Application of the CCQI methodology for assessing the quality of carbon credits

This document presents results from the application of version 3.0 of a methodology, developed by Oeko-Institut, World Wildlife Fund (WWF-US) and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), for assessing the quality of carbon credits. The methodology is applied by Oeko-Institut with support by Carbon Limits, Greenhouse Gas Management Institute (GHGMI), INFRAS, Stockholm Environment Institute, and individual carbon market experts. This document evaluates one specific criterion or sub-criterion with respect to a specific carbon crediting program, project type, quantification methodology and/or host country, as specified in the below table. Please note that the CCQI website Site terms and Privacy Policy apply with respect to any use of the information provided in this document. Further information on the project and the methodology can be found here: www.carboncreditquality.org

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Criterion:	**6.2 Sustainable development impacts of the project type or project**
Project type:	**Improved forest management**
Date of final assessment:	**21 February 2024**
Score	**See next page**

Scores

Activity	Country Group	Score
Extended rotation	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	2.21 1.21
Production to conservation	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	3.47 2.47
Increasing productivity	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	1.37 1
Reduced impact logging	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	3.05 2.05
Avoiding degradation		
Projects avoiding an *increase* in harvesting that is assumed to occur in the baseline scenario	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	2.42 1.42
Projects avoiding *the start* of harvesting that is assumed to occur in the baseline scenario	• LDCs/SIDS • Other countries	3.05 2.05

Assessment

Relevant scoring methodology provisions

The methodology assesses the extent to which a project type or specific project contributes to or hinders the achievement of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the exception of Goal 13 on climate action which is the primary goal of the climate mitigation projects. To assess the impacts of a project type or individual project on each SDG, the methodology draws on a seven-point ordinal scale for each SDG (see further details in the methodology). The following table illustrates the scale from -3 to +3 points to assess the impact or influence of a project type or individual project on each individual SDG goal:

Impact of the project on the SDG goal	Points
Indivisible: The successful implementation of the project automatically delivers progress on this SDG goal.	+3
Reinforcing: The successful implementation of the project directly makes it easier to make progress on this SDG goal.	+2
Enabling: The successful implementation of the project indirectly creates conditions that enable progress on this SDG goal.	+1
Consistent: There is no significant link between the project and this SDG goal.	±0
Constraining: The successful implementation of the project constrains the options for how to deliver on this SDG goal.	−1
Counteracting: The successful implementation of the project makes it more difficult to make progress on this SDG goal.	−2
Cancelling: The successful implementation of the project automatically leads to a negative impact on this SDG goal.	−3

As an additional step of the evaluation, it is assessed whether the project is implemented in Least Developed Countries or Small Island Developing States, which are recognized to face special circumstances that require additional support. Projects implemented in these countries receive an upgrade of one score point (e.g., from 3 to 4) in the overall evaluation of criterion 6.2. Note that the overall score cannot exceed 5.

Information sources considered

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10 Review of descriptions of different individual carbon credit projects

Assessment

The criterion is here assessed at the level of the project type, noting that the actual impacts may differ substantially between individual projects. The assessment thus aims to provide a picture of the typical impacts of the relevant project type. The project type is characterized as follows:

"Implementing forest management practices that aim to increase and/or avoid the loss of carbon stocks.

This may include the following activities:

- **Extended rotation:** Extending the rotation (e.g., age or target diameter) at which trees are harvested in a forest or patch of forest.
- **Shift from timber production to conservation:** Shifting from forest management for timber production to management for conservation. Harvesting of trees for conservation purposes may continue.
- **Increasing forest productivity:** Implementing silvicultural techniques that result in increased forest carbon stocks, e.g., by cutting climbers and vines, performing liberation thinning, and enrichment planting.
- **Reduced impact logging:** Improving logging practices to reduce negative impacts on forest stands and soils during timber harvesting in a forest or patch of forest, such as by using directional felling or minimizing the number of skid trails.
- **Avoiding forest degradation**

a) Projects avoiding *an increase* in harvesting that is assumed to occur in the baseline scenario and/or targeting harvesting towards higher quality timber, thereby avoiding the reduction of carbon stocks below current and recent levels.

b) Projects avoiding *the start* of harvesting that is assumed to occur in the baseline scenario and/or targeting harvesting towards higher quality timber, thereby avoiding the reduction of carbon stocks below current and recent levels."

The assessment results are summarized for each activity in the tables below.

Table 1: Extended rotation

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The IFM activity does not explicitly include inclusive approaches like community forest management or change the access to forest resources compared to the baseline (as subsistence use of forest resources is anticipated in baseline/project activity). The project is thus unlikely to impact poverty (and interact with SDG 1).
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	0	No change in land use affecting agriculture is assumed. Also, subsistence use of forest resource for food is not assumed (projects mainly implemented in North America) or subsistence use not affected compared to baseline (if implemented in Global South).
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	No significant change compared to baseline regarding reducing the risks for deaths and illnesses (target 3.9).
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	1	IFM project activities often include a range of forest activities which are not necessarily limited to extending the rotation. These additional protection measures but also the decreased disturbance (intensity) through the extended rotation can provide the conditions for an improvement in water quality (6.3) and the protection of the water-related ecosystem forest (target 6.6). The change compared to the baseline is however considered to be small.
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	Commercially harvested wood might be used as biomass for renewable (bio-) energy production. Commercially harvested wooded can have many different end uses and does not necessarily increase the share of renewable energy. Additionally, the prolonged use of woody biomass (e.g. as furniture) should be prioritized compared to an energetic use from a climate perspective.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	0	No interaction.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	No interaction.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 15: Life on Land	1	If trees are able to grow over a longer time period, this provides the conditions for an increase in biodiversity - e.g. as older and more structured forests might be more suitable for nesting of birds and provide a better habitat for insects. However, the effect is only small - especially considering a potential clear-cut harvesting after the extended rotation period. Further, there is a trade-off between species as there will be a shift away from light-loving species as the forest gets denser and darker. The number of species might thus not necessarily increase but the species composition might change. This effect is though more significant cumulatively if the activity is implemented over a larger area/region. Hunting can occur in the project area and might sometimes be necessary for the ecological transition of a forest area and depends on the local ecosystem. In case of an existing/non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity (target 15.5).
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: 2		

The project type receives 2 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of 1.21. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 2.21.

Table 2: Shift from timber production to conservation

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The IFM activity does not explicitly include inclusive approaches like community forest management. If implemented in the Global South, it is more likely that the project type negatively impacts the access to forest resources. This depends, however, on the specifics of the land, land ownership, and informal use of the land. As the impact on SDG 1 is uncertain and dependent on the local context, the interaction is scored with a zero.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	2	If implemented in the Global South, it is more likely that the project type negatively impacts the access to forest resources (target 2.1). This depends, however, very much on the specifics of the land, land ownership, and informal use of the land. As the project area is already a forest plantation, it can be assumed that access to forest resources was not possible before or at least that there is no change to the accessibility compared to the baseline. Although dependent on the local context, forests can contribute to farmland pollination and seed dispersal. Beyond providing shelter for critical vertebrate pollinators, natural forests feature upmost diverse genetic material which can be utilized for breeding more resilient crops. Furthermore, forests reduce soil erosion and can act as a buffer for nitrate leakage from surrounding agriculture (target 2.4). However, in some cases the

SDG	Points	Justification
		reduced wood production of the project area might shift harvesting activities to other areas outside the project area where competition for land could impact food production
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	Forests and wildlife have major well-being benefits across different cultural contexts. Permitting adjacent community access to forests and culturally important forest products, such as wild meat and medicine, can improve local well-being (target 3.4). It is unclear whether the access to forest resources for local communities will be permitted in the protected forest area compared to a baseline of deforestation This depends also very much on the specifics of the land, land ownership, and informal use of the land. Due to this uncertainty, it is thus assumed that there is no significant change compared to baseline.
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	3	Compared to harvesting, keeping the forest intact and even improving it, will enhance water quality. By also avoiding a degradation of the forest, the risk for floods might be reduced depending on the local conditions as the water retention is higher in intact forests (target 6.3). The project types directly protects the water-related ecosystem forest compared to harvesting (or even clear-cut) in baseline (target 6.6).
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	No interaction.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	0	Jobs are likely lost as commercial harvesting is halted. However, new jobs might be created to conserve the forest area (e.g. monitoring, protection, harvesting for conservation purposes) and there might thus be no significant change to the total number of jobs compared to the baseline.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	If implemented in the Global South, it is more likely that the project type negatively impacts the access to forest resources for livelihoods, well-being etc.. This depends, however, very much on the specifics of the land, land ownership, and informal use of the land. It is unclear whether the access to forest resources for local communities will be permitted in the protected forest area compared to a baseline of deforestation. As the impact on SDG 11 is uncertain and dependent on the local context, the interaction is scored with a zero.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 15: Life on Land	3	The project type conserves forest and avoids forest loss and can also increase forest carbon stocks (targets 15.1. and 15.2). There is a trade-off regarding biodiversity as there will be a shift away from light-loving species as the forest gets denser and darker. This effect is though more significant cumulatively if the activity is implemented over a larger area/region. Hunting can sometimes be necessary for the ecological transition of a forest area and depends on the local ecosystem. In case of an existing/ non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity (target 15.5).
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: 8		

The project type receives 8 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of 2.47. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 3.47.

Table 3: Increasing forest productivity

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The IFM activity does not explicitly include inclusive approaches like community forest management or change the access to forest resources compared to the baseline and is thus unlikely to impact poverty (SDG 1).
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	0	No change in land use affecting agriculture is assumed. Also, subsistence use of forest resource for food is not assumed (projects mainly implemented in North America) or subsistence use not affected compared to baseline (if implemented in Global South).
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	No interaction.
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	-1	Thinning or removing big or less productive trees changes water retention and soil quality in forests and can negatively impact the water balance in the forest (target 6.6).
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	Commercially harvested wood might be used as biomass for renewable (bio-) energy production. Commercially harvested wood can have many different end uses and does not necessarily increase the share of renewable energy. Additionally, the prolonged use of woody biomass (e.g. as furniture) should be prioritized compared to an energetic use from a climate perspective.

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	1	The change in forest management / silvicultural techniques might require a larger/different workforce compared to the baseline, thus creating new jobs (target 8.5).
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	No interaction.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.
Goal 15: Life on Land	-2	While additional trees might be planted to increase the carbon stock and the productivity, these trees will also be harvested as in the baseline not leading to an overall halting of deforestation or increase in afforestation (target 15.2). Biodiversity is negatively impacted by the changed management activity (for example, as the structure of the forest is altered by thinning or cutting climbers/vines) (target 15.5). Hunting can occur in the project area and might sometimes be necessary for the ecological transition of a forest area and depends on the local ecosystem. In case of an existing/ non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity (target 15.5).
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: -2		

The project type receives -2 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of 1.0. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 1.37.

Table 4: Reduced impact logging

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The IFM activity does not explicitly include inclusive approaches like community forest management or change the access to forest resources compared to the baseline and is thus unlikely to impact poverty (SDG 1).
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	0	No change in land use affecting agriculture is assumed. Also, subsistence use of forest resource for food is not assumed (projects mainly implemented in North America) or subsistence use not affected compared to baseline (if implemented in Global South).

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	No interaction.
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	2	The project type can improve water filtration by causing less disturbance to the forest ecosystem (e.g. impact on soils) (target 6.3).The project type can increase water retention/decrease flood risks and thus contributes to the protection of the water-related ecosystem forest (target 6.6).
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	Commercially harvested wood might be used as biomass for renewable (bio-) energy production. Commercially harvested wood can have many different end uses and does not necessarily increase the share of renewable energy. Additionally, the prolonged use of woody biomass (e.g. as furniture) should be prioritized compared to an energetic use from a climate perspective.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	2	Reduced impact logging likely enhances forest worker safety compared to the baseline of conventional harvesting (target 8.8).
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	No interaction.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.
Goal 15: Life on Land	2	The project type improves soil quality compared to baseline and can be regarded as a more sustainable use of the forest (target 15.1). Forest loss is avoided by decreasing the negative impact from conventional harvesting (target 15.2). There is a higher species richness/biodiversity compared to the baseline and a soil enrichment. There is a trade-off as there will be a shift away from light-loving species as the forest gets denser and darker. This effect is though more significant cumulatively if activity is implemented over a larger area/region. Hunting can occur in the project area and might sometimes be necessary for the ecological transition of a forest area and depends on the local ecosystem. In case of an existing/ non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity (target 15.5).
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: 6		

The project type receives 6 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of

2.05. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 3.05.

Table 5: Avoiding forest degradation a) (increase in harvesting avoided)

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation by the forest owner. There are thus no changes expected in relation to access to land or employment of local stakeholders.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation by the forest owner and thus excludes the avoidance of activities from local communities (which are typically the source of unplanned forest degradation). There are thus no changes expected in relation to access to forest resources (for food) from local stakeholders.
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	No interaction.
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	1	Although still harvested, the forested area (and thus the water-related ecosystem forest) is better preserved than in the baseline (target 6.6).
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	Commercially harvested wood might be used as biomass for renewable (bio-) energy production. Commercially harvested wood can have many different end-uses and does not necessarily increase the share of renewable energy. Additionally, the prolonged use of woody biomass (e.g. as furniture) should be prioritized compared to an energetic use from a climate perspective.
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	0	No interaction.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation by the forest owner and thus excludes the avoidance of activities from local communities (which are typically the source of unplanned forest degradation). There are thus no significant impacts in relation to injustices or inequalities expected to the baseline.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 15: Life on Land	2	A reduction of forest carbon stocks below current level is avoided by reducing/stopping (planned) forest degrading activities of the forest owner (target 15.2). However, the project type does not halt deforestation activities. The reduced degradation will increase forest health and biodiversity although commercial harvesting of timber products still occurs (target 15.5). Hunting can occur in the project area and might sometimes be necessary for the ecological transition of a forest area and depends on the local ecosystem. In case of an existing/ non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity.
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: 3		

The project type receives 3 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of 1.42. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 2.42.

Table 6: Avoiding forest degradation b) (start of harvesting avoided)

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 1: No Poverty	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation and the start of harvesting by the forest owner. There are thus no changes expected in relation to access to land or employment of local stakeholders.
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation and the start of harvesting by the forest owner and thus excludes the avoidance of activities from local communities (which are typically the source of unplanned forest degradation). There are thus no changes expected in relation to access to forest resources (for food) from local stakeholders.
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	0	No interaction.
Goal 4: Quality Education	0	No interaction.
Goal 5: Gender Equality	0	No interaction.
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	3	The forested area (and thus the water-related ecosystem forest) continues to be preserved compared to baseline where harvesting is introduced (target 6.6).
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	0	Commercially harvested wood might be used as biomass for renewable (bio-) energy production. Commercially harvested wood can have many different end uses and does not necessarily increase the share of renewable energy. Additionally, the prolonged use of woody biomass (e.g. as furniture) should be prioritized compared to an energetic use from a climate perspective.

SDG	Points	Justification
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	0	No interaction.
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	0	No interaction.
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	0	The project type avoids planned forest degradation and the start of harvesting by the forest owner and thus excludes the avoidance of activities from local communities (which are typically the source of unplanned forest degradation). There are thus no significant impacts in relation to injustices or inequalities expected to the baseline.
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	0	No interaction.
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	0	No interaction.
Goal 14: Life Below Water	0	No interaction.
Goal 15: Life on Land	3	The project type continues to protect a forested area and avoids forest loss due to the start of harvesting which conserves or even increases carbon stocks compared to the baseline (targets 15.1. and 15.2). The reduced degradation and continued protection of the forested area will increase forest health and biodiversity compared to a baseline of harvesting and degradation (target 15.5). Hunting might occur in the project area. In case of an existing/ non-transitional forest (which is likely the case here), hunting might not be necessary and pure commercial/recreational hunting can actually have a negative impact on biodiversity (target 15.5).
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	0	No interaction.
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	0	No interaction.
Total points achieved: 6		

The project type receives 6 points in the SDG impact evaluation. Furthermore, none of the goals is assessed with a score of -3. Using the scoring approach of the methodology, this results in a score of 2.05. If the underlying project is implemented in a Least Developed Country or Small Island Developing State, the score is upgrade by one scoring point, resulting in an overall score of 3.05.