The PEFC FAQ has been developed to help you better understand PEFC and accurately answer some of the questions you may get from your customers. If you are in a customer facing role, CSR or procurement, then this Q&A is for you.

The structure of the document is divided into 6 chapters:

- Chapter one: About PEFC
- Chapter two: PEFC sustainable forest management
- Chapter three: PEFC Chain of Custody certification
- Chapter four: The PEFC Trademarks

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Chapter one: About PEFC

1. What is PEFC?
PEFC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, is a leading global alliance of national forest certification systems. As an international non-profit, non-governmental organization, we are dedicated to promoting sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.

In 1999, small- and family forest owners from Europe came together to create a forest certification system that would enable them to demonstrate their excellence in sustainable forest management. 20 years on, PEFC is the largest forest certification system in the world. Two thirds of the world’s certified forest area is certified against to PEFC-endorsed standards from 48 national systems.

2. What is PEFC’s relationship with ISO, IAF, ISEAL?
PEFC has closely aligned its process with the globally accepted, governmentally supported norms in standardization provided by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the worldwide federation of national standards bodies, and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), the global association for conformity assessment accreditation.

The ISO and IAF (International Accreditation Forum) standards and guidance documents harness the collective knowledge of the tens of thousands of stakeholders that have been involved in their development over the past decades and are universally recognized as best practice. PEFC is proud to collaborate with both ISO and IAF, and is an Association Member of IAF.

While PEFC monitors the activities of International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) as a private alternative to the established framework provided by ISO and IAF and considers ISEAL codes as valuable input into our standard-setting processes, we will continue to rely on internationally agreed processes such as ISO and IAF. Since 2018, PEFC has been part of the ISEAL community as an ISEAL Insight member.

3. Is PEFC in compliance with global timber legality legislation?
PEFC and EUTR:
The PEFC Chain of Custody meets the needs of emerging legislations worldwide to halt the trade in illegally harvested timber. The EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) was incorporated in our 2014 revision and further revised in our 2020 revision and we take into account other legislation such as the US Lacey Act, UK Timber Regulation, the Japanese Clean Wood Act and the Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Act. See more details in PEFC GD 2001:2020 Guidance for use of Chain of Custody

A common theme in this global legislation is behaviour modification of organisations through exercising ‘due diligence’ or ‘due care’ when sourcing wood products. For this reason the revised Chain of Custody incorporates transparency and information availability as core elements in PEFC’s Due Diligence System. Information on the origin and tree species of any supply in the Chain of Custody has to be accessible at ANY point in the PEFC supply chain, whenever, wherever. This extends the PEFC requirements beyond the requirements of the legality legislation such as the EUTR.
PEFC and FLEGT:
“FLEGT licensing and forest certification schemes are complementary initiatives that work at different scales. FLEGT licensing operates at the national scale, while certification operates at the scale of the forest management unit. Forest certification standards targeting at sustainable forest management, however, can be more far-reaching than legality definitions under VPAs.”
– flegtlicense.org

Synergies and formal recognition between FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and certification can help simplify verification thereby reducing audit costs. Recognition also acknowledges efforts made by forest managers and operators to achieve or contribute to Sustainable Forest Management. And where FLEGT VPAs can take years or decades to fully implement, PEFC certification can deliver recognition of sustainable forest management based on a forest manager’s initiative.

4. Market acceptance of PEFC. Who is accepting PEFC?
• Over 20,000 supply chain companies are certified to PEFC’s Chain of Custody standard
• Public/Governmental procurement policies reference PEFC
• Private sector commitments: Consumer Goods Forum, BREEAM, LEED, WBCSD industry organizations guidelines etc.
• Private sector procurement policies: procurement policies and corporate sustainability goals
• Banking, finance and insurance: BEI (Banking Environment Initiative), ASEAN RAI etc.
• Consumer: recognition of and trust in the PEFC label

Since its inception, the PEFC programme has been regularly evaluated by independent institutions. Our standards are revised every 5 years to allow continuous improvement as well as continuous dialogue with our stakeholders. Independent assessments from the Dutch government (TPAC), ASEAN RAI, and others have delivered positive assessment PEFC standards.

Chapter two : PEFC sustainable forest management

5. How does PEFC Certification help prevent deforestation and forest degradation?
To avoid forests being converted to other land uses e.g. to grow agricultural crops such as soy, palm oil, agricultural land and cattle grazing or even for infrastructure; a value needs to assigned to forests lands to encourage them to stay forested. It might seem counter intuitive but the best way to keep our forests is to use them, but sustainably. By purchasing PEFC-certified products, you are helping to deliver value to the forest owner.

Preventing forest degradation:

PEFC-certified forests are managed in compliance with internationally recognized sustainability requirements and regularly monitored by third-party, independent auditors. This ensures that forest management activities are not leading to forest degradation, a common pre-condition for forests, which are then converted for alternative land use.

• Prohibiting forest conversion
Within PEFC-certified forests there are strict requirements, which control conversion. In addition, plantations established on land converted from natural forest after 2010 are not eligible for PEFC certification.

- Establishing supply chain transparency

Products carrying a PEFC logo or certified claim have been delivered through a controlled supply chain whereby each operator has Chain of Custody certification in place and must exercise due diligence to ensure that unwanted, controversial sources, including conversion timber, do not enter the product.

- Strengthening consumer trust

Forest products that come from responsibly managed, renewable forests are part of the solution, not the problem. Certification and the PEFC label on a product help to build consumer trust in forest products, which in turn creates additional demand and ultimately increases the value of forests. Creating additional value and demand for forest products is one of the best ways to keep forests standing, as it prevents them from being cleared for alternative land uses.

Many organizations such as UNECE, FAO and the IPCC recognize how sustainable forest management helps combat climate change.

“B.3 Reducing deforestation and forest degradation lower GHG emissions .... By providing long-term livelihoods for communities, sustainable forest management can reduce the extent of forest conversion to non-forest uses (e.g., cropland or settlements). Sustainable forest management aimed at providing timber, fiber, biomass, non-timber resources and other ecosystem functions and services can lower GHG emissions and can contribute to adaptation” - IPCC, Climate and Land report, 2019

6. How does PEFC address Indigenous people’s rights?
PEFC follows ILO (International Labor Organisation), the UNDRIP and the UN normative references for human rights, specific land tenure and other rights of the Indigenous communities. We follow the free, prior and informed consent principles of engagement.

7. How does PEFC ensure consistency between all the endorsed systems?
PEFC has a strict standard for standards setting by national systems supported by our members as well as a robust endorsement process to assess our members standards before they are endorsed. If we take the PEFC International benchmark, there are 63 audit check points and a total of 110 requirements that have to be integrated into each of our members SFM standards before they can be endorsed.

As forests and local conditions vary from one country to another, we also encourage that our members go further in establishing some requirements for local conditions and specificities.
Chapter three: PEFC Chain of Custody certification

8. Where can I find a list of PEFC certified suppliers?
You can check if your suppliers are PEFC certified and find new PEFC certified suppliers via our global database: https://www.pefc.org/find-certified

9. How can PEFC Chain of Custody certificates be found in countries where there is no PEFC-endorsed scheme?
PEFC Chain of Custody certification is available worldwide and open to all companies that manufacture, process, trade or sell forest-based products.
In countries, where a system is endorsed by PEFC, both forest and chain of custody certifications will be managed by the PEFC National member.
In others countries, the administration of the Chain of custody certificate is managed by PEFC International. PEFC recognized Certification Bodies operate all over the world, check standards compliance and issue certificates. For example; a company sources their forest-based materials from countries where there is PEFC certified forest area and all of their suppliers are certified, they can obtain a PEFC Chain of Custody certification.

10. Where can I find a list of accredited Certification Bodies?
These are certification bodies who are accredited by accreditation bodies that are signatories of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification of IAF or IAF’s Regional Accreditation Groups. You can find a list of PEFC recognized Certification Bodies from our search engine: https://www.pefc.org/find-certification-bodies

11. Do all of my suppliers need to be PEFC certified to claim PEFC Chain of Custody certification and use the PEFC logo?
A short answer is yes. If you buy goods from a PEFC certified supplier and you are intending to sell them onto a customer as PEFC certified, you have to have a Chain of Custody Certificate.

The term supplier is defined under PEFC ST 2002:2020, Chain of Custody requirements under 3.38: 
Entity supplying material used as input for an organization’s PEFC product group.
Note 1: Where PEFC certified products are physically delivered by an entity other than having the ownership title to the material, the entity that is covered by a PEFC recognized certificate and that has specified the organization as PEFC customer is considered the supplier for the product/delivery in question.
Note 2: The term supplier can also refer to an internal supplier within an organization, where subsequent product groups have been established.

12. Do retailers need to be certified to use the PEFC label?
No, unless the retailer is manufacturing its own products.
Retailers that sell finished and labelled products to consumers without changing the product in any way, e.g. changing the packaging wrapping or mixing a product with non-certified products, do not have to be PEFC certified. See more details under PEFC ST 2001 – Trademark rules requirements “6.3. PEFC trademarks users classification”.
On the other hand, retailers have an other important role to play in promoting the sustainability of forests around the world. Through responsible sourcing, retailers create the demand for certified sustainable products thereby providing a financial incentive for a forest to stay a forest.

13. What should I do if I cannot find PEFC certified materials in the country where I source from?
75% of the certified forest area worldwide is certified to PEFC endorsed standards (data as of September 2019), chances are you may be sourcing PEFC certified fiber already.

If you can’t obtain PEFC certified materials in the countries from which you source, start asking your suppliers for PEFC certified materials and encourage them to become certified. Check if the supplier is PEFC certified: https://www.pefc.org/find-certified

14. What happens if I buy goods, which are sold to me as certified, but then turn out not to be?
As with any commercial transaction, you have a responsibility and a duty of care to check that what you are buying has been supplied legally and is what it says it is.

In the case of goods which are Chain of Custody Certified to a Forest Certification scheme you should check three things:

1. That your supplier has a current and valid certificate. You must ask the supplier for a Chain of Custody certificate number and verify if it’s still valid on our database. https://www.pefc.org/find-certified

2. That the scope of the certificate covers what you are buying, there are plenty of examples of companies who say that they are certified, but this may not apply to the particular product that you are purchasing.

3. That the supplier has not had their certificate withdrawn for a breach of the rules. Suppliers are unlikely to volunteer this information and you may need to check with the scheme itself (certification details should be available on the scheme website) or with your certifier/auditor, that the supplier is still certified. If a certificate has been withdrawn, the supplier may still have a valid document in his possession.

If you can show that you have acted in good faith and have taken all reasonable measures to check your sources, you would not be held responsible. However, if you were held to have been negligent, you would lose your Chain of Custody Certificate and this would be made public on the certification scheme’s website.

15. There is more than one Forest Certification Scheme. Do I require a separate Chain of Custody Certificate for each?
Yes, you will need to have a certificate for each.

16. How much does it cost and how long does it take to become PEFC certified?
PEFC does not get involved in audit price setting. The cost of PEFC Chain of Custody certification are fixed by individual Certification Bodies, so prices may vary.
Audit time depends on a number of variables, including company size, number of sites and complexity of the Chain of Custody

**17. Do PEFC certified products cost more?**
PEFC does not get involved in price setting, this is the responsibility of each company. Given the extra requirements for certified forest owners and certified companies, it would be fair for them to charge a small price premium.

**18. How does PEFC define recycled materials?**
Recycling contributes to reducing the demand on natural resources and is essential to waste management, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions associated with new product manufacture as well as the impacts of ecosystem degradation associated with resource extraction.

**PEFC ST 2002:2020 Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements**

3.35 Recycled material definition

Forest and tree based material that is

(a) recovered from waste during a manufacturing process. Excluded is reutilization of materials such as rework, regrind or scrap generated in a process and capable of being reclaimed within the same process that generated it. Excluded are by-products resulting from primary production processes, such as sawmilling by-products (sawdust, chips, bark, etc.) or forestry residues (bark, chips from branches, roots, etc.) as they are not considered waste

(b) generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of the product which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain

Suppliers of the recycled materials will need to determine and calculate the recycled material content based on ISO 14021 and inform about it upon request. (PEFC ST 2002:2020, under 5.4.1)

A PEFC recognised certification body will need to verify whether the material meets the PEFC strict definition of recycled materials. The calculation of recycled content and that the suppliers are in compliance with PEFC’s standards and requirements for a company to use “PEFC Certified” label, which contain 99% of recycled materials content or “PEFC Recycled” label which contain 100% of recycled materials.
Chapter four: The PEFC Trademarks (see PEFC trademark rules requirements)

19. What do the PEFC labels mean?

The PEFC trademarks provide information relating to the origin of forest based products in sustainably managed forest and other non-controversial sources. Trademarks information drives buyers and potential buyers to choose products based on environmental, as well as other considerations. The overall goal of the PEFC trademarks usage is, through non-misleading communication of accurate and verifiable information, to encourage demand for and supply of products originating from sustainably managed forests and thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous improvement of the world’s forest resources.

There are two main types of labels: the PEFC on-product labels and the PEFC off-product labels (for promotional use).

1. The PEFC on-product labels

These labels are visible on the “product” that is certified. These labels communicate that:

- your company is promoting and has committed to and sources from sustainable forest management with full respect to social, environmental and economic aspect.
- the forest and tree based materials used in a product meet the requirements of PEFC and has a PEFC Chain of Custody certificate.
- your company is helping to increase the value of forests and therefore reduce the risk of deforestation.

a. The PEFC certified label

The label must include the name of the product when it is not clear what the label refers to.

- Your product contains a minimum of 70% of PEFC certified material content and less than 100% recycled material content.
- Your product contains a minimum of 70% of PEFC certified material content and no recycled content.
- Your product contains only material from PEFC certified forests.
- The PEFC on product label can be used with no message.
b. The PEFC recycled label

![PEFC Recycled Label]

Your product contains 100% recycled materials (follow PEFC’s definition of recycled material)

c. The PEFC initials for on product usage

The PEFC initials may be used directly on a product where the product contains a minimum of 70% PEFC certified material. Whenever the product does not carry a PEFC label with the license number in the same product, the PEFC trademarks licence number shall be used with the PEFC initials.

Example 1: This product was made with PEFC certified wood (PEFC/XX-XX-XXX)
Example 2: This journal was printed on PEFC certified paper (PEFC/XX-XX-XXX)

When it is not clear what the PEFC initials refer to, the certified product shall be specified.

Any usage of the PEFC initials on-product different from that mentioned above shall be approved by the PEFC Council.

2. The PEFC off-product label (The PEFC promotional label)

The PEFC promotional label is used for promotional purposes on non-commercial products and it cannot be used to claim that products are certified.

This label communicates that your company:

- supports sustainable forest management
- promotes sustainable development and corporate social responsibility
- is helping to raise awareness on the importance of responsible forestry

An organisation can use PEFC’s promotional label to enhance communication about its responsible practices, including on your website, annual and CSR reports, marketing materials, catalogues, brochures and in-store materials.

The PEFC initials may be used for promotional purposes without the PEFC label under the same requirements as the label. In those cases, and whenever the PEFC label is not used close to the message, the PEFC trademarks licence number shall be placed next to the message.

The usage of the PEFC initials off-product is allowed under the same conditions and requirements as the PEFC promotional label. It shall be accurate and refer to PEFC in the correct term.

If you wish to receive some examples of statements about PEFC to use on your website and documents, please contact marketing@pefc.org

20. Why should I use the PEFC label on my product?

Labels enable consumers to identify and choose products that support responsible forest management.

Market research shows that:
55% of global online consumers across 60 countries say they are willing to pay more for products and services provided by companies that are committed to positive social and environmental impact.

68% believe that forest certification labels are important in promoting sustainable forest management.

70% agree that companies should use PEFC certification to demonstrate that the wood they are using is verified to originate from legal and sustainable sources.

90% of consumers want on-pack labelling to show the packaging’s environmental status.

### 21. Can I label my products once I have a PEFC Chain of Custody certificate?

Provided your products are eligible, yes you can but make sure you:

1. sign a PEFC trademarks usage contract with the relevant PEFC National governing body; in countries where there is no PEFC National governing body, the contract will be signed directly with the PEFC council.
2. meet our trademarks usage rules and requirements as stated in the PEFC ST 2001 for on and off products usages;
3. generate labels using the PEFC’s label generator.

### 22. I am a non-PEFC certified retailer, can I use the PEFC label on product?

Retailers that procure PEFC certified products and sell them to consumers without manipulating the products in any way such as changing the wrapping, mixing the products with non-certified products etc., may exceptionally use the PEFC trademark indirectly on product and the PEFC promotional label.

PEFC ST 2001:2020. 5.2.1

b) Indirect on-product usage through any reference that can be interpreted or understood as if the product itself is certified or contains PEFC certified material, such as on media or marketing materials to communicate that the product is PEFC certified.

In order to use the PEFC Labels indirectly on product and the PEFC promotional label, retailers must sign a PEFC trademark license agreement with PEFC National Governing Body of the country where they operate or with PEFC Council if coming from a country without national governing body or with the appropriate PEFC authorized body.

### 23. Why doesn’t PEFC have a Policy for Association?

PEFC is committed to continually improving our standards to ensure that PEFC labelled products are sourced from forests managed to the highest level of sustainable forest management standards.

A Policy of Association that allows a standard-setting organization to essentially cancel certificates issued by independent, accredited certification bodies and exclude entities from certification for

2. PEFC YouGov Global Consumer Survey (June 2017, 21,000)
3. PEFC YouGov Global Consumer Survey (June 2017, 21,000)
reasons outside of the scope of certification, therefore, runs counter to the fundamental ISO principle of impartiality, in addition to undermining the openness and accessibility of the certification process. We consider it inappropriate for a standard-setting organization such as PEFC to develop a Policy for Association that risks arbitrary decision-making instead of capturing the objectives of such Policy within the certification standard as certification requirements. This ensures the correct implementation of certification requirements while safeguarding the crucial impartiality of the certification process.

24. Which NGOs do support PEFC?
PEFC is supported by many environmental and social NGOs at international, regional and national levels. They are either stakeholders participating to our standards revisions and some sit on our national and international Boards.
According to an internal survey conducted in 2018, 104 NGOs supported PEFC across 14 national members. 43% from Nature Conservation, 48% social and 10% from indigenous organisations.

For additional questions, please email marketing@pefc.org