

Main changes in PEFC GD 1007:2017

Introduction

This document provides an overview of the main changes in the revised PEFC GD 1007:2017 as compared to PEFC GD 1007:2012. The main driver for the revision has been the necessary streamlining of both the assessment of applicant systems and the procedures for endorsement. The number of systems under assessment is growing every year. The revised standard is made future proof by allowing an assessment of changes for revised systems and by introducing an endorsement without expiry date.

Changes in the structure of the standard

- The previous Chapter 6 on system development and review has been removed as these topics are addressed in PEFC ST 1001. Where necessary chapters 6 and 7 link to standard development activities.
- The structure of the standard is simplified by reducing the number of levels in the clause numbering. As a consequence the assessment process is less described in different phases, but more or less chronological (chapter 6.1)
- The endorsement is addressed in a separate chapter 7.
- From 'Informative Guides' to appendices:
 - The format of IGD is dropped in GD 1007.
 - Two appendices remain: the appointment of assessors and the assessment report.
 - The checklist will be available as a separate support document, so it can easily be kept up to date and improved.
 - The appendix on the Panel of Experts is removed (and replaced with an internal review, see 6.1.11).

Explaining specific clauses

3.2 Applicant system

This definition specifies who is responsible for the application. The definition addresses systems applied within one country and systems applied in more than one country. It also specifies that the application can be done on behalf of the NGB by an entity that is technically not the NGB, while ensuring the formal NGB is aware. In relation to that, clause 6.1.3 bullet a) ensures that NGB's are always aware of regional system operational in their country.

3.9 Review date

The review date is the starting point for the endorsement conditions (see 7.3.1). It is the ultimate date by which the NGB must have started the periodic review. The review date is calculated by taking the approval date of the endorsed system's SFM standard PLUS FIVE YEARS.

An NGB can start the periodic review before the review date, i.e. sooner than five years, but for the purpose of the endorsement conditions, the review date counts.

6 The assessment process

The steps are presented chronologically in Figure 1. Depending on the type of assessment some of the steps would apply partially (e.g. the assessment scope) or be not applicable (e.g. international consultation and field assessment). This is specified in chapter 6.3 (Table 2) for the different assessment types. So the steps are explained in chapter 6.1, the different assessment types in chapter 6.3. Chapter 6.2 contains the requirements relating to the work of the PEFC Registered Assessor.

6.1.3 Application

- Bullet a) describes the need for support of other NGB's in case of regional systems. A system can apply in more than one country, if there is support from the NGB in the other country.
- Bullet d) details the minimum content of the development report. The list is based on the requirements for development of PEFC International standards (GD 1003:2009)
- The NOTE clarifies that records can be submitted in the native language, but the assessor can request translation of those parts that it needs for making a proper assessment decision.

6.1.5 International consultation

To get more people interested in the international consultation, PEFC will host stakeholder webinars. In these webinar the NGB will present the applicant system and an overview of the process. The presentation could be done by NGB staff itself, or any other person involved in the development work (for example, the chairman of the working group).

6.1.11 Internal review

The Panel of Experts review is replaced with an internal review done by the Secretariat. The main reasons being that it is not a current stakeholder demand, it had a limited influence on the assessment quality, and it will save costs and time.

6.1.13 Interruption of the assessment process

Interruptions have been quite common in the past assessments. The assessment contract used to have a brief clause on interruptions, but this new clause provides some transparent rules and principles for an interruption of the process. The most important aspect is that interruptions may lead to an additional assessment fee.

6.2.2 Assessment decisions

The wording is amended to make it clearer that the decision on minor or major nonconformity has to be based on the intended outcome of a requirement/standard. It is less important whether there is a small or big gap between a system's requirement and the PEFC requirement. More important is how big the impact of the nonconformity is on (not) achieving the intended outcome.

6.3 Types of assessment

This chapter introduces the different assessment types. Table 2 provides an overview of the differences in assessment process between the different types.

Compared to the previous version, the three major changes are:

- The assessment of a revised system can be limited to the introduced changes.
- The specific assessment process for reaffirmed systems. This option was implicitly available in the previous version, but now clearly described. It focussed heavily on the assessment of the review process.
- No differentiation between minor or major amendments. The assessment of any amendment (other than editorial changes) is always done by a PEFC Registered Assessor.

6.3.2 Assessment of a revised system

The assessment of a revised system can be limited to the introduced changes. This covers changes in the applicant system and changes in the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark. The assessor will not “re-assess” the parts of the applicant system that did not change. This works because the results of the previous/initial full assessment are still valid and available. However, the NGB and the PEFC Secretariat can still request/require a full assessment.

Especially for a limited number of changes in the applicant system’s SFM standard, the assessment of changes can save resources. An important element is that the assessor needs to compare the revised system with the endorsed version to identify any other changes. This could be done quite practically with comparison of documents in Word.

6.3.3 Assessment of a reaffirmed system

Reaffirmed systems have been through periodic review without any changes being introduced. This outcome is now explicitly addressed in both the revised ST 1001 and this guide. The assessment is focused on the assessment of the review process: was the decision to reaffirm the standard justified? Was it based on a gap analysis and if necessary, stakeholder consultation? Also, the assessor needs to compare the submitted reaffirmed system with the current version.

6.3.4 Assessment of amendments

This assessment type replaces the previous “assessment process as defined by the PEFC Council Board of Directors” and the “simplified assessment process ... by the Panel of Experts”.

- Amendments between periodic reviews will be assessed directly by a PEFC Registered Assessor. There will be no tender for such an assessment (see Appendix 1, 4.1.2). Instead, the Secretariat will directly appoint one of the assessors.
- No differentiation between minor and major amendments.
- The PEFC Board can still require endorsed systems to ensure and demonstrate compliance with specific PEFC requirements between their periodic reviews.

7 The endorsement

The chapter on endorsement has been revised to accommodate the new approach to endorsement; an endorsement without expiry date. Instead, the endorsement status of a system is under continuous monitoring.

The background for this change is a better alignment of the endorsement with the standard revision process. Currently, a system needs to be revised and again endorsed within five years after endorsement. The revised ST 1001 proposes that the periodic review starts five years after approval of the standard (see 3.9 review date). As the standard review and revision take time, the five year periodic review does not align with the endorsement expiry after five years.

For the first endorsement of a new applicant system nothing changed. There is a full assessment process, a PEFC Board recommendation and endorsement decision by the PEFC General Assembly. Then things change:

- The endorsement is without expiry date
- The endorsement needs to be maintained by meeting specific endorsement milestones
- The milestones are all related to the determined review date (see 3.9 above)
- When endorsement milestones are not met, the endorsement is automatically suspended.

The new approach entails a continuous monitoring of the NGBs to verify that the milestones are timely met.

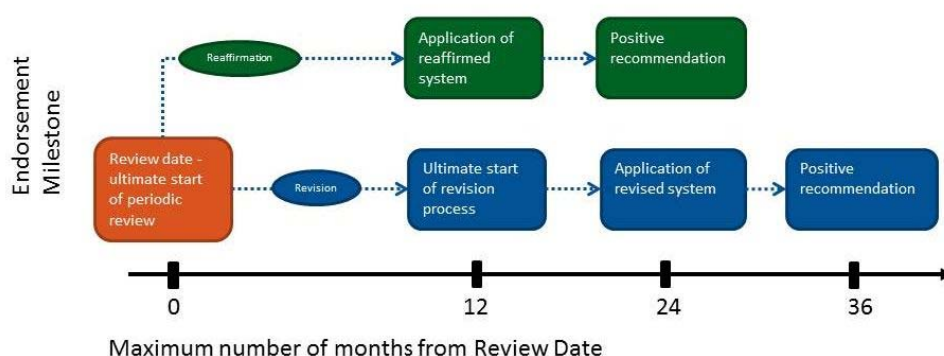
7.3.1 Endorsement milestones

The milestones more or less replace the endorsement expiry date. If they are not met at the required time the endorsement may be suspended or even terminated.

The milestones consist of the timely performing of the periodic review as required in ST 1001, and subsequent timely submission of the reaffirmed or revised system, or any amendments to PEFC.

From the review date (see 3.9) the NGB has:

- 24 months to achieve a positive recommendation on a reaffirmed system (including the time necessary for the assessment process)
- 36 months to achieve a positive recommendation on a revised system (including the time necessary for the assessment process)



This means that when the actual periodic review/revision is started before the review date, more time is available.

7.3.3 Suspension process

The suspension of the endorsement follows automatically when an endorsement condition is not met. Before that, the Secretariat will first send a reminder and after that a warning, to give the NGB a chance to take timely action.

7.4 Suspension and termination of endorsement

The clause introduces the different consequences of suspension and endorsement.

- Suspension means that any new certificates, group members will not be PEFC recognized. Existing certificates will still be PEFC recognized
- Termination means that also existing certificates will be “not PEFC recognized”

7.5 Transition of revised applicant system

Revised standards should only be operational after endorsement, but practice has shown this is not always feasible.

Better oversight/control of these situations is needed. Based on specific conditions, this clause allows the practice of operating certification against an applicant system’s revised standard before a positive recommendation is resulting from the assessment.

The NGB that wants to operate the revised standard before endorsement has to apply for a “temporary endorsement”. This application has to be submitted well before the revised standard enters into force. This gives the Secretariat the time to assess the changes and the risk that the revised standard might not comply with the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark. The temporary endorsement can cover the gap until the assessment of the revised applicant system is finalized and should therefore not exceed a period of one year.