

**PEFC INTERNATIONAL STANDARD**  
Requirements for certification schemes

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## **Group forest management certification – requirements**



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## Foreword

PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) is a worldwide organization promoting sustainable forest management through forest certification and labelling of forest based products. Products with a PEFC claim and / or label deliver confidence that the raw material originates from sustainably managed forests.

PEFC Council provides endorsement of national forest certification schemes which are required to comply with PEFC Council requirements subject to regular evaluations.

This document has been developed in an open, transparent, consultative and consensus based process involving a broad range of stakeholders.

This document cancels and replaces requirements for group and regional forest management certification as defined in Annex 3 of PEFC Council Technical Document (Standard setting procedures).

## Introduction

PEFC Council endorses national forest certification schemes for sustainable forest management. Forest conditions, their ecological, social, economical and historical aspects vary amongst different regions and countries. PEFC Council reflects this fact through incorporating national forest certification schemes and standards which are suitable to local situations.

Forest ownership in many countries is characterised by significant numbers of small forest owners. The limited financial income of small forest owners, periodicity of their management activities and revenues, limited access to information and knowledge as well as limitations relating to their conformity with some of the criteria for sustainable forest management which cannot be achieved on small forest areas, represents significant barriers for forest certification.

Group certification is an alternative approach to forest certification which allows forest owners to become certified under one certificate and share financial obligations arising from forest certification as well as common responsibility for forest management. This approach aims at improving information dissemination and cooperation in forest management amongst individual forest owners.

## 1 Scope

This document defines the general requirements for forest certification schemes which include group forest management certification and allow the certification of a number of forest owners / managers under one certificate.

Group forest management certification requires establishing a certain management structure between individual forest owners / managers and an entity representing them in forest certification in order to ensure the correct implementation of a sustainable forest management standard and provide a sufficient level of confidence in sampling based certification activities.

Note: The term “group certification” is equivalent to the terms “regional certification” or other terms chosen by individual forest certification schemes where a number of individual forest owners are certified under one certificate.

## 2 Normative references

## 3 Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996 apply together with the following definitions.

### 3.1 Certified area

The forest area covered by a **group forest certificate** representing the sum of forest areas of the **participants**.

### 3.2 Group entity

An entity that represents the **participants**, with overall responsibility for the conformity of forest management on the **certified area** to the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

Note: The term “group entity” is equivalent to the terms “group entity”, “regional / group applicant”, etc.

### 3.3 Group organization

A group of **participants** represented by the **group entity** for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification.

In cases where a forest certification scheme allows an individual forest owner to participate in more group organizations, the scheme shall ensure that non-conformity of the forest owner identified in one group organization is addressed in any other group organization that the forest owner is participating.

Note: The term “group organization” is equivalent to the term “region” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

### 3.4 Group forest certification

Certification of the **group organization** under one **group forest certificate**.

Note: The term “group organization” is equivalent to the terms “regional forest certification” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition. The term “regional forest certification” is to be understood as “group forest certification” limited by the geographical boundaries.

### 3.5 Group forest certificate

A document confirming that the **group organization** complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

Note: The term “group forest certificate” is equivalent to the term “regional certificate” or other terms chosen by a relevant forest certification scheme which comply with the content of this definition.

### **3.6 Participant**

Forest owner / manager or other entity covered by the **group forest certificate**, who has legal rights for forest management on clearly defined forest area, and the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard on that area.

Note: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right for forest management and would disqualify one-off contractors to become participants in the group certification.

### **3.7 Document confirming participation in group forest certification**

A document issued to an individual **participant** that refers to the **group forest certificate** and that confirms the **participant** being covered by the scope of the **group forest certification**.

## **4 Eligibility criteria for the group certification**

### **4.1 General**

4.1.1 The forest certification scheme shall make clear definitions relating to the following terms, which are in conformity with the definitions of those terms presented in chapter 3:

- (a) the group organization,
- (b) the group entity,
- (c) the participant,
- (d) the certified area,
- (e) the group forest certificate,
- (f) the document confirming participation in group forest certification.

4.1.2 The forest certification scheme shall define requirements for group forest certification which ensure that the participants’ conformity with the sustainable forest management standard is centrally administered and is subject to central review and that all participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring programme.

4.1.3 The forest certification scheme shall define requirements for an annual internal monitoring programme, that provides sufficient confidence in the conformity of the whole group organization with the sustainable forest management standard.

### **4.2 Functions and responsibilities of the group entity**

4.2.1 The forest certification scheme shall define the following requirements for the function and responsibility of the group entity:

- (a) To represent the group forest organization in the certification process, including communication and relationship with the certification body, submission of an application for the certification and contractual relationship with the certification body,
- (b) To provide a commitment on behalf of the whole group forest organization to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
- (c) To establish written procedures for the management of the group forest organization,
- (d) To keep records of:

- the group entity and the participants' conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard, and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
  - all participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and their size,
  - the certified area,
  - the implementation of an internal monitoring programme, its review and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken.
- (e) To establish connection with all participants based on a written agreement, which shall include participants' commitment to comply with the sustainable forest management standard. The group entity shall have a written contract or other written agreement with all participants covering the right of the group entity to implement and enforce any corrective or preventive measures, and to initiate the exclusion of any participant from the scope of certification in case of non-conformities with the sustainable forest management standard,

Note: The requirements for "participant' commitment" and "written contract or other written agreement with all participants" can also be satisfied by the commitment of and contract with the forest owners / managers' association, where the association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the contract are enforceable.

- (f) To provide participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification,
- (g) To provide all participants with information and guidance needed for the effective implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
- (h) To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the participant's conformity with the certification requirements.
- (i) To operate a review of the conformity with the sustainable forest management standard, that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme and certification body's evaluations and surveillance; corrective and preventive measures if required; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of corrective actions taken.

#### **4.3 Function and responsibilities of participants**

The forest certification scheme shall define the following requirements for the participants:

- (a) To enter into a contractual relationship with the group entity, including the commitment on conformity with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,

Note: The requirement for "contractual relationship" is also satisfied by the contractual relationship of the forest owners / managers' association with the group entity, where the forest owners / managers association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the contract are enforceable.

- (b) To comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
- (c) To provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the group entity or certification body for relevant data, documentation or other information; allowing access to the forest and other facilities, whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise,
- (d) To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.

Figure 1: Definition of the group forest organization

