

PEFC Denmark's

Requirements for group certification of sustainable forest management

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1. Introduction

This document is a part of the Danish PEFC certification system for sustainable forest management (in the following referred to as “the Danish scheme”). The requirements are normative for group leaders, which administer group certification of forest properties in Denmark under the Danish scheme.

The rationale for group certification is to spread the costs of certification across a number of owners, for whom the costs of being certified individually as owners of small or medium-sized properties might otherwise have been disproportionate to the benefits. The premise for this potential cost reduction is that only a sample of the forest areas within the group needs to be audited each year by the certification body. Furthermore the group leader can choose to provide counselling and ensure otherwise that the requirements are met, which makes group certifications attractive for smaller properties without an independent forestry administration.

Administration, policies and forest management planning relevant for the whole group, may be implemented by the group leader.

This document replaces “PEFC Denmark’s Guidelines for Certification of Umbrella Organisations - PEFC DK 003-3”.

2. Scope

This document defines the requirements for group leaders and forest properties participating in a group certification under the Danish scheme.

3. References

PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard – PEFC DK 001-3
Terms and definitions – PEFC DK 007-2

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in “*Terms and definitions - PEFC DK 007-2*” apply.

The following is however of particular interest in relation to this document:

Group leader: is an organisation that organises and administers certification of groups of forest properties under the Danish PEFC scheme. The group leader represents all the group members in the group in relation to the certifying body and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements from PEFC-Denmark.

Group members: Forest properties, which have signed a written agreement with a group leader about participation in a group certificate and are prepared to implement the requirements in the Danish PEFC scheme

5. Requirements for the group leader

5.1 FORMAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GROUP LEADERS

In order to be designated as a group leader the company shall:

- Be registered as a legal unit.
- Have a daily administration.

The group leader shall ensure that decisions about admission of a group member in the group and the execution of the internal audits are carried out by a professional, with expertise in forestry and the environmental impact of forestry together with 2 years of practical experience with Danish forestry.

Note: professional expertise about forestry and the environmental impact of forestry can be documented for personnel with a relevant education and professional experience within forestry in relation to forest management. A Master of Forestry, Forest and Landscape Engineer, Biologist, Forest technician or similar, all fall within the understanding of having a relevant education.

5.2 MINIMUM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

PEFC certification of group leaders requires application of a management system. As a minimum requirement the system shall be able to handle and control the requirements for routines and documentation for the group leaders, defined in this document.

It shall be demonstrated that the company has established a management system in accordance with this standard (section 5.3 – 5.10) and that all the group members meet the requirements in *“PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard – PEFC DK 001-3”*.

The company shall be able to demonstrate its ability to collect and analyse data from all the group members including the company’s authority and ability to initiate change at the level of the individual group member, if required.

5.3 THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUP LEADER

Group leaders administer and organise group certification of forest properties. In doing so the group leader shall carry out the following functions:

- Consider and approve applications from forest owners wishing to participate in a PEFC group certification.
- Provide all applicants with information and guidance needed for effective fulfilment of the requirements in PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard.
- Continuously inform group members of changes in PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard.
- Through a contractual connection and control ensure that the managements of the group members’ forests comply with the requirements in PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard.
- Develop and operate an internal audit programme for internal annual audits of the group members and of the central administrative functions of the group leader, prior to the certification body starts its assessment.
- Based on the results of the internal and external audits, undertake corrective and preventive measures in case of identified deviations in the associated forests or the administrative system of the group leader. Subsequently the efficiency of the corrective and preventive measures is evaluated.
- To collect remarks and observations received from external parties. These remarks and observations shall be passed on uncensored to the certification body at external audits.
- Issuing of forest management proofs with reference to a valid group certificate issued to the group leader.
- To immediately inform the certification body and PEFC Denmark about issued, terminated, suspended and withdrawn forest management proofs in written.
- To handle a register of the certified forest properties containing the following information regarding each group member:
 - Name of the forest property

- Name and address of the forest owner
- Name of contact person
- Phone number (contact person)
- Mail address (contact person)
- The date of the agreement coming into force
- The date of expiry of the agreement
- Number of the forest management proof
- The size of the certified area

If it is accepted by the individual group member, the group leader is entitled to lay down a forest policy and management objectives for the forestry as required under section 7.4 in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard, which applies for the members of a group in general.

5.4 AGREEMENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN GROUP CERTIFICATION

For each group member a written agreement for participation in the group certification shall exist between the forest owner (or an authorized representative of the owner) and the group leader, which ensures an organisational or contractual connection that commits the forest owner to meet the requirement in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard. Following issues in connection with the agreement shall be observed:

1. The agreement shall be signed by the owner of the forest or by an authorised representative of the owner.
2. The group member shall be in possession of information material regarding the implications of PEFC certification.
3. It is the duty of the group member to comply with Danish legislation concerning forestry, PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard and other directions put forward by the group leader in order to maintain membership of the group.
4. The agreement shall be valid for at least 1 year and can maximally be signed for a period of 3 years. After that, the agreement shall be renewed.
5. The agreement shall include the right of the group leader to exclude any group member from participation in the group in case of repeated major deviations from PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard.
6. The group leader can issue a forest management proof when a specified group member manages the forest in compliance with the requirements in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard.
7. The group leader shall collect information regarding forest management from the individual group member at appropriate intervals. Information shall as a minimum be collected when the agreement is renewed.
8. The group member must accept inspections from a 3rd party.
9. The agreement is made in 2 copies, one for the group member and one for the group leader.

The group leader may set up further requirements for participation in the group than those specified in this standard and in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard.

5.5 ORGANISATION - RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

The group leader shall describe the structure of the organisation in relation to the activity as a group administrator, for example in an organisation chart. Procedures, roles, rights and duties for the work as a group leader shall be defined and distributed by the group leader. The management shall provide the necessary resources in order to carry out the work.

5.6 MANAGEMENT OF DOCUMENTS

The group leader shall implement and maintain procedures for managing all documents and registrations required by the present document to ensure that:

- a) they can be located
- b) they are periodically reviewed, revised as necessary and approved by authorised personnel
- c) the currently valid version of relevant documents is available at all locations where operations essential to the effective functioning of the system are performed
- d) obsolete documents are promptly removed from all points of issue and points of use and are otherwise ensured against unintended use

Documents shall be legible, dated (with dates of revision) and readily identifiable. Procedures and responsibilities shall be established and maintained concerning the creation and modification of the various types of document.

As a minimum the following routines shall be described:

- The entering of the agreement regarding participation in the group certification.
- Issuance of forest managements proofs.
- Guidelines for collection of the documentation required in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard section 7.4 from the group members.
- Procedures in connection with conveyance of property or parts of property.
- Termination of agreement for participation in the group.
- Collection of remarks and observations received from external parties.
- Planning and implementation of internal audits.
- Handling of deviations and corrective actions. (annex 1)
- Document handling and filing procedures, including a register with issued forest management proofs containing information as required in section 5.3, continuous reporting of certification agreement to PEFC Denmark and filing of important documents or documents that may be important in relation to the completion of the certification. (An example is provided in annex 2).
- Other routines of interest for the administration of the group certification.

5.7 INTERNAL AUDIT

Of the management system:

The group leader shall conduct internal audits of the management system at least annually. These shall cover all requirements in this guideline and conduct corrective and preventive actions if necessary.

Of the group members:

The group leader shall carry out internal audits of the group members at least once a year, so that it can be rendered probable that the individual group members comply with the requirements in PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard.

The internal audit shall be based on a sample among the group members. The group leader shall define a strategy of sampling, so that at least a number of group members equal to the square root of the number of all group members in the group, take part in the yearly audit.

When planning the internal audits and the selection of group members in that regard, the following shall be taken into consideration:

- The result from previous internal audits
- Received comments
- The variation of size of the properties
- Geographical distribution
- The association of the forest to the group in other regards

Note: With "the association of the forest to the group in other regards" is meant that the forest may be associated to the group in another way. E.g. if the group leader carries out the daily administration of the forest property in question, this would under normal circumstances, lead to a lower intensity in regard to selection for internal audits than if the sole association of the property to the group is through the certification.

The management of the group leader shall at least annually go through the reports from the internal audits.

5.8 CONTROL CARRIED OUT BY MANAGEMENT

The management of the company shall at least once a year ensure that the current standards of PEFC Denmark are fulfilled.

5.9 TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN GROUP CERTIFICATION

The group leader may at any time in written form terminate the agreement of participation in a group during the period of the validity of the agreement. The cancellation is effective from the point of time stated in the written agreement, though not before the owner has received the written termination.

The group leader shall inform the certification body and PEFC Denmark about terminated agreements.

5.10 SUSPENSION AND WITHDRAWAL OF AGREEMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN A GROUP CERTIFICATE AND FOREST MANAGEMENT PROOF

The group leader may suspend or withdraw the agreement if there is confirmed reason to believe that the forest management proof is being misused or if a major deviation from PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard is registered and corrective actions has not been executed. The group leader shall define procedures for handling of suspension and withdrawal of agreements. Guidance in handling of deviations from PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard is laid down in appendix 1.

The group member is informed about the suspension or withdrawal in writing along with a demand of returning the issued forest management proof.

The group leader shall immediately inform the certification body and PEFC Denmark about suspended or withdrawn forest management proofs.

The group leader shall keep a register over suspended and withdrawn forest management proofs.

6. Responsibilities of group members participating in a group certification

All owners of forest properties can apply to participate in a group certification under a group, as long they meet the requirements for participation in the group set up by the group leader. A written agreement about the participation in the group shall be made.

The total certified area of the forest property shall in principle be included in the agreement.

By signing the agreement with the group leader, the group member is committed to accept and observe the following, as a minimum:

- 1) PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard.
- 2) Relevant legislation and regulation associated with forestry in Denmark.
- 3) Control in the form of internal audits performed by the group leader and third party audits performed by a certification body.
- 4) Responding effectively to all requests from the group leader or certification body for relevant data, documentation or other information whether in connection with formal audits, reviews or otherwise.
- 5) Providing full co-operation and assistance in respect of the satisfactory completion of internal audits, reviews, relevant routine enquiries or corrective actions.
- 6) Implementation of relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group leader.
- 7) Participation in several PEFC groups or upholding of an individual PEFC certificate shall be informed to all group leaders/ certification bodies with whom the forest is certified with.

- 8) If there is participation in several PEFC groups or upholding of an individual PEFC certificate, all the deviations identified during internal or external audits shall be announced to the remaining group leaders/ certification bodies with whom the forest is certified with.

6.1 CANCELLATION OF AGREEMENT

The forest owner can at any time in writing terminate the agreement during the validity period. The termination is effective from the time the group leader receives the cancellation letter.

6.2 TRIAL OF SUSPENDINGS AND WITHDRAWALS OF AGREEMENT

The forest owners, whose agreement has been suspended or withdrawn, may submit a complaint to the certification body and apply to have the termination retried.

Annex 1: Guidance for handling of observations and deviations from “PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard”

The intention of this instruction is to clarify which corrective actions could be taken towards group certified forest owners when deviations from PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard are observed.

Preconditions:

Observations and deviations from the current PEFC Denmark Forest Management Standard for certified forest owners participating in a group certification shall be noted both by internal and external audits in the group.

No corrective actions can be demanded for deviations caused by circumstances not controlled by the forest owner e.g. actions from the group leader, results from expropriation or military activities.

Guidance

It is in general necessary for the group leader to keep in mind that forests are biological systems evolving only slowly and that forests are production sites being substituted only every 50-150 years. Furthermore, the site-specific soil conditions and climate conditions along with specific stand conditions are crucial to what actions may seem reasonable in silvicultural management.

The forest management shall be evaluated in the light of the following:

- The general requirements for the forest management - PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard (chapter 6)
- The specific criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management - PEFC Denmark’s Forest Management Standard (chapter 7)
- The individual objectives defined for the individual forest property

In the cases where the forest property develops in a “wrong” direction in relation to one or several issues, it shall be evaluated in the formulated certification report whether this development can be explained from the current circumstances on the property and whether the development is acceptable.

Observations and deviations shall be handled as follows:

1. Observations

Observations are registered conditions at the property, which do not comply with the Forest Management Standard but do not deviate considerably or result in a significant risk of affecting the environment negatively. It should be evaluated whether the observed issues are reasonably substantiated in special conditions on the property.

If the observation cannot be substantiated as stated, it is pointed out for the forest owner in written form and is included in the audit report.

Observations can turn into deviations.

2. Minor deviation

A minor deviation is a deviation, which implies that an indicator is evolving in a decidedly negative direction or that certain conditions in the management are in conflict with the Forest Management Standard in general or where earlier registered observations has not been dealt with in an adequate way.

It should be evaluated whether the deviation is satisfactory substantiated by specific conditions on the property. Deviations shall be included in the audit report.

If the deviation cannot be substantiated at states, this is pointed out for the forest owner in writing and the owner in question receives a written command about correcting the deviation. The group leader

may, depending on the character of the deviation, give a deadline for the corrective action, which must be set before the next surveillance audit – though within at most 1 year.

The minor deviation will be upgraded to a major deviation if the minor deviation is not followed up by corrective actions before the specified deadline.

3. Major deviation

A major deviation is a deviation where the group leader can point out a management of the forest that is violating the foundation and contents of PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard or when earlier written commands have not been followed up.

The group leader cannot issue a forest management proof if a major deviation is pointed out in relation to admission in a group and the condition is not reasonably substantiated.

Deviations shall be included in the audit report.

If the deviation is pointed out after the forest management proof has been issued, the group leader shall give the group member a written injunction about a corrective action with a deadline within 3 months. If the deviation has been observed repeatedly, the group leader shall suspend the forest management proof until the corrective action has been executed.

If the corrective action has not been executed or the deviation is directly inconsistent with PEFC Denmark's Forest Management Standard, conditions for withdrawal of the certification agreement exist. The group member receives written communication about the presence of the conditions for withdrawing the agreement for participating in the group. The owner of the forest is requested to explain the criticised circumstances within two months. If the explanation is considered unsatisfactory, the agreement of certification is withdrawn in a written communication to the group member.

Annex 2 - An illustration of rules of filing

Rules of filing exist for all documents of importance for carrying out the certification, internal control, handling of deviations and denunciation of certificates.

The filing procedure shall fulfil reasonable security demands.

Document type:	Time of filing:
Regulations	1 year after alteration
Register of certified group members in group	Current updating
Copies of agreements about PEFC certification	2 years after denunciation
Documents guiding monitoring and control	2 years
Routines for registration of natural amenities etc	
Reports of deviations and corrective actions	2 years
Denunciation of certifications of forestry	5 years
Plans of revision, internal and external revisions	2 years