

**REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES
OPERATING AGAINST THE VIETNAM FOREST
CERTIFICATION SCHEME (VFCS)**



VFCS GD 1006:2019

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable forest management has been implemented in Vietnam since the 1990s and the second phase (from 2006 to 2020) of the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy has been approved by the Vietnamese Government.

In 2018, the Prime Minister approved the Project on Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification through the Decision No. 1288/QĐ-TTg dated October 1, 2018, in which the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS) was established and operated under the Vietnam Administration of Forestry - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme is acted based on the principles of independent decision-making among the parties and it ensures compliance with the requirements of international forest certification systems.

A set of forest management standards (consisting of Sustainable Forest Management Standard; Group Sustainable Forest Management Standard and a Chain of Custody Management Standard) has been developed and issued by the Vietnam Forest Certification Office. These standards are crucial documents that will be used by certification bodies for evaluating and providing sustainable forest certifications for forest owners, forest management units and related organisations.

The sustainable forest management standard has been developed based on the current regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Vietnam Administration of Forestry and the requirements of PEFC (PEFC ST 1001:2010).

Requirements for certification bodies operating against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme are built on the regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Vietnam Administration of Forestry and requirements and guidelines of PEFC following the document title PEFC ST 2003: 2012 (PEFC annex 6).

This document is issued by the Vietnam Forest Certification Office in order to guide certification bodies; accreditation bodies and stakeholders acting against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

II. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

- Pursuant to the Decision 190/QD-BNN-TCLN dated November 1, 2019 of the Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on assigning the task of sustainable forest management and forest certification;
- Pursuant to the Decision No. 191/QD-BNN-TCLN dated November 1, 2019 of the Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on the establishment of the Vietnam Forest Certification Office;
- Pursuant to the Decision No. 71/QD-TCLN-VP dated March 22, 2019 of the General Director of the Vietnam Administration of Forestry on the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Vietnam Forest Certification Office;
- Based on the document title PEFC Annex 6, Certification and Accreditation Procedures;
- Based on the document title PEFC ST 1003:2013, Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard.

III. SCOPE

This document is to apply for Certification bodies; Accreditation bodies and agencies, units, individuals, and stakeholders involved in certification activities of sustainable forest management against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES OPERATING FOREST MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION (CB-FM)

1. Be a national or international organization, registered and licensed to operate in accordance with the laws of Vietnam.

2. The certification body operating forest management certification against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme shall have a management system and operational capacity which meets the requirements specified in the international standard ISO/IEC 17021:1-2015, Vietnamese national standard TCVN ISO/IEC 17021:1-2015 on Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems - Requirements.

3. The Certification Body shall have internal procedures and guidelines for activities of forest management certification.

4. The certification body shall have a valid accreditation issued by Bureau of Accreditation (BoA)-Ministry of Science and Technology of Vietnam, or other International accreditation bodies which are a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for Accreditation.

5. Certification bodies shall ensure that all personnel carrying out the key activities, such as contract review, auditing, granting of certification, monitoring of auditors, etc. have the relevant and appropriate knowledge and competencies corresponding to these activities.

6. The certification body shall provide evidence that demonstrates the annual monitoring of chain of custody auditors applying methods. At the same time, certification body shall have a documented process to ensure that auditors have personal attributes, knowledge and skills in assessment and certification activities.

7. The certification body shall have at least 02 official auditors (permanent employees or temporary ones signing contracts with a term at least 12 months or employees with indefinite contracts).

8. The certification body shall be notified by the Vietnam Forest Certification Office through a notified contract.

9. The certification body carrying out forest management certification shall meet the requirements of forest management, assessment of economic, social and environmental impacts on forest management and criteria for sustainable forest management.

10. The certification body shall have a good understanding of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme; sustainable forest management standard and other relevant documents against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

11. Auditors involved in the certification activities

a) The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least university education and at least 3 years experience with courses related to forestry, environment, biodiversity conservation;

b) For a first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditors within the last three years has performed forest management audits for at least four organizations under the leadership of a qualified auditor;

c) The certification body shall ensure that auditors have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011 or Vietnam standard TCVN 19011:2013 - Guidelines for auditing management systems;

d) Knowledge and understanding of the principles, criteria and indicators of the sustainable forest management standard VFCS ST 1003:2019 and group forest management standard, VFCS ST 1004:2019;

e) Understanding of Forestry Law, decrees, circulars and relevant documents of the Forestry Law.

V. REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES OPERATING CHAIN OF CUSTODY CERTIFICATION

1. Be a national or international organization, registered and licensed to operate in accordance with the laws of Vietnam.

2. The certification body carrying out chain of custody certification against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme shall be management system and operational capacity which meet the requirements specified in the international standard ISO/IEC 17065: 2013 or Vietnamese national standard TCVN ISO/IEC 17065:2013.

3. The Certification Body shall have internal procedures and guidelines for activities of chain of custody certification.

4. The certification body shall have a valid accreditation issued by Bureau of Accreditation (BoA)-Ministry of Science and Technology of Vietnam, or other

International accreditation bodies which are a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for Accreditation.

5. The certification bodies shall ensure that all personnel carrying out the key activities, such as contract review, auditing, granting of certification, monitoring of auditors, etc. have the relevant and appropriate knowledge and competencies corresponding to these activities.

6. The certification body shall provide evidence that demonstrates the annual monitoring of their auditors. At the same time, the certification body shall have a documented process to ensure that auditors have personal attributes, knowledge and skills in assessment and certification activities.

7. The certification body shall have at least 02 official auditors (permanent employees or temporary ones signing contracts with a term at least 12 months or employees with indefinite contracts).

8. The certification body shall be notified by the Vietnam Forest Certification Office.

9. The certification body carrying out chain of custody certification shall have the technical competence in forest-based product procurement and processing, material flows in different stages of processing and trading.

10. The certification body shall have a good understanding of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme, Chain of Custody certification standard and other documents relevant to the process of operating the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

11. Auditors involved in the Certification activities

a) The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least university education and at least 3 years experience with courses related to forest based and related industries, forest economy where the auditor(s) conducts chain of custody audits;

b) For a first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor within the last three years has performed chain of custody audits for at least four organisations under the leadership of a qualified auditor. The number of chains of custody audits in training can be reduced by two (02) audits for auditors that are qualified for ISO 9001 or 14001 auditing in the sector of forest based and related industries;

c) The certification body shall ensure that auditors have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011 or Vietnamese national standard TCVN 19011:2013 - Guidelines for auditing management systems;

d) The certification body shall ensure that auditors, in the last two years, have participated in an education programme in chain of custody of forest -based products that is recognised by the PEFC Council or the Vietnam Forest Certification Office;

e) The certification body shall ensure that auditors applicable international treaties and conventions relating to forest products trade (CITES) and Viet Nam specific forest governance and law enforcement system relevant to the harvestation, transportation, processing and consumption of timber and forest base products to ensure the legal management and traceability of timber and forest base products

f) The certification body shall ensure that auditors demonstrate ability to apply terminology, knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas of the chain of custody of forest- based products:

- Principles and requirements for each indicator, criteria and standards of chain of custody systems;
- Process and application of management systems to manage input materials and output products for traceability of raw materials;
- Information systems and technology for authorisation, security, distribution and control of documents, data and records;
- Knowledge of using VFCS certified products in product labels and claims.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION PROVISIONS

1. Implementation responsibility

The certification body operating in the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme shall comply with the provisions of this document;

The accreditation body is responsible for the accreditation of the certification body in terms of competence and expertise specified in this document.

2. Inspection and monitoring

The Vietnam Forest Certification Office is responsible for coordinating with the Accreditation Body to assess the competence of the Certification body;

The Vietnam Forest Certification Office is responsible for dealing with complaints and disputes of relevant parties in terms of the competences and experience of certification bodies operating in the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.