

GENERAL PROCEDURE CERFOAR – PEFC ARGENTINA

Stakeholders consultation to be implemented by certification bodies during forest management certification.

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1. Object

This procedure establishes the requirements that the Certification Bodies (hereinafter CBs) shall meet to carry out the consultation with the stakeholders during the initial certification, recertification and surveillances audits for the evaluation of the conformity of the forest management with the requirements of the current IRAM 39801, IRAM 39805 and PEFC ST 2001 standards.

2. Scope

This General Procedure has been approved by the Board of Directors of the CERFOAR – PEFC Argentina Association and is applicable to all those CBs notified by CERFOAR – PEFC Argentina that carry out the certification of sustainable forest management in accordance with the provisions of the Argentine Forest Certification System.

3. Normative references.

The following documents are essential for the application of this document. The latest edition of the indicated documents (including any amendments) or the most current and in force document that replaces any of them applies:

- PEFC ST 2001: in force. — PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements

- IRAM 39801: in force. Sustainable forest management. Criteria and indicators of the management unit.
- IRAM 39805: in force. Sustainable forest management. Group Certification.

4. Stakeholders consultation.

4.1 Generalities

4.1.1 The evidence of the forest management audits shall include relevant information provided by the stakeholders to determine conformity with the sustainable forest management standards of CERFOAR – PEFC Argentina.

NOTE: The sustainable forest management standards of the Argentine Forest Certification System are IRAM 39801 and IRAM 39805 in force.

4.1.2 The CB shall carry out, during the certification process, a consultation with the stakeholders that can provide relevant information regarding the conformity of the audited management unit (organization requesting certification) with the legal, environmental, social requirements and economic costs established in IRAM 39801 and IRAM 39805 in force.

4.1.3 The stakeholder consultation process shall include the following stages:

- a) Identification of relevant stakeholders for the management unit(s) to be assessed;
- b) Communication of the beginning of the evaluation for certification and its characteristics, to the identified stakeholders;
- c) Consultation with stakeholders during audits: initial certification, surveillance and recertification;
- d) Evaluation of the information provided by the stakeholders;
- e) Record of consultations and information provided by the stakeholders;
- f) Incorporation of the comments of the stakeholders to the corresponding audit report.

4.2 Stakeholder Identification

4.2.1 The CB shall have (develop and document) effective procedures for the identification of stakeholders that can provide relevant information for the evaluation of the audited organization (forest producer or group entity requesting certification or recertification) and / or that can be able to put the CB in contact with other stakeholders.

NOTE 1: The range of stakeholders consulted is appropriate to the scale, magnitude and scope of the impacts of forest management under assessment (national and local enforcement authorities, organizations or trade unions of forest sector workers, representatives of indigenous peoples and communities organizations, non-governmental organizations that work in relation to social or environmental aspects of forest management at the local or national level, contractors that provide services to the forestry operation, among others)

4.3 Communication of the beginning of the forest management certification or recertification process to the stakeholders

4.3.1 The CB shall communicate to the identified stakeholders, at least 30 days before the initial certification audit or the recertification audit, the evaluation of the forest management implemented by the applicant organization for its certification in accordance with IRAM 39801 and/or IRAM 39805 in force and PEFC ST 2001 in force.

4.3.2 The communication shall include at least the following information:

- a) Name of the requesting company/producer and the location of the management unit(s) to be evaluated;
- b) Scope of the initial certification audit or recertification audit;
- c) Composition of the audit team;
- d) Audit stages and schedule (brief description of the certification or recertification process and tentative agenda):

- Opening meeting,
- Field audits (on site),
- Interviews with local stakeholders during the field audit (on site),
- Closure meeting,
- Preparation of preliminary report,
- Certification decision;

e) Request for contributions of information on the management unit or units under evaluation and data from other stakeholders. At this point, the CB shall inform the stakeholders:

- The options provided for presenting their observations and points of view (by post and/or electronic mail; by telephone and/or fax; interviews with the audit team before, during or immediately after the field audit, among others),
- That they have the opportunity to present their contributions and points of view publicly or confidentially to the audit team,
- That the information provided, unless otherwise requested, will be handled confidentially and for the sole purpose of using it in the forest management evaluation process and during the certification decision-making;

e) CB contact persons.

4.3.3 The CB shall ensure that there is an adequate opportunity for stakeholders to comment directly to their defined contact persons.

4.4 Stakeholder consultation during initial certification, surveillance and recertification audits

4.4.1 During the field assessment, as part of the initial certification, surveillance or recertification audit, the audit team shall consult the local stakeholders identified, directly involved, related and/or affected by the forest management activities of the audited management units.

NOTE Consultation with local stakeholders may include, among others, individual and group interviews with local residents, landowners neighbouring the management unit under evaluation, local authorities and representatives, direct and indirect workers, companies that provide services, external advisors directly involved, among others.

4.4.2 The CB shall establish a communication methodology appropriate to the particularities of the stakeholders involved / identified.

4.5 Evaluation of the information provided by the stakeholders

4.5.1 The CB shall have a procedure to carry out an objective evaluation of the information provided by the stakeholders, so that it influences the certification decision only to the extent that it provides certain evidence of the conformity or non-conformity of the management forest audited with the requirements of the forest management standards of CERFOAR – PEFC Argentina.

4.5.2 Stakeholder comments received after the initial certification or recertification audit shall be recorded and evaluated at the immediate surveillance, unless provided as part of a formal complaint or indicating a serious nonconformity (major nonconformity) requiring immediate corrective action.

4.5.3 The procedure shall include how the information provided by the stakeholders has been proven or corroborated.

NOTE. The information provided by the stakeholders is binding in the certification decision only in cases where it is presented accompanied by relevant and objective evidence.

4.6 Record of queries and information provided by stakeholders

4.6.1 The OC shall record at least the following information:

- a) Names and contact details of persons and organizations consulted on the applicant's compliance with the applicable requirements of PEFC ST 2001, IRAM 39801 and/or IRAM 39805 in force;

- c) Notes on all information received orally;
- d) Copies of all correspondence and/or comments received in writing;
- e) Notes or other information showing how the information received has been tested or corroborated;
- f) The explanation of the way in which the contributions of the stakeholders have been interpreted or taken into account in the decision making of the certification.

4.7 Incorporation of stakeholder input into audit reports.

4.7.1 The CB shall incorporate in the public reports of the initial certification, surveillance or re-certification audits a systematic detail of the contributions of the stakeholders and a description of the consequent follow-up measures implemented.