1. **Objective**
   Establish the parameters for the Group Certification by PEFC Uruguay

2. **Scope**
   All bodies that certify by the PEFC Uruguay scheme.
   All forest entities certified or in the process of certification by PEFC Uruguay.

3. **Normative references**
   PEFC ST 1002:2018 Group Forest Management – Requirements
   Sustainable Forest Management Standard PEFC Uruguay:2020

4. **Terms and Definitions**

   **4.1 Affected stakeholder**
   A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by activities of the group organization.
   
   **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.

   **4.2 Audit**
   Systematic, 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.

   **4.3 Certified area**
   The forest area covered by a sustainable forest management system according to the PEFC Sustainable Forest Management Standard (PEFC ST 1003).
   
   In the group certification context, the certified area is the sum of forest areas of the participants and covered by a group forest certificate.

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

   **4.5 Document confirming participation in 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 for instance a sub-certificate or a confirmation of participation.

### 4.6 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.

### 4.7 Group entity

A legal 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 system. For this purpose, the group entity is using 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.

### 4.8 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 certification system.

### 4.9 Group forest certification

Certification of the group organization under one group forest certificate.

### 4.10 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 group level.

### 4.11 Group management system

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

### 4.12 Group organization

A group of participants represented by the group entity for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification. A binding 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.
4.13 Internal Audit
Systematic, 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, undertaken by the group organization itself (first party audit).

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

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

4.16 Participant
A forest owner/manager covered by the group forest certificate, who has the ability to implement the requirements of the 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.

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

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

5. Context of the Group Organization
The Group Certification requires the grouping of the interested parties, who will be administered by a legally constituted entity (company, association, or person), or by means of a written agreement, in which it will be determined who will act as Administrator of the Group.

5.1 Understanding the needs and expectations of affected stakeholders
5.1.1 The group organization shall identify:
   a) the affected stakeholders that are relevant for the group management system and
   b) the relevant expectations of these affected stakeholders.
5.2 Determining the scope of the group management system

5.2.1 Group forest certification must follow the PEFC Uruguay certification scheme.

5.2.2 For the establishment of the scope for the group management system the boundaries and applicability of the group management system shall be determined.

5.2.3 The scope shall be made available as documented information.

5.3 Group management system

5.3.1 All participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring and the internal audit program.

6. Group management system

6.1 All participants in the group shall be subject to the internal monitoring and the internal audit program established by the group.

6.2 A certified PEFC chain of custody system shall be in place if a group entity acts as a trader of forest-based material not covered by group certificate.

7. Organizational roles, responsibilities, and authorities

7.1 Functions and responsibilities of the group entity

The Administrator of the Group, duly qualified in the Certification System of Sustainable Forest Management or Chain of Custody, will be responsible for the application before the certifying body and the custody of the Group Certificate, being its functions:

1. Ensure that all certification-related activities are carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Sustainable Forest Management Certification System or Chain of Custody.
2. Represent 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.
3. Assume and enforce the sustainable forest management or chain of custody standards in force to all members of the Group individually.
4. Develop and implement a written procedure for the annual monitoring of the members of the Group in relation to the fulfillment of their obligations:
   a) internal monitoring shall be carried out annually.
   b) each group participant will be monitored each year.
c) the Group Administrator will conduct a review of the compliance of the monitoring with the Forest Management or Chain of Custody system. This review will include reviewing the results of the annual monitoring program, corrective and preventive measures if required; and to assess the effectiveness of the corrective measures implemented.

d) the Group Administrator shall keep a written record of all instances of annual monitoring (monitoring report, nonconformities, corrective actions).

5. To operate an annual internal audit programme covering both group members and group entity;

6. to operate a management review of the group forest certification and acting on the results from the review;

7. Inform members and stakeholders about group certification, their rights and obligations and provide the information and assistance necessary for the effective implementation of Sustainable Forest Management or the Chain of Custody.

8. Guard and ensure the maintenance of the Group’s Certificate, issued by the Certification Body after the favorable report of the Audit.

9. Keep a record of all forest areas, of the members of the group, included in the group certificate, identifying owner, manager, and surface, as well as maintain written records of the agreements of conformity of the members with the requirements of the group certification scheme and of the realization and evolution of the internal monitoring of each of the members.

10. In the case of the Chain of Custody, keep the records established in the certification system of all the members of the group.

11. Provide technical assistance to provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the certification body, accreditation body, PEFC International or the National Governing Body 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.

12. Address 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.

13. Develop written procedures for the entry, suspension, and expulsion of members of the Group and implement them in accordance with the guidelines established in DG 07:
   - Item 5. Members of the Group Certification
   - Item 6. Rights of group certification members
   - Item 7. Duties of the members to the Group Certification.
   - Item 8. Loss of the status of member to the Group Certification.

   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).

14. Request from PEFC Uruguay, after obtaining the Group Certificate, the official license to use the PEFC logo and trademark.

15. Process for each member of the group that requests it, a document accrediting the inclusion in the Group Certificate of the certified forest areas.
16. Communicate to the certifying body the income and cancellations of members to the Group.

17. Provide group members with a written document confirming their participation in the forest certification group.

18. Provide a written commitment, by the entire group, to comply with the Sustainable Forest Management or Chain of Custody standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

19. Provide a written agreement with all participants covering the right of the group entity to implement and apply corrective or preventive measures and to initiate the exclusion of participants from the scope of certification in cases of non-compliance with the Sustainable Forest Management standard or the Chain of Custody standard.

8. Members of the Group Certification

Those natural or legal persons, public or private, voluntarily interested in group certification for the forest areas they manage sustainably, or the chain of custody may join the group. Each of the members must express in writing, to the Group Administrator, their interest in participating in the process and commit to comply with the requirements of this Sustainable Forest Management Certification System or Chain of Custody in the signing of a written agreement.

9. Function and responsibilities of participants

9.1 Rights of the Group Certification participants

The participants of the Group Certification will have the right to:

1. Obtain a document that certifies their participation in the Group certification, by the Group Administrator.

2. Receive from the Group Administrator the necessary and updated information on the certification process as well as the information and assistance necessary for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Forest Management standard and other applicable requirements of the certification system.

3. Receive a list of all the participants of the Group, name of the properties and surfaces included in the scope of the certificate.

4. Request, to PEFC Uruguay, a license to use the PEFC logo and trademark, after fulfilling all the requirements of the Group Certification.

5. Make claims to the certifying body or to PEFC Uruguay about the certification process or the operation of the system.

9.2 Duties of the Group Certification participants

The members of the group must:

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. Submit in writing to the Group Administrator all forest areas that they manage and wish to include in the group certification or products included in the scope of the chain of custody. It is recommended to include the total area of the establishment.

4. Expressly commit to comply with the obligations imposed by this Sustainable Forest Management Certification System or Chain of Custody.

5. Commit to the closure of nonconformities identified during monitoring and take preventive and/or corrective measures.

6. Have less than 10,000 ha of area in the total of forest management units (UGF) to be certified by each member.

7. When the forest works on the areas subject to certification are carried out by third parties, require that they be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Sustainable Forest Management Certification System.

8. Make available to the Group Administrator and the certifying body all documents or facilities that are required for the performance of certification audits or other requirements not directly connected to the audits.

9. 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.

10. Inform the group entity about nonconformities identified under other PEFC certifications than the particular group certification.

11. Inform the Administrator of the Group, of the uses and other treatments that are carried out in the forest areas subject to certification.

12. Provide the Group Administrator with audit reports and records of nonconformities and corrective actions results of monitoring/audits under the coverage of other forest certification systems to which the member is associated.

10. Loss of the status of member to the Group Certification

10.1 A member of the Group Certification may be expelled, if he or she has had a serious breach of the certification requirements and the relevant corrective action has not been applied, following written notification.

10.2 The expelled member may rejoin the group, after a specified fixed period, if he has applied the corresponding corrective action.

10.3 The Administrator of the Group has the power to decide on the expulsion and the duration of the restrictive period.

10.4 This decision may be appealed to PEFC Uruguay.

10.5 The entire process must be documented in writing and filed by the Group Administrator.
11. Commitment and policy

11.1 The group entity shall provide a commitment:
   a) to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable
      requirements of the certification system;
   b) to integrate the group certification requirements in the group management system;
   c) to continuously improve the group management system;
   d) to continuously support the improvement of the sustainable management of the land/forests
      by the participants.

11.2 The commitment of the group entity may be part of a group management policy and shall be
publicly available as documented information upon request.

11.3 The standard requires that the participants shall provide a commitment
   a) to follow the rules of the management system;
   b) to implement the requirements of the sustainability standard in their operations in their area.

12. Planning

12.1 If a group organization plans any changes in the group management system, these changes
shall be included in a group management plan.

13. Support

13.1 Resources needed for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, and continual
improvement of the group management system shall be determined and provided.

13.2 The Administrator of the Group (person or entity), must be duly qualified in the Certification
System of Sustainable Forest Management and/or Chain of Custody, and will be responsible for the
application before the certifying body and the custody of the Group Certificate.

13.3 A communication processes 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.

13.4 Internal and external communications relevant to the group management system shall be
determined in the group management plan. This includes:
a) on what to communicate;
b) when to communicate;
c) with whom to communicate;
d) how to communicate.

13.5 The group must have in place procedures for resolving complaints and disputes relating to group management and sustainable forest management operations.

13.6 Documented information relevant to the group management system and the conformance with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard must be:
   a) up to date;
   b) available and suitable for use, where and when it is needed;
   c) adequately protected against loss of confidentiality, improper use, or loss of integrity.

14. Operation

14.1 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) to implement the actions determined in 12.

14.2 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.

15. Performance evaluation

15.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis, and evaluation

15.1.1 An ongoing internal monitoring program must be established to provide confidence in the conformity of the group organization with the sustainable forest management standard. It shall be determined:
   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.

15.1.2 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.

15.2 Internal audit

15.2.1 Objectives

15.2.1.1 An annual internal audit program shall provide information on whether the group management system:

a) conforms to
   i. the group organization’s own requirements for its group management system;
   ii. the requirements of this group certification standard;

b) ensures the implementation of the sustainable forest management standard on the participant level;

c) is effectively implemented and maintained.

15.2.1.2 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.

15.2.2 Organization

An internal audit program shall cover at least:

a) 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;

b) definition of the audit criteria and scope for each audit;

c) competence of internal auditor (forest knowledge, standard knowledge);

d) selection of auditors and conducting of audits to ensure objectivity and the impartiality of the audit process;

e) ensuring that the results of the audits are reported to relevant group management;

f) retaining of the documented information as evidence of the implementation of the audit program and the audit results.

15.3 Selection of participants in the internal audit program

15.3.1 General
15.3.1.1. The audit plan must establish the requirements for the selection of participants in the internal audit program. These requirements shall include the following procedures for:

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).

15.3.2 Determination of the sample size

15.3.2.1 The sample size shall be calculated for the participants of the group organization.

15.3.2.2 The size of the sample generally should be the square root of the number of participants: \( y = \sqrt{x} \), rounded to the upper whole number.

15.3.2.3 The size of the sample may be adapted considering one or more of the following indicators:

a) 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;

b) results of internal audits or previous certification audits;

c) quality / level of confidence of the internal monitoring program;

d) use of technologies allowing the gathering of information concerning specified requirements;

Note: Such technologies may be e.g. the use of satellite data or drones and allow compliance statements for specific requirements of a sustainability standard or support the risk based sampling.

e) 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.

15.3.3 Determination of sample categories

15.3.3.1 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 the standard. The following non-exhaustive list of indicators may be used for the risk assessment:

a) ownership type (e.g. state forest, communal forest, private forest);

b) size of management units (different size classes);

c) biogeographic region (e.g. lowlands, low mountain range, high mountain range);

d) operations, processes and products of potential group participants;

e) deforestation and forest conversion;
f) rotation period(s);
g) richness of biological diversity;
h) recreation and other socio-economic functions of the forest;
i) dependence of and interaction with local communities and indigenous people;
j) available resources for administration, operations, training and research;
k) governance and law enforcement.

15.3.2 Conditions which constitute risk for each indicator on low, medium, and high level and the respective consequences for the sampling shall be defined.

15.3.4 Distribution of the sample
The sample shall be distributed to the categories according to the result of the risk assessment.

15.3.5 Selection of the participants

15.3.5.1 At least 25% of the sample should be selected at random.
15.3.5.2 A risk-based procedure for the selection of the participants shall be specified.
15.3.5.3 In case of participation of pre-existing organisations or group or the members participation, such as a forest owners'/managers’ association, the group entity shall establish additional sampling procedures.

15.4 Management review

15.4.1 An annual management review shall at least include:
   a) the status of actions from previous management reviews;
   b) changes in external and internal issues that are relevant to the group management system;
   c) 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;
   d) information on the group performance, including trends in:
      i. nonconformities and corrective actions;
      ii. monitoring and measurement results;
      iii. audit results;
   e) opportunities for continual improvement.

15.4.2 The outputs of the management review shall include decisions related to continual improvement opportunities and any need for changes to the group management system.

15.4.3 The group organization shall retain documented information as evidence of the results of management reviews.
16. Improvement

16.1 Nonconformity and corrective action

16.1.1 When a nonconformity occurs, the group organization shall:
   a) react to the nonconformity and, as applicable:
      i. take action to control and correct it;
      ii. deal with the consequences;
   b) evaluate the need for action to eliminate the causes of the nonconformity, in order that it does not recur or occur elsewhere, by:
      i. reviewing the nonconformity;
      ii. determining the causes of the nonconformity;
      iii. determining if similar nonconformities exist, or could potentially occur;
   c) implement any action needed;
   d) review the effectiveness of any corrective action taken;
   e) make changes to the group management system, if necessary.

16.1.2 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.

16.1.3 A participant who was excluded from a group certification shall be internally audited by the group entity before it is allowed to re-enter the group certification. The internal audit shall not take place sooner than 12 months after the exclusion.

16.2 Continual improvement

The suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the group management system and the sustainable management of the forest shall be continuously improved.