

Coupling High Carbon Stock and High Conservation Value Approaches to protect forests, biodiversity and livelihoods

The High Carbon Stock (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) approaches, can be used together to identify areas important for conservation and livelihoods – and to support no deforestation commitments. Companies, sustainability actors, smallholders and certification schemes apply these approaches on farms or plantations and now increasingly at larger scales (i.e. jurisdictions and landscapes). Although the two approaches differ, they both focus on conserving important environmental and social values. Once identified, values must be maintained in the long term by responsible and adaptive management and monitoring.

HCV Approach

The HCV Approach is a methodology to identify, manage, and monitor important environmental and social values in production landscapes – across any ecosystem or habitat type (including aquatic ecosystems, grasslands and other non-forest ecosystems). There are six categories of HCVs covering biodiversity, rare ecosystems, ecosystem services, landscapes, and livelihoods and cultural values. Developed in 1999 for forestry, HCV is now also used across various agricultural commodities (cotton, sugar, palm oil) in nearly 20 certification schemes and for conservation priority setting (e.g. by conservation NGOs, governments and multi-laterals like UN Development Programme). The HCV Approach is overseen by the HCV Resource Network (HCVRN), a member-based non-profit organisation, governed by a Management Committee. The organisation is coordinated and run by a Secretariat.

HCS Approach

The HCS Approach is an integrated conservation land use planning tool to distinguish forest areas in the humid tropics for conservation from degraded lands that may be developed while ensuring the rights and livelihoods of local peoples are respected. There are four main classes of HCS forests which range from high to low density forests and young regenerating forests. Since its launch in 2015, the HCSA Toolkit has been adopted by the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), recognised by rubber and cocoa sector initiatives and other parties like the UN Environment Programme and governments. The HCS Approach is governed by its Steering Group members and the Executive Committee and is coordinated and supported by a Secretariat.

How the two approaches work together

The two approaches can be complementary, allowing companies and other stakeholders to agree where commodity production, conservation and community lands should be most appropriately and responsibly allocated and managed.

There will often be overlaps between HCV areas and HCS forests, for instance where HCS forests harbour concentrations of biodiversity, provide ecosystem services or provide critical livelihood resources and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is integral to both approaches. Coordinating the use of both approaches brings efficiencies (e.g. when data can contribute to both HCV and HCS forest identification results and stakeholder consultation can be done simultaneously). By using both approaches together – companies, conservationists, and other stakeholders can aim to identify and conserve more of the potential values present.

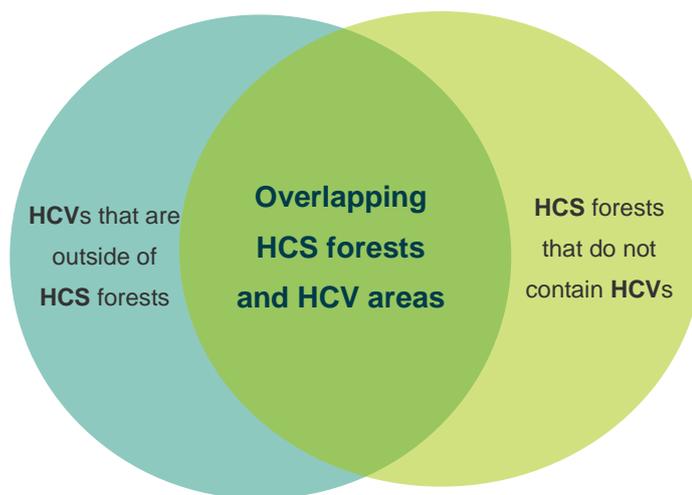


Figure 1. Schematic view of how HCV areas and HCS forests often overlap and how they can be distinct from each other.

The HCS Approach includes use of the HCV approach as an important part of its land use conservation planning decision tree. At farm or plantation scale, HCVs and HCS forests are identified through combined HCV-HCSA assessments based on fieldwork, analysis, and stakeholder consultation. The assessments are conducted by assessors, whose reports undergo evaluation by the HCVRN Assessor Licensing Scheme. Once the values are identified an Integrated Conservation Land Use Plan for long-term management and monitoring to maintain HCS forests and HCVs must be developed and agreed.

Some of the main areas where the two organisations collaborate and where the two approaches can be applied together in humid tropical forests include:

- Commodity certification schemes and sustainability initiatives.
- Corporate commitments to protect HCVs and HCS forests.
- To develop simplified methodologies for implementation by smallholders.
- To develop guidance on scaling up the approaches for landscapes and jurisdictions.
- Long term management and monitoring to measure the impact of the approaches.

Questions? Please contact:

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