

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF FOREST MINISTERS' CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT INDICATOR REVIEW

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTION: What are Criteria and Indicators of sustainable forest management?

ANSWER: The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' (CCFM) framework of Criteria and Indicators (C&I) is a science-based framework to define, monitor and communicate Canada's progress in the sustainable management of forests. Criteria are sets of values that Canadians want to enhance and sustain. Indicators measure an aspect of a criterion and are used to assess the state of the forest and measure progress over time. Together, the criteria and indicators characterize the essential components of sustainable forest management and provide a framework for assessing national progress towards this goal.

QUESTION: To whom are we reporting, and for what purpose?

ANSWER: Reporting on C&I is intended to provide credible, relevant information on progress towards sustainable forest management to many domestic and international audiences, in particular the general public, interest groups, and decision makers in the private and public sectors.

The CCFM C&I are intended to enable a common understanding of what is meant by sustainable forest management in the Canadian context. Collectively, they provide a framework for reporting on the state of forests, forest management, and achievements in sustainable forest management, by identifying those elements of the forest ecosystems, and related social and economic systems, that should be sustained or enhanced.

More specifically, the CCFM C&I are intended to help:

- Define sustainable forest management, and provide concepts and terms to facilitate the on-going domestic and international dialogue on sustainable forest management
- Monitor to enable comprehensive and scientifically valid assessment of progress towards sustainable forest management at the national level
- Communicate to the public and decision makers to clarify issues related to the forest environment and forest products, provide a basis for development of policies that

support the conservation and sustainable management of forests, and to inform day-to-day operational decisions

QUESTION: How were the current CCFM C&I developed?

ANSWER: The CCFM C&I framework was developed in response to goals stated in Canada's 1992 National Forest Strategy and commitments made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in June 1992 at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to improve forest management globally by developing and reporting on progress using C&I. In 1993, the CCFM established the Steering Committee on Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Management of Canada's forests. With the support of a science panel and a technical committee, the steering committee embarked upon an open, transparent and inclusive process involving officials and scientists from the federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as experts from the academic community, industry, non-governmental organizations, the Aboriginal community and various other interest groups. In 1995, the CCFM released the current C&I framework in a document titled "Defining Sustainable Forest Management: A Canadian Approach to Criteria and Indicators."

QUESTION: Why are the indicators being reviewed?

ANSWER: The CCFM C&I framework has been in place since 1995. Since then, the capacity of information systems has increased, approaches to forest inventories have changed, data availability has improved and advances in science have improved our understanding of ecosystems. Recognizing that sustainable forest management is an adaptive process, a preliminary assessment of the indicators was conducted in 1999. Based on the results of that assessment, the CCFM approved a review of the 83 indicators in the framework in August 2000.

QUESTION: Who will revise the indicators?

ANSWER: A Task Force composed of representatives from the federal, provincial and territorial governments guides the CCFM C&I process and is leading the framework review. Three experts on sustainable development indicators will advise the task force during this process and six Technical Working Groups will revise the indicators. Public involvement is an important aspect of the C&I review process and the Technical Working Groups are comprised of experts from government, industry, non-government organizations, the Aboriginal community and academia. The Technical Working Groups will make their recommendations to the C&I Task Force in September 2002. The Task Force will assemble the recommendations into a revised framework, which will then be distributed to potential users for comment before final recommendation to the CCFM in summer, 2003.

QUESTION: Are the Criteria being reviewed along with the indicators?

ANSWER: No. During this review process only the indicators are being evaluated and revised. The C&I Task Force decided not to revise the criteria because they correspond well with criteria found in other C&I frameworks, including nine other national level frameworks used by over 150 countries. Also, because of the linkages to other processes in Canada like local level indicators, CSA certification, provincial State of the Forest reporting, etc., the decision was made not to change the criteria at this time.

At the beginning of the review process, focus groups indicated that while there was some uncertainty about the meaning of some criteria, almost all of the values, issues and concerns expressed could be placed under one or more of the existing criteria. The C&I Task Force may consider rewording some of the criteria as long as this does not change their fundamental meaning. In addition, groups of indicators within a criterion that relate to a common theme may be grouped together under a single element. These elements may or may not be the same as those in the existing framework.

QUESTION: What are the attributes of a good indicator, or a good list of indicators?

ANSWER: The C&I Task Force has defined a set of five attributes that it feels all indicators in the revised framework should strive to possess. These are similar to attributes that have been defined by other C&I processes, namely that an indicator is relevant, measurable, understandable, can be forecast, and has reference values.

Collectively, indicators should be selected and designed to give a comprehensive, balanced and scientifically valid picture of forests and forest management, so that the public can be aware of both positive and negative aspects, such as progress made to date and shortcomings that the public may want to see addressed.

QUESTION: What if a proposed indicator does not have all of the attributes?

ANSWER: It is possible that identified indicators are closely related to values, issues or concerns that have been expressed, but do not possess all of the indicator attributes defined by the C&I Task Force. If a Technical Working Group (TWG) feels strongly that the indicator should be retained in the framework anyway, then that indicator can be identified as a potential indicator. For example, an indicator may be identified that closely relates to a value, but for which the data to measure that indicator do not exist. If no better indicator can be found, the TWG may want to retain this in the framework as a potential indicator, recognizing that it may not be measurable in the near term.

QUESTION: Many indicators have relevance to more than one criterion. If the Technical Working Groups are working separately, how will cross-communication about this issue be handled?

ANSWER: As the Technical Working Groups (TWG) develop their indicators, the lists of indicators will be compiled and distributed to the other working groups so that similarities may be recognized. Also, during the TWG meetings, there will be opportunities for plenary sessions, where cross-cutting issues can be identified. Finally, the chairs of the TWGs will hold meetings between the TWG meetings to try and identify any cross-cutting issues that need to be brought to their groups' attention.

QUESTION: Are targets, objectives, thresholds or baselines being defined for indicators?

ANSWER: Yes, where they are obvious. However, defining targets, objectives, thresholds or baselines for some indicators may be very difficult and require a much different public input process than is available here. It may not be possible to define these for all of the indicators that are recommended to the C&I Task Force in this process.

QUESTION: How should the revised CCFM indicators relate to the Montreal Process indicators?

ANSWER: The Task Force would like to make Canada's various C&I reporting initiatives more mutually supportive. Canada uses C&I to report both nationally and internationally on progress towards sustainable forest management. Nationally, the CCFM C&I framework provides information on the state of Canada's forests and a reference point for the development of Canadian policies on conservation, management and sustainable development of forests. Internationally, Canada is a participant in the Montréal Process, an international C&I initiative aimed at ensuring the sustainability of, principally, the world's temperate and boreal forests. The two C&I frameworks are compatible, with considerable overlap in the indicators, and Canada reports on the Montréal Process through the CCFM framework of C&I. For this reason, the C&I Task Force has asked the TWGs to consider the indicators in the Montreal Process when revising the CCFM indicators.

The TWGs are encouraged to adopt or adapt any Montréal Process indicators that relate to the values, issues or concerns that Canadians have expressed and that possess the indicator attributes defined by the C&I Task Force. In this way, many indicators in the two initiatives may be similar enough to simplify reporting.