

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 16th October 2025

Bigi Poika becomes Suriname's first FSC-certified community: "A milestone for the community, for Suriname, and beyond."

On 14 October 2025, the Surinamese community of Bigi Poika received its Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certificate from the President of Suriname, Jennifer Simons. With this achievement, Bigi Poika becomes the first community in Suriname to obtain this international recognition for sustainable forest management. This milestone not only marks significant progress for forest management in Bigi Poika, but also demonstrates the potential for other communities – in Suriname and abroad – to sustainably manage and protect their own forests. It opens new opportunities for accessing high-quality international timber markets that increasingly value sustainability, transparency, and traceability.

FSC certification is a process

Obtaining the FSC certificate is the result of a multi-year process during which Bigi Poika has developed its own vision and management plan for community forest management, while step by step investing in professionalization. Under the guidance of Environmental Services & Support (ESS) and Stichting Probos, and with funding from the SUSTAME

program of IDB Lab and Cities4Forests, the community completed the first phase of the FSC Continuous Improvement Procedure (FSC-CIP) – a stepwise certification pathway for communities. Over the past years, the Bigi Poika forest team participated in various trainings on sustainable forest management and FSC certification. In May 2025, Control Union conducted the Forest Management

audit, and in September, the official certification was granted.

Hans Paters, director ESS: "After five years of hard work, with a clear vision, direction, and perseverance from Captain Ivanildo Ijoenakame, the traditional leadership, the working groups in the office, and the forest team in the field, Bigi Poika has reached this milestone."



Presentation of the FSC certificate – receipt of the certificate on behalf of Bigi Poika from President Jennifer Simons (Photo: Environmental Services & Support)

Wood with a story

The certification opens doors to a growing market for sustainably produced timber from community forests – so-called 'conservation timber'. This is wood with a story: sourced from forests managed not only according to international standards for sustainable forest management, but also contributing to sustainable economic development, local employment, and the conservation of forests and biodiversity. In collaboration with Probos, ESS, sawmill Soekhoe & Zonen, timber importer Van den Berg Hardhout, street furniture producer



FSC training in Bigi Poika (Photo: Eli Prins, Stichting Probos)

ERDI, and the Municipality of Amsterdam, the first shipment of timber from Bigi Poika has been sent to the Netherlands. The wood will be used to make city benches for the public domain of Amsterdam, each fitted with QR codes telling the story of the timber and the community. Interest from other municipalities and market actors is growing, as they recognize that using conservation timber contributes to supporting economic, social, and ecological value creation.

President Jennifer Simons: "Suriname is one of only three CO₂-negative countries in the world, and by protecting our forests, we can remain so."

A global challenge

The success of Bigi Poika is not an isolated case. Worldwide, indigenous and local communities are estimated to manage about 20% of the world's tropical forests – and in the Amazon region, this number is closer to 30%. Studies show that community forests are often better protected against deforestation than conventional concessions. By conserving and sustainably managing their forests, communities directly contribute to climate mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and water management. At the same

time, they strengthen local social and economic development, as both income and decision-making remain close to the community.

Eli Prins (Stichting Probos): "This is an incredible achievement for Bigi Poika, but the story is bigger. Other communities in Suriname – and beyond – can learn from their success. The first collaborations are already taking shape."

Scaling up success

Within the SUSTAME program, supported by IDB Lab, Probos, and ESS are now working on scaling up to other communities in Suriname. The next phase, co-financed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), aims to facilitate an FSC group certification system for communities, allowing multiple villages to join under one system. On the market side, efforts are underway to develop short, transparent supply chains toward Dutch and other international buyers. The ambition: to create maximum added value for communities in Suriname while ensuring a consistent demand for high-quality, sustainably produced timber.

The certification of Bigi Poika proves that the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forests can go hand in hand. With local leadership, international standards, and fair market access, a new perspective emerges for both communities and forests. Stichting Probos, ESS, and their partners remain committed to advancing this example – in Suriname and beyond. ■

About Probos

The Probos Foundation is committed to sustainable forest management worldwide. It focuses on the entire chain, which begins in the forest and ends with the end users of wood.

[Probos website](#)

[Linkedin](#)

Further information

- [Press release on website Surinamese government](#)
- [Bosbericht probos](#)
- For further information eli.prins@probos.nl



The forest of Bigi Poika (Photo: Mark van Benthem, Stichting Probos)