

# Overview of Research on Forest Certification at Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies



**Ben Cashore**

Chair,

Program on Forest Certification

Global Institute for Sustainable Forestry

Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

Society of American Foresters Annual meeting

Buffalo, NY

October, 27, 3003

# Three Broad Questions Guide US

---

- **What is forest certification?**
  - What type of policy instrument? What are its features?
- **How is it gaining support?**
  - What groups support forest certification, which ones do not. What types of forest certification programs do different groups and interests prefer?
- **What are its impacts in achieving SFM goals?**
  - What do the actual standards say? How do they compare with public policies and other certification programs? Does certification change behavior on the ground?

# Collaborative: with outside institutions

---

- **Begun at Auburn University strong support from Dean Brinker, and Auburn's Center for Forest Sustainability and Forest Policy Center**
- **Recruited at Auburn two Masters Students, Deanna and Newsom and Graeme Auld, who continue to do collaborative work with me. Also hired Jamie Lawson, now Professor at Memorial University**
- **Other university partners include Errol Meidinger SUNY Buffalo; Fred Gale, University of Tasmania, Australia; Aseem Prakash, University of Washington; Erika Sasser, Duke University**
- **Also have worked with a wide range of non-university partners including world wildlife fund, rainforest alliance, the forest dialogue, as well as interacting closely with key US firms and their efforts on international certification efforts.**

# Collaborative: inside Yale

---

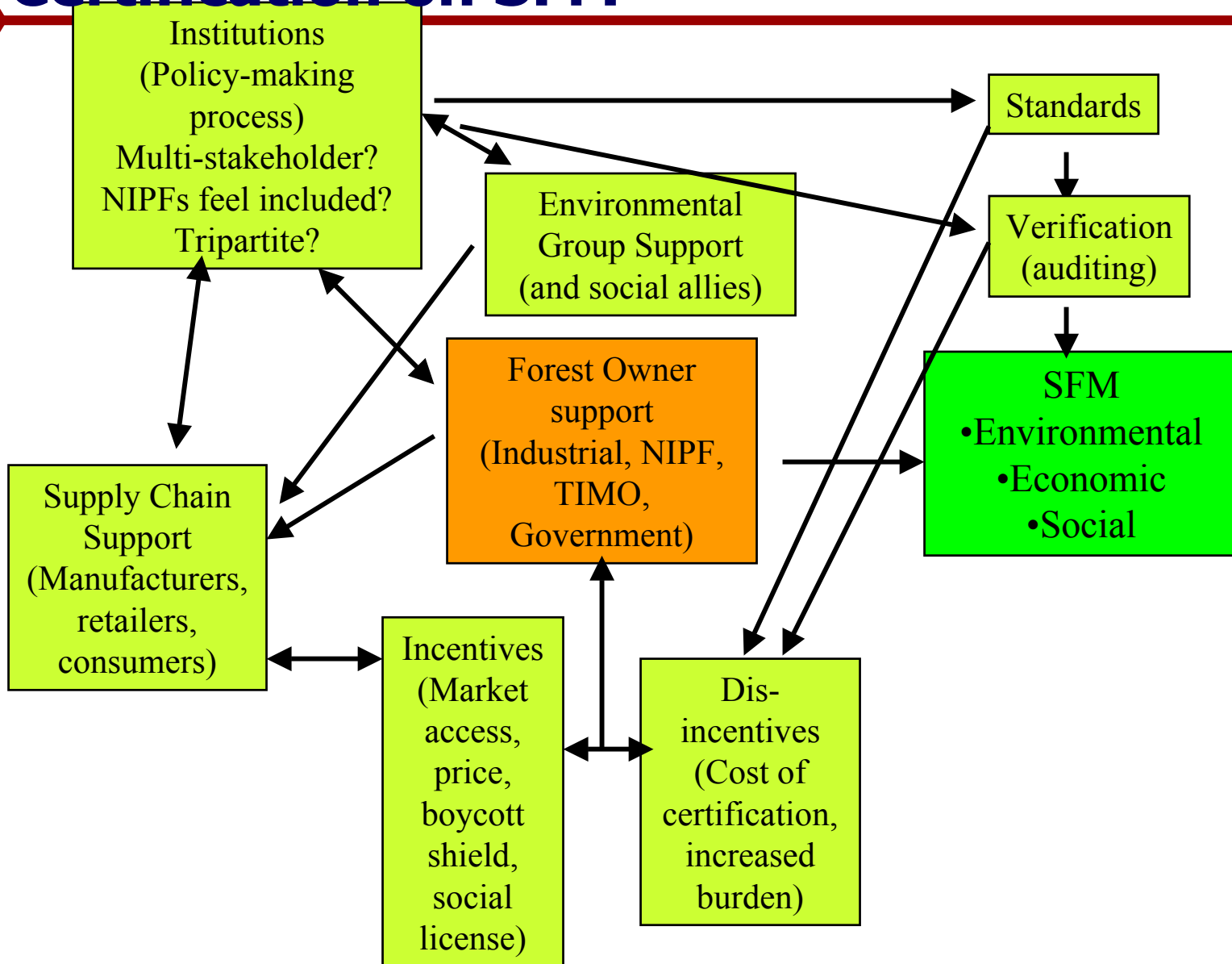
- **Great variety of research and faculty interest on forest certification within Yale.**
- **Faculty research collaborations include Chad Oliver and Mark Ashton, and Rob Mendelsohn**
- **Recent faculty additions include Lloyd Irland and Michael Conroy, both of whom have worked on forest certification. Other faculty interest in tropics on part of Lisa Curran and Florencia Montagnini.**
- **Significant research staff and student support including Emily Noah, Megan Mattox, Alex Finkral, Dave Ellum, Graeme Auld, Liz Gordon, Barb Bamberger, and more!**

## Research Projects

---

- **All have goal of understanding better emergence of forest certification and its impact in achieving sustainable forestry.**
- **Cannot review all today but various projects encouraged us to go beyond specific research questions and explore the range of factors that might influence “effectiveness” of SFM in achieving its goals**
- **How do we do this? First, we conceptualize how factors intersect to produce impacts on SFM**
- **Then identify key research projects underneath that**

# Factors that influence impact of Forest Certification on SFM



# Forest Owner Support

---

- **Mail Surveys**

- Alabama forest owners' attitudes toward forest certification (undertaken at Auburn led by Newsom)
- US forest sector (forest companies and supply chain), led by Auld, also undertaken at Auburn

- **Case Studies**

- As part of our broad comparative work on forest certification politics in Europe and North America (Cashore, Auld, Newsom, Egan)
- More in-depth case studies of 16 industrial forest companies in the US (Sasser, Prakash, and Auld)

- **Findings**

- Widespread differences in support for certification in different countries
- US overwhelming preference by industrial companies is Sustainable Forestry Initiative.
- FSC and supporters have had a big influence as a catalyst for changes in SFI

# Sustainable Forest Management

---

- **Landscape Management System (LMS) Analysis**
  - Models impact of forest management choices after FSC certification on a range of SFM values. Compares to non-FSC forests
- **Understory and Overstory Floristics Analysis**
  - Explores influence of FSC and SFI certified forests on understory and overstory floristics. How do these forests influence these features. (Ashton, Ellum, Frinkral)
- **Findings**
  - In progress

# Standards Development and Auditing

---

- **Comparison of FSC standards in different regions, and to SFI**
  - Focus on levels of discretion and whether rules are procedural or substantive. Analytical. Does not take positions. Lawson, Noah, and Cashore
- **Comparison of FSC standards processes in different regions**
  - Explores what interests dominated process and potential influence on policy outcomes. Noah and Cashore
- **Data analysis on Smartwood “preconditions”**
  - Identifies what companies seeking FSC certification were told to change in order to maintain or obtain FSC certification. Looks at a range of indicators from water to soils to planning. Newsom, Butterfield, Cashore.
- **Findings to date**
  - Standards keep evolving. FSC less prescriptive than originally conceived. SFI more prescriptive than originally conceived.
  - Certification does result in behavioral changes. Extent still being researched.

# Institutions

---

- **Analysis of emergence and changes in certification institutions**
  - Part of comparative project. Trace development and changes. Cashore, Auld, Newsom, Noah.
- **Analysis of impact of FSC international office on the United States**
  - What international influences affect domestic level and vice-versa? Noah
- **Results to date**
  - Considerable institutional changes
  - FSC international office takes a broad view in effort to maintain or obtain support.
  - Some FSC regional processes focused more on identifying gold standard than in obtaining widespread support
  - SFI considerable changes – autonomous Sustainable Forestry Board
  - Private Landowners uncomfortable with FSC three chamber approach
  - Different notions of accountability in each program

# Markets

---

- **Analysis of key supply chain announcements**
  - Home Depot, B and Q.
  - NGO targeting campaigns. Sasser, Prakash, Auld, Newsom and Cashore
  - Consumer survey to begin. Robert Mendelsohn.
- **Results to date**
  - Supply chain support fairly weak in the United States.
  - Little or no consumer recognition.
  - FSC now focusing on certification as “Business to business issue”
  - Quality management
  - Targeting campaigns in support of FSC in US have had an effect, but not as expected. Increased support for the SFI.

# Overall evaluation

---

- **Constructing a framework for bringing factors together**
  - Turning to evaluation and policy analysis literature.
  - Difficult is that future is uncertain. Standards and support not static. Difficult to quantify
  - Use “mediating factors” framework to begin this task.
- **Key Questions**
  - Will the different programs reach an agreement?
  - How many certification systems in the future?
  - What will happen in the global South?
  - Will certification provide a competitive advantage or disadvantage

# Overall evaluation

---

- **General conclusions to date**
  - FSC certification more influence in export-dependent countries
  - SFI certification increasingly supported my most industrial forest companies in the US
  - SFI competition with FSC led to changes on part of both programs.
  - Certification creates a learning environment, multi-stakeholder discussions
  - Development of norms, creation of a global outlook
  - One of many tools in promoting and encouraging sustainable forest management.