Part Six

Group Forest Management Requirements
Contents

Foreword ........................................................................................................................................... 1
1. Scope ........................................................................................................................................... 2
2. Normative references .................................................................................................................. 2
3. Terms and Definitions .................................................................................................................. 2
4. Context of the group organization ............................................................................................... 6
5. Leadership .................................................................................................................................... 7
6. Planning ....................................................................................................................................... 11
7. Support ....................................................................................................................................... 11
8. Operation ..................................................................................................................................... 12
9. Performance evaluation ................................................................................................................ 12
10. Improvement ............................................................................................................................... 17
Foreword

Group certification is an alternative approach to individual certification which allows forest owners and managers 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.

Group certification is regulated in a procedure that allows forest owners/managers of different forest management units to cooperate under one standard.

The standard has been developed using an open, transparent, consultative and consensus-based process.

The standard replaces the CFCC Guidelines on Group Forest Management Certification (2017).

The standard is developed based on PEFC ST 1002:2018.
1. Scope

This document defines the general requirements for group forest management certification which allow the certification of a number of forest owners/managers under one certificate under the China Forest Certification Council (CFCC).

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 management certification in order to ensure the correct implementation of the sustainable forest management certification standard and provide a sufficient level of confidence in sampling-based certification activities.

2. Normative references

For dated references, only the cited edition applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

PEFC ST 1002:2018 Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements
ISO/IEC Guide 2: Standardisation and related activities – General vocabulary

3. Terms and Definitions

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

3.1 Affected stakeholder

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

Note 1: Affected stakeholders include neighbouring communities, minor nationalities, 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 Certified area
The forest area covered by a sustainable forest management system according to the CFCC Forest Management Standard (GB/T 28951). In the group certification context the certified area is the sum of forest areas of the participants and covered by a group forest certificate.

3.4 Documented information
Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation using any format and media, from any source.

3.5 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.

3.6 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 CFCC Forest Management Standard in this area.
3.7 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 CFCC Forest Management Standard and other applicable requirements of the CFCC. 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 organisation. It may be represented by one person.

3.8 Group forest certificate
A document confirming that the group organisation complies with the requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard and other applicable requirements of the CFCC.

3.9 Group forest certification
Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

3.10 Group management plan
Documented information specifying objectives, actions and control arrangements. It covers planned changes of the group management system and requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard which are covered on group level.

3.11 Group management system
Set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organisation to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the CFCC Forest Management Standard.

3.12 Group organisation
A group of participants represented by the group entity for the purposes of
implementation of the CFCC Forest Management Standard and its certification. A binding written agreement shall be established between a participant and the group entity.

Note: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “regional organisation” if the group is defined by regional boundaries or other terms chosen by the CFCC and complying with the content of this definition.

3.13 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 organisation itself (first party audit).

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

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

3.16 Participant
A forest owner/manager covered by the group forest certificate, who has the ability to implement the requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard in a certified area.

Note: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the CFCC 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.

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

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

4. Context of the group organization
4.1 Understanding the group organization and its context
A general framework for the group organisation shall be determined by the group entity in accordance with the following:
   a) regional groups: group of forest owners/managers defined by regional borders and
   b) other groups; and/or
   c) whether there are any other specific circumstances which influence the implementation of the group management system.

4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of affected stakeholders
The group organisation shall identify:
   a) the affected stakeholders that are relevant for the group management system and
   b) the relevant expectations of these affected stakeholders. Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties.

4.3 Determining the scope of the group management system
4.3.1 The group management shall provide definitions relating to the following terms, which are in conformity with the definitions of those terms presented in chapter 3:
   a) the group organisation and the elements of the group organisation (group entity and participant),
   b) the certified area,
c) the group certificate and
d) the document confirming participation in group certification.

4.3.2 The boundaries and applicability of the group management system shall be determined to establish the scope of the group management system and define which requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard that may be fulfilled on the group level.

4.3.3 The scope shall be made available as documented information.

4.4 Group management system

4.4.1 All participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring and the internal audit programme.

4.4.2 A certified CFCC/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.

5. Leadership

5.1 Organisational roles, responsibilities and authorities

5.1.1 Functions and responsibilities of the group entity

The functions and responsibilities of the group entity are as follows:

a) to implement and maintain an effective management system covering all participants of the group;

b) to represent the group organisation in the certification process, including in communications and relationship with the certification body, submission of an application for certification, and contractual relationship with the certification body;

c) to establish written procedures for the management of the group organisation;

d) to establish written procedures for the acceptance of new participants of the group organisation. 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);
e) to establish written procedures for the suspension and exclusion of participants who do not correct/close nonconformities. Group participants excluded from any certification group based on nonconformities cannot be accepted within 12 months after exclusion;

f) to keep documented information of:

i. the group entity and participants' conformity with the requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard, and other applicable requirements of the CFCC,

ii. all participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and its/their size(s),

iii. the certified area, and

iv. the implementation of an internal monitoring programme, its review and any preventative and/or corrective actions taken;

g) to establish connections with all participants based on a binding written agreement which shall include the participants’ commitment to comply with the CFCC 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 nonconformity with the CFCC Forest Management Standard;

Note: The requirements for “participant’s commitment” and “written contract or other written agreement with all participants” may also be satisfied by the commitment of and written agreement of a pre-existing organisation or group or the members participation, such as a forest owners'/managers’ association, sustainable forest management programme and submission to tax programming, where the organisation can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and condition of the contract are enforceable.

h) to provide all participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification;
i) to provide all participants with information and guidance required for the
effective implementation and maintenance of the CFCC Forest Management
Standard and other applicable requirements of the CFCC;

j) to address nonconformities reported from group members which were
identified under other CFCC/PEFC certifications than the particular group
certification and to ensure implementation with all group members;

k) to operate an internal monitoring programme that provides for the
evaluation of the participants’ conformity with the certification requirements;

l) to operate an annual internal audit programme covering both group
members and group entity;

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

n) to provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all
requests from the certification body, accreditation body, CFCC and PEFC
international for relevant data, documentation or other information; allowing
access to the forest area covered by the group organisation and other facilities,
whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise related or with
implications for the management system.

5.1.2 Function and responsibilities of participants All participants are required
to perform the following functions and responsibilities:

a) to provide the group entity with a binding written agreement, including a
commitment on conformity with the CFCC Forest Management Standard and
other applicable requirements of the CFCC; group participants excluded from
any certification group cannot apply for group membership within 12 months
after exclusion;

Note: The requirement for “written agreement” and participants’
“commitment” is also satisfied by the commitment of and written agreement of
a pre-existing organisation or group or the members participation, such as a
forest owners'/managers’ association, SFM programme and submission to tax
programming, where the organisation can demonstrate that it has a legal
mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms
and condition of the contract are enforceable.

b) to provide the group entity with information about previous group participation;

c) to comply with the CFCC Forest Management Standard and other applicable requirements of the CFCC as well as with the requirements of the management system;

d) 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 related or with implications for the management system;

e) to inform the group entity about nonconformities identified under other PEFC certifications than the particular group certification;

f) to implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.

5.2 Commitment and policy

5.2.1 The group entity shall provide a commitment:

a) to comply with the CFCC Forest Management Standard and other applicable requirements of the CFCC;

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.

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

5.2.3 The participants shall provide a commitment

a) to follow the rules of the management system;

b) to implement the CFCC Forest Management Standard in their operations in their area.
6. Planning

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

6.2 If a group organisation decides to fulfil requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard on the group level, these requirements shall be considered in a group management plan.

7. Support

7.1 To ensure sustainability of the group organisation, resources needed for the establishment, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of the group management system shall be determined and provided.

7.2 The persons doing work in the group management system shall have the necessary competence relevant to their roles.

7.3 Communication processes shall be in place to raise the awareness of participants concerning:
   a) the group management policy;
   b) the requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard;
   c) their contribution of the effectiveness of the group management system and sustainable forest management, including the benefits of improved group performance; and
   d) the implications of not conforming with the group management system requirements.

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

7.5 The appropriate mechanisms shall be in place for resolving complaints and disputes relating to group management and sustainable forest management operations.

7.6 The documented information relevant to the group management system and the conformance with the requirements of the CFCC Forest Management Standard shall 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.

8. Operation
8.1 Group organisation shall plan, implement and control processes needed:
   a) to meet the requirements of the group certification standard and the CFCC Forest Management Standard and
   b) to implement the actions determined in chapter 6.

8.2 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.

9. Performance evaluation
9.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation
9.1.1 An ongoing internal monitoring programme provides confidence in the conformity of the group organisation with the CFCC Forest Management
Standard. In particular, 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 analysed and evaluated;
  e) what documented information shall be available as evidence of the results.

9.1.2 Group entity shall evaluate the group management performance and the effectiveness of the group management system concerning the implementation of the CFCC Forest Management Standard requirements.

9.2 Internal audit
9.2.1 Objectives
9.2.1.1 An annual internal audit programme shall provide information on whether the group management system:
  a) conforms to
    i. the group organisation’s own requirements for its group management system;
    ii. the requirements of the national group certification standard;
  b) ensures the implementation of the CFCC Forest Management Standard on the participant level;
  c) is effectively implemented and maintained.

9.2.1.2 The internal audit programme 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.

9.2.2 Organisation
  An internal audit programme which shall cover at least:
  a) planning, establishing, implementing and maintaining an audit programme(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 programme and the audit results.

9.3 Selection of participants in the internal audit programme

9.3.1 General

9.3.1.1 The requirements for the selection of participants in the internal audit programme shall be established and these requirements shall include the following procedures for:

a) determination of the sample size (9.3.2);

b) determination of sample categories (9.3.3);

c) distribution of the sample to the categories (9.3.4);

d) selection of the participants (9.3.5).

9.3.1.2 Additional requirements on the regional, national or sub-national level may be defined.

9.3.1.3 Additional sampling requirements shall be defined in case of participation of pre-existing organisations or group or the members participation, such as a forest owners'/managers’ association, industry association and SFM programme.

9.3.2 Determination of the sample size

9.3.2.1 The sample size shall be calculated for the participants of the group organisation.

9.3.2.2 The size of the sample generally should be the square root of the number of participants (rounded to the upper whole number):
9.3.2.3 The size of the sample may be adapted by a standard taking into account 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 programme;
   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.

9.3.3 Determination of sample categories

9.3.3.1 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, collective forest);
   b) size of management units (different size classes);
   c) biogeographic region (e.g. flintlands, hill land, 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

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

9.3.4 Distribution of the sample

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

9.3.5 Selection of the participants

9.3.5.1 At least 25% of the sample should be selected at random.

9.3.5.2 A risk-based procedure for the selection of the participants shall be specified.

9.4 Management review

9.4.1 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 CFCC Forest Management Standard, that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme, 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

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

9.4.3 The group organisation shall retain documented information as evidence
of the results of management reviews.

10. Improvement

10.1 Nonconformity and corrective action

10.1.1 When a nonconformity occurs, the group organisation 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

10.1.2 The group organisation 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.

10.1.3 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.

10.2 Continual improvement

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