



Strengthening SFM Standards and Timber Legality Framework in Myanmar



ITTO
INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL
TIMBER ORGANIZATION

Project Supported by Forestry Agency of Japan
Implemented by Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC) &
International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

Newsletter Issue 2 - Mar 2022

About MFCC

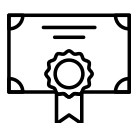
Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC) is the National Governing Body (NGB) of forest/timber certification schemes in Myanmar and a central part of the mandate is to carry out forest and timber certification and create an enabling environment for the sustainability of Myanmar forests. MFCC also aims to promote market access of Myanmar forest products in international trade. MFCC's activities cover the entire forest and forest products, and MFCC has been empowered to execute all processes of forest and timber related certification.

For more information please visit: <https://www.mfcc.org.mm>



Transparency

MFCC system documentation is publicly available to view. We welcome input through formal consultations, or at any time through our website contact page.



Certification

MFCC governs all processes of forest and forest products certification to bring an enhanced sustainable forest management to Myanmar Forests.



Third Party Verification

MFCC Certification Bodies are independent, impartial and qualified. They all are required to achieve ISO accreditation against ISO/IEC 17065:2012.



Partnership

MFCC has worked on a number of projects with partners that have included PEFC, FLEGT-VPA, FAO, ITTO and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation.

Message from Secretary

Although I do not remember the exact wordings, there is a saying which has been hiding in my memory - If one move with a firm direction, regardless of the speed, the destination will be reached. It is true for Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC). Last year, MTCC (Malaysia Timber Certification Council) celebrated the 20th Anniversary with many remarkable achievements. In fact, MFCC was established in 1998, so a bit older than MTCC although we are lagging behind in the considerable gap. However, the celebration of MTCC made us more energetic to have similar success. In fact, we have encountered many more different challenges than other NGBs (National Governing Bodies). I attended 12th PEGC General Assembly, Vienna, Austria in 2012 as an observer and joined MFCC as Secretary in 2013. In 2019, MFCC became PEFC Membership, almost 7 years later after my first engagement with PEFC in 2012 .



"If one move with a firm direction, regardless of the speed, the destination will be reached - it is a true statement for Myanmar Forest Certification Committee"
Barber Cho (Secretary MFCC)

The most meaningful event for MFCC was " MTLAS Gap Analysis Project" in 2016 which was funded by EU and supported by FAO. This project was followed by another big project " Working in Partnership to bring sustainable management to Myanmar's Forest" funded by Prince Albert II Monaco and supported by PEFC. These two projects were cornerstone of the achievement of MFCC in both areas of Timber Legality and SFM Certification. The second project was completed in 2020. In order to enable MFCC to maintain the acceleration of the achievement gained under these two projects, MFCC was awarded another comprehensive project from ITTO being funded by The Forestry Agency of Japan. The title of project is "Strengthening SFM Standards and Timber Legality Framework in Myanmar" which officially started on 1st Feb 2021. The title reflects the proper goal which will not only maintain but also upgrade the certain level of achievements under the previous two projects.

However, MFCC faced big challenges in carrying out the activities outlined by the project because of the pandemics and the other developments in the country. However, MFCC worked hard during the first year of the project to sustain the relative achievement. For the last and second year, we have determined to yield the tangible success as targeted by the project.

On behalf of MFCC and Project Team, I would like to extend my most sincere thanks to all who trusted us by giving such opportunities in the areas of Timber Legality and SFM Certifications.

MFCC-ITTO Project Workshops and others activities

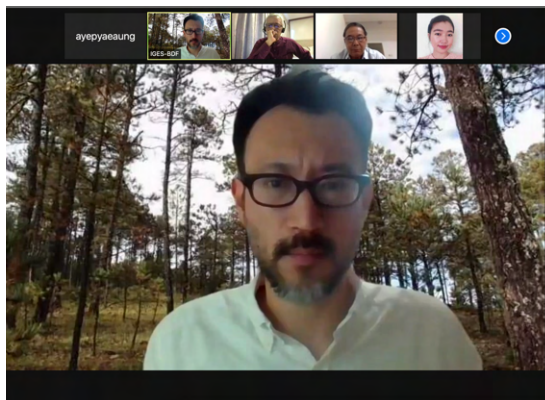
The first and second workshops of the MFCC-ITTO Project funded by the Forestry Agency of Japan has been held on the 18th and 28th of January 2022 respectively. The purpose of the workshop was to provide information on the implementation of the project over the past year and the upcoming year with the relevant project stakeholders.

A very fruitful meeting with primary and secondary stakeholders of the current project including governmental organizations, DRI, CBs, Private Plantation Owners, Supply Chain partners, International NGOs and NGOs etc. MFCC documented and reviewed the stakeholder input from the workshop, which will be proceed and strengthened to enhance further project objectives and activities.

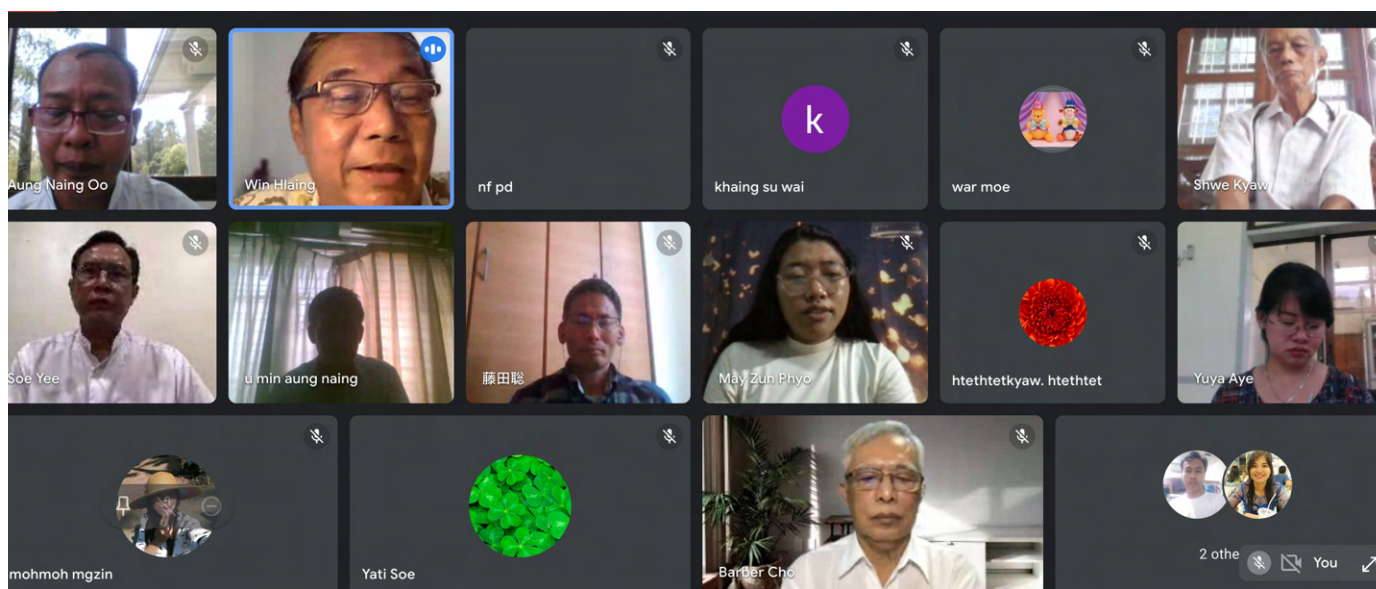


"providing information & discussion on the implementation of the MFCC-ITTO Project for the past year and the upcoming year with the relevant project stakeholders"

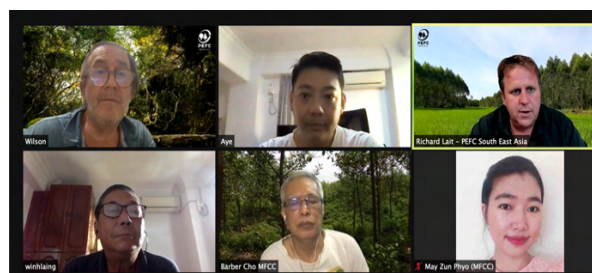




Furthermore, the MFCC team facilitated a series of meetings with Mr. Taiji Fujisaki who is the Research Manager from Biodiversity and Forest Area, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) for the purpose of understanding forests in Myanmar from a legal timber perspective. It was also a cooperative meeting to prepare a technical paper for analysis of Myanmar timber legality requirements in internationally recognized timber legality systems such as EU Due Diligence, US Lacey Act, Australia Illegal Logging Prohibition Act and Japan's Clean Wood Act.



Likewise, MFCC has been working and collaborating together with representatives from PEFC International, PEFC South East Asia and meetings were held regularly to ensure ongoing support from the PEFC to our current and ongoing project activities as well as the synergies between project partners. Additionally, MFCC also actively participated in the PEFC international rubber thematic task force meetings for the PEFC's Supporting Sustainable Rubber Campaign, MFCC also had meetings with rubber stakeholders from Myanmar for information sharing webinars. Moreover, MFCC participated in the PEFC week in November 2021 as well as the Asia Pacific Coordination Hub as the National Governing Body member of the PEFC international.



Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme

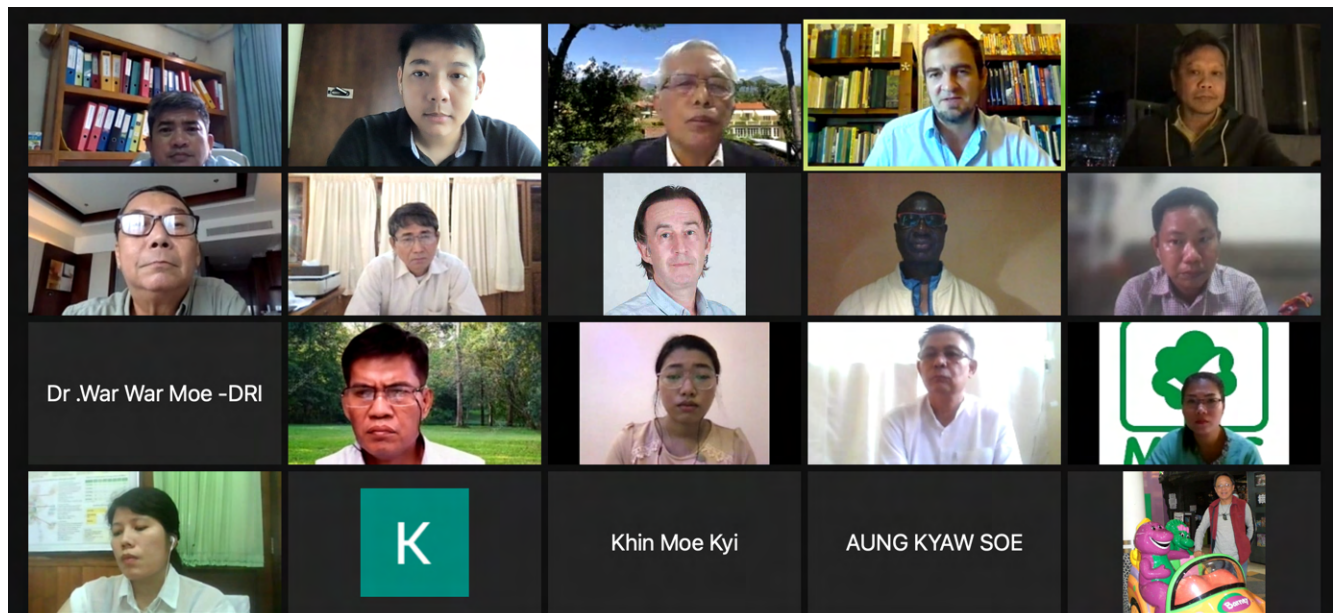
After developing the MFCS standard in line with the PEFC requirements, MFCC submitted the system to PEFC for endorsement. The national system went through the PEFC assessment process and held the webinar “Introduction to the Myanmar National System” together with PEFC on 16th August 2021.

However, on 14th September 2021, PEFC announced on their website that they suspended the endorsement assessment of the Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme and indicated that the assessment of the Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme has been suspended due to concerns that Myanmar-based stakeholders are unable to freely participate in the assessment process, which PEFC also mentioned open, transparent, and meaningful stakeholder engagement is core to their processes in their website.

However, the MFCC project management team has been reviewing and summarizing the results from the meetings about the “Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard Checklist/Audit Form”; it is now developed as a draft and currently conducted to access the audibility to the MFCC selected pilot project areas.

In 2020, MFCC submitted “Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard (2020)” and “Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System (2013)” to the Standards Development Division of National Standards and Quality Department under the Department of Research and Innovation to define Myanmar National Standards.

In 2021, according to the Myanmar Standards Development Procedure of Standards Development Division, “Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard (2020)” is now reached the fourth stage, “Enquiry Stage” which “National Standards and Quality Department” invites comments from the public and other interested parties on “Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard (2020)” from December 17, 2021, to February 16, 2022.



“Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard (2020)” is now reached the fourth stage - Enquiry Stage” which “National Standards and Quality Department” invites comments from the public and other interested parties on “Myanmar Criteria and Indicators for Forest Management Certification Standard (2020)” from December 17, 2021, to February 16, 2022.

MTLAS Update

MFCC reviewed all of the previous assessment reports related to MTLAS and conducted the Expert Group (EAG) Meetings. Also, the EAG group members revised the MTLAS legality Definition based on international timber legality definitions, as well as revising the MTLAS to publish as version no.2.



Update of System Documentation

During this project, the MFCC project management team revised documents that do not comply with the current situation; in priority. They are -

- Issuance of PEFC Trademark Usage Licenses by MFCC
- MFCS Trademark Usage
- Trademark Manual
- Accreditation and Certification Body Requirements for MFCS
- Notification of Certification Bodies for MFCS
- Certification Body Requirements for MTLAS
- Implementation Arrangement

Among them, three documents (Accreditation and Certification Body Requirements for MFCS, Notification of Certification Bodies for MFCS and MFCS Trademark Usage) were already approved by MFCC's Expert Advisory Group at the fourth AEG meeting. The remaining documents will be submitted to the coming EAG meeting for the approval process. After approval process, project management team will submit to MFCC meeting as the final approval stage.

Digitalization of Timber Tracking Systems - DTTS

Myanmar needs robust timber tracking and a Chain of Custody system for its timber processing. To further strengthen tracking systems, the MFCC-ITTO project aims to incorporate Myanmar's newly developing technological timber tracking solutions - 'Digitalization of Timber Tracking System (DTTS)'. DTTS aims to track production from the stump to Myanmar's legal ports of export.



Due to the current situation, the DTTS implementation phase was behind, but nevertheless, MFCC started implemented in the 4th quarter of 2021. MFCC also formed DTTS's Technical Working Group in December 2021 and held its first meeting in January 2022.

Update of Certification Body's ISO Accreditation

MFCC notified certification bodies were need to be accredited for the legality, forest management and chain of custody certifications. A key foundational challenge faced by both MFCS and MTLAS is the limited quality infrastructure. In order to operate at an internationally acceptable level, Certification Bodies that audit MFCS/MTLAS need accreditation. MFCC is facilitating with the Department of Research and Innovation to achieve our CBs' ISO accreditation. During the MFCC-ITTO workshop with stakeholders held on January 2022, MFCC discussed with relevant stakeholders to find possible solutions.



Certification Body Profiles

Myanmar Forest Certification Committee fully notified two local Certification Bodies and one international Certification Body. Local CBs are United Forestry Services, Nature Watch and international CB is Double Helix. Another local CB SGS successfully completed as provisional notification status and it is under the full notification process.



Contact Person

Tin Aung Moe
Managing Director
+95-9797005151, +95-9420330417
tinaungmoe@ufs-myanmar.com



Contact Person

Soe Min Naing
Director
+95-9444451678
minsoen99@gmail.com



Contact Person

Vicky Nang Htet Htet Ei Win
Timber Verification Expert
+95-9261967110, +95-9771960892
vicky@doublehelixtracking.com



Contact Person

Myo Min Than
SGS Myanmar Forestry Auditor
+95-9767558485
myomin.than@sgs.com

For Further information please contact the organizations below.

Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC)

MFCC is set up to develop forest product standards to ensure the sustainable management of Myanmar's forest resources. MFCC serves as the National Governing Body of the Myanmar Timber Legality Assurance System (MTLAS) and the Myanmar Forest Certification Scheme (MFCS). The MFCC Secretariat, guided by the MFCC Chairman and Committee Members, carries out the day-to-day activities of the Committee.

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

ITTO is an intergovernmental organization promoting the conservation and sustainable management, use and trade of tropical forest resources. Its members represent the bulk of the world's tropical forests and of the global tropical timber trade. ITTO develops internationally agreed policy documents to promote sustainable forest management and forest conservation and assists tropical member countries to adapt such policies to local circumstances and to implement them in the field through projects. In addition, ITTO collects, analyzes and disseminates data on the production and trade of tropical timber and funds projects and other actions aimed at developing sustainable forest industries at both the community and industrial scales.

CONTACT:

Myanmar Forest Certification Committee (MFCC)

Forest Department Compound, Bayintnaung Road, West Gyogone, Insein Township, 11011, Yangon, Myanmar

-  info@myanmarforestcertification.org
-  <https://www.mfcc.org.mm>
-  <https://www.facebook.com/MFCCCommittee>

Contact person: Barber Cho, Secretary, secretary@myanmarforestcertification.org

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

1-1-1 Minato-Mirai, Nishi-Ku, Yokohama 220-0012, Japan

-  itto@itto.int
-  <https://www.itto.int/>
-  <https://www.facebook.com/ittosfm>

Contact person: Ma Hwan-ok, Project Manager, ma@itto.int