

PAFC GABON – THE GABONESE ASSOCIATION OF THE PAN-AFRICAN FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM



PAFC GABONESE FOREST CERTIFICATION SCHEME

PAFC forest management standard setting and revision procedure

Version 2.3 – February 2014

With the collaboration of:

ECOFORAF



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Approved by: PAFC Gabon General Assembly

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Issue date (Application):endorsement date by the PEFC Council

Transition date: no longer than one year after the endorsement date by the PEFC Council

1. Objectives

This procedure describes the phases and procedures involved in setting and revising the Gabonese forest certification scheme standards.

Once the PEFCC has approved the scheme, this procedure is made publicly available on the PEFCC website and can be requested at any time from the PAFC Gabon Secretariat.

This procedure will be revised just like the standards (see paragraph 4.11) either regularly (every five years) or on an ad-hoc basis.

2. Scope

The following requirements cover the development, periodic revision and formal approval of the forest certification standards by PAFC Gabon, in compliance with the requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2010 “Standard-setting – Requirements”.

3. Structure and responsibilities of the standardising body

Reminder: in accordance with the terms and definitions of PEFC (PEFC ST1001: 2010) “a standardising body for a forest management scheme/standard is a body which is responsible for the development and maintenance of standards for the forest certification scheme.”

3.1. Statutes of PAFC Gabon

The standardising body recognised by the PEFC Council in Gabon is the following non-profit association registered under Gabonese law -PAFC Gabon.

3.2. Structure of PAFC Gabon

PAFC Gabon is made up of members who are divided into four colleges: the college of forest owners and rightful owners, the college of professionals, the social college and the environmental college.

PAFC has the following governing bodies:

- The General Assembly comprising all the members of the PAFC.
- The Board upon which three members of each college sit.
- The Executive Committee comprised of a President, a Vice-President, a General Secretary and a Treasurer elected by the Board.

3.3. Body charged with achieving a consensus:the PAFC Forum

3.3.1. 3.3.1 Responsibilities

A working group will be set up and will be responsible for devising or revising the PAFC standard. The working group shall be known as the PAFC Forum.

The decision-making method used by this working group is consensus, in accordance with chapter 5.

3.3.2. 3.3.2 Duration of the PAFC Forum

The Forum shall be temporarily created from the moment it is appointed by the PAFC Executive Committee until the PEFCC approves the standard.

3.3.3. Requirements for forming the Forum

From among the stakeholders who have expressed an interest in devising or revising the PAFC standard, the PAFC Executive Committee must take account of the following criteria when selecting the PAFC Forum participants:

- Stakeholders who are practically or directly concerned by the implementation of the standard or the facilitation of the implementation of the standard are prioritised and account for at least 35% of the Forum.
- There must be a balance between the different categories of participants (representatives of the four interest groups). The number of participants from any one of the interest groups must not exceed by any more than 25% the number of participants from another interest group (i.e. number of participants from interest group Z = $\pm 25\%$ number of participants from interest group Y) in order to achieve this balance.
- Include stakeholders with relevant standard development and revision expertise.
- Participants must honestly and efficiently represent the stakeholders concerned.

The PAFC Gabon Secretariat shall send the finalised list of Forum participants to the stakeholders, explaining to stakeholders who expressed an interest the reasons why they have / have not been selected to take part in the Forum.

All inclusions / rejections of stakeholders in the PAFC Forum shall be explained by the Executive Committee, which may base its reasoning on the need for a balanced representation of the different categories of participants (as above).

As a first step, the Forum shall elect an Executive Committee comprising a President, Secretary and Facilitator, with the following roles:

- **President:**The president is responsible for the smooth running of the process and will also be the focal point for all requests and complaints relating to the standard setting / revision work (see paragraph 4.10 for the complaints and appeals management procedure).
- **Secretary:**The secretary is responsible for drafting the minutes of the Forum sessions.
- **Facilitator:**The facilitator helps to develop a structured and constructive debate, enables all the stakeholders to take part and puts forward solutions for discussion in order to resolve conflictual issues.

3.4. Standard setting and revision responsibilities

Phase	Description	Responsibilities	Associated documents
Stakeholder mapping	Identify the stakeholders	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	List of stakeholders
Start of the process	Invitation sent to the stakeholders	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	Invitations / Standard revision / setting procedure / Registration form / Website
Forum is created	Analysis of the comments received	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	Communication via email / list of the participants / comments made by the stakeholders and the GA
	Appoint and approve participants	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	
	Publication of forum participants	Secretariat	
Develop the preliminary documents	Election of the Forum president, secretary and facilitator. Approval of the SSP and the stakeholder mapping.	PAFC Forum	Meeting minutes / results of votes
	Revision of the standards		
Public consultation	60 day deadline for receiving comments	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	Circulation list / website
Pilot testing	Not applicable in the event of a revision.	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	Pilot run report
Approval	Summary report	Executive Committee PAFC Gabon	Report
	Approval	The General Assembly of PAFC Gabon.	Decision
	Mutual recognition	PEFCC	Decision

4. Standard setting and revision procedure

N.B.:The following procedure takes account of the new requirements of the PEFC International meta-standard on standard-setting (PEFC ST 1001:2010).

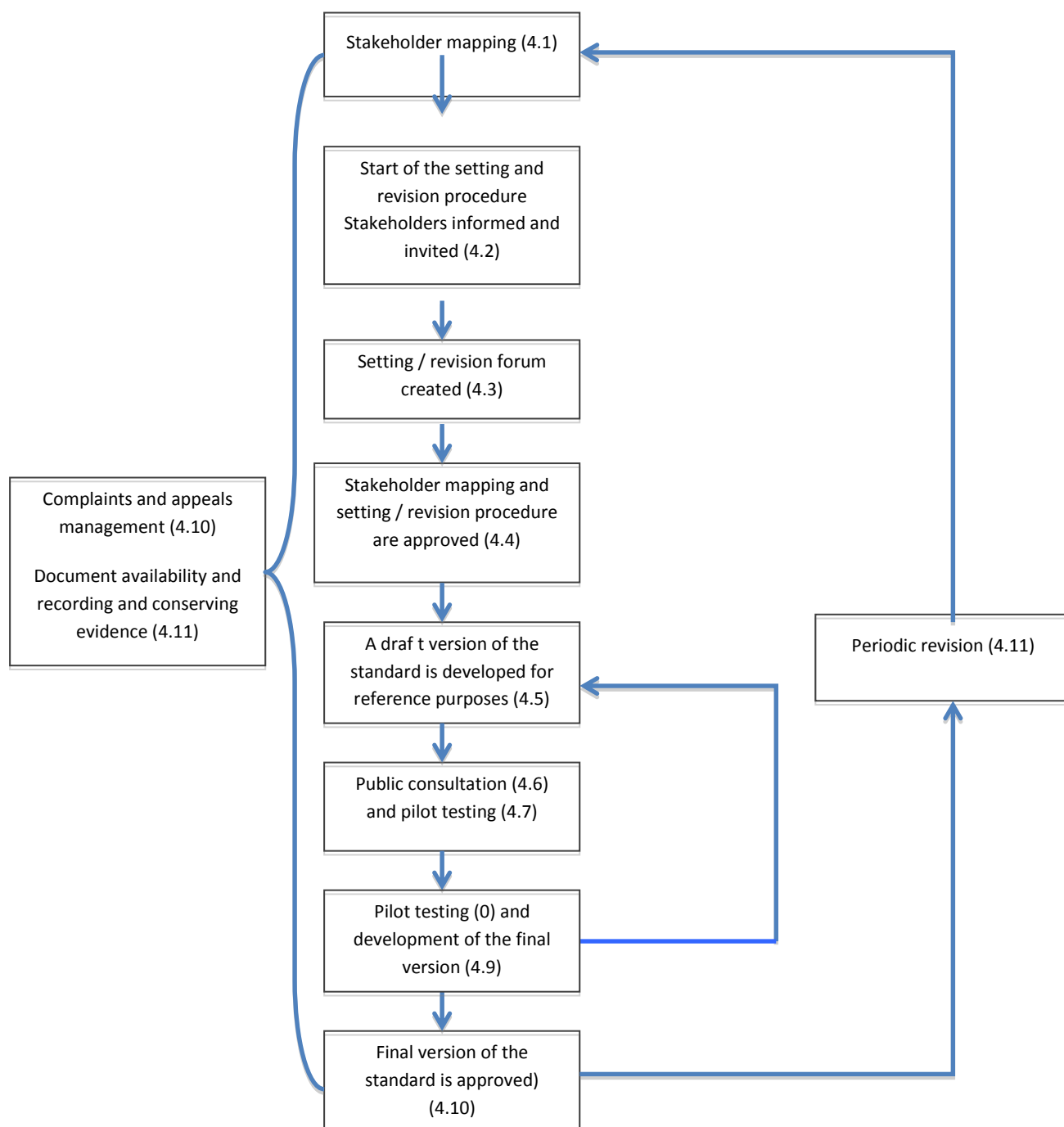


Figure 1: Standard setting / revision process

4.1. Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholders need to be identified by the PAFC Gabon Executive Committee before the process of setting and revising the standard gets underway.

Stakeholder mapping identifies the individuals and organisations affected by the setting or revision of the Gabonese forest certification standard and / or who are affected by implementation of the standard.

Stakeholders who wish to do so will participate in the standard setting and revision forum. The Executive Committee will pay particular attention to the most disadvantaged and key stakeholders, ensuring that it:

- Uses suitable means of communication to contact and inform them about the process.
- Finds effective ways of getting them involved so that they can contribute to the different phases of the standard-setting process.

This mapping will be submitted to the stakeholders for comment. The Executive Committee will then produce a final version that will be submitted to the PAFC forum for approval.

4.2. Start of the standard setting and revision process

4.2.1. 4.2.1 Public announcement

The start of the standard setting and revision process will be publicly announced via as many media as possible -a national radio broadcast and a press release in the national written press. A TV broadcast and a press release published by the national online media could also be envisaged.

4.2.2. Invitation content

Invitations to take part in the revision process shall be sent to all the identified stakeholders by post, email or personal delivery, with confirmation of receipt being required. The invitations will state that the deadline for registering for the forum is one month starting from the date when the invitations were sent out.

These invitations must include the following information:

- Information about the scope of the setting / revision process, its aims, the timetable and phases of the process.
- An invitation to comment on the standard setting and revision process and its scope.
- The mapping of the stakeholders who have already been identified.
- The option of taking part in the process by registering an interest and appointing a representative via the form that can be used to register an organisation and its representative.
- Information for other stakeholders who have not been identified to take part in the process.
- Information about the public availability of certification standard setting and revision procedures.

Particular attention shall be paid to the invitations to disadvantaged and key stakeholders, ensuring

that the invitation is in a format that is understandable and that it reaches the intended recipients.

4.3. Creation of the PAFC Forum

Stakeholders should express their interest in taking part in the process by sending an email or letter to the PAFC Gabon Secretariat explaining their reasons and listing the name of the person chosen to represent them at the Forum.

The Forum will be created in accordance with the procedure detailed in 3.3.3 of this procedure.

4.4. Validation of the setting / revision procedure and stakeholder mapping

The procedure will be sent to the PAFC Forum participants and stakeholders. They will be able to comment on its scope and content, sending their comments to the PAFC Secretariat by email or letter.

The PAFC Executive Committee will summarise any comments made by the stakeholders (even those not included in the Forum) about the procedure and the stakeholder mapping during the period of time stipulated at the start of the process (a month). This procedure and the stakeholder mapping will be approved at a meeting of the Forum in accordance with the decision-making mechanism defined in 5.

Once the procedure has been approved by the Forum, it will be made publicly available on the PEFC website, once the standard has been recognised, and can be obtained by sending a written request to the PAFC Gabon Secretariat.

4.5. Development of a draft version of the standards for reference purposes

4.5.1. Definition

According to PEFC ST 1001/2010, a draft version is “a proposed document available for public consultation”.

According to the same requirements, a working document is a “proposed document that is available generally for comments or voting within a working group/committee.”

4.5.2. Development of the draft version of the standards using working documents

The PAFC Forum will develop a draft version of the standard using the working documents submitted to it prior to the work meetings.

The Forum must work in an open and transparent manner. This aim will be achieved by taking the following actions:

- The timetable and work schedule will be handed out to all the participants at the start of the process. Participants shall be immediately informed about any changes made.
- The working documents are made available to all Forum participants.
- All possible efforts shall be made to ensure that the Forum participants are involved in developing the draft version (e.g. interviews, interpreters, travel expenses etc).
- Participants' comments and opinions will be recorded (see paragraph 7). They will be dealt with in a transparent and open manner and will be settled by reaching a consensus in accordance with the "Decision-Making Mechanism" procedure (see paragraph 5).

4.5.3. 4.5.3 Reference documents

In order to develop the draft version for public consultation, the Forum shall use Good Forest Management principles and the Principles, Criteria and Indicators (PCI) developed by the ATO / ITTO (African Timber Organization and the International Tropical Timber Organisation) and the requirements of the PEFC International meta-standard.

Documents must be circulated to all the PAFC Forum participants.

4.6. Public consultation

4.6.1. Length and organisation of the public consultation

The draft version of the standards put forward by the PAFC Forum will be made public and accessible (on the website and via the PAFC Gabon Executive Committee) at the very latest one month after it has been approved by the PAFC Forum. The public will be invited to comment on it during a 60-day consultation period starting from the date when the invitation was issued.

Particular care will be taken to ensure that disadvantaged stakeholders can take part, with the document being sent to them in an understandable format.

The start and end dates of the public consultation will be announced in an appropriate fashion on the website and circulated to the Forum participants and affected stakeholders so that the dates can be publicised via as many media outlets as possible - a national radio broadcast, a press release in the national written press and a press release published by the national online media, as a minimum requirement. A TV broadcast could also be envisaged. Forum members shall be informed by post or email.

4.6.2. Summary of the comments from the public consultation

The Forum's Executive Committee or any other body appointed by the Forum must acknowledge receipt of each comment that is made during the public consultation.

At the end of the 60-day consultation period, comments will be compiled and summarized by the body appointed by the Forum. The Forum's Executive Committee will produce a summary of the compiled comments and the objective way in which they have been handled. This summary will be made publicly available on the website and from the PAFC Gabon Executive Committee.

4.7. Development and approval of the version for pilot testing by the PAFC Forum

A version for pilot testing is a document that has been amended following the incorporation of the comments from the public consultation, approved by the consensus body, and which needs to undergo pilot testing.

The draft version of the standard will then be amended taking account of the comments deemed to be relevant by the PAFC Forum, following the consensual decision-making procedure (paragraph 5). This version will then be trialled.

4.8. Pilot testing

The definitive version of the standard must be trialled on the ground in order to assess its implementation and evaluate its relevance. The results of this trial must be evaluated by the PAFC Forum so that they can be included in the definitive version of the standard.

Pilot testing is not compulsory if the standard is being revised. In this scenario, the definitive version is the one produced following the inclusion of comments from the public consultation approved by the PAFC Forum.

4.9. Development and approval of the definitive version by the PAFC Forum

According to PEFC ST 1001/2010, a definitive version is "a proposed document that is available for formal approval".

The pilot version of the standard will then be amended taking account of the results of the trial that are deemed to be relevant by the PAFC Forum, following the consensual decision-making procedure (paragraph 5). This will then become the definitive version.

4.10. Approval of the finalised version of the standard by the standardising body

4.10.1. Documentation to be submitted to the standardising body

The PAFC Executive Committee shall produce a report summarising the following information:

- Standard setting / revision procedure schedule.
- Information about the consultation on the setting / revision process and the list of participants selected for the Forum.
- Minutes of Forum meetings, meeting reports signed by the meeting participants.
- Final summary of the public consultation process.
- If the standard is being revised, a description of the amendments made to the standard and the reason for them.
- Summary of the main concerns / opposition raised during the process and of complaints and appeals lodged. Evidence will be supplied that a consensus was reached on these points.
- The finalised version of the standard approved by consensus by the Forum.

This report will be made publicly available.

4.10.2. Submission to PAFC Gabon

The report is submitted to the General Assembly which decides whether or not to approve the new standard in accordance with the PAFC's procedure.

In the event of the document being rejected by the General Assembly, the process must restart at the "Development of the draft version of the standards" (see figure 1).

4.10.3. Submission to the PEFC for approval

If the standard is approved by the PAFC Gabon GA, it will then be submitted to the PEFC Council (English language version) as a component part of the scheme to be evaluated and approved.

The PAFC Gabon approved version will be made public.

The standard approved by the PEFC Council and documents relating to the setting/revision process will be made available on the website and via the PAFC Gabon Executive Committee within two weeks of them being recognised by the PEFC Council.

4.11. Revision of the standard

The standard shall be revised either within the context of the systematic five-year revision or within a specific context, for example if the PEFC International requirements are changed.

Revision of the PAFC Gabon standard will follow all the phases listed above and will be submitted to

the PEFC Council for evaluation and approval within the set deadlines.

5. Decision-making mechanismconsensus

The decision-making mechanism selected for the setting and revision of the Gabonese certification standard is **consensus**.

5.1. Definition

Consensus can be defined as “general agreement characterised by the absence of any sustained opposition to core questions by any significant number of the affected stakeholders and as a process that involves a quest to take on board the views of all the affected parties and to reconcile all conflicting opinions” (PEFC ST 1001: 2010).

5.2. Reaching a minimum quorum

It shall be deemed that quorum has been reached if, as a minimum requirement, each interest group is represented by a simple majority of its members.

No consensus can be reached if this requirement is not met.

5.3. Reaching a consensus

Members will express their approval or disapproval by means of a ‘vote’ in order to find out if a consensus has been reached.

Each and every represented member is entitled to one vote (one member = one vote) within the framework of the PAFC Forum. Observers may be accepted in an advisory capacity but under no circumstances may vote, as this is solely reserved for the members of the PAFC Forum.

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, s/he may give a proxy vote to another member of the working group who will vote on his/her behalf. The president must be informed before the meeting and during the meeting itself will detail the proxy votes that s/he has received.

In order to establish whether there is disagreement, the Forum shall organise one of the following:

- A meeting with a yes/no vote (either by a show of hands or a ballot).
- A teleconference with a verbal vote (yes/no).
- An email meeting (by proxy).
- A combination of the three previous options.

The first option should be favoured given the technological constraints.

The Forum must provide evidence that a consensus was reached when setting or revising the standards in accordance with the procedure described in paragraph 7.

If opposition is expressed, the process shall comprise the following stages:

1. The facilitator will organise a second round of discussions so that all the participants can clarify their positions. If necessary, the facilitator may call upon external experts to provide expertise that may help to move forward the debate.
2. A second vote is taken:
 - a. If no opposition is registered, it will be deemed that a consensus has been reached.
 - b. If there is still opposition at the second round, a third vote will be organised.

The third round of voting will use the interest group system. If an absolute majority is reached in an interest group, the group will be deemed to have voted “yes”, otherwise it will be regarded as having voted “no”. A consensus will be reached if none of the interest groups express their disagreement.

In the event of a consensus not being reached, an alternative proposal will be sought and the stakeholders must rule on this new proposal using one of the methods listed above and in accordance with the decision-making mechanism listed above.

6. Complaints and appeals management

Complaints and appeals made within the context of the setting and revision of the standard will be managed in accordance with the PAFC Gabon scheme procedure.

7. Recording and conserving evidence

7.1. Aims and Responsibilities

PAFC Gabon, via its Executive Committee, will be responsible for recording and conserving the documents linked to the standard setting and revision process. These documents will constitute evidence of compliance with the PEFC requirements.

7.2. Documents to be conserved

The following documents will be conserved:

- The Board, General Assembly and PAFC Forum meeting attendance lists.
- Meeting minutes signed by the participants.
- All the contributions made by the stakeholders taking part in the Forum or during the public consultation process.
- Complaints and appeals lodged.
- The various versions of documents.
- Any other document that proves the compliance of the standard setting and revision procedure.

These documents will be conserved by the PAFC Gabon Secretariat for five years. They will be made available to the stakeholders on request.

8. Document transparency and availability

This procedure is available and can be downloaded from the website and obtained via the PAFC Gabon Executive Committee.

The following documents that were used to develop the Gabonese forest certification scheme in force are available either on the PEFC website or the PAFC website or from the PAFC Gabon Secretariat if requested in writing:

- The Gabonese Forest Certification Scheme recognised by the PEFC.
- Gabonese Forest Certification Scheme procedures.
- PEFC audit and recognition reports.
- Any other document deemed to be relevant.