

# GOLD STANDARD FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS LAND-USE & FORESTS ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS

Version 1.1 – Published March 2018

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### GOLD STANDARD FOUNDATION VISION & MISSION

**OUR VISION:** Climate security and sustainable development for all.

**OUR MISSION:** To catalyse more ambitious climate action to achieve the Global Goals through robust standards and verified impacts.

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### PREFACE

This Requirements document, hereafter “the Requirements”, functions as part of a pathway to certification within Gold Standard for the Global Goals. The Requirements enable eligible forestry and agriculture activities to undergo Design Certification and Performance Certification, including issuance of Certified SDG Impact Statements and Products.

The Requirements are designed to be read in conjunction with the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [Principles & Requirements](#) and associated documents.

Through conformity to these two documents and relevant Methodologies and Product Requirements (for e.g. [GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Product Requirements](#)) a Project may be issued with Gold Standard VERs (GSVERs) and other products for certification.

## HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents the Requirements that Gold Standard Land-use & Forest Projects, including Afforestation/Reforestation (A/R) and/or Agriculture (AGR) shall apply in conjunction with the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements.

The 'Land Use & Forests Requirements' include sections or items within sections that apply only to A/R or to AGR projects. Sections/items labelled "**A/R specific**" apply only to A/R projects. On the other hand, sections/items labelled "**AGR specific**" apply only to AGR projects. Sections/items without any specific label apply to both A/R and AGR projects.

The Requirements for Smallholder and Microscale Projects are included in Annex A. These simplifications to the requirements provide better access to carbon markets for smallholders.

The specific Sections that incorporate particular considerations for A/R and for AGR projects are summarized in the table below:

**Table 1: Sections of the 'Land Use & Forests Requirements' with specific requirements for A/R or AGR projects**

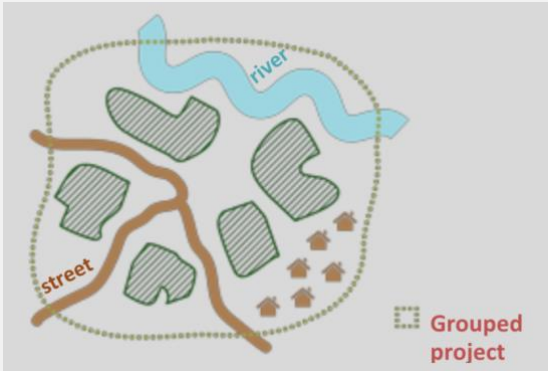
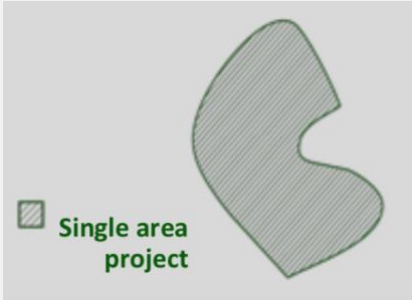
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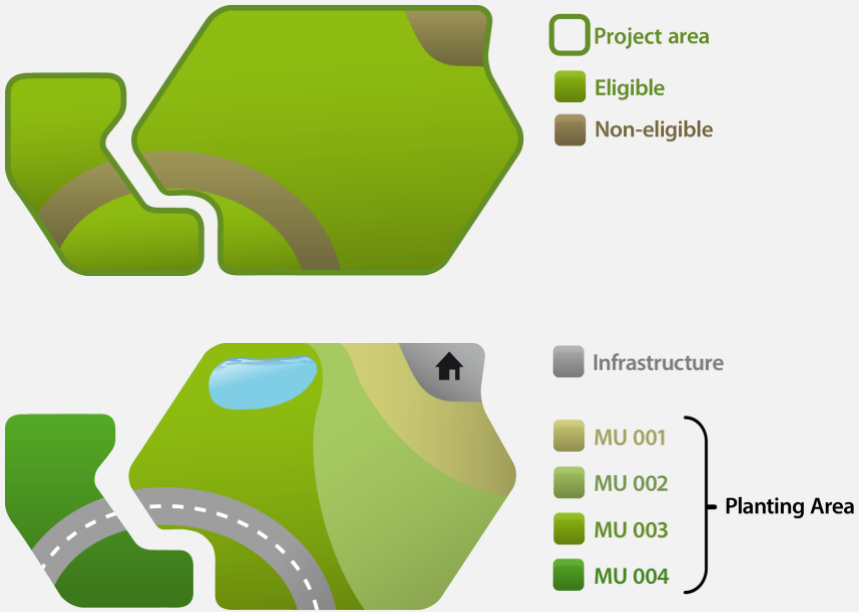
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## TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

A/R specific	AGR specific
Terms	Definitions
Agriculture	The Gold Standard defines agriculture in accordance with the FAO as agricultural activities that contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals: <a href="http://www.fao.org/climatechange/en/">www.fao.org/climatechange/en/</a>
Crop	A crop is a plant or fungus species that is purposefully cultivated and/or harvested to satisfy human and livestock needs.
Forest	A forest is defined by the Designated National Authority (DNA) of the project's host-country: <a href="http://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/index.html">http://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/index.html</a> . In case no forest definition is yet given by the DNA, the Project Developer can take the forest definition of the FAO: <a href="http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6896e/x6896e0e.htm">http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6896e/x6896e0e.htm</a> or the national forest definition of the project's host country.
Invasive Species	(adapted from IUCN and SAN) An organism introduced by man into places out of its natural range of distribution, where it becomes established and disperses, generating a negative impact on the local ecosystems and species. An invasive species is likely to cause economic harm or harm to human health. Note that species which are already locally established and of economic importance are excluded under this definition.
Livestock	Source: (FAO) Livestock comprises all domestic animals. Non-domestic animals are not included unless they are kept or raised in captivity on agricultural holdings, including holdings without land.
Modelling Units (MU)	1. ( <b>A/R specific</b> ): Modelling Units are distinct parts of the planting area where carbon stocks can be quantified based on applying a forest growth-model or any SDG Impact can be quantified and certified. To meet the precision level for the carbon stocks estimation (see Gold Standard Afforestation/Reforestation (A/R) GHG Emissions Reduction and Sequestration Methodology chapter – CO <sub>2</sub> -Fixation'). MU

	<p>areas normally have homogeneous characteristics in their growth patterns, silvicultural treatment and planting date</p> <p>2. (<b>AGR specific</b>): Modelling Units represents distinct areas with homogeneous characteristics to quantify a certain SDG Impact</p>
New Area	<p>New areas are project areas that are added to an existing project after it achieves Design Certification and are included in submission for Verification.</p>
<p>People Affected</p> <p>(<b>AGR specific</b>)</p>	<p>(Adapted from FSC where the term is 'affected stakeholder') People affected are individuals or an entity that are, or are likely to be, subject to the project activities.</p> <p>Examples of people affected are local:</p> <p>(a) Communities, indigenous peoples, neighbors, processors, and local businesses, AND</p> <p>(b) Organizations authorized or known to act on behalf of people affected (e.g., NGOs, labour organizations).</p>
<p>Planting Area</p> <p>(<b>A/R specific</b>)</p>	<p>The planting area is the part of the project area where tree planting activities take place.</p> <p>The eligible planting area is the part of the planting area which meets the applicability conditions of' any applied Gold Standard Methodology.</p> <p>Non-eligible planting area   The non- eligible planting area are areas which do not meet the applicability conditions of' any applied Gold Standard Methodology.</p>
Project Area	<p>As per Gold Standard for the Global Goals Glossary, with further definition as follows:</p> <p>1. (Adapted from FSC, where the relevant term is 'Management Unit') The project area is a spatial area or areas submitted for certification with clearly defined boundaries managed to a set of explicit long term management objectives.</p> <p>2. New areas can be added or removed to an existing project area after it has achieved Design Certification and submission for Verification.</p> <p>3. Under the Gold Standard the project area is divided in Modelling Units (MU) for an efficient calculation of the amount of Certified SDG Impact Statement or Product (for example GS-VERs).</p> <p>For clarification, 'project area' as the area of certification shall be limited to planting areas, any riparian or other buffer zones located within planting areas, and areas set aside for conservation in accordance with GS requirements. All A/R</p>

	<p>requirements referring to 'project area' shall pertain to these areas only.</p> <p>All Requirements contained in this document and in Gold Standard for the Global Goals more broadly apply to the Project Area.</p>
<p>Project Area (<b>AGR specific</b>)</p>	<p>Boundaries of the project area shall be clearly distinguishable in the field.</p> <p>Project Types</p> <p>A grouped project encompasses several single area projects but applies the 'Land Use &amp; Forests Requirements' in the same way as a single area project. Figure 1 illustrates a grouped project and Figure 2 a single area project. Grouped projects are similar to a Programme of Activities (PoA) under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), allowing for an unlimited number of new project areas to be added without undergoing the complete Gold Standard certification process.</p> <p>At any time after achieving Design Certification and submission for Verification, the project owner can add new project areas to an existing project (grouped projects) or expand an existing project area (single area projects). To do this the Project Developer shall undertake the process as described for New Areas.</p> <p>Figure 1: Grouped Project</p>  <p>Figure 2: Single Area Project</p> 

<p>Project Area (<b>A/R specific</b>)</p>	<p>Boundaries of the project area and the planting area shall be clearly distinguishable in the field.</p> <p>The project area can be made up of discrete parcels of land.</p> <p>Planting Area: The planting area is the part of the project area where tree planting activities take place. It can be composed by multiple Modelling Units (MU) (Fig. 3).</p> 
<p>Project Participant</p>	<p>A project participant is an individual or entity that is contributing to the generation of the certified impacts.</p>
<p>Project Region</p>	<p>The project region is the spatial area where people and environment are influenced by the project activities. A project region can be expanded over time. All project areas are located within the project region.”</p> <p>The ‘project region’ must be identified in the Key Project Information template and may indicate areas of future project growth through new area certifications.</p>
<p>Project start</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In addition to the requirements set in the latest applicable version of “GS4GG Principles and Requirements” document, the following also apply:</li> <li>2. (<b>A/R specific</b>): The project start is considered the same as the tree planting start, that is the date when the first trees are planted.</li> </ol>

	3. ( <b>AGR specific</b> ): The project start is the date when the project begins to implement project activities that lead to the certification of Ecosystem Services and SDG Impacts
SDG Impacts & Ecosystem Services	<p>Ecosystem services are benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Examples include SDG Impacts such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas reduction (SDG 13), AND</li> <li>(b) Water supply and purification (SDG 6), AND</li> <li>(c) Biodiversity conservation and enhancement (SDG 15).</li> </ul>
Smallholders	Smallholders are farmers that have more than 50% of farm work done by family members, cooperative members or neighbours.
Tree	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A tree is a perennial woody plant with one or several dominant sprouts that increase its circumference due to secondary growth.</li> <li>2. For a practical use of this document the definition of a tree goes beyond the scientific definition of a tree and also includes shrubs, palms and bamboo plants.</li> <li>3. In any project, trees shall reach a minimum height of 2 meters.</li> <li>4. (<b>A/R specific</b>): For forest inventories of these different types of trees additional guidance is provided by the forest inventory guidelines of the BioCarbon Fund<sup>[1]</sup>.</li> </ol>
Tree Planting ( <b>A/R specific</b> )	Tree planting refers to the activity of putting trees in the ground for growth; it also includes sowing or assisted natural regeneration.
Verification & Performance Certification	<p>Review that may take place either alongside or after Project Design Certification and must occur at least once during the 5-year Certification cycle.</p> <p>(<b>AGR specific</b>) The first Verification shall be completed either within two years of project implementation or Project Design Certification, whichever is later.</p> <p>(<b>A/R specific</b>) Verification shall follow the Project Design Certification and shall occur at least every 5 years until the end of the crediting period.</p>
Wetlands	(According to Cowardin et al. 1979) Wetlands are lands that are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water, and that have one or more of the following attributes:

	<p>(a) At least periodically, the land supports predominantly plants typically occurring in wetlands, AND</p> <p>(b) The substrate is predominantly undrained and water saturated soil, AND</p> <p>(c) The substrate is non-soil and is saturated with water or covered by shallow water at some time during the growing season of each year.</p>
Workers	<p>Workers are all persons that are employed by whom by a written or verbal agreement. This includes permanent, migrant, part-time and seasonal employees of all ranks and categories, including field workers, artisans, labourers, administrators, supervisors, executives, contractor employees as well as self-employed contractors and sub-contractors.</p> <p><b>(AGR specific):</b> Excepted from the definition above are:</p> <p>(a) Workers employed by a verbal agreement on smallholder farms for less than 3 months per year, AND</p> <p>(b) Smallholder farmers themselves, AND</p> <p>(c) Family members of the smallholder farmer</p>

## 1.0 SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

1.1. All Afforestation or Reforestation (A/R) Projects and all Agriculture (AGR) Projects for which Gold Standard certification is being sought shall fulfill the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements](#) as well as the Requirements as set out in this document and those referenced or associated. New methodologies and certification products involving Land-use & Forests may be submitted to Gold Standard for approval as per the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements](#).

1.2. In order to maintain the integrity of the standard, Gold Standard reserves the right to issue updates and changes, clarifications or corrections to its requirements. Typically, this will involve a notice period and guidance will be provided on how to apply the new rules and requirements. Likewise, the Gold Standard reserves the right to require additional information and evidence to be supplied by the Project Developer.

1.3. The Requirements are organized in line with the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles, as set out in the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements](#). Each section explains the specific applicability and/or any further Requirements that apply specifically to A/R projects (**A/R specific**) and/or AGR Projects (**AGR specific**).

## 2.0 ELIGIBILITY PRINCIPLES & CRITERIA

2.1 Eligible projects include:



- Afforestation & Reforestation Projects – A/R
- Agriculture Projects – AGR

2.2 In addition to the requirements stipulated in the Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles and Requirements, A/R and AGR projects shall comply with the following principles and criteria to be considered eligible:

(a) No Deforestation: The planting area (**A/R specific**) or the project area (**AGR specific**) shall not have been *forest* for at least 10 years prior to the project start.

(b) In case the that the planting area (**A/R specific**) or the project area (**AGR specific**) has been deforested during the last 10 years, the eligibility of the project shall be determined by Gold Standard as part of the Preliminary Review. The project developer shall provide evidence that the deforestation activity has not taken place with the intention to implement the project activities and generate Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact Statements and Products, such as GSVERs.

(c) Projects can be implemented in all countries. If projects are located in a country or state that has an operational mandatory national or pan-national cap-and-trade scheme to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, and hereby accounts for its own land-based activities under its national or subnational accounting, then projects seeking GS-VERs shall follow the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [GHG Emissions Reduction and Sequestration Product Requirements](#). In particular, Annex A (Double Counting Guidelines) is highlighted.

### 2.3. (**A/R specific**):

2.3.1 Projects include planting trees

2.3.2 Projects can include single-species plantations

2.3.3 Projects can apply all silvicultural systems. For example:

- (a) Conservation forests (no use of timber)
- (b) Forests with selective harvesting
- (c) Rotation forestry

2.3.4 All projects can include agriculture (agroforestry) or pasture (silvopasture) activities.

### 2.4 FSC Dual Certification

2.4.1 The Gold Standard and FSC are in partnership to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests. It will be possible for projects to obtain a dual certification (Gold

Standard and FSC) in a parallel process. Projects seeking dual certification will need to comply with all the FSC requirements.

2.4.2 With respect to potential dual certification The Gold Standard recognises that FSC certification can be used to demonstrate conformity with the Requirements of the Safeguarding Principles Assessment as well as the Annual Reporting Requirements. In such cases the GS-VVB is not required to re-check the FSC documentation.

2.4.3 In the event of a grievance being raised against a Gold Standard Land-use & Forests Project then all Gold Standard Requirements shall apply for the purpose of assessing Non-conformity and any response/redress.

2.4.4 The Project shall demonstrate conformity to [Gold Standard Safeguarding Principle 4.2.1 \(Water\)](#). FSC Certification is not deemed as evidence that this Principle is met.

2.4.5 When applying a dual certification, the Project Developer shall provide the 'FSC Audit Report' alongside the PDD (which may reference the FSC Audit Report for relevant sections but is not required to duplicate) and the 'FSC Annual Surveillance Report' instead of the template for 'Annual Report'. For dual certification, FSC certification is required to be valid throughout the crediting period.

2.5 (**AGR specific**): Eligible projects are those whose project activities are covered by an approved [Gold Standard for the Global Goals "Agriculture Methodology"](#).

## 2.6 Secured Titles

### 2.6.1 (**A/R specific**):

For all project participants, the following information and evidence shall be provided:

- Name and contact details
- Each entity's legal registration number and documentation by the governing jurisdiction that proves that the entity is in good standing.
- AND for the duration of the crediting period the Project Developer shall:
  - (where sought as a GS Certified Statement or Product (e.g. GS-VERs) own the CO2 user rights<sup>[17]</sup> or carbon sequestration rights for the project area, AND
  - hold an uncontested legal land title for the Project Area, AND
  - own the rights for timber and non-timber forest products for the project area, AND
  - hold all necessary permits to implement the project (planting permits, infrastructure permits, harvesting permits, etc.), AND

- participate in the financing of the project.

2.6.2 If the Project Developer does not meet all of the above requirements, the persons or legal entities that do meet those respective requirements shall endorse the expected project being undertaken by the Project Developer through an agreement that aligns with the duration of the crediting period.

2.6.3 The Project Developer shall define the authorities of all project participants with respect of:

- (a) instructing The Gold Standard secretariat, AND
- (b) requesting or communicating the addition or edits of project participants, AND
- (c) receiving all information from The Gold Standard Secretariat on matters related to the project.

2.6.4 (**AGR specific**)

Depending on the structure of the project, the Project Developer shall fulfil requirement 1 or 2:

**Requirement 1: The Project Developer acts on behalf of project participants.**

In this case each project participant shall sign an *agreement* with the Project Developer, which confirms that:

- (a) The project participant holds the CO2 user rights<sup>[18]</sup> that are associated with the project activities and passed these on to the Project Developer, AND
- (b) The project participant holds all necessary rights to implement the project activities (e.g., rights to harvest), AND
- (c) The legal land title or similar entitlement<sup>[19]</sup> for the land on which the project activities are implemented is uncontested.

These *agreements* shall include the:

- (e) Contact details of the project participants, AND
- (f) The legal registration number and documentation by the governing jurisdiction that proves that the entity is in good standing (in case of an organization), AND
- (g) Contact details of the land owner (if differing), AND
- (h) Length of lease contract (if applicable), AND

- (i) The liabilities and benefits for the person or entity to implement the project activities (e.g., switch to another crop and get access to the seeds).

## **Requirement 2: The Project Developer acts on its own.**

The Project Developer shall provide evidence that:

- (a) It holds the CO2 user rights<sup>[20]</sup> and the rights for any other Certified SDG Impact Statement or Product as applicable that are associated with the project activities, AND
- (b) It holds all necessary rights to implement the project activities (e.g., rights to harvest), AND
- (c) The legal land title or similar entitlement<sup>[21]</sup> for the land on which the project activities are implemented is uncontested.

### 2.7 New Area Certification

2.7.1 New Areas can be added or removed to an existing project area after it has achieved Design Certification.

2.7.2 The Project Developer should assess the New Areas that present material differences from the Preliminary Review and update the [Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles & Requirements assessment](#) accordingly.

2.7.3 To add new areas to its exiting project. For this the following requirements are set:

- (a) The new areas shall meet ALL applicable requirements of the Gold Standard for the Global Goals as well as the Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements
- (b) The new areas shall follow the process described for Validation and Project Design Certification under the Gold Standard for the [Gold Standard Principles and Requirements](#)
- (c) The crediting period of new areas cannot go beyond the crediting period of the existing project, as by the Design Certification.
- (d) The Project Developer shall update, if necessary, the existing Monitoring & Reporting Plan template with the information from the new areas added. The new information shall be clearly distinguishable, e.g., by the use of a different color.

2.7.4 New Areas added to retroactive projects must follow the requirements for retroactive issuance in the Gold Standard Principles and Requirements, [Gold Standard GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements](#), and the Gold Standard Use & Forests Activity Requirements

### 3.0 PRINCIPLE 1 – CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1. **(AGR specific)**: Increasing resilience to be able to deal with impacts of climate change is crucial for achieving income stability, food security and long-term development. Hence, preserving and increasing adaptive capacity for project participants must be an integral element of every project. Specifically:

- (a) The Project Developer shall identify the current and predicted variability in climate/weather for the project region.
- (b) Based on the current and predicted variability in climate/weather, the Project Developer shall analyze the possible effects on the project within the crediting period.
- (c) The Project Developer shall implement adaptation activities appropriate to the context and need of the respective project. Adaptation activities may include:
  - Practices that increase the resilience of farming systems, OR
  - Measures to improve the efficiency of water use, OR
  - Crops (crop breeds) with improved characteristics, OR
  - Crop rotation schemes, OR
  - Sharing of existing farmers' knowledge as well as knowledge on new agriculture practices, OR
  - Diversification of livelihoods, e.g., through increased agricultural productivity, increased variety of cultivated crops, identification of other income streams than from agriculture, OR
  - Measures to improve soil fertility.

### 4.0 PRINCIPLE 2 – SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES & REQUIREMENTS

4.1 In addition to the [Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles & Requirements](#) the Project Developer shall follow the process as set out in the [Risks & Capacities Guideline](#) for Land Use & Forest projects. The assessments for each shall be submitted for Preliminary Review and updated as required for Validation and Project Design Certification and at each Verification and Performance Certification.

4.2 The Safeguarding Principles & Requirements as well as the process as set out in the [Risks & Capacities Guideline](#) for 'Land Use & Forest' projects shall be assessed for the Project Area, taking into account any issues in the Project Region. In the case of New Areas added after achieving Design Certification, the Project Developer should assess the New Areas that present

material differences from the Preliminary Review and update the Safeguarding Principles & Requirements accordingly.

4.3 A minimum of 10% of the total Project Area shall be identified and managed to protect or enhance the biological diversity<sup>[2]</sup>. For this, the HCV<sup>[3]</sup> approach should be followed. This area has to be located within the Project Area and managed by the Project Developer. The area can also include the areas of buffer zones for water bodies. To protect or enhance biological diversity, the following shall be identified and managed.

- Existing patches of native tree species<sup>[4]</sup>, AND
- Single solitary stems of native tree species<sup>[5]</sup>, AND
- Habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species<sup>[6]</sup>, AND
- Areas relevant for habitat connectivity

4.4 Buffer Zones for Water Bodies: On both sides of permanent or temporary *water bodies* (lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, etc.) buffer zones of 15 meters shall be implemented. Irrigation channels are excluded from this requirement. In these buffer zones:

- All existing native trees<sup>[7]</sup> shall be kept, AND
- No fertiliser and pesticides shall be used, AND
- No logging activities shall take place, AND
- No heavy machinery shall be used, AND
- No cropping is allowed, AND
- In case trees are being planted, these shall be *native*<sup>[8]</sup>.

4.5. (**AGR specific, not applicable to Smallholder projects**) For the case of Agriculture projects or project areas managed by smallholders the following Safeguarding Principles & Requirements **do not** need to be fulfilled (Table 3):

**Table 2: Safeguarding Principles & Requirements that do not apply to smallholder projects**

Safeguarding Principles & Requirements	Specific sections that do not apply to smallholders' projects
4.3.10 High Conservation Value Areas and Critical Habitats	Point 4, item b
	Point 2
4.3.6 Pesticides & Fertilisers	All

## 5.0 PRINCIPLE 3 – STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

5.1 The Stakeholder Consultation should be conducted prior to the project start date (for A/R projects this is the planting start date and for Agriculture projects this is the date when project activities started). If the Stakeholder Consultation is conducted after the project start date, the Project Developer shall provide further explanation of how comments received during the Stakeholder Consultation are taken into account in the project.

5.2 The Stakeholder Consultation shall be conducted prior to the completion of Preliminary Review (meaning the report and any feedback received shall be documented and presented).

## 6.0 PRINCIPLE 4 – DEMONSTRATION OF REAL OUTCOMES

6.1 All Projects shall undergo a detailed Preliminary Review, as per [Gold Standard Principles & Requirements](#). The time period for Preliminary Review, Project Design Review and Performance Review are adjusted to 6, 8 and 3 weeks, respectively`.

6.2 The crediting period is the time span in which SDG Impacts can be accounted for and are subject to monitoring:

### 6.2.1 (A/R specific):

(a) The crediting period shall be minimum 30 years and maximum 50 years. The Project Developer shall select the crediting period based on the characteristics of the project.

(b) The crediting period starts with the planting start and may be up to 3 years prior to the date the project reaches the 'Design Certification' status for the purpose of issuing Certified SDG Impacts or Products such as GS-VERs.

### 6.2.2 (AGR specific)

(a) The crediting period shall be determined by the applicable Gold Standard for the [Gold Standard SDG Impact Quantification Methodology](#).

(b) The crediting period may be up to 3 years prior to the date the project reaches the 'Design Certification' status for the purpose of issuing Certified SDG Impacts or Products such as GS-VERs.

6.3 Gold Standard for the Global Goals requires Certification Renewal every 5 years. The following are exceptions for A/R and AGR projects:

6.3.1 The project baseline is not required to be updated unless otherwise stated in any applicable [Gold Standard SDG Impact Quantification Methodology](#).

6.3.2 Ongoing Financial Need is not required to be proven at Certification Renewal unless otherwise stated in a specific [Product Requirement](#).

6.4 In accordance with the above the process for Certification Renewal follows the same process as Performance Certification.

6.5 The Inputs & Grievance Mechanism (Annex B) shall apply. An updated Inputs & Grievances table shall be included in the Annual Reports and in Verification.

6.6 At any time after the Design Certification and submission for Verification, the Project Developer can add new areas to its exiting project. For this the following requirements are set:

(a) The new areas shall meet ALL applicable requirements of the Gold Standard Land Use & Forests Requirements according to the processes outlined for New Area Certification

(b) The crediting period of new areas cannot go beyond the crediting period of the existing project, as by the Design Certification.

(c) The Project Developer shall update, if necessary, the existing Monitoring & Reporting Plan template with the information from the new areas added. The new information shall be clearly distinguishable, e.g., by the use of a different color.

## 7.0 PRINCIPLE 5 – ADDITIONALITY ASSESSMENT

7.1 These Requirements shall be implemented in line with the [Gold Standard Principles & Requirements](#), for projects seeking Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact Statements or Products. The requirements in this section ensure that projects can demonstrate that they would not have been implemented without the benefits of Gold Standard Certification.

Templates for the submission of Additionality for [AGR](#) and [A/R](#) Projects are provided and should be submitted along with PDD for Preliminary Review.

7.2 Retroactive Submission: If the submission to the Preliminary Review was after the project start, the Project Developer shall demonstrate that:

(a) the revenues from Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact Statements or Products, such as GS-VERs, were seriously considered in the decision to implement the project, AND

(b) there was continuous interest in Certified SDG Impacts or Products for the project in parallel with its implementation.

Evidence to support this can include: contracts, draft versions of project information, correspondence with financial institutions or other stakeholders, minutes and notes of meetings, agreements or negotiations with auditors, publications in newspapers.



### 7.3 Tools for demonstrating project additionality (**A/R specific**):

#### 7.3.1 Option 1 – A/R CDM Tools

The project shall meet the additionality requirements of the latest version of the A/R CDM '[Combined tool to identify the baseline scenario and demonstrate additionality in A/R CDM project activities](#)'.

The CDM specific terms of the A/R CDM additionality tool (tCERs, A/R CDM project, etc.) shall be interpreted within The Gold Standard context. The '[Guideline on the assessment of investment analysis](#)' and the '[Guidelines for objective demonstration and assessment of barriers](#)' can be used.

#### 7.3.2 Option 2 – Positive List

The project shall meet all of the requirements (a), (b) and (c) in the list below and at least one of the requirements from (d) to (g) in order to be considered as additional under Option 2.

(a) The project is located in a Less Developed Country (LDCs) or in a region with a recent UNDP Human Development Indicator<sup>[9]</sup> below 0.8.

(b) The project shall have no intention of creating a forest for the commercial use of the timber or non-timber forest products.

(c) The project activities shall not be mandatory by any law or regulation, OR if it is mandatory, it shall demonstrate that these laws or regulations are systematically not enforced.

(d) The project area is located in a region with a mean annual precipitation of less than 600 mm

(e) The soil pH of the planting area is less than 4.0.

(f) The planting area is planted with minimum 5 different native tree species in mixed stands, covering at minimum 50% of the planting area.

(g) The project area is located in a country or region with a recent UNDP Human Development Indicator<sup>[10]</sup> below 0.5, OR In a Small Island Developing State (SIDS)<sup>[11]</sup>

### 7.4 Tools for demonstrating project additionality (**AGR specific**):

#### 7.4.1 Option 1 – CDM Tools

The project shall meet the additionality requirements of either:

- The latest version of the CDM '[Guidelines for the establishment of sector specific standardized baselines](#)', or
- The latest version of the CDM '[Combined tool to identify the baseline scenario and demonstrate additionality](#)'

The '*Guideline on the assessment of investment analysis*' and the '*[Guidelines for objective demonstration and assessment of barriers](#)*' can be used as assistance.

#### 7.4.2 Option 2 – Activity Penetration

This option shall only be applied by projects applying the Gold Standard for the Global Goals [GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements](#) and that result in GSVERs of less than 60,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq annually. The project is deemed additional when the project activity is adopted by less than 5% of farmers in the Reference Area<sup>[12]</sup>:

The '*Number of farmers adopting the project activity*' represents the farmers participating in the project.

#### 7.4.3 Option 3 – Positive List

The project shall meet requirements (a) and (b) in the list below and at least **one** of the requirements (c) – (f) in order to be considered as additional:

- (a) The project area is located in a country or in a region with a recent UNDP Human Development Indicator<sup>[13]</sup> below or equal to 0.7.
- (b) The project activities shall not be mandatory by any law or regulation, OR if they are mandatory, the Project Developer shall demonstrate that these laws or regulations are systematically not enforced.
- (c) The mean annual precipitation in the project area is less than 600 mm.
- (d) In the project area a minimum of 5 native crop species are being cultivated in a locally adapted agroforestry system<sup>[14]</sup>.
- (e) The project is a smallholder project and results in GSVERs of less than 60,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq annually.
- (f) The project area is located: In a country or region with a recent UNDP Human Development Indicator<sup>[15]</sup> below 0.5, OR In a Small Island Developing State (SIDS).

## 8.0 RETROACTIVE ISSUANCE

8.1 A project may issue Gold Standard Certified SDG Impact Statements or Products, such as GS-VERs only within its crediting period. The crediting period cannot start before the project start, but may start after.

8.2 If a project has its Preliminary Review later than the project start, retroactive Issuance of SDG Impact Statements or Products of up to 3 years is possible. In the case that new areas are added to a project (New Area Certification), its crediting period may not be moved earlier to the date of the existing crediting period.

8.3 These rules should apply in combination with the requirements set in the latest version of [Gold Standard Principles & Requirements](#) and [Gold Standard GHG Emissions Reductions & Sequestration Product Requirements](#).

## 9.0 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

9.1 In addition to the [Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements](#) The Project Developer shall undertake the following process based on the type of certification that is being pursued.

### 9.2 Key project information

For all projects involving A/R and/or Agriculture activities the following information shall be included in the Key Project Information:

- General description and overview of Project activities
- Organizations that are involved in the project (project participants)
- Communities stakeholders involved in the project, as applicable
- Location of the project area and the planting area **(A/R specific)**, as applicable
- Size of the project area and the planting area **(A/R specific)**, as applicable
- Risk of the project area to change (during the crediting period)
- Risk of the project activities to change (during the crediting period)
- Timeframe for the project activities
- Number of predicted CO2-certificates or other Certified SDG Impacts sought
- Land-use history and current situation of the project area
- Socio-economic history and current situation
- Main social impacts (risks and benefits)
- Main environmental impacts (risks and benefits)
- Financial structure
- **(A/R specific)**: Forest management applied (past and future)
- **(A/R specific)**: Forest characteristics (including main tree species planted)

- **(AGR specific):** Distribution of revenues (between the Project Developer and the smallholders), if applicable

The Project Developer shall define the project representatives who may have sole or joint authority on:

(a) Instructing and communicating with the Gold Standard secretariat,  
AND

(b) Receiving all information from the Gold Standard secretariat on matters related to the project.

(c) For all projects involving A/R and Agriculture activities the following information shall be submitted as GIS vector layers<sup>[16]</sup> (Table 4). The GIS vector layers shall be labelled comprehensively:

**Table 3: Information that must be submitted as a GIS vector layer**

ITEMS	A/R projects	AGR projects
Project Region	Yes	Yes
Project Area	Yes	Yes
Planting Areas	Yes	
Modelling Units	Yes	
Infrastructure (road, houses, etc.)	Yes	Yes
Water bodies	Yes	Yes
Protected Areas		Yes
Biodiversity Areas		Yes
Where Affected People are situated		Yes
Sites with special cultural, ecological, economic, religious or spiritual significance		Yes
Sites with special significance for <i>indigenous people and local communities</i> – resulting from the Local Stakeholder Consultation (LSC)	Yes	
Where <i>indigenous people and local communities</i> are situated	Yes	
Where <i>indigenous people and local communities</i> have legal rights, customary	Yes	

rights or sites with special cultural, ecological, economic, religious or spiritual significance.		
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9.3 (**AGR specific**) Special guidance on requirement (s) – for smallholder projects

- (a) Project region: A map with a polygon reflecting the boundaries
- (b) Project areas: A map with one GPS point per project participant and each project participant shall have a hand- drawn map of its part of the project area
- (c) Protected areas: A map with national parks (as by Google Maps) and UNESCO sites (as by <http://whc.unesco.org/en/interactive-map/>)
- (d) Biodiversity areas: A map with a polygon reflecting the boundaries
- (e) Infrastructure and permanent water bodies: As by Google Maps
- (f) Where people affected are situated: One GPS point per person, group of persons or community with a caption that described the effect
- (g) Sites with special cultural, ecological, economic, religious or spiritual significance: One GPS point per site with a caption that describes the significance and effect

## ANNEX A – UNCERTAINTY OF LUF PARAMETERS

**Applicability:** This guideline is applicable to all Gold Standard LUF projects in all countries.

Estimated greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from Land Use and Forestry (LUF) activities have uncertainties associated with the measurements/estimates of various parameters, especially area or other activity data, carbon stocks, biomass growth rates, expansion factors, emission factors and other coefficients.

This guideline provides a step-by-step approach on how to treat uncertainties in Gold Standard (GS) LUF projects and how to comply with the required GS target precision of 20% of the mean at a 90% confidence level.<sup>1</sup>

This guideline does not provide requirements for the estimation of uncertainties. Rather, it is assumed that the uncertainties associated with the various input data are known, either as estimates based on sound statistical sampling/measurement or published values, or default values given in IPCC Guidelines (2006), IPCC GPG - LULUCF (2003).

To accommodate that measurements are not always available to projects, and IPCC default factors following tier 1 approach do not meet GS requirements for project data and precision level, this guideline incorporates three approaches for baseline and project activity quantification:

*Approach 1:* Approach 1 requires on-site measurements to directly document pre-project and project activity data.

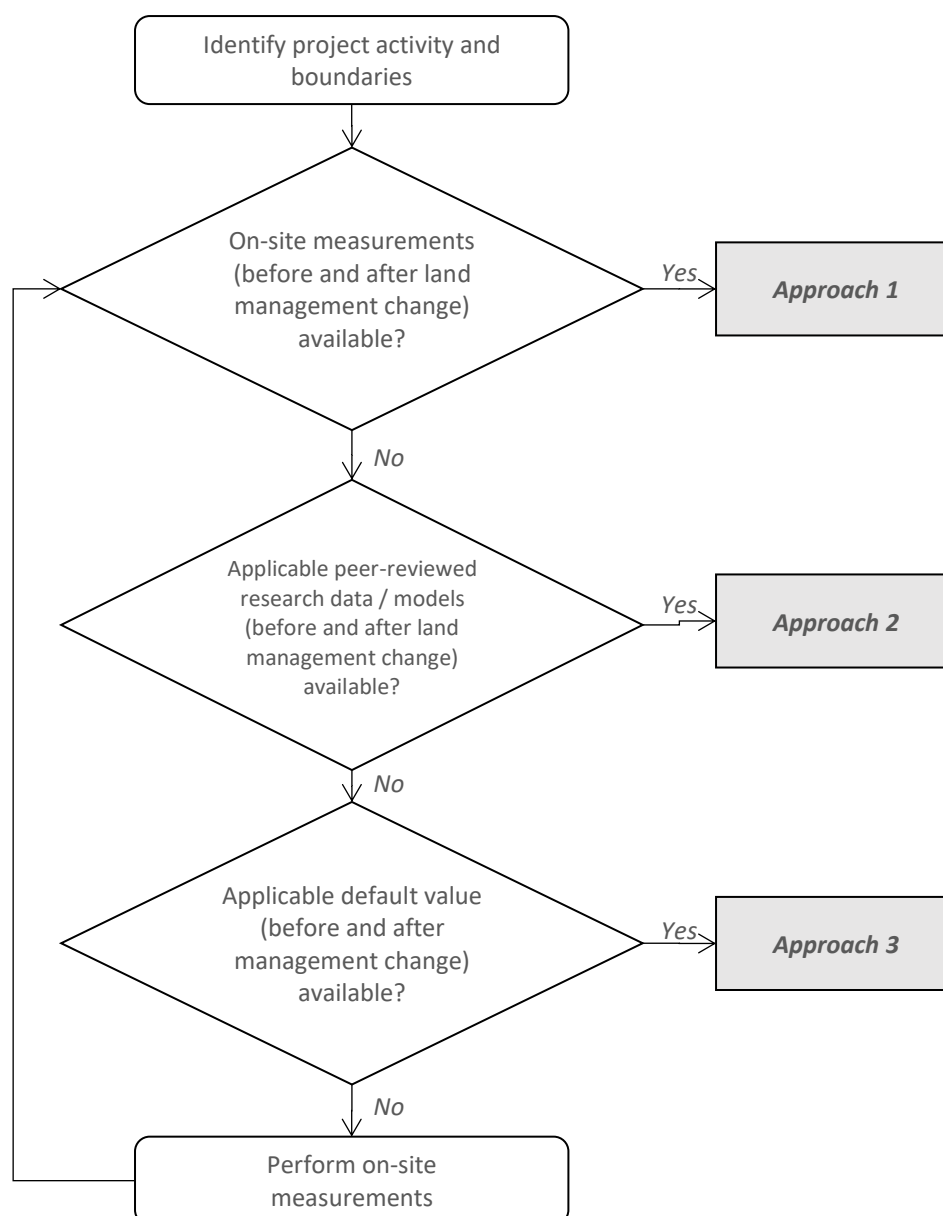
*Approach 2:* Approach 2 uses peer-reviewed publications to quantify baseline and project activity data. Project owners need to prove that the research results are conservative and applicable to the project site and management practice.

*Approach 3:* Approach 3 applies default factors to quantify changes but a discounting factor (Uncertainty Deduction) must be applied if compliance with the GS uncertainty threshold of  $\pm 20\%$  at a 90% confidence interval is not satisfied.

Generally, the most specific approach possible with the data available must be chosen. A decision tree to determine an eligible approach is supplied in Figure 1 below.

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<sup>1</sup> For parameters also applied in Gold Standard (GS) Energy such as fuel emission factors the GS precision of 10% of the mean at the 90% confidence level must be applied.



**Figure 1: Decision tree for identification of appropriate approach (according to The Gold Standard Agriculture Methodology Increasing Soil Carbon through Improved Tillage Practices)**  
**Approach 1**

Data is measured within each stratum and shall follow accepted sampling and analysis protocols. The project owner shall use Special Guidance for Smallholder Projects Data is measured within each stratum and shall follow accepted sampling and analysis protocols. If the uncertainty of estimated value is less than or equal to 20% of the mean change value then the project owner may use the estimated value without any deduction for uncertainty, i.e. UD = 0. If the uncertainty is greater than 20% of the mean value, then the project owner shall either increase the sampling effort to achieve this target or the project owner shall use the estimated value subject to an Uncertainty Deduction (UD) in table 1 below (see approach 3).

### Approach 2

Data is derived from data published in peer reviewed literature. Evidence for applicability of the literature values to the project site has to be provided with respect to climate factors (e.g. precipitation levels and seasonal distribution), soil and vegetation types as well as current and historic management systems (e.g. crops, tillage techniques, fertilization). Direct application of literature values is only permitted if the source conditions match the project environment, evidence of which shall be provided. Furthermore, literature values shall only be applied within the spatial and temporal dimensions analyzed in the original source (e.g. SOC depth, timespan for which changes are documented). If a range of parameter values is given in a source or data is aggregated across various factor levels (e.g. average in a region, across a range of soil types), the most conservative value shall be used.

Alternatively, values from literature may be verified by comparing them to measurements in a set of sample sites within the respective project stratum to indicate conservativeness of the parameter values applied. Such measurements are required if evidence for applicability (as listed above) of literature values is deemed insufficient by an auditor.

The project owner shall use GS LUF precision of 20% of the mean at the 90% confidence level as the criteria for reliability of estimates

### **Special Guidance for Smallholder Projects**

Data is derived from data published in peer reviewed literature. Evidence for applicability of the literature values to the project site has to be provided with respect to climate factors (e.g. precipitation levels and seasonal distribution), soil and vegetation types as well as current and historic management systems (e.g. crops, tillage techniques, fertilization). Direct application of literature values is only permitted if the source conditions match the project environment, evidence of which shall be provided. Furthermore, literature values shall only be applied within the spatial and temporal dimensions analyzed in the original source (e.g. SOC depth, timespan for which changes are documented). If a range of parameter values is given in a source or data is aggregated across various factor levels (e.g. average in a region, across a range of soil types), the most conservative value shall be used.

Alternatively, values from literature may be verified by comparing them to measurements in a set of sample sites within the respective project stratum to indicate conservativeness of the parameter values applied. Such measurements are required if evidence for applicability (as listed above) of literature values is deemed insufficient by an auditor.

If the uncertainty of estimates is less than or equal to 20% of the mean change value then the project owner may use the estimated value without any deduction for uncertainty, i.e. UD = 0. If the uncertainty is greater than 20% of the mean value, then the project owner shall use the estimated value subject to an Uncertainty Deduction (UD) in table 1 below ((see approach 3).

### **Approach 3**



Project owners may use published default factors such as IPCCs. However, as IPCC default factors are often available on tier 1 level only and are thus too generic for project level with high resulting errors for an individual site (or product), GS provides a discounting approach for those default factors which do not meet the GS uncertainty threshold of  $\pm 20\%$  at a 90% confidence interval. If the uncertainty is less than or equal to 20% of the mean change value then the project owner may use the estimated value without any deduction for uncertainty, i.e.  $UD = 0$ . If the uncertainty is greater than 20% of the mean value, then the project owner shall use the estimated value subject to an Uncertainty Deduction (UD) in Table 1:

**Table 4: Uncertainty discounting approach**

Uncertainty [U]	Uncertainty Deduction [UD] (% of U)
$20 < U \leq 30\%$	50%
$30 < U \leq 40\%$	75%
$40 < U \leq 50\%$	100%

**Example:**

Estimated mean =  $60 \pm 30$  kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

Calculate Uncertainty  $U = 30/60 = 50\%$

Resulting Uncertainty Deduction  $UD = 100\% * 30 = 30$  kg CO<sub>2</sub>e

The Uncertainty Deductions shall always be applied in the most conservative way, i.e. limiting the activities' GHG benefits to the lower end of the confidence interval.

Discounted conservative mean:

For stocks / GHG removals:

In baseline =  $60 + 30 = 90$  kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

In project =  $60 - 30 = 30$  kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

For GHG emissions:

In baseline =  $60 - 30 = 30$  kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

In project =  $60 + 30 = 90$  kgCO<sub>2</sub>e

## ANNEX B – A/R SMALLHOLDER & MICROSCALE GUIDELINES

### Background

These guidelines are an add-on module for the 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements'.

The guidelines simplify the existing requirements and aim to a reduction of transaction costs. For this, certain requirements have been modified, simplified or waived. Furthermore, the use of a special class of auditors is possible. If there is no mention of a particular requirement from the 'Land-use & Forest Activity Requirements' in these guidelines, it implies that the 'Land-use & Forest Activity Requirements' and/or Gold Standard for the Global Goals Principles & Requirements are unchanged.

Please note that the numbering of chapters is not always continuously within this guideline, as some chapters of the 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements' remain unchanged. This guideline aims to simplify the existing 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements'. In case a project intends to use in a particular case the original requirement of the 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements' instead of the adapted version by this guideline, it may do so.

### How to read

The applicability of requirements for Microscale or Small scale is indicated at the start of a specific chapter or subchapter.

## 1.0 APPLICABILITY / SCOPE

### 1.1 Applicable for:

- Microscale Projects
- Smallholder Projects

### 1.2 Applicability / Scope – To be added as new requirements:

- (a) This guideline shall be applied in combination with the Gold Standard LU&F Activity Requirements.
- (b) Smallholders | This guideline can be applied by 'smallholder projects' – project areas that are managed by smallholders.
- (c) There is NO limit in size for such 'smallholder projects'.
- (d) Projects that consist of areas, which are managed by a mix of smallholders and non-smallholders ('smallholders' as defined in 'Definitions') can use this guideline only for the project areas that are managed by smallholders.

(e) Combined certifications are possible and economically worthwhile.

(f) Microscale | This guideline can be applied by 'microscale projects' – projects with a project area of maximum 500ha.

(g) In order to avoid undermining the purpose of this guideline, Project Developer shall not register projects with similar characteristics as separate projects.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS

### 2.1 Applicable for:

- Microscale Projects
- Smallholder Projects

2.2 The 'A/R Smallholder & Microscale Guidelines' modify some of the existing definitions of the 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements'. Thus the 'Requirements' shall be interpreted accordingly.

2.3 When the Project Developer is uncertain about a particular interpretation, he shall contact the Land Use & Forest team of the Gold Standard Secretariat.

### 2.4 Governance

#### 2.4.1 To be added to the definition 'Auditor':

Auditors are individuals that have successfully completed the Gold Standard training for 'LUF Auditors' and are as defined in the Gold Standard Validation & Verification Body Requirements. Until then regular 'company auditors' shall be used.

These 'individual auditors' are limited to audit projects

(a) as New Area Certification

(b) as Performance Certification (except for the first Performance Certification)

The cumulative amount of GS-VERs (in the case of application of the Gold Standard GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Product Requirements) issued through one or several certifications executed by 'individual auditors' cannot exceed 100,000. For other SDG Impact Statements sought please contact the Gold Standard for limitations.

Beyond this threshold a Performance Certification by a 'company auditor' can reinstate a project's eligibility for subsequent cumulative 100,000 GSVERs – again issued through one or several certifications executed by 'individual auditors'.

#### 2.4.2 Project Actors

The term 'Worker' is adapted to:

- Workers (adapted from Fairtrade and FSC) Workers are all persons that are employed by a written or verbal agreement.
- This includes permanent, migrant, part-time and seasonal employees, of all ranks and categories, including field workers, artisans, labourers, administrators, supervisors, executives, contractor employees as well as self-employed contractors and sub-contractors.

Excepted from the definition above are:

- workers employed by a verbal agreement on smallholder farms for less than 3 months per year, AND
- smallholder farmers themselves, AND
- family members of the smallholder farmer
- Smallholder- Smallholders are farmers that have more than 50% of farm work done by family members, cooperative members or neighbors.

## 2.5 Areas

The term project area replaces/merges the definitions of 'Project area', 'Planting area' and 'Eligible Planting Area':

Project area I (Source: adapted from FSC, where the relevant term is 'Management Unit') The project area is a spatial area submitted for certification, managed to a set of explicit long-term management objectives.

For the efficient calculation of the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>-certificates or other accounted SDG Impacts (e.g. carbon reduction, removal and avoidance, biodiversity enhancement, water supply) under The Gold Standard, the project area is divided into the sub-unit of Modelling Units (MUs).

New project areas can be added and removed to an existing project area after its Initial Certification (see 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements' – New Area Certification').

To be added as new definition:

**2.6 Project activity:** Project activities are activities (planning, implementation and management) undertaken with the objective to certify more than one Ecosystem Services and SDG benefit (e.g. emission reduction, removal and avoidance, biodiversity enhancement, water supply).

**2.7 The term 'Project' is adapted to:**

Project: A project is the realization of project activities.

**2.8 The term 'Modelling Unit (MU)' is adapted to:**

Modelling Unit (MU) | A Modelling Unit (MU) represents an area with *homogeneous characteristics* to predict (model) and verify SDG Impacts

## 2.9 A/R projects

For A/R projects these *homogeneous characteristics* are usually defined by the:

- age cohorts, AND
- (mix of) tree species, AND
- silvicultural treatment, AND
- agro-ecological conditions (e.g. elevation, precipitation, soil type, etc.).

## 2.10 Certificates

The term 'Crediting period' is adapted to:

Crediting period | The crediting period is the time span in which SDG Impacts, including the reduction, removal and avoidance of CO<sub>2</sub> can be accounted for and is subject to monitoring.

## 2.11 Smallholder projects

Smallholders join and exit projects more frequently than participants in regular projects. Although a project always has only *one* crediting period, smallholders of a project can have different commitment periods to a project.

Overall, it is in the responsibility of the Project Developer to deliver the estimated SDG Impacts and GS-VERs (where applicable) within its crediting period, as outlined during the Initial Certification.

## 2.12 Smallholder and microscale A/R projects

An adaptation of the crediting period after the Design Certification is possible, as long as it stays within the timeframe of 30-50 years. For the procedures, please contact the Gold Standard secretariat.

# 3.0 KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

## 3.1 Applicable for:

- Smallholder Projects
- Micro-scale Projects (Not applicable)

## 3.2 The following additional information is required to support Key Project Information:

(a) Organizations involved in the project (including legal details of the Project Developer and its relationship to the *local communities* of the project)

(b) Target smallholder groups that will be invited to participate

- (c) Location of the project area
- (d) Size of the project area
- (e) Distribution of revenues (between the Project Developer and the smallholders)

3.3 The Project Developer shall have a digital map with the location of all project areas. All A/R projects involving smallholders and using the Smallholder and Microscale Guidelines shall be required to submit digital polygons of each plot area (as by Google Earth or other online tools, on-site GPS or Lidar measurements).

3.4 Each smallholder participating in the project shall:

- (a) know during any field visit what area of his land is part of the project activity (project area), AND
- (b) have a hand-drawn (or digital) map of this area that contains the size of his land and/or the number of trees.

## 4.0 SUSTAINABILITY

4.1 Applicable for:

- Smallholder Projects
- Micro-scale Projects

4.2 Safeguarding Principles Assessment

4.2.1 Social

Note that the requirements for Working Conditions and for Occupational Health & Safety are limited to 'workers' of the project.

4.2.2 Environmental

The following Requirements are removed:

- (a) Through a smart mosaic of the planting areas, buffer zones and infrastructure habitat connectivity for flora and fauna should be enhanced.
- (b) Minimum 10% of the project area shall be identified and managed to protect or enhance the *biological diversity*<sup>[22]</sup> of *native ecosystems*<sup>[23]</sup>. For this, the *HCV*<sup>[24]</sup> approach should be followed.
- (c) On both sides of permanent or temporary *water bodies* (lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands, etc.) riparian buffer zones of 15 meters shall be implemented on each site. In these riparian buffer zones:
  - only *native tree species*<sup>[25]</sup> may be planted, AND

- *invasive species*<sup>[26]</sup> shall be removed, AND
- all existing vegetation shall be kept, AND
- no timber harvesting activities shall take place, AND
- no use of fertilizer or chemical pesticides.

Requirements are further adapted to:

(e) Existing patches of trees or single solitary stems with a high degree of *biological diversity*<sup>9</sup>, AND

(f) habitats of *endangered species*<sup>[27]</sup> shall always be *identified* and *managed* to protect or enhance the *biological diversity*<sup>9</sup>.

(g) Workers shall transport, store, handle and apply chemical pesticides in a safe way.

## 5.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION (SC)

5.1 According to the 'Gold Standard Safeguarding Principles & Requirements' which needs to be applied by all projects, all requirements of the Safeguarding Principles Assessment are subject to discussion during the stakeholder consultations – and need to be monitored in case any risk of future non-compliance is identified.

## 6.0 LEGAL RIGHTS

6.1 The requirement is adapted to:

Each smallholder shall sign an *agreement* with the Project Developer which confirms that the smallholder holds the 'CO2 user rights<sup>[28]</sup>' from the trees that are planted due to the project and passed these rights on to the Project Developer, AND the smallholder holds all necessary rights to implement the project (e.g. planting permits, right to harvest).

Such *agreements* shall include the:

- contact details of the smallholder, AND
- contact details of the land owner (if differing), AND
- length of lease contract (if applicable), AND
- a confirmation that the land tenure on which the trees are planted is uncontested, AND
- the liabilities and benefits for the smallholder.

If a smallholder does not meet requirements (a) and (b), the person or legal entity that does meet those respective requirements shall endorse the participation of the smallholder in a written form.

6.2 All paragraphs within the *agreement* shall be explained and discussed with the smallholders in meetings. If helpful, the *agreement* should be translated to the local language and/or in an oral way.

6.3 The Project Developer shall have a list with all:

- names and contact details from the participating smallholders, AND
- the locations (GPS points) and area (ha) of their project areas, AND
- the *end dates* of the lease contracts and frequency of renewal (if applicable), AND
- the *start* and *end dates* of the smallholders participating in the project.

## 7.0 ADDITIONALITY

### 7.1 Additionality

7.1.1 Please note that the 'Land Use & Forests Activity Requirements' contain two options for the proof of additionality. Though, the adaptations made by this guideline only refer to 'Option 2', 'Option 1' can also be applied by the Project Developer.

7.2.2 To be added to the 'Process for New Area Certification':

Process for New Area Certification

Option 2: The Project Developer may use the *UNDP Human Development Indicator* [\[29\]](#) of the Initial Certification.

7.2.3 The requirement for eligibility is adapted to:

The project area shall not have been *forest* [\[30\]](#) for at least 10 years prior to the planting start.

In case the project area has been deforested during the last 10 years, evidence shall be given that the deforestation activity has not taken place with the intention to reforest the area and generate CO<sub>2</sub>-certificates

## 8.0 GHG EMISSIONS REDUCTION & SEQUESTRATION METHODOLOGY (A/R)

8.1 Applicable for:

- Smallholder Projects
- Micro-scale Projects



8.2 Practical Approach where Gold Standard A/R GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration, or Gold Standard Agriculture GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Methodologies are applied

8.2.1 Many projects take place in countries where little scientific information is available for trees species, biomass in general and other land use related activities.

8.2.2 To provide cost-efficient estimations for the parameters 'Baseline', 'Leakage' and 'CO<sub>2</sub>-Fixation' it is thus *recommended* for the Project Developer not to execute expensive field research, but to use wherever possible existing national or international default values.

8.3 Baseline: To be added as new requirement:  
Applicability conditions for each Baseline scenario shall be set.

8.4 The process for 'New Area Certification' is adapted to:

Process for New Area Certification

For the New Area Certification, the Project Developer shall provide justification that the *new areas* meet the applicability conditions that were set during the

Project Design Certification.

In case 'new' *Leakage scenarios* are created, the process for Project Design Certification shall be followed.

The resulting figures of the 'Baseline' template shall be used to update the projects 'Modelling Units Report'. This can be a self-made spreadsheet by the project.

The resulting figures of the 'Leakage' template shall be used to update the projects 'Modelling Units Report'. This can be a self-made spreadsheet by the project.

In case 'new' *MU growth-models* are created the process for Initial Certification shall be followed.

The resulting figures of the 'CO<sub>2</sub>-Fixation' template shall be used to update the projects 'Modelling Units Report'. This can be a self-made spreadsheet by the project.

8.5 Leakage: To be added as new requirement:

Applicability conditions for each *Leakage scenario* shall be set.

8.6 CO<sub>2</sub>-Fixation (for application of A/R GHG Emissions Reduction & Sequestration Methodology): To be added as new requirement:

Applicability conditions for each *MU growth-model* shall be set.

8.7 Forest Inventory

The requirement is adapted to:

For *forest inventories* the 'Guidelines – Forest Inventory' should be followed.

8.10 The requirement is adapted to:

The *forest inventory* shall be sufficient to meet a MU precision with a maximum error of  $\pm 20\%$  at a 90% confidence interval. Where the error is above 20%, the additional difference shall be deducted.

## 9.0 PROJECT CYCLE

9.1 Applicable for:

- Smallholder Projects
- Micro-scale Projects

9.2 New Area Certification

9.2.1 To be added as information:

New Area Certification can also be executed by 'Auditors' as per Definitions, Section 2.4.

## ANNEX C – LU&F INPUT & GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

### 1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To maintain a transparent communication channel with stakeholders throughout the crediting period of a project, in addition to the consultation conducted at the design stage (via two rounds of Stakeholder Consultation).

1.2 To address early in the crediting period, unforeseen issues that arise during the course of a project. Stakeholders can suggest improvements or modifications based on their direct experience with the project and their knowledge and understanding of local conditions.

1.3 To further increase the robustness of The Gold Standard through more active and continuous stakeholder involvement, thereby adding value to the existing system of stakeholder feedback and monitoring.

1.4 To increase mutual trust between the project developer and the local stakeholders, to the benefit of both parties.

### 2.0 REQUIREMENTS

2.1 The project developer shall establish methods a-c (below) of *input & grievance* expression for each project. Method d (below) is optional and may be chosen in agreement with local stakeholders (as part of the SC meeting). The project developer shall also demonstrate that they regularly monitor and respond to the comments that are made through each of the methods for continuous *input & grievance* expression.

Methods for continuous *input & grievance* expression

- (a) Continuous 'Input & Grievance Expression Process Book'
- (b) Telephone access
- (c) Internet and email access
- (d) Nominated Independent Mediator (NIM)

2.2 Comments received through any of the methods shall be documented using the table template below. This table is part of the 'Annual Reports' and thus part of every third-party audit and Gold Standard review.

#### Method 1 – Input & Grievance Expression Process Book

A comment book shall be made available on the project site or in the most appropriate, publicly accessible location (e.g. a local community centre, at the local council, a local library or school), so that local stakeholders can provide feedback on the project.

The book is important to allow for continuous inputs in regions with high literacy rates but which have minimal access to the internet. The location of the book shall be explained and discussed at the SC meeting and then justified in the project documentation.

At a minimum, the book shall be formatted to include the five sections from the table (C-1) template. If the project developer feels that additional columns are necessary then these can be included. The table shall be formatted to allow for stakeholders to make anonymous comments should they wish.

The project developer shall check the comments in the book on a regular basis and record responses. The project developer may record changes that are made to the project, acknowledge problems and explain their causes, or explain why the comment cannot be addressed by the project, or if it is irrelevant. Even where the desired outcome of the stakeholder cannot be achieved, the project developer shall use their response to show that they are respectful of the views of stakeholders and suggest alternative solutions or compromises wherever possible.

**Table C-1: Template table for recording input & grievance expressions**

Date	Comment	Action requested from Project Developer	Response from project developer	Person designated with responsibility by project developer	Issue resolved?
	Explanation of problem or comment.	What would the stakeholder like to see change/stay the same.	Explanation from the project of what they will do in response to the comment. This may be an explanation as to why the project is unable to respond/does not see the problem as necessary to address.	Identification of who will take responsibility for responding AND monitoring the issue.	This could be confirmation from the person who made the complaint, or the project.

**Table C-2: Pros and cons of Method 1**

Pros	Cons
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simple to use – does not require access to technology or associated costs for stakeholders</li> <li>○ Cheap, efficient to manage</li> <li>○ Simple to explain to stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assumes literacy (they are still able to communicate through other input mechanisms)</li> <li>○ Requires small geographical spread of stakeholders (or possibly more than one book)</li> <li>○ Potential loss/theft of the book (ensure that a secure place is chosen and daily checks are carried out)</li> <li>○ Could result in complaints from individuals, but little space for constructive discussions with wider community (encourage discussing these complaints in the local governance meetings)</li> </ul>
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## Method 2 – Telephone access

In regions where stakeholders may be spread over a large geographical area, telephone contact may be more practical than a physical book. The telephone contact details shall be explained and discussed at the SC meeting and then justified in the project documentation.

The telephone number could be that of the project site office or another location. However, in countries where local or national calls, or calls to mobiles, have different pricing, the project developer shall try to offer the least expensive option and justify the choice. The contact details of The *Gold Standard Regional Manager* located closest to the project shall also be provided for stakeholders.

The project developer shall ensure that the phone is answered by someone (or has an answer phone message) in a language(s) appropriate to the stakeholders of the project.

Calls received shall be logged and recorded in the same way as in the book, with the date, comment, action requested and project developer response recorded for each call. As with all of the methods, stakeholders are not required to give their personal details when they wish to make a comment.

**Table C-3: Pros and cons of Method 2**

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simple to use</li> <li>○ Simple to explain to stakeholders</li> <li>○ Inexpensive to run if the project developer uses the same phone line as the project/office rather than setting up a separate phone line</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stakeholder incurs the cost of a phone call</li> <li>○ Provides fewer channels for discussion with wider community as complaints are individualized (encourage discussions on these</li> </ul>

- Greater anonymity for stakeholders
- Overcomes illiteracy issues
- Better where stakeholders may be spread over a larger area or have geographical barriers to access the project site/book/mediator

also in the local governance meetings)

### Method 3 – Internet access

In regions with widespread internet access an email address or comments section on a website established by the project developer could be the easiest way of receiving input from stakeholders. The email and website details shall be explained and discussed at the SC meeting and then justified in the project documentation.

The email address of The *Gold Standard Regional Manager* located closest to the project shall also be provided for stakeholders to contact. On a website, the information of the project and mechanism for providing comments shall be presented in a straightforward manner, showing the same information as in the table (C-1) template. The information shall be in the language(s) most appropriate for local stakeholders and it shall allow for comments to be made anonymously.

Emails or website comments received shall be logged and recorded in the same way as in the book, with the date, comment, action requested and project response recorded for each message. As with all of the methods, stakeholders are not required to give their personal details when they wish to make a comment.

**Table C-4: Pros and cons of Method 3**

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simple to use</li> <li>○ Simple to explain to stakeholders</li> <li>○ Useful where stakeholders are be spread over a larger area or have geographical barriers to access the project site/book/mediator</li> <li>○ Managing an email address or website section for comments is inexpensive for project developer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assumes literacy</li> <li>○ Assumes internet connection, and access to the internet for all groups of stakeholders</li> <li>○ May entail some costs for the project developer to set up, of a website is used</li> <li>○ Provides fewer channels for discussion with wider community as complaints are individualised (discuss in the local governance meetings)</li> <li>○ Potential lower level of anonymity than telephone calls/comment book.</li> </ul>

### Method 4 – Nominated Independent Mediator (Optional)

The selection of a Nominated Independent Mediator (NIM) by the project developer may be the best approach for projects in regions with low literacy rates and/or little access to telephone and internet connections. The NIM shall be someone that local stakeholders can access easily, trust to represent their views, and who is in contact with the project developer. The selected NIM shall be discussed at the SC meeting and agreed by and with the local stakeholders. Contacts between the NIM and the local stakeholders shall be communicated to, and recorded by, the project developer using Table 5. This shall include the date of contact, all of the issues that have been discussed and any information or responses that were provided to the NIM in response to the stakeholders. The NIM shall be willing to be contacted by the auditor or The Gold Standard Secretariat to confirm their role and the comments they have received.

**Table 5: Pros and cons of Method 4**

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simple to explain to stakeholders</li> <li>○ Can work within (and uphold) local customs for managing disputes</li> <li>○ Potentially provides a third party to mediate relationships</li> <li>○ Overcomes literacy issues</li> <li>○ Potentially allows for community engagement and discussion of issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The mediator may be biased towards/against the project and not give objective feedback (can be discussed in the local governance meetings and a request can be made to change the mediator if they are found to be prejudiced)</li> <li>○ May not be approachable for stakeholders, or not to all groups (as above can be resolved in local governance meetings)</li> <li>○ May require remuneration to take the role seriously</li> </ul>

**Table 6: Table template for communications between NIM and stakeholders**

Date	Comment	Action requested from Project Developer	Response from project developer	Person designated with responsibility by project developer	Issue resolved?
2 April 2013	The construction vehicles that drive to the site make lots of noise, and beep their horns	Please make less noise on the roads around the site and at the site entrance, as there are	Drivers have been asked to be respectful of the neighbours as they drive near the site, and turn off their engines	Mr. Kajura, Head of Site Transport	Internal monitoring suggests that drivers now call instead of using their horns to gain entry to the site. Mr Kajura

	to access the site.	houses nearby.	when they are waiting to enter. They have also been asked to telephone the site office to gain entry to the site, instead of beeping their horns. May 2013.		has spoken to project neighbours, and they agree that noise levels from the site have reduced. June 2013.
3 April 2013	There is now less land to graze our cattle because the area around the turbines has a fence.	Access to more land for grazing the animals.	For safety reasons, some areas have to be restricted so that there are no accidents. However, we will hold a meeting with local people to explain which areas are dangerous and therefore restricted, but use a map and discuss with local people to see if there are other areas of the site that can be used for grazing animals. May 2013.	Ms. Mandela, Site Manager.	Project community meeting held 30th May 2013. Map produced and copies distributed to local people to indicate which areas are accessible. Explained the dangers of high voltages for the animals to show why access to some land had been restricted. Community members agreed, but have asked for an animal passage to be made to access the western area of the



					site. This will be done with new fencing in August 2013.
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### 3.0 Stakeholder Consultation (SC) Meeting

At the SC meeting, the methods of input shall be explained and discussed to ensure that local stakeholders agree that the details of the selected methods will be the most appropriate e.g. the location of the book is accessible and secure, local stakeholders agree that the mediator is someone that they can approach and trust to represent their comments to the project without prejudice, the website is in appropriate language(s) and will be easy for local stakeholders to use etc.

The *SC Report* shall document any comments, criticisms or improvements that were made to the continuous *input & grievance* expression methods discussed at the SC meeting.

#### ***Recommended Best Practice for Continuous Input & Grievance Expression from Stakeholders (local governance meetings)***

The Gold Standard Foundation recommends that, where practical, project developers have regular meetings to invite local stakeholders to give their feedback on the project, ensure that the project goals are understood and investigate if there are any improvements that could be made. These could be in the form of:

Annual project open days to allow local stakeholders to visit the site and see the project

A meeting (e.g. coincide with training and repairs, or at the same time as auditor *field visits*) that includes general information about the project, education about climate change and carbon offsetting, etc.

These regular meetings can be very useful for projects as they allow project developers to hear the views of local stakeholders (including employees) and, as they allow for greater communication and understanding, can improve relations between the project and the local community. If regular meetings are planned, they shall be mentioned at both rounds of the LSC and advertised in accordance with The Gold Standard requirements.

As part of the Validation, the GS-VVB shall check whether the approved/selected methods of continuous *input & grievance* from the *SC Report* or other consultations have been implemented on site and discussed in the project documentation.

The continuous *input & grievance* log (the template table in Section 2.0) is part of the project documentation that the auditor shall use to audit the project.

The GS-VVB shall check:

- (a) That the project developer has responded in a reasonable manner to comments that have been raised.
- (b) That the responses are adequate, timely and appropriate to address the problem or comments raised.
- (c) That any issues the auditor considers serious are taken up as a Forward Action Request (FAR) for the project as part of the certification to ensure further monitoring of the issue.

The auditor shall make use of the comments when in discussions with local stakeholders as part of the *field visits*. The comments can provide useful starting points for conversations with the local stakeholders. If there are comments from a stakeholder that has chosen not to remain anonymous, the auditor can request to speak to this individual if they think an issue is of serious concern for the project.

Where the auditor has doubts about the activities of the project, or the comments raised relate to a serious problem, the auditor shall:

- (a) Confirm that the actions, as per the response from the project developer, recorded in the table have taken place.
- (b) Confirm that stakeholders accept the results.
- (c) Consider using a Forward Action Request (FAR) to ensure further monitoring of the issue.

If no comments have been made through the *input & grievance* mechanisms, the auditor shall record this information as part of their report. When engaging with local stakeholders they shall inquire whether stakeholders are aware of the continuous *input & grievance* mechanisms, whether there are any problems, concerns or comments about the project, and encourage the stakeholders and the project developer to use the continuous *input & grievance* mechanisms.

## Endnotes

[1] <http://katoombagroup.org/~katoomba/documents/tools/Pearson%20et%20al%20-%20Sourcebook%20for%20LULUCF.pdf>

[2] (Source: FSC) The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

[3] High Conservation Value [www.hcvnetwork.org](http://www.hcvnetwork.org)

[4] Native tree species (Source: FSC) Species, subspecies, or lower taxon, occurring within its natural range (past or present) and dispersal potential that

is, within the range it occupies naturally or could occupy without direct or indirect introduction or care by humans.

[5] Same as footnote #4

[6] All endangered and critically endangered species as defined by the IUCN Red List – [www.IUCNredlist.org](http://www.IUCNredlist.org)

[7] Same as footnote #4

[8] Same as footnote #4

[9] UNDP Human Development Indicator: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles/>

[10] See footnote #9

[11] SIDS: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sids/list>

[12] Reference Area: an area with similar climatic and social conditions as defined by the Köppen-classification [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Köppen\\_climate\\_classification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Köppen_climate_classification)

[13] See footnote #9

[14] A locally adapted agroforestry system refers to land-use systems and practices where trees are deliberately integrated with crops and/or livestock on the same land management unit adapted to the local geophysical and social conditions.

[15] See footnote #9

[16] A *GIS vector layer* is any file format containing vector spatial data that can be opened and displayed with a software application. For assistance in creating *GIS vector layer* maps, contact the Gold Standard secretariat.

[17] CO2 user rights are rights that grant the titleholder any benefit that could be generated from the certification of the carbon sequestration or greenhouse gas reduction by the project.

For land use projects, the holder of the CO2 user rights is usually the owner of the land, where the project activity takes place – except when such rights have been expressly transmitted to another person or entity by the land owner, or when an authority act / decision / order / regulation assigns such rights to a different person than the land owner.

[18] See footnote #17

[19] Similar Entitlement: It is considered that similar entitlement exists, when  
1) A person or entity has been using the land of the project as its owner, for the period of time that the applicable law requires for persons or entity to acquire property by its use, AND 2) Neighbours or neighbouring community agrees that the land has been used for such time by the person or entity claiming it

[20] See footnote #17

[21] See footnote #19

[22] See footnote #2

[23] Native ecosystem (Adapted from FSC) Sites to favour or restore native species and associations of native species that are typical of the locality, and for managing these associations and other environmental values so that they form ecosystems typical of the locality.

[24] See footnote #3

[25] See footnote #4

[26] Invasive species (Source: FSC) Species that are rapidly expanding outside of their native range. Invasive species can alter ecological relationships among native species and can affect ecosystem function and human health.

[27] See footnote #6

[28] See footnote #17

[29] See footnote #9

[30] Forest: A forest is defined by the Designated National Authority (DNA) of the project's host-country: <http://cdm.unfccc.int/DNA/index.html>