

Adopted by the Extraordinary General Assembly of the PEFC Belgium
on 27 June 12

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1. Objectives

The purpose of this document is to define the requirements for the development, administration and revision of regional forest management standards, in compliance with PEFC Council document PEFC ST 1001:2010 "Standard setting – requirements".

This document was validated by the Belgian PEFC Board of Directors on 18 January 2011 and by the Extraordinary General Assembly on 27 June 2012.

2. Scope of application

The requirements cover the development, periodic revision and official approval of forest management standards by PEFC Belgium, in compliance with the requirements in effect in PEFC Council technical documents.

In Belgium, the environment, city planning, agriculture, forest management, hunting and nature conservation are all under regional control. Therefore, forest management standards are also defined at the regional level.

3. Bodies responsible for standards development and revision

3.1. *Standardising body*

The standards body is the PEFC Belgium not-for-profit.

The standardising body shall make its standard-setting procedures publicly available and shall regularly review its standard-setting procedures including consideration of comments from stakeholders.

3.1.1. *Extraordinary General Meeting of PEFC Belgium*

The Extraordinary General Meeting of PEFC Belgium is responsible for the formal adoption of regional standards for sustainable forest management in the Walloon Region. The composition and decision-making process of the Extraordinary General Meeting of PEFC Belgium are defined in the articles of association of PEFC Belgium published on 27/08/2007 and 06/10/2009 in the Official Belgium Journal.

3.1.2. *Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium*

The membership of the Board of Directors is defined in the articles of association of PEFC Belgium.

The development and revision, every five years, of the development and/or revision procedure for regional sustainable forest management standards is the responsibility of the PEFC Belgium Board of Directors:

- Initiation of the development and/or revision work for regional sustainable forest management standards every five years (the Board of Directors approves the preparatory file created by the Secretariat General, sets the date for the start of the process and makes it public)

- Creation of an invitation list of all players relevant to the Forum and the acceptance of applications. The Board of Directors identifies the relevant players who meet the objectives and field of application of the revision work. Mapping will be done to define:
 - The sectors of interest
 - The areas of each sector that may require attention
 - The stakeholders of each sector
- The preferred means of communication for contacting them. Relevant players will be divided into "disadvantaged" and "key" players. A "disadvantaged player" may be disadvantaged from a financial standpoint or in some other way with respect to standards development work. A "key player" is a player whose participation is critical to the results of the standards development process.
- Implementation of the Forum (point 3.4.1)
- Receipt of information about invitations of experts or observers made by the Forum (point 3.4.2, last paragraph)
- Establishment or dissolution of the Forum responsible for the development of Walloon standards for sustainable forest management
- Receipt and examination of the minutes of the Forum (point 4.1.)
- Resolution of complaints, requests for arbitration and appeals tied to the revision process of sustainable forest management standards
- Formal consensus approval by the Forum of the final version of the standards for sustainable forest management before presentation to the Extraordinary General Meeting
- Presentation of the final version to the Extraordinary General Meeting of PEFC Belgium for formal adoption.

The Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium must seek a consensus when taking a decision. If the Board of Directors cannot reach a consensus after multilateral, or bilateral, discussions and negotiations intended to find a compromise, PEFC Belgium will consider a proposal resulting from a consensus by simple majority vote of the members present or represented. In the event of a tie vote, the vote of the Chairman or their replacement will be decisive.

3.1.3. General Secretariat of PEFC Belgium

The Secretariat is responsible for ensuring implementation of, and compliance with, the present procedure and all rules governing the technical activities of PEFC Belgium. To do so, the Secretariat will act as a liaison between the members of the Forum, the working groups (see 3.4.2.) and the Board of Directors.

The Secretariat is responsible for the following, in particular:

- Preparation of the standards development and revision process and project proposal
- Recording of applications (whether spontaneous or not) for participation in the regional Forums, after acceptance by the Board of Directors
- Logistics and administrative support for the Forums (when a Forum doesn't manage this itself)
- An announcement of the start of the regional sustainable forest management standards revision process
- Management of the public consultation
- Publication of the approved regional forest management standards.

3.2. Regional Forum (= Regional entity)

3.2.1. Forum Creation and Mission

Regional forest management standards are developed and revised by a Regional Forum consisting of the organisations involved in the sustainable management of forests in the Region.

Regional Forums are created and dissolved by the Board of Directors. The Regional Forum must report on its work to the Board of Directors.

3.2.2. The Composition of Regional Forums

Forums must ensure balanced representation of the various interest groups and be accessible to materially and directly affected stakeholders. All “relevant organisations” must be invited including stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the standard, those that are materially affected by the standard, and those that can influence the implementation of the standard. A “relevant organisation” is a body with a clear link to the forest in its multifunctional dimension in the Region in question that officially recognises PEFC and wants to participate in the development of PEFC certification.

Organisations representing a sector will have priority.

Representatives to the Forum must be invited by the Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium. They must officially confirm their attendance in writing to the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium and their intent to recognise and develop the PEFC approach (by filling out and signing the commitment form provided by the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium). An official invitation will be sent and, if necessary, supported with bilateral interviews.

The Forum must reflect balanced representation of the various interest groups (chambers). In compliance with the articles of association of PEFC Belgium, the five Forum chambers are:

- Forest owners and managers
- The wood industry and commerce
- Consumer representatives, the users of green spaces (hunters, walkers, etc.), and worker organisations (unions)
- Environmental groups
- Research centres

Forums can invite observers to their work as well as specific experts to contribute to certain studies. They must inform the Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium when they do so. If need be, Forums can create workgroups to study specific topics in greater depth. The workgroups must report on their work to the Forum.

3.2.3. Forum Operations

All decisions must be taken by consensus. The points of view of all participants must be heard openly and transparently.

- a) working drafts shall be available to all members of the working group/committee,
- b) all members of the working group shall be provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development or revision of the standard and submit comments to the working drafts, and

- c) comments and views submitted by any member of the working group/committee shall be considered in an open and transparent way and their resolution and proposed changes shall be recorded.

A Chairman and a Secretary must be elected. The content of Forum debates must be reported by the Secretary in the meeting's minutes. In any event, a consensus should be reached by all members of the Forum.

The Forum must prove that standards have been approved by consensus before they are officially adopted by the Extraordinary General Meeting of PEFC Belgium.

If unanimity cannot be reached on a topic after discussions and negotiations, PEFC Belgium will consider a proposal resulting from a consensus by vote of the chambers, each chamber being entitled to one vote. A proposal will be accepted in the following instances:

- When four out of five chambers agree to the proposal
- When three chambers out of five agree to the proposal, with one or two abstentions.

Each chamber will take decisions by simple majority. The chamber must abstain if a majority cannot be obtained.

If a serious disagreement within the Forum prevents it from moving forward, the issue will be handled as a last recourse via the PEFC Belgium complaint and appeals hearing and resolution procedures (see point 6 below).

4. Forest management standards development and revision process steps

The standards and provisions for implementation must be re-examined at least once every five years in light of new scientific discoveries and practical experience given that continuous improvement is one of PEFC Belgium's objectives.

The development of management standards is independent of the certification and accreditation processes.

4.1. Steps

The different steps and their associated responsibilities and documents are listed in the table below.

STEPS		RESPONSIBILITIES	ASSOCIATED DOCUMENT
Launch	Project presentation	Secretariat General	Preparatory File
	Preparatory file approval	Board of Directors	
Preparation	Public announcement	Secretariat General	Preparatory File
	Invitation of PEFC members and interested parties to the Forum - Mapping of the interested parties	Secretariat General/Board of Directors	
	Forum set-up	Board of Directors/Secretariat General	
Construction	Reflection - exchanges of points of view	Forum/Secretariat General	Forum document
	Obtaining a consensus	Forum/Secretariat General	
Public Consultation	Development and dissemination of the project in consultation	Forum/Secretariat General	Forum document
	Development and dissemination of the Public Consultation Form	Forum/Secretariat General	Public Consultation Form
Pilot Study (not for revisions)	Organisation of a pilot study Inclusion of the results in the standards	Forum/Secretariat General	Forum document
Approval	Writing of the Development Report	Secretariat General	Development Report Final Document
	Writing of the Final Document after public consultation	Forum/Secretariat General	
	Approval of the Development Report and the Final Document by the Board of Directors	Board of Directors	
	Approval of the Development Report and the Final Document by the Extraordinary General Meeting	Extraordinary General Meeting	
Forwarding of the Development Report and the Final Document to PEFC for acknowledgement		Secretariat General	Development Report Final Document

4.2. Launch steps

The Secretary General and the Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium are responsible for launching the management standards development or revision process.

4.2.1. PEFC Belgium Secretariat General revision process launch tasks

The Secretary General of PEFC Belgium will handle the following as part of the revision process launch.

Creation of the preparatory file used as the basis for reflection by the Forum and consisting of the following:

- The present procedure
- The new PEFC sustainable forest management criteria
- The revision schedule
- The composition of the Forum
- The Belgian PEFC certification scheme in effect (for the 2007-2011 period) and the sustainable management standards
- Presentation of the preparatory file described above to the PEFC Belgium Board of Directors for approval.

4.2.2. PEFC Belgium Board of Directors revision process launch tasks

The Board of Directors must approve the preparatory file (as described in point 4.2.1).

4.3. Preparation steps

4.3.1. Public announcement and invitation

Public announcement of the start of the sustainable forest management standards development/revision process will be made via the PEFC Belgium Internet site in order to provide the greatest amount of information about the revision process. The Secretariat General will send out invitations to participate in the Forum to a list of interested parties created by the Board of Directors of PEFC Belgium.

Interested stakeholders will be identified based on the recommendations in point 3.1.2.

The public announcement and the invitation will contain, at a minimum,

- a) an explanation about the objectives, scope and the steps of the development/revision process and its timetable
- b) the way in which interested parties can contribute to the process.
- c) an invitation to nominate their representative(s) to the Forum. The invitation to disadvantaged and key stakeholders shall be made in a manner that ensures that the information reaches intended recipients and in a format that is understandable.
- d) an invitation to comment on the scope and the standard setting process and
- e) reference of the public available procedure on the PEFC Belgium website www.pefc.be

The standardising body shall review the standard-setting process based on comments received from the public announcement and establish a working group/committee or adjust the composition of an already existing working group/committee based on received nominations. The acceptance and refusal of nominations shall be justifiable in relation to the requirements for balanced representation of the working group/committee and resources available for the standard-setting

4.3.2. Forum set-up

The Secretariat General (acting in the name of the Board of Directors) will ensure that participants are fully aware of the procedure. It will also ensure that the interested parties that accept to take part in the Forum are distributed among the different chambers and that they have received the preparatory file.

4.4. Construction steps

The Forum will use the criteria defined by PEFC in document PEFC ST 1003:2010 "Sustainable forest management - requirements" to develop and revise forest management standards. These requirements are based on, and comply with, inter-governmental processes such as the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

4.4.1. The goal of development and revision

Regional sustainable forest management standards must be developed/revise with the dual goal of continuous improvement and a search for suitable performance. They must include the following documents, at a minimum:

- The sustainable management charter for forest owners (specifications applicable to the forest management unit)
- A progress plan (an improvement plan for the development of specific actions to support the implementation of owner commitments at the regional level).

Forest management standards must be defined at the regional and forest management unit levels in order to improve the sustainable management of forests.

4.4.2. Basic items for development/revision

The Forum will use the following:

- The criteria defined by PEFC in document PEFC ST 1003:2010
- The Preparatory File used as the working basis for the development of new regional sustainable forest management standards.

4.4.3. Procedures for including items used as the basis for development/revision

The Forum must choose the best way to take these criteria and recommendations into account at the regional level given the regional forest situation.

The Forum must explicitly explain any changes to these criteria and recommendations such as, for example, why a point was not taken into account or was added.

The various versions of the working documents can be obtained by all Forum members and interested parties by request to the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium.

The Forum Chairman, in liaison with the Forum and the Secretariat, is responsible for ensuring that the conditions for obtaining a consensus (as described in Article 3.4.2.) are met to enable initiation of the public consultation step for the final version of the Forum Document.

4.5. Consultation steps

The Forum Document (enquiry draft) submitted to the General Public will be published on the PEFC Belgium website at www.pefc.be.

It will also be sent by e-mail to a distribution list prepared by the Secretariat General. The Secretariat will ensure that the Forum document (enquiry draft) is accessible and understandable to all key and disadvantaged stakeholders.

All comments must be submitted based on the model provided for this purpose by the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium.

The public consultation will last at least 60 days. The consultation start and end dates will be announced in advance via the appropriate media. The Forum must consider all comments in an open and transparent manner. It must duly respond to comments it considers relevant and it must modify the Final Document in consequence.

A summary of the comments received will be compiled when the review results are published on the PEFC Belgium website.

Any changes resulting from the public consultation will be made available within a reasonable time frame on the PEFC Belgium website and by request.

4.6. Pilot study

Forest certification standards must be evaluated in a pilot study before being submitted to PEFC Belgium. The final version will be tested by several forest owners.

The pilot phase is not compulsory if the experience acquired via the application of the standards over the preceding period is sufficient.

The final version, amended based on the pilot study, must be submitted to the General Meeting of PEFC Belgium for final approval. If approved, the standards will become part of Belgian Forest Certification Standards.

4.7. Approval steps

4.7.1. Development report

To approve the Final Document, the Secretariat General will write a development report demonstrating compliance of the revision process with the present procedure. The development report must contain the following, at a minimum:

- The revision process schedule
- Information about the announcement of the start of the revision process and the invitation to interested parties (list of parties invited)
- The minutes of Forum meetings

- Information about the public consultation and a summary of the comments and points of view as well as the results of their review
- Proof of consensus, including a summary of any opposition and resolution

4.7.2. Approval by the Forum

The Forum will recommend the Final Document when it reaches a consensus. Consensus is defined in 3.4.2.

4.7.3. Approval by the Board of Directors

The development report and the Final Document will be submitted to the Board of Directors which must return a favourable or unfavourable opinion. In the event of an unfavourable opinion, the Office must send the Final Document back to the "Preparation" (Point 4.3) or "Construction" (Point 4.4) step.

4.7.4. Formal adoption by the Extraordinary General Meeting

After approval by the Board of Directors, the Final Document must be submitted to the Extraordinary General Meeting. In accordance with Article 19 of the articles of association of PEFC Belgium, the General Meeting must take decisions based on a majority:

- Of the members present or represented and
- In at least four of the five colleges of the General Meeting.

If the Final Document is not formally approved, the Extraordinary General Meeting must send it back to the "Preparation" (Point 4.3) or "Construction" (Point 4.4) step.

4.8. Publication steps

Within four weeks of approval by the General Meeting, the Secretariat will correct all minor errors in the formally approved document, send it to the members of PEFC Belgium, and make it public by publishing it on the PEFC Belgium website.

5. Transparency and Advertising

Transparency of the procedure and advertising of the documents are guaranteed in the development or revision process for regional forest certification standards.

The following are, therefore, made public as part of the revision:

- The present procedure
- The development or revision process start date
- The minutes of Forum meetings (available on request)

- The management standards proposed by the Forum and adopted by the Office of PEFC Belgium or, in the case of a revision, the version of revised standards proposed by the Forum and adopted by the Office of PEFC Belgium
- The Public Consultation Form
- The comments received during the public consultation
- The version of the standards modified by the Forum following the public consultation
- The final version of the revised standards adopted by the Extraordinary General Meeting
- Any complaints and appeals and their outcome.

The documents will be advertised as follows:

- On the PEFC Belgium website: www.pefc.be
- On the PEFC Council's website: www.pefc.org
- They will also be available on request from the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium.

All intermediate documents leading to the development of a national scheme will be kept for a minimum period of five years and will be available on request to all interested parties.

6. Management of complaints and appeals

All complaints and appeals will be addressed by PEFC Belgium. It will treat them according to the hearing and resolution procedures for complaints and appeals below.

Complaints made as part of the revision procedure:

Complaints and claims made against PEFC Belgium about the revision procedure for regional sustainable forest management standards will be recorded by the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium.

Complaints and claims must be submitted by letter or e-mail to the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium within fifteen days after the adoption and publication of the revised scheme by the General Meeting of PEFC Belgium.

On receipt of the complaint, the Secretariat of PEFC Belgium must:

- Provide confirmation in writing to the complainant that their complaint was received
- Gather and check all information required to validate the complaint, objectively and impartially evaluate the reason for the complaint, and forward the complaint to the Board of Directors
- Formally communicate the decision with an explanation to the complainant
- Potentially implement corrective measures.

Complaints about the Extraordinary General Meeting's decision with respect to the adoption of standards:

If the decision taken by the General Meeting regarding the adoption or non-adoption of standards is contested, the complainant(s) can submit an appeal to a national appeals examination board.

The committee will consist of a forest owners' representative, a wood industry representative and an environmental organisations' representative designated by the Board of Directors. Appeals must be submitted by letter or e-mail to the Secretariat General of PEFC Belgium within fifteen days after the adoption and publication of the revised standards by the General Meeting of PEFC Belgium.

On receipt of the complaint, the Secretariat of PEFC Belgium must:

- Provide confirmation in writing to the complainant that their complaint was received
- Gather and check all information required to validate the complaint.

The appeals examination committee will objectively and impartially evaluate the object of the complaint and take a decision. It will give a response with an explanation and will, if required, recommend the adoption of corrective measures to the General Meeting.

The Secretariat General will formally communicate the decision with an explanation to the complainant.

Complaints, claims and appeals have no suspensory effect.

7. Revisions requested by the PEFC Council

When the PEFC Council modifies its general requirements for the development and implementation of sustainable forest management standards, it will inform PEFC Belgium of the changes and of the deadline by which they must be implemented in the national scheme. All revisions of PEFC Belgium standards required by the PEFC Council must be submitted by PEFC Belgium to the PEFC Council for evaluation, validation and mutual acknowledgement within the time limit granted.

8. Effective date of new regional sustainable forest management standards

All owners and managers wishing to become certified must immediately implement the new sustainable forest management standards.

For owners who are already certified, revised regional sustainable forest management standards will become effective within maximum 12 months of their acknowledgement by the PEFC Council.