



Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Purpose of document:

To answer some of the questions we have received in response to the [statement published on 8 March 2022](#).

FSC announced the suspension of all certificates in Russia and Belarus that allow the sale or promotion of FSC products. In addition, all sourcing of controlled forest products from the two countries is blocked. This means that once this suspension and blockage becomes effective, wood and other forest products can no longer be sourced as FSC-certified or controlled from Russia and Belarus for their inclusion in FSC products anywhere in the world.

On FSC's decision

Q: What is the effective date of the decision on Russia and Belarus?

A: All measures to stop sourcing wood and other forest products from Russia and Belarus must take effect by 8 April 2022.

Sourcing companies have 30 days to adapt their due diligence systems to make sure they no longer source from Russia or Belarus, and certification bodies have the same time to take relevant actions towards affected certificate holders.

Q: Why is FSC giving companies 30 days to implement this instead of doing it immediately?

A: This timeline has been set to:

- Ensure that all directly affected parties and their staff are duly informed and can take the steps necessary to change internal systems and inform their clients and customers accordingly;
- Allow for an orderly close-down of relevant certification, trading and sourcing activities by FSC's business partners around the world with respect to Russia and Belarus;



- Avoid the risk of the generation of false claims and non-conforming products which would arise from overly short implementation timelines.

Q: Why did FSC take longer to make this decision than other organizations?

A: The war on Ukraine is tragic. It has devastating effects on people and our deepest concern and empathy are with all the innocent people impacted by this appalling crisis in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

Since the beginning of the invasion, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian FSC members agreed that what is happening is contrary to the values that FSC stands for and that we needed to take action, but that any decision had to be made wisely. FSC's leadership mapped out the options available, investigated the implications of each, and made every effort to reduce the risk of 'doing further harm'.

The decision process included engagement with FSC members, certificate holders and wider stakeholders, who came to FSC with a range of viewpoints and considerations to help inform our decision announced on 8 March 2022.

Q: Why is FSC keeping forest management certificates valid in Russia?

A: FSC is an organization that lives its mission as a community where several actors work together towards one common goal: ensuring the long-term resilience of the world's forests.

FSC's decision to stop trade with the FSC-certified material coming from Russia and Belarus ensures that FSC's activity is not associated with the war.

Discussions among FSC's leadership, the International Board and members made it evident that removing forest management certificates in Russia would jeopardize the protection of these forests and affect those who are not involved or supportive of the invasion.

Click [here](#) to read about the value and impact of Russia's forests.



FSC is keeping forest management certificates valid in Russia to give forest owners the option to protect these forests and sustainably manage them through pure forest management certification, without the possibility to sell timber with the FSC trademark coming from these forests.

Q: How does this relate to ASI's decision to terminate its FSC oversight activities in Belarus?

A: ASI's [decision](#) to exclude Belarus from the scope of all certification bodies was a result of an investigation of the integrity risks to the FSC system in Belarus, which pre-dates the invasion of Ukraine.

In line with ASI's decision, FSC has enforced additional measures on Belarus which in combination require the withdrawal of all certificates in the country.

The reason is that the rigorous work of auditors on the ground, who monitor the FSC-certified organizations, can no longer be ensured to be safely conducted nor to be verified by ASI under the current political conditions. For more information, read the [official statement here](#).

Assurance Services International (ASI) is the assurance partner that accredits independent certification bodies to audit FSC certificate holders' adherence to FSC standards.

Q: Can companies in Russia retrieve their FSC certificates when the invasion ends?

A: Once the current invasion of Ukraine ends, the suspension of certificates (in Russia, not Belarus – see previous question and answer) could be lifted accordingly. Certification bodies will have to determine whether this will require an on-site audit to make sure that relevant management systems and critical control points are still working effectively, and that forest management resources have not been depleted in the meantime.

Q: What if the war ends before the 30-day period is over?



A: If the invasion of Ukraine ends before 30 days from the date of the announcement (i.e. before 8 April 2022), certificate suspensions in Russia will be lifted.

Terminations in Belarus will nevertheless remain effective because of the additional issues in relation to FSC Core Labour Requirements as highlighted in the [statement](#).

Q: What about FSC's activities in Ukraine?

A: FSC's leadership and the FSC International Board of Directors are currently discussing what meaningful actions can be taken in this rapidly changing operational environment. We are in close alignment with ASI on this matter and will be making an announcement as the situation develops.

On certificates and companies

Q: Can entities with a forest management/ chain of custody certificate in Russia turn it into forest management only?

A: Yes, forest management certificates in Russia can remain valid when their scope is reduced so that they no longer have the possibility to sell timber with the FSC trademark coming from these forests.

Certification bodies will be able to conduct a reduction of the certificate scope of forest management/chain of custody to forest management either before the suspension would become effective or during the suspension.

Q: Can certificate holders in Russia still sell FSC material that was produced and labelled before the suspension?

A: No, following their suspension organizations will no longer be eligible to sell products with FSC claims beyond that timeframe. The general rule applies here that products which have not yet left the organization's chain of custody system at the time the certificate is invalidated have lost their certified status.



In the case of suspension, however, these products can regain their certified status upon the reinstatement of certification, provided that the organization can demonstrate the continued control over these products according to applicable FSC requirements.

If you are a certificate holder or a company trading in FSC-labelled products and have questions, please contact your closest [FSC office](#)