1. **Introduction**

IPMF, the Instituto Pró Manejo Florestal (henceforth PEFC Brazil), is the entity authorized by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (henceforth PEFC Council) as the National Governing Body responsible for administering PEFC Brazil, the national forest certification system.

Diagrama

Descrição gerada automaticamente

1. **Objective**

To establish the parameters for group certification by PEFC Brazil.

1. **Scope**

This procedure is intended for all accredited certification bodies and certified organizations, or those who are in the process of obtaining PEFC certification in Brazil.

1. **Normative references**

PEFC ST 1002 - 2018 - Group FM - Requirements

1. **Terms and definitions**
   1. **Certified area**

The forest area covered by a sustainable forest management system according to the certification standard for sustainable forest management standard (ABNT NBR 14789 or ABNT NBR 15789).

Within the context of group certification, the certified area is the sum of the forest areas of the participants that are covered by the group forest certificate.

* 1. **Auditing**

Systemic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact, or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled.

* 1. **Internal audit**

Systemic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact, or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled, implemented by the group organization itself (first-party certification).

* 1. **Group forest certification**

Certification of the group organization under one group forest certificate.

* 1. **Group forest certificate**

A document confirming that the group organization complies with the requirements of a sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest management system.

* 1. **Document confirming participation in a group forest certification**

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

Note: This document may be a sub-certificate or a confirmation of participation, for instance.

* 1. **Group entity**

A legal entity (for example: company, association, person) 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 system, as established by this document. The group entity uses a group management system.

Note: The structure of the group entity should follow the operations, number of participants, and other basic conditions for the group organization. It may be represented by one person.

* 1. **Documented information**

Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organization using any format and media, from any source.

* 1. **Monitoring**

Determining the status of a system, a process, or an activity.

* 1. **Organization**

Person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities, and relationships to achieve its objectives.

* 1. **Group organization**

A group of participants represented by the group entity for the purposes of implementing the sustainable forest management standard and its certification. A written agreement shall be established between a participant and the group entity. The term "group organization" is equivalent to the term "regional organization" if the group is defined by regional boundaries or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

* 1. **Stakeholder**

A person, group, community, or organization with an interest in the subject of the requirements of the standard.

* 1. **Affected stakeholder**

A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by the group organization's activities.

Note 1: Affected stakeholders include neighboring communities, indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the standard (e.g. NGOs, scientific community, civil society) is not equal to being affected.

Note 2: A stakeholder who might be a user of the standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g. a forest owner in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

* 1. **Participant**

A forest owner/manager covered by the group forest certificate, who has the ability to implement the requirements of this sustainable forest management standard in a certified area.

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

Where regional or national systems allow contractors without long-term management rights for a specific forest area to participate in group forest certification, the system shall ensure that these contractors can only make PEFC claims for material originating from certified areas of participants or individually certified forest owners/managers with long-term legal or tenure management rights.

* 1. **Group management plan**

Documented information specifying objectives, actions, and control arrangements. It covers planned changes of the group management system and requirements of the sustainable forest management standard which are covered on the group level.

* 1. **Policy**

Intentions and direction of an organization, as formally expressed by its manager/owner or by the group entity.

* 1. **Forest owner/manager**

Person, group of people or legal entity having the legal or tenure right, or executing traditional or customary tenure rights, to manage the forest in a clearly defined certified area, and the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard in this area.

* 1. **Group management system**

Set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organization to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the sustainable forest management standard.

* 1. **Forest management unit (FMU)**

An area defined for the purpose of good management practices in social, environmental, and economic terms.

1. **Context of the group organization**
   1. Group certification requires that stakeholders be grouped and shall be administered by a legal entity (company, association, or person).
   2. The group organization shall identify:

a) affected stakeholders that are relevant for the group management system and

b) the relevant expectations of these affected stakeholders.

* 1. All the requirements contained in this document and in the ABNT NBR 14789 or ABNT NBR 15789 standards shall be observed by the group's participants and by the entity that represents them.
  2. Compliance with this document and with the ABNT NBR 14789 or ABNT NBR 15789 standards by the group participants shall be centrally administered and subject to review by the group entity, which shall define the boundaries and applicability of the group management system.
  3. The scope shall be made available as documented information.

1. **Group management system**
   1. All participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring and internal audit programs established by the group.
   2. A certified PEFC chain of custody shall be in place if a group entity acts as a trader of forest-based material not covered by the group certificate.
2. **Functions and responsibilities of the group entity**
   1. The group entity shall be responsible for:
3. representing the group organization 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.
4. implementing and maintaining an effective management system that covers all group members, and reports to the participants and stakeholders about the group certification, rights, and obligations.
5. determining and providing the resources necessary for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, and continual improvement of the group management system.
6. ensuring that the persons involved in the group management system have the necessary competences required to carry out their responsibilities.
7. protecting and ensuring maintenance of the group certification issued by the certification body after favorable audit report.
8. developing and implementing written procedures for managing the group organization and for the acceptance of new participants. These acceptance procedures shall cover at least the verification of the applicant’s information about contact details, clear identification of their forest property and its/their size (s)
9. develop and implementing written procedures for suspension and exclusion of group participants who do not correct/close nonconformities. Participants excluded due to nonconformities cannot be accepted within 12 months after exclusion.
10. developing and implementing a written procedure for monitoring group participants with relation to complying with their obligations.
11. keeping records of:

* the group entity and participant's conformity with the requirements of this document and with the ABNT NBR 14789 or ABNT NBR 15789 standards.
* information about all group participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property, and its/their size.
* the certified area.
* implementation of an internal monitoring program, its review, and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken.
* implementation of an annual internal audit program and its findings.

1. signing a written agreement with all participants which shall include each participant's commitment to comply with the forest management requirements, and also includes 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 nonconformity with the sustainable forest management standard.

Note: The written agreement may be part of a management policy of a pre-existing organization or group (such as in an association), where the organization 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.

1. providing all participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification (item 5.6).
2. providing all participants with information and guidance required for the effective implementation and maintenance of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification system.
3. addressing nonconformities reported from group members which were identified under other PEFC certifications than the particular group certification, and to ensure implementation with all group members.
4. reporting inclusions and exclusions of group participants to the certification body.
5. requesting the official license to utilize the PEFC trademark after obtaining group certification.
6. developing a written procedure and implementing an internal monitoring program that provides for the evaluation of participants' conformity with the certification requirements.
7. developing a written procedure and implementing an annual internal audit program that covers group participants and the group entity.
8. conducting an annual review of the group certification and define actions based on the results of this review.
9. cooperating and providing assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the certification body, the accreditation body (INMETRO), PEFC International or PEFC Brazil for relevant data, documentation, or other information; allowing access to the forest area covered by the group organization and other facilities, whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise related or with implications for the management system.
10. **Functions and responsibilities of group participants**
    1. **Rights of group certification participants**

Group participants have the right to:

1. obtain a document certifying their participation in the group certification, from the group entity.
2. receive from the group entity updated and necessary information about the certification process, as well as information and assistance necessary for effective implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements.
3. receive a list of all group participants, names of the properties, and forest areas included in the scope of the certification.
4. request a license to utilize the PEFC trademark from PEFC Brazil, when applicable.
5. make complaints to the certification body or to PEFC Brazil about the certification process or the function of the system.
   1. **Responsibilities of group certification participants**

Group participants shall:

1. provide the group entity with a binding written agreement, including a commitment on conformity with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification system; group participants excluded from any certification group cannot apply for group membership within 12 months after exclusion.
2. provide the group entity with information about previous group participation.
3. comply with the sustainable Forest Management standard and other applicable requirements of PEFC certification.
4. inform the group entity in writing of all the forest areas they manage and wish to include in the group certification.
5. 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 related or with implications for the management system.
6. notify the group entity of nonconformities identified under other PEFC certifications than the particular group certification.
7. notify the group entity of uses and other treatments that are carried out in certified forest areas.
8. commit to implementing corrective and preventive measures defined by the group entity, as well as address nonconformities identified during audits.
9. when forest operations in the certified areas are carried out by third parties, require that these operations be done in accordance with the requirements of the sustainable Forest Management certification system.
10. **Loss of participant status in group certification**
    1. A participant can be excluded if a severe infraction of certification requirements occurs and no corrective measures were implemented, after written notification.
    2. The group entity has the power to decide whether the participant is excluded, and if the duration extends more than 12 months.
    3. This decision may be appealed to PEFC Brazil.
    4. The entire process shall be documented and archived with the group entity.
11. **Commitment and policy** 
    1. The group entity shall establish a commitment to:

a) comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of PEFC certification.

b) integrate the group certification requirements in the group management system.

c) continuously improve the group Management System.

d) continuously support the improvement of the sustainable management of the forest management unit (FMU) by the participants.

* 1. The commitment of the group entity may be part of a group management policy and shall be publicly available as documented information upon request.
  2. The group participants shall establish a commitment to:

a) follow the rules of the management system.

b) implement the requirements of the sustainability standard in their operations in their area.

1. **Planning**
   1. If a group organization plans any changes in the group management   
      system, these changes shall be included in a group management plan.
   2. if a group organization decides to fulfil requirements of the sustainable   
      forest management standard on the group level, these requirements shall be considered in a group management plan.
2. **Support**
   1. The resources necessary for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, and continual improvement of the group management shall be determined and provided.
   2. The group entity and participants shall be competent for work in the group management system.
   3. A communication process shall be in place to raise the awareness of participants concerning:

a) the group management policy.

b) the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard.

c) their contribution to the effectiveness of the group management system and the sustainable forest management, including the benefits of improved group performance.

d) the implications of not conforming with the group management system requirements.

* 1. Internal and external communications relevant to the group   
     management system shall be determined in the group management plan. This includes:

a) what to communicate.

b) when to communicate.

c) with whom to communicate.

d) how to communicate.

* 1. The group shall have appropriate mechanisms in place for resolving complaints and disputes relating to group management and sustainable forest management operations.
  2. The documented information relevant to the group management system and the conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard shall be:

1. up to date.
2. available and suitable for use, where and when it is needed.
3. adequately protected against loss of confidentiality, improper use, or loss of integrity.
4. **Operation**
   1. The group organization shall plan, implement, and control processes   
      needed:

a) to meet the requirements of the group certification standard and the sustainable forest management standard and

b) implement the actions determined in the group's management plan.

* 1. This planning, implementing, and controlling shall be done by:

a) defining the necessary processes and establishing criteria for those.

b) implementing control of the processes in accordance with the criteria.

c) keeping documented information to the extent necessary to have confidence that the processes have been carried out as planned.

1. **Performance evaluation** 
   1. **Monitoring, measurement, analysis, and evaluation**
      1. The ongoing internal monitoring program shall determine:

a) what shall be monitored and measured.

b) the methods for monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation, as applicable, to ensure valid results.

c) when the monitoring and measuring shall be performed.

d) when the results from monitoring and measurement shall be analyzed and evaluated.

e) what documented information shall be available as evidence of the results.

* + 1. The group entity shall evaluate the group management performance   
       and the effectiveness of the group management system concerning the implementation of the sustainable forest management requirements.
  1. **Annual internal audit program**

* + 1. The annual internal audit program shall provide information on   
       whether the group management system:

1. conforms to
   * 1. the group organization's own requirements for its group management system.
     2. the requirements of the group certification.
2. ensures the implementation of the sustainable forest management standard on the participant level.
3. is effectively implemented and maintained.
   * 1. The internal audit program shall cover the group entity and all group participants. The group entity shall be audited annually. The participants may be selected on a sample basis.
     2. An internal audit program shall cover, at a minimum:
4. planning, establishing, implementing and maintaining an audit program(s) including the frequency, methods, responsibilities, planning requirements and reporting, which shall take into consideration the importance of the processes concerned and the results of previous audits.
5. definition of the audit criteria and scope for each audit.
6. competence of internal auditors (forest knowledge, standard knowledge).
7. selection of auditors and conducting of audits to ensure objectivity and the impartiality of the audit process.
8. ensuring that the results of the audits are reported to relevant group management.
9. retaining of the documented information as evidence of the implementation of the audit program and the audit results.
   1. **Selection of participants in the internal audit program**
      1. The audit planning shall establish requirements for the selection of participants in the internal audit program based on the following requirements of this document:

a) determination of the sample size (15.3.2);

b) determination of sample categories (15.3.3);

c) distribution of the sample to the categories (15.3.4);

d) selection of the participants (15.3.5).

* + 1. The sample size shall be calculated based on the number of participants in the group.
       1. The sample size shall be the square root of the number of participants (y=√x), rounded up to the next whole number, and may be adapted taking into account one of the following indicators:

1. results of a risk assessment. In this case deviations of sample sizes in case of low or high risk for individual categories shall be defined.
2. results of internal audits or previous certification audits.
3. quality/level of confidence of the internal monitoring program.
4. use of technologies that allow the gathering of information concerning specified requirements.

Note: Such technologies may involve the use of satellite data or drones, for example, and allow compliance statements for specific requirements of a sustainability standard or support the risk-based sampling.

1. based on other means of gathering information about activities on the ground.

Note: One way could be a survey with participants who provide some information about their activities on the ground.

* + 1. The sample categories shall be established based on the results of a risk assessment. The indicators used in the risk assessment shall reflect the geographical scope of this document. The following non exhaustive list of indicators may be used for the risk assessment:

1. ownership type (e.g. state forest, communal forest, private forest).
2. size of management units (different size classes).
3. biogeographic region (e.g. lowlands, low mountain range, high mountain range).
4. operations, processes and products of potential group participants.
5. deforestation and forest conversion.
6. rotation period(s).
7. richness of biological diversity.
8. recreation and other socio-economic functions of the forest.
9. dependence of and interaction with local communities and indigenous people.
10. available resources for administration, operations, training and research.
11. governance and law enforcement.
    * + 1. Conditions which constitute risk for each indicator at a low, medium, and high level and the respective consequences for the sampling shall be defined.
      1. The sample shall be distributed to the categories according to the result of the risk assessment.
      2. At least 25% of the sample should be selected at random.
         1. A risk-based procedure for the selection of the participants shall be specified.
    1. **Management review**
       1. An annual management review shall include, at a minimum:
12. the status of actions from previous management reviews.
13. changes in external and internal issues that are relevant to the group management system.
14. the status of conformity with the sustainable forest management standard, that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring program, the internal audit and the certification body’s evaluations and surveillance.
15. information on the group performance, including trends in:
    * 1. nonconformities and corrective actions.
      2. monitoring and measuring results.
      3. audit results.
16. opportunities for continual improvement.
    * 1. The outputs of the management review shall include decisions related to continual improvement opportunities and any need for changes to the group management system.
      2. The group organization shall retain documented information   
         as evidence of the results of management reviews.
17. **Improvement** 
    1. **Nonconformity and corrective action** 
       1. When a nonconformity occurs, the group organization shall:
18. take appropriate actions to control, correct, and mitigate the resulting damage, as applicable.
19. evaluate the identified nonconformities in order to:
    * 1. determine the causes.
      2. determine if similar nonconformities exist or could potentially occur.
      3. determine corrective actions to eliminate the causes and avoid recurrence.
20. review the effectiveness of any corrective action taken.
21. make changes to the group management system, if necessary.
22. retain documented information as evidence of reviews related to nonconformities and any subsequent actions taken.
    * 1. The group organization shall retain documented information as evidence of:

a) the nature of the nonconformities and any subsequent actions taken;

b) the results of any corrective action.

* + 1. A participant who was excluded from a group certification shall be   
       internally audited by the group entity before being allowed to re-enter the group certification.  
         
       The internal audit shall not take place sooner than 12 months after the exclusion.
  1. **Continuous Improvement**
     1. The suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the group management system and the sustainable management of the forest shall be continuously improved.