captured the reflections and recommendations directly from the actors involved in certified operations (see WWF et al., 2001, for an exception). This article aims to present suggestions for improvement to the FSC certification process for CFEs as identified by local actors involved in three certified CFEs in Acre, Brazil. It also presents innovative ways in which various actors in Brazil are striving to make certification more accessible and profitable for CFEs.

The FSC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit, international, membership-based organization whose Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship are used as the basis
for independent, third-party certification of forest management operations around the world. As of May 2005, a total of 698 FSC certificates had been issued for operations in 66 countries that cover over 50 million hectares of public, private, and communal lands (FSC, 2005b). Yet, community-based forest enterprises (CFEs) are a small part of this total--there are 89 FSC-certified CFEs, representing only 12.7% of the total number of enterprises and 4.2% of the total area certified (FSC, 2005b).

The FSC certification process clearly has significant shortcomings for communities and small-scale enterprises. The “certification process” refers to the set of steps that operations complete to obtain and maintain certification, as well as the procedures used by the certifiers during their evaluation of operations. Typically the process includes an initial visit to the operation by the certifiers, also known as a “scoping visit.” This is followed by a full-scale assessment of the operation to determine to what extent it complies with the standards for certification, and corrective action requests (also known as pre-conditions, conditions, and recommendations) are given to the operation, as applicable. Annual audits are conducted for the following four years to monitor compliance with the corrective action requests, after which a complete re-assessment is performed.

In recognition of the need to address the challenges of certification for smaller operations, the FSC has developed the Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) Streamlined Procedures for Certification (see FSC, 2005c), and donors are subsidizing the costs of certification for communities. However, if the FSC is going to find widespread application among these types of operations, further adjustments to the
certification process and standards must be made, without compromising the integrity of the FSC label.

Brazil, a leader in certified industrial operations in Latin America, is intent on increasing its number of certified CFEs. With only seven certified CFEs, it trails behind Mexico and Guatemala in the number of certified CFEs in Latin America (FSC, 2005a). Given Brazil’s vast Amazonian forests and the fact that it has over 300 forest management plans involving communities in the country (Amaral and Amaral Neto, 2005), this ranking seems unimpressive. However, certification has been outlined as a priority in a collaborative initiative of the federal and state governments, business sector, and civil society—known as the “Positive Agenda for the Amazon”—aimed at reducing deforestation and improving income in the Amazon basin (MMA, 2000).

Furthermore, the state government of Acre, in Brazil’s western Amazon region, has embraced FSC certification of CFEs as part of its state policy of forest-based development with the expectation that certified forest products will be more competitive in national and international markets (MMA and Government of Acre, 1999). Acre currently leads the country in certified CFEs with four certificates, two of which were the first to be issued in the country. The support offered from the state government and donors [such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and a national program called ProManejo] to local associations for obtaining certification and the recent success of the certified CFEs in Acre in accessing national markets have encouraged additional communities to pursue certification.

However, even with this support, Brazilian CFEs have faced significant challenges in obtaining and retaining certification. In Chapter 2 it was revealed that the
manejadores and support organizations from two certified CFEs participating in this research rated elements of the certification process among the most important negative aspects of certification. This chapter aims to provide a forum to share the observations and suggestions of community members, principal support organizations, and a donor involved in three certified CFEs in Acre, Brazil (including the two from Chapter 2), on how the certification process for CFEs could be improved. The specific objective is to identify process recommendations from these actors. As pilot operations, these CFEs are important references for other CFEs in the Amazon region, as well as the rest of the globe.

**Study Area**

Acre is the birthplace of the extractive reserve concept. Born out of the highly publicized rubber tapper struggle for the forests which sustained their livelihoods, this land use strategy institutionalizes collective resource management areas for non-indigenous populations, and assigns management responsibilities to local people who have a long-term stake in maintenance of the resource base. Generally, traditional forest use in Acre focused solely on non-timber products, and because of the historical struggle to prevent forest felling, management for timber production has been a controversial proposal in the state (Azevedo and Freitas, 2003). When a handful of community-based timber management projects was initiated by state governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations in Acre in the 1990s, they were met with much resistance. However, the persistence of the self-proclaimed state “Forest Government” is gradually changing societal perspectives on timber management.

The popular governor, who is a forester, has embraced small-scale, sustainable timber production as part of a larger forest-based development plan, the aim of which is
to improve the management and commercialization of a variety of forest products to diversify and improve income and help make standing forests more attractive than alternative land uses (Kainer et al., 2003). He has stated that the end goal is to turn Acre into a global example of sustainable development based on the rational use of tropical forests (estadão.com.br, 2001), and has described certification as key to reaching this end (A Tribuna, 2003; Página 20, 2003).

This research focuses on three pilot CFEs in Acre: Porto Dias and Peixoto, which attained certification in 2002 and 2003, respectively (IMAFLORA, 2005), and São Luís do Remanso, which at the time of the study had not yet completed the certification process (Andre G. de Freitas, personal communication). These operations were chosen because they were among the first CFEs to obtain certification in Acre. In addition, while all three operations participate in the local community forestry producers group, they differ notably regarding their livelihood systems, principal support organizations, and experiences with the certification process.

All three communities are located within settlement models that fall under the purview of the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). Porto Dias and São Luís do Remanso are designated as “agroextractive settlement projects,” or PAEs, which is a settlement model based on extractivism of forest products, while Peixoto is a “colonization settlement project,” or PDA, which is a settlement model based on agricultural colonization (Cunha dos Santos, 2002; Stone, 2003).

The local associations in Porto Dias, ASPD (Association of Rubber Tappers of Porto Dias), and São Luís do Remanso, ASSER (Association of Rubber Tappers of São Luís do Remanso), are working with CTA (Center for Amazonian Workers), a local
conservation and development organization, as their principal support organization, and APRUMA (Association of Rural Producers in Forestry and Agriculture) in Peixoto works with EMBRAPA (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation), a national research institute, as its principal support organization. All three associations’ timber management operations were certified by IMAFLORA (Institute of Forestry and Agricultural Management and Certification) based on the FSC-approved Standards for Amazon dry land forests. However, APRUMA’s operation, which involves small forest management units (approximately 40 hectares per household) and was originally designed as a reduced-impact timber operation, was evaluated using the FSC’s new SLIMF Streamlined Procedures for Certification.

**Methodology**

Data for the three certified CFEs were collected through face-to-face, structured interviews (Bernard, 2002), conducted from June to August 2005. Respondents included community members participating in the CFEs (hereafter referred to as *manejadores*), the principal support organization for each operation (the outside organization that has played the most significant role in each community’s forestry operation), and a donor who has supported the certification of these operations. Interviews were conducted with 76% of the *manejadores* in Peixoto and 87% in Porto Dias. Those not interviewed were unavailable for personal reasons, except one individual who refused to participate. In São Luis do Remanso, interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of six *manejadores* from a total of ten who were managing for timber. This sampling scheme was selected due to time constraints of the researcher and availability and accessibility of the *manejadores*. 
Regarding the principal support organizations, interviews were conducted with three representatives of EMBRAPA (which works with the operation in Peixoto) and three representatives of CTA (which supports the operations in Porto Dias and São Luís do Remanso). Finally, one representative was interviewed from a donor organization, WWF, which has directly or indirectly assisted all of the certified CFEs in the state.

The structured interviews focused on how to improve the certification process for CFEs, and centered on the following questions: 1) What were the most positive aspects of the certification process? 2) What could the FSC, certifiers, principal support organizations, local associations, and others do to improve the certification process for CFEs? 3) What would you change about your CFE’s experience with the certification process if given the chance? and 4) What advice would you give other communities considering certification?

Results

What Were the Most Positive Aspects of the Certification Process?

The most positive aspect of the certification process named by the *manejadores* from all three operations was the learning that occurred during the certifiers’ visits. Specific issues about which the *manejadores* reported having learned from the certifiers include refuse management, stream protection, the use of protective clothing for timber harvesting and processing, and the forest management and chain-of-custody requirements for certification. One *manejador* also stated that the certifiers sometimes bring

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1 Since IMAFLORA is the only certifying organization the *manejadores* and principal support organizations have worked with, they often referred specifically to this organization during interviews. However, I have replaced “certifier” for IMAFLORA because the recommendations for improving the process are relevant to all certifying bodies. Also, the term “certifiers” refers both to the certifying bodies, like IMAFLORA, and the professionals they hire to perform certification assessments and annual audits of operations.
information about potential buyers. In addition, five manejadores pointed out that just as they learned from the certifiers, the certifiers also learned from them. One explained that this was important because the certifiers normally work with companies, but through certifying CFEs they are becoming more familiar with this operation type. Finally, another manejador said, "I like [the certification process] because we get to be known and to know other people."

One representative of EMBRAPA highlighted the use of the FSC’s new SLIMF Streamlined Certification Procedures for the certification of Peixoto’s operation as a positive innovation in the certification process. He described the development and use of these new procedures as “a great step.” A representative of CTA said that certifiers’ observations and suggestions during the certification assessment and annual audits had already led to improvements in the management planning and execution for the Porto Dias and São Luis do Remanso operations.

**What Could the FSC, Certifiers, Principal Support Organizations, Local Associations, and Others Do to Improve the Certification Process for CFEs?**

Focusing on FSC and the certifiers, manejadores emphasized two areas for improvement. First, they called on the FSC and certifiers to simplify the certification process for CFEs. One manejador from Porto Dias specifically recommended that certifiers simplify the language used in their communications with the communities and that the FSC and certifiers eliminate standards that are inappropriate for smaller, less intensive CFEs. Two manejadores, one each from Porto Dias and Peixoto, made specific suggestions to reduce the required documentation and minimize bureaucracy in order to reduce the requisite work load. Secondly, several manejadores recommended that the certifiers make adjustments in how they interact with the communities. Specifically, a
manejador recommended that the certifiers speak with all of the manejadores during visits, and not assume that one of them can speak for the rest. Furthermore, he suggested that the certifiers work with the manejadores more as collaborators, instead of acting as policing agents. He hypothesized that this would inspire the manejadores to open up more and improve communication between them and the certifiers. Finally, several manejadores in Porto Dias and São Luís do Remanso expressed interest in having more time to converse with the certifiers. One manejador from Porto Dias suggested that continuous contact with and motivation by certifiers would improve the certification process. Similarly, another Porto Dias manejador speculated that a greater presence by the certifiers would increase the manejadores’ compliance with the certification standards.

Manejadores also reflected on what they could do to improve the process. One in Peixoto emphasized the importance of good organization of the local association in maintaining certification. He stated that his local association, APRUMA, should stay on top of things in general and be sure to do everything correctly, “because,” he said, “we have to have everything in order to maintain certification.” He further stated that certification would be easier for APRUMA if all of the manejadores communicated and debated more on certification. The rest (or majority) of the manejadores reported that the process was fine or otherwise did not comment on how the process could be improved.

While the representatives of EMBRAPA did not make any suggestions for improving the certification process, the CTA representatives made several centered on FSC standards, the certification process, and capacity building. They recommended that the FSC and certifiers develop less burdensome certification standards specifically for
CFEs. They advocated that certifiers first prioritize the standards most important for CFEs, and treat the rest as recommendations. They also requested that they then systematize the standards, especially those regarding monitoring, to simplify required documentation. One representative specifically emphasized the need to simplify the chain-of-custody requirements (which necessitate detailed documentation of logs and sawn products), noting that they are too cumbersome for most CFEs.

Regarding the certification process, the CTA representatives recommended that the certifiers: (1) simplify the technical language used during visits to the CFEs and in their reports and (2) assess CFEs based on the capacity of the local association, not the support organization. CTA believed that many of the conditions the Porto Dias CFE received were beyond the capacity of the local association and increased the association’s dependence on outside assistance, especially for research. Upon successfully completing the certification process, a CTA representative also suggested that plaques issued to Brazilian operations should be in Portuguese.

CTA representatives recommended that the FSC and/or certifiers implement more training, targeting several groups. First, professionals hired by certifiers to conduct field assessments and annual audits need adequate instruction and applied experience before working with CFEs. The CTA representatives were critical of the certifiers used in the initial assessment of the Porto Dias operation for having limited experience with communities. Second, local associations need more training to understand certification standards and requirements. It is not enough to take copies of the standards to the field, explained one CTA representative; rather, the FSC and certifiers should utilize videos
and posters. Third, training is needed [presumably for the *manejadores* and principal support organizations] on how to market certified products.

The representative of WWF added several recommendations for improving the certification process. He stated that if local certifiers were available, ideally in the same state, it could significantly reduce the fees paid to the certifiers. As of August 2004, employees of IMAFLORA, which is based near São Paulo, are conducting the initial assessments and annual audits of the operations in Acre. If a local office could be opened or professionals from the state were used as certifiers, savings in transportation costs per assessment or audit alone could reach US$2,000. He further recommended that the FSC’s new SLIMF Streamlined Certification Procedures be consistently used by certifiers when working with CFEs in the future to further reduce costs. He also noted that high quality technical assistance is necessary for communities to become certified. He contended that training local people to provide technical assistance is constructive, but the need for additional assistance from outside, highly trained silviculturalists will likely persist. Finally, he also cited improved government funding, fiscal incentives, and credit opportunities for community-based operations as positive developments that will help these operations with certification.

**What Would You Change About Your CFE’s Experience with the Certification Process if Given the Chance?**

One *manejador* in Porto Dias stated that if he could change anything about the first time the operation was assessed for certification, the *manejadores* would have had more internal discussions about certification. He also noted that the *manejadores* should have discussed at greater length with IMAFLORA concerns about the operation and their lengthy history of taking care of the forest, rationalizing that this might have reduced the
conditions the operation received. One manejaror in Peixoto said the change he would make would be that everyone in the community would be involved in certification and they would pursue certification for all products that have an environmental impact (only a very small percentage of residents of this large settlement area participate in the certified forest management operation).

One EMBRAPA representative suggested that the costs of certifying the CFEs could have been shared with the wood buyers. One also added that the cooperation between the two sub-groups of manejarores involved in the project in Peixoto could have been better during the certification process.

**What Advice Would You Give Other Communities Considering Certification?**

For CFEs contemplating certification, the manejarores in APRUMA emphasized the importance of having a consolidated local association, including good organization, maintaining respect among the members, and investing in the training of members to more effectively benefit from certification. Being well informed about certification was cited by manejarores from all three communities as important preparation for certification, and specific suggestions included: (1) the FSC and certifiers should visit communities to explain certification in detail, (2) interested associations should participate in meetings with certifiers, and (3) association members should visit other certified CFEs, especially when certifiers are present in these established operations. In addition, a manejaror from Peixoto recommended that upon gaining access to the certification standards, associations should strive to bring their management into full compliance. Once a CFE is engaged in the certification process, one manejaror from Porto Dias underscored the importance of discussing with the certifiers any concerns they may have in order to minimize pre-conditions and conditions. Finally, one manejaror in
Peixoto recommended that other CFEs persist in their efforts to get certified because it is a great opportunity.

Two of the EMBRAPA representatives suggested that communities interested in certification should foremost improve their organization. Another stressed that certification is not for everyone, and for an association to get certified, they must make it a priority. The representatives of CTA emphasized that community members understand the costs and benefits of certification, the purpose of certification, what it implies, and the steps in the certification process. They also emphasized that communities, prepared with all of this information, should participate in the decision to become certified or not. One explained that, in contrast, the *manejadores* in Porto Dias entered into the certification process without understanding what they were getting into.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

**Recommendations to the FSC and Certifiers**

In this study, the *manejadores* and support organizations identified several ways in which the FSC and certifiers could improve the certification process for CFEs. First, they suggested a simplification of certification standards. WWF *et al.* (2001) report that certification standards are excessively bureaucratic in general, and that their focus on timber and industrial level operations is inappropriate for CFEs. Further, Markopoulos (2003) and Carrera *et al.* (in press) cite examples of communities having trouble complying with excessively demanding standards and sometimes impractical requests while constrained by limited technical and/or financial capacity.

Secondly, *manejadores* and their support organizations also noted that certifiers should be better prepared to work with local communities. Alatorre (2003, in Fonseca, in press) highlighted a lack of qualified professionals to implement community-focused
certification assessments and annual audits as one of the most important roadblocks for CFE certification in Mexico. Likewise, Markopoulos (2003) and Carrera et al. (in press) report specific cases of certifiers demonstrating a lack of understanding of local conditions under which CFEs function, and being too subjective in their evaluations of these operations.

Thirdly, certifiers need to be more accessible to the maneijadores. WWF et al. (2001) and Soza (2003) have highlighted the importance of improving the flow of information to communities on certification. In our study, maneijadores noted multiple times that they were not communicating effectively with the certifiers, lamenting that there was not enough time for discussing certification standards and conditions. In a complementary way, several maneijadores felt that more time spent with the certifiers would also be of great benefit to the certifiers themselves.

Indeed, when asked what they liked best about the certification process, both maneijadores and their principal support organizations emphasized that they valued the learning process the most. They appreciated receiving feedback from certifiers on management practices and other aspects of the timber operations, and suggestions for improvement. Similarly, they recommended that FSC and the certifiers provide more training on certification and marketing to the communities and their principal support organizations. They want to learn more. Madrid and Chapela (2003) report that communities in Oaxaca and Durango, Mexico noted that they pursued certification to improve their timber management operations – to learn.

**Recommendations to Communities**

The maneijadores and principal support organizations provided multiple suggestions to other CFEs interested in pursuing certification. Both groups highlighted
the importance of having a well-organized local association. Madrid and Chapela (2003) emphasized the value of such social capital for communities interested in certification. In once again highlighting the importance of communication between communities and the certifying bodies, both manejudores and their support organizations recommended that other communities seeking certification should be well-informed on certification standards and processes. Furthermore, manejudores urged community members to discuss the certifiers’ concerns directly with them to minimize corrective action requests. Being well-informed and well-prepared was also highlighted by Thornber and Markopoulos (2001) so that communities could specifically minimize financial costs and risk.

**Advances in Brazil**

Brazil has made increasing its number of certified CFEs a priority. In addition to national, regional, and local support to help communities to organize, meet certification standards, and cover costs, Brazil has made several other important strides. First, three certifying organizations have opened national offices in the country. Their presence helps cut costs and involves more local professionals in the certification of Brazilian operations. In addition, one of these certifying organizations, IMAFLORA, specializes in certifying CFEs and has taken several notable steps to make the certification process more accessible to small-scale operations (Andre Freitas, personal communication). The measures include creating the Social Fund for Certification through which part of the certification fees paid by industrial operations is used to offset the costs of certification for communities, forming a Volunteer Auditors Bank of professionals who work as certifiers at a reduced cost, and developing a booklet specifically for communities on certification.
Second, the FSC-Brazil office has nearly completed the development of certification standards specifically for Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests. These were developed with input from representatives of CFEs, NGOs, and governmental organizations (FSC - Brazil, 2004).

Finally, several ways to assist in the marketing of certified forest products are being innovated in Brazil. Brazil will host its second international FSC Certified Products Trade Fair in 2006, which will also double as the first Latin American FSC Certified Products Trade Fair. The first Trade Fair presented special opportunities for representatives of the certified CFEs in Brazil to meet with buyers of certified products, and the second promises to do so as well (CTA, personal communication). In Acre, in particular, strong state government support for certification and marketing of CFE products has been forthcoming. Acre is home to the Community Forest Producers Group, which was formed in 2002 to help market the products of the CFEs in Acre, and helped the certified CFEs in the state gain access to the São Paulo market in 2003 and 2004.

It is hoped that the recommendations provided in this study will help inform the FSC and certifiers’ continued efforts to improve the certification process for CFEs in Brazil as well as the rest of the globe. A wider application of certification in CFEs stands to benefit communities, forests, and consumers.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSIONS

My research examined the perspectives of community members, principal support organizations, and other stakeholders involved in certified community-based forest enterprises (CFEs) in western Brazil on the negative and positive aspects of certification, the relative importance of these aspects, and why the perspectives differed among informants. It also identified specific suggestions from these actors on how the certification process could be improved for CFEs. Two communities were involved in the study of the contrasting aspects, and three communities (the same two plus a third) were involved in the study of the certification process.

The positive aspects identified were similar across all informants, but the negative ones varied greatly. While a wide range of negative aspects were identified, not all of them were perceived to be important. The types of aspects that were perceived to be the most important (or negative) pertained to the certification process and the economic expenditures of certification. The specific aspects of most concern were certification fees, increased dependence of communities on outside assistance, and elements of the certification process itself. In contrast to the negative aspects, almost all of the positive ones identified were perceived to be important. Overall, the types of positive aspects that were perceived to be most important were economic and social. The most important specific positive aspects overall were access to new markets, better prices, and recognition of the CFEs.
There were two notable differences in the perceptions of these contrasting aspects among the actors in the two CFEs involved in this part of the study. First, the principal support organizations typically scored the negative aspects higher and the positive aspects lower than the community members, perhaps because the support organizations feel a greater burden of responsibility for the certification process while it is the community members who receive more of the benefits. Second, the actors in one community typically scored both the negative and the positive aspects higher than their counterparts in the other community. This is likely related to the fact that the community with the higher scores both had more difficulty with the certification process (and thus typically scored the negative aspects higher) and perceived a greater range of positive aspects to be more important. The latter is likely due to differences between the two communities in livelihood strategies, motivations for implementing timber management, and the influence of support organizations.

The informants interviewed agreed that the positive aspects of certification outweighed the negative ones, and that they would recommend it to other communities. Indeed, the economic benefits of certification being realized were perceived to be very important. In fact, the higher price the CFEs are receiving due to new access to certified wood markets in São Paulo may be key to the economic viability of these operations given the plethora of disadvantages, such as size and isolation, they otherwise face. At the same time, the maintenance of market benefits may ultimately require indefinite dependence of the CFEs on outside support due to the high costs of certification and challenges of standards compliance. However, the FSC and certifiers are making substantial efforts to render the process less cumbersome and expensive (e.g., the Small
and Low Impact Managed Forests Streamlined Certification Procedures), and Brazil is a leader in this endeavor.

The recommendations made by the actors in all three communities of ways in which the FSC and certifiers should improve the certification process for CFEs included (1) simplify the certification standards and process for CFEs, (2) better prepare certifiers to work with local communities, and (3) be more accessible to community members, including the provision of more training on certification and marketing to communities and their principal support organizations. The principal recommendations for other CFEs interested in certification were (1) to have a well-organized local association, (2) to be well-informed on certification, and (3) to discuss the certifiers’ concerns with them to minimize corrective action requests.

It is important to note two important enabling conditions that distinguish the CFEs in this study from other CFEs globally, and perhaps have contributed to their success, especially with regard to economic benefits: (1) membership in a regional producers group, and (2) strong political, technical, and financial support from the state government. If these conditions were to change, or if the differences in perspectives revealed in this study among the actors in the CFEs were to lead to conflict, these CFEs could encounter more difficulty in maintaining certification and access to higher price markets.

Although as of August 2004 Brazil had only seven certified CFE operations, widespread support and dedication exists in the FSC-Brazil office, certifiers, the national and state governments, and non-governmental organizations to increase this number.
Therefore, the three certified CFEs examined in this study serve as important references for the rest of the Brazilian Amazon, as well as the globe.

The specific negative and positive aspects perceived by the actors in the operations in this study, reasons behind the differences in perceptions, and the conditions that have enabled these operations to achieve relative success help to improve our understanding of the application of certification in CFEs. In addition, the recommendations from these pilot CFEs may help improve the certification process in Brazil and the rest of the globe. A wider application of certification in CFEs stands to benefit communities, forests, and consumers.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shoana Humphries was born in Grass Valley, California, in 1974. She moved around quite a bit during her childhood, and graduated from high school in Anniston, Alabama. Shoana received her Bachelor of Science degree in natural resource conservation from the School of Forest Resources and Conservation at the University of Florida. Before returning to the University of Florida to complete a Master of Science degree in community forest management, Shoana worked for three years in forest certification in the Southeastern United States and three years in community development and conservation in Bolivia and Peru.