

**PEFC INTERNATIONAL STANDARD**  
Requirements for certification schemes

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**Group Forest Management Certification –  
Requirements**



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## Contents

1	Scope.....	6
2	Normative references .....	6
3	Terms and definitions .....	6
3.1	Certified area .....	6
3.2	Group entity .....	6
3.3	Group forest certificate .....	6
3.4	Group forest certification .....	6
3.5	Group organisation .....	7
3.6	Participant.....	7
3.7	Document confirming participation in group forest certification.....	7
4	Eligibility criteria for group certification .....	7
4.1	General .....	7
4.2	Functions and responsibilities of the group entity .....	8

## Foreword

The PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) is a worldwide organisation promoting sustainable forest management through forest certification and labelling of forest-based products. Products with a PEFC claim and/or label offer assurances that the raw materials used in the manufacture of the product originate from sustainably-managed forests.

The PEFC Council endorses national forest certification schemes which comply with PEFC Council requirements. Schemes are regularly evaluated.

This document has been developed using an open, transparent, consultative and consensus based-process and involving a broad range of stakeholders.

This document cancels and replaces the requirements for group and regional forest management certification as defined in Annex 3 of PEFC Council Technical Document (Basis for certification schemes and their implementation).

## **Introduction**

The PEFC Council endorses national forest certification schemes for sustainable forest management. Forest conditions, their ecological, social, economical and historical aspects vary between different regions and countries. The PEFC Council reflects this fact by incorporating national forest certification schemes and standards which are appropriate to local situations.

In many countries forest ownership is characterised by significant numbers of small forest holdings. The limited financial income of small forest owners; periodicity of their management activities and revenues; limited access to information and knowledge; as well as limitations relating to their conformity with some of the criteria for sustainable forest management which cannot be achieved in small forest areas, represent significant barriers to forest certification.

Group certification is an alternative approach to forest certification which allows forest owners to become voluntarily certified under one certificate and share the financial obligations arising from forest certification as well as the common responsibility for forest management. This approach aims at improving information dissemination and co-operation in forest management among individual forest owners.

## 1 Scope

This document defines the general requirements for forest certification schemes which include group forest management certification and allow the certification of a number of forest owners/managers under one certificate.

Group forest management certification requires establishing a specific management structure that includes the individual forest owners/managers. This entity represents the individual owners/managers in forest certification in order to ensure the correct implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and provide a sufficient level of confidence in sampling-based certification activities.

Note: The term “group certification” is equivalent to the term “regional certification” or other terms chosen by individual forest certification schemes where a number of individual forest owners are certified under one certificate.

## 2 Normative references

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996 apply together with the following definitions.

### 3.1 Certified area

The forest area covered by a **group forest certificate** representing the sum of forest areas of the **participants**.

### 3.2 Group entity

An entity that represents the **participants**, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the **certified area** to the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

Note 1: The term “group entity” is equivalent to the term “regional/group applicant”, etc.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

### 3.3 Group forest certificate

A document confirming that the **group organisation** complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

Note: The term “group forest certificate” is equivalent to the term “regional certificate” or other terms chosen by a relevant forest certification scheme which comply with the content of this definition.

### 3.4 Group forest certification

Certification of the **group organisation** under one **group forest certificate**.

Note: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “regional forest certification” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition. The term “regional forest certification” is to be understood as “group forest certification” limited by geographical boundaries.

### 3.5 Group organisation

A group of **participants** represented by the **group entity** for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification.

Note1: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “region” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

### 3.6 Participant

A forest owner/manager or other entity covered by the **group forest certificate**, who has the legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area, and the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard in that area.

Note1: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right to manage the forest and would disqualify one-off contractors from becoming participants in group certification.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

### 3.7 Document confirming participation in group forest certification

A document issued to an individual **participant** that refers to the **group forest certificate** and that confirms the **participant** as being covered by the scope of the **group forest certification**.

## 4 Eligibility criteria for group certification

### 4.1 General

4.1.1 The forest certification scheme shall provide clear definitions relating to the following terms, which are in conformity with the definitions of those terms presented in chapter 3:

- (a) the group organisation,
- (b) the group entity,
- (c) the participant,
- (d) the certified area,
- (e) the group forest certificate, and
- (f) the document confirming participation in group forest certification.

4.1.2 In cases where a forest certification scheme allows an individual forest owner to be covered by additional group or individual forest management certifications, the scheme shall ensure that non-conformity by the forest owner identified under one forest management certification is addressed in any other forest management certification that covers the forest owner.

4.1.3 The forest certification scheme shall define requirements for group forest certification which ensure that participants' conformity with the sustainable forest management standard is centrally administered and is subject to central review and that all participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring programme.

4.1.4 The forest certification scheme shall define requirements for an annual internal monitoring programme that provides sufficient confidence in the conformity of the whole group organisation with the sustainable forest management standard.

## 4.2 Functions and responsibilities of the group entity

4.2.1 The forest certification scheme shall define the following requirements for the function and responsibility of the group entity:

- (a) To represent the group organisation in the certification process, including in communications and relationships with the certification body, submission of an application for certification, and contractual relationship with the certification body;
- (b) To provide a commitment on behalf of the whole group organisation to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme;
- (c) To establish written procedures for the management of the group organisation;
- (d) To keep records of:
  - the group entity and participants' conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard, and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
  - all participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and its/their size(s),
  - the certified area,
  - the implementation of an internal monitoring programme, its review and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken;
- (e) To establish connections with all participants based on a written agreement which shall include the participants' commitment to comply with the sustainable forest management standard. The group entity shall have a written contract or other written agreement with all participants covering the right of the group entity to implement and enforce any corrective or preventive measures, and to initiate the exclusion of any participant from the scope of certification in the event of non-conformity with the sustainable forest management standard;

Note: The requirements for "participant' commitment" and "written contract or other written agreement with all participants" can also be satisfied by the commitment of and written agreement of the forest owners/managers' association, where the association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the contract are enforceable.

- (f) To provide participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification;
- (g) To provide all participants with information and guidance required for the effective implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme;
- (h) To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the participants' conformity with the certification requirements, and;
- (i) To operate a review of conformity with the sustainable forest management standard, that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme and the certification body's evaluations and surveillance; corrective and preventive measures if required; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of corrective actions taken.

## 4.3 Function and responsibilities of participants

4.3.1 The forest certification scheme shall define the following requirements for the participants:

- (a) To provide the group entity with a written agreement, including a commitment on conformity with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme;

Note: The requirement for "written agreement" and participants' "commitment" is also satisfied by the written agreement of the forest owners/managers' association with the group entity, where the forest

owners/managers' association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the written agreement are enforceable.

- (b) To comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme;
- (c) To provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the group entity or certification body for relevant data, documentation or other information; allowing access to the forest and other facilities, whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise;
- (d) To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.

Figure 1: Definition of the group organisation

