

FACT SHEET

CRITERIA AND INDICATORS: PUTTING SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT INTO PRACTICE — ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND



Sustainable forest management balances a wide range of values — environmental, economic, social and cultural — for present and future generations. Canada was one of the first countries to endorse sustainable forest management and back it with a framework of criteria and indicators.

What is SFM?

“Sustainable forest management (SFM) consists, in part, of actions or programs that are ecologically viable, economically feasible, and socially desirable. The set of values, geographic scales, and time horizons considered within the realm of SFM has expanded greatly over the last decade, adding to an already complex policy and operating environment.”

National Forest Strategy Final Evaluation Report, 2008

Criteria and indicators are of immense value in Canada, where sustainable forest management involves a complex set of values that must be measured over time across a vast landscape. They also provide global benefits since Canada has 10 percent of the world’s forests.

Across Canada, where 93 percent of the forests are publicly owned, criteria and indicators are being used to shape national, provincial and territorial policies, regulations and legislation on forest management. Around the world, they are helping countries track and report on the status and trends in their efforts to achieve sustainable forest management.

Benefits of Criteria and Indicators

Criteria and indicators are practical, science-based tools that support sustainable forest management by assessing the state of forests. They give all stakeholders — from national and provincial resource regulators and policy-makers to forest

companies, certification bodies and small woodlot owners — the ability to define, assess, monitor and report their progress in achieving sustainable forest management on public and private lands.

The benefits of criteria and indicators include:

- setting the stage for how to gather and integrate information by jurisdiction and time period;
- providing a means of recognizing and responding to stakeholder values and expectations;
- helping point the way to improved practices by means of adaptive management; and
- standardizing data collection and status reporting so jurisdictions can track trends over time and make evidence-based decisions at all levels.

Canada: An Early Leader

Canada’s involvement with criteria and indicators began with the Montréal Process (www.mpci.org/) in 1994. The 12 jurisdic-

tions involved, including Canada, Russia and the United States, agreed to use criteria and indicators to define, measure and report on the progress of sustainable forest management in boreal and temperate forests.

Resulting work led to seven criteria and 67 indicators that were endorsed in 1995 — creating a framework that has since served as the basis for criteria and indicators in all member nations.

Also in 1995, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) released a Canadian framework of six criteria and 83 indicators — developed with broad stakeholder input. A thorough public review and revision process led to a more finely tuned framework of six criteria and 46 indicators, released in 2003 (www.ccfm.org/current/ccitf_e.php).

Canada’s Use of Criteria and Indicators

Canada’s criteria and indicators are being used nationally and locally — by federal

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agencies, provinces and territories, non-government organizations, industry groups, certification bodies and researchers. As interest in sustainable forest management spreads, many countries have invited Canada to help them develop criteria and indicators.

What are Criteria and Indicators?

Criteria define the range of forest values — environmental, economic, social and cultural — considered to underpin sustainable forest management. *Indicators* are objective measures for which data can be collected and summarized.

National use of criteria and indicators

At the national level, the CCFM will use the criteria and indicators to measure and assess performance related to a long-term, strategic vision for Canada's forests, which was released in 2008. The ultimate goal for the *Vision for Canada's Forests: 2008 and Beyond* is to make Canada the best in the world in sustainable forest management and a global leader in forest sector innovation.

The criteria and indicators help to guide research at the national level. One example is the Sustainable Forest Management Network, an interdisciplinary, university-based research partnership that uses the criteria and indicators to identify sustainable forest management research needs.

Canada is always looking for new ways to use criteria and indicators, and continues to consolidate reporting on various national and international initiatives, making them a recognized source for national forest information. The Canadian government uses the data to show international markets how the country is meeting its commitment to sustainable forest management.

Regional/local use of criteria and indicators

In Canada, responsibility for forest management lies largely with provinces and territories, and each decides how to integrate the criteria and indicators into its forest management policies, practices and accountability.

Many provinces use the CCFM indicators as the basis of reports on the state of their forests or environment or for forest management plans. British Columbia, Ontario Newfoundland and Saskatchewan legally require the use of indicators to assess sustainable forestry management practices.

The Canadian Model Forest Network (www.modelforest.net/), which delivers sustainable forest management on the ground, uses the CCFM's criteria and indicators framework to develop indicators that meet regional and local conditions.

Supporting Third-Party Forest Certification

Canada is a world leader in independent forest certification (www.certificationcanada.org/), which assures buyers that forest products come from legal, responsible sources. One of the three internationally recognized certification programs used in Canada — the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) — bases its performance requirements directly on the CCFM criteria and indicators, and makes their use mandatory in third-party verification audits.

Criteria and indicators can be used or adapted to deliver a quantitative rigor that all three of the third-party certification programs — CSA, the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative — can use to assess forest sustainability.

Companies can use local-level indicators as a checklist to measure what they need to do to achieve sustainable forest management and earn certification.

Canada's Most Recent Criteria

1. **Biological Diversity:** Maintaining biological diversity so organisms and ecosystems can respond and adapt to environmental change.
2. **Ecosystem Condition and Productivity:** Ensuring forest ecosystems can cope with and recover from natural and human disturbances and maintain their ecological functions and processes.
3. **Soil and Water:** Modifying management techniques to minimize disturbance, erosion, and compaction.
4. **Role in Global Ecological Cycles:** Ensuring forests are able to depend on and contribute to self-regulating processes responsible for recycling carbon, water, nitrogen, and other life-sustaining elements.
5. **Economic and Social Benefits:** Providing a broad range of forest goods and services over the long term, offering significant economic and social benefits.
6. **Society's Responsibility:** Reflecting social values in forest operations, and recognizing many rural communities depend on the forest for their economic, social and cultural well-being.

For More Information:

Canadian Council of Forest Ministers
(www.ccfm.org)

*A Vision for Canada's Forests:
2008 and Beyond*

*Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable
Forest Management in Canada*

Natural Resources Canada
(www.nrcan.gc.ca)

Montréal Process (www.mpci.org/)