PEFC Sustainable forest management standards for the Walloon Region
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1. Objectives

The criteria for sustainable forest management defined for the Walloon Region contain the requirements for ensuring the economic, ecological and social functions of the forests.

The criteria include management and performance requirements that are applicable
• at the Forest Management Unit (FMU) level, and
• at the Organisational level to ensure that all requirements are achieved at the FMU level,
• to forest operators who wish to be certified to operate in PEFC certified forests or in forests certified under an endorsement recognised by PEFC Belgium.

2. Scope

The sustainable forest management standards for the Walloon region apply to the Public and Private owned forests located in the Walloon region, as well as to workers who carry out work in certified forests.

Four levels of application can be considered:
• Organisation level: requirements applicable to the sustainability of forest management as defined at the level of the organisation carrying out the group certification.
• FMU level: the owner and / or manager of each certified FMU has to commit to comply with the criteria that are applicable to the individual level through the signature of an individual commitment.
• Forest operator level: forest operators who wish to be certified to operate in PEFC-certified forests.
• Forest operations licensing system: owner of a licensing system of forest operators who want to be endorsed by PEFC Belgium.

3. Normative references

PEFC ST 1003 Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements, last version
PEFC ST 1002 Group Forest Management Certification Requirements, last version

4. PEFC sustainable Forest management standards for the Walloon Region

4.1. The organisation shall:

4.1.1. Generic standards

• Respect the applicable requirements of the PEFC B 1002. Requirements for the implementation of forest, TOF management and operators' certification. (Requirements for the implementation of forest, TOF and forest operators management certification).
4.1.2. Information - training - communication

- Ensure that the personnel, contractors and members of the certified entity are trained in:
  - The requirements that must be met at the individual level.
  - The operation, procedures and requirements of PEFC.

- Promote afforestation, reforestation and other tree planting activities that contribute to the improvement and restoration of ecological connectivity.

- Identify forest-related experience and traditional knowledge, innovations and practices such as those of forest owners, NGO’s, local communities. Equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge shall be encouraged.

- Make a publicly available aggregated executive summary of the Simple Management Document/Management Plan, containing non-confidential elements, of all its participants per province and shall include information on the general objectives and forest management principles.

- Make available a tool to help draw up the management document or management plan and the owner’s commitments.

- Ensure the availability of the health and vitality monitoring results covering the entirety of its members’ forests (and in particular the main biotic and abiotic factors that can affect the health and vitality of forest ecosystems, such as pests, diseases, overstocking, fires and damage caused by climatic factors, atmospheric pollutants or forest management operations).


4.1.3. Simple Management Document / Management Plan

- Ensure that each member of the certified entity has a Simple Management Document / Management Plan that meets the predefined requirements and carry out an initial audit concerning the membership procedure of the organisation to verify that this document is available and meets the requirements.

- During internal audits, verify the effectiveness of the Simple Management Document / Management Plan and the availability of records demonstrating its implementation.

4.1.4. Forestry operations and harvesting

- Provide members with a sale slip template containing all the elements required by PEFC in its “chain of custody” standard:
  - the price;
  - the quantity and characteristics of the lot (species);
  - the two parties (seller and buyer);
  - the certificate number;
  - the words “100% PEFC certified”;
  - the operational deadlines;
  - the conditions for transfer of ownership of the wood lot concerned.

- Labels of origin for products from a region covered by the standard can only be used by forest owners that are covered by an approved PEFC certificate issued on the basis of the standard.
4.1.5. Prevention and management of damage due to overpopulation by large ungulates

- Provide an information brochure on the challenges of forest game balance and unacceptable negative impacts.
- Provide a list of useful contacts and/or references giving access to the information at regional / local hunting council (“conseil cynégétique”) level.
- Provide a range of communication tools for forest owners and hunters explaining the need to achieve a forest/game balance and to regulate large ungulates.
- Provide an evaluation grid to allow each forest owner to evaluate negative impacts\(^1\) on woodland management and ecological objectives and an indication of the forest/game balance for each owner.
- Provide documentation related to the possibilities of land use planning for the property and possible woodland management operations to improve the flora-fauna balance.
- Provide model clauses suitable to be included in a hunting rights concession contract \(^2\) for properties of over 50 contiguous hectares, including, as a minimum, all elements required to allow the forest owner to meet his obligations as set out in these standards.

4.2. Planning

4.2.1. The forest owner shall:

4.2.1.1. Information – training – communication

4.2.1.1.1. Make a commitment to the organisation to meet the standards of sustainable management and:
- Train and/or inform forest managers and other forest workers regarding sustainable forest management.
- Retain the information needed to demonstrate the implementation of his commitments - this information shall be available for review during internal and external audits.
- Agree that an aggregated executive summary of the Simple Management Document / Management Plan, containing non-confidential elements, is made available to the public.
- Promote the long-term health and well-being of communities within or adjacent to the forest management area, whilst respecting the principles of private property applicable in Wallonia.

4.2.1.1.2. Audit and termination:

- Accept visits from and be available to an auditor whose role is to verify that the owner is respecting his commitments.
- If he decides to terminate his PEFC membership, undertake to respect the reinstatement conditions defined by the organisation.

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1. See examples in the information appendix
2. Hunting rights concession contract, commonly known as “bail de chasse” ("Hunting Lease")
4.2.1.2. Simple Management Document / Management Plan

- Write or commission a Simple Management Document / Management Plan, if necessary using a tool to help with the writing of the Management Document / Management Plan made available by the organisation, and send a copy to the organisation within one year after signature of the commitment. as the document shall contain a minimum, taking into account the specific context of the property, and the owner's commitment to improve the quality of forest resources and their ability to store and sequester carbon:

  - An initial inventory of his forest property, taking into account the different functions of the forest, including:

    - A presentation of the ecological value, in particular identification of priority areas for the protection of water and soil and for the conservation of characteristic or rare features.

    - A presentation on the cultural value (historical, cultural or spiritual) of the forest as heritage. Specific sites shall be identified for which he has to provide special protection in his management activities.

    - An appropriate presentation of the infrastructure (operation and reception) present on the property including a presentation of the measures taken to plan, establish and maintain infrastructure to ensure efficient delivery of goods and services while minimising negative impacts on the environment.

  - A presentation of the forest area.

  - An identification of old-growth forests for which he has to provide special protection in his management activities.

  - A presentation of the management aims and the relative importance of the various forest management functions (production, protection, social function, conservation) in order to pursue a sound economic performance on the long term, taking into account possibilities for new markets and economic activities in connection with all relevant goods and services of forests, and in particular:

    - A presentation of measures to promote biodiversity.

    - A presentation of measures to take landscape aspects into account in management operations.

    - A presentation of the measures taken to ensure the protection of water and the soil, particularly during management activities (exploitation and regeneration) along watercourses in bodies of water, in areas with springs, on sensitive soils (peat, peaty, hydromorphic with a permanent water table), in zones with steep inclines, etc.

    - If applicable: integrate the management of “non-wood” forest products into the management plan.

    - If applicable: plan the rehabilitation of degraded forest ecosystems wherever and as far as economically feasible, by making best use of natural structures and processes and using preventive biological measures.

  - A presentation of the planning policy for woodland management activities and the allowable average annual volumes harvested, including explanations, and, if applicable, definitions of the allowable average use of “non-wood” forest products.

  - A presentation of measures allowing the maintenance or evolution towards a diversified, resilient forest that is appropriate for climate and global changes, taking into account the genetic aspects of the existing and regenerated stands.
4.2.1.3. Forestry operations and harvesting

• Ensure a long-term balance between the growth of the forest and the cutting that takes place there, as long as the size of the property and health-related conditions allow it.

• Use the standard form made available by the organisation or a form containing the information that is compulsory under the PEFC «Chain of Custody» standards (PEFC ST 2002).

• For work carried out in the forest,
  – Use a document made available by the organisation or an equivalent document to ensure, based on the risks relating to the type and location of the intervention, avoidance of damage to (1) roads, (2) remaining trees and stands, (3) soil and (4) water resources. The document will stipulate the ban on dumping exogenous waste and the obligation to inform those involved about forest safety instructions.
  – Make use of:
    - A forestry contractor licensed under a scheme endorsed by PEFC Belgium as being equivalent to these standards, on the basis of procedure PEFC B 4005.
    - A forest contractor licensed based on the forestry management standards that apply to him.
    - Failing this, take responsibility for the damage caused (1) to roads, (2) to remaining trees and stands, (3) to soil and (4) to water resources.

• Submit a reasoned request to the organisation beforehand for any clear-cuts intended to exceed an area of 5 ha of softwood and 3 ha of hardwood, which must be approved by the organisation, in addition to the application made to the competent authority and subject to acceptance of that application. In case of authorisation for health-related or climate-related reasons by the competent authority, the owner must inform the organisation and will not require authorisation by the organisation.

• In case of a clear-cut, ensure the areas are suitable in view of risks of soil erosion on slopes, destabilisation of neighbouring stands, ground water upwelling or impacts on the landscape.

• Encourage that climate positive practices in management operations, such as greenhouse gas emission reductions and efficient use of resources.

4.2.1.4. Conversion of forest to non-forest land

4.2.1.4.1. For all plans for conversion to non-forest land:

• Comply with the relevant legislation.

• Ensure integration of his plan in the relevant regional plans.

• Convert no more than 5% of forest type in the area of his forest.

• Ensure that his plan has no negative impacts on forests of ecological importance (particularly on rare, sensitive or representative ecosystems, on genetic reserves or on endangered species – particularly in migration corridors) and on areas of cultural and social interest or other protected areas.

• Ensure that his plan does not destroy areas with high carbon storage.

• Ensure that his plan has positive long-term economic, social and environmental impacts.

4.2.1.4.2. Regarding reforestation of important non-forest ecosystems:

• Comply with the relevant legislation.

• Ensure integration of his plan in the relevant regional plans.
• Ensure that the affected stakeholders were consulted during the decision-making process.
• Ensure that the plan has no negative impacts on endangered non-forest ecosystems, areas of cultural and social interest, endangered species and habitats or other protected areas.
• Convert only a small part of the important non-forest ecosystems on his property.
• Ensure that his plan does not destroy areas with high carbon storage.
• Ensure that his plan has positive long-term economic, social and environmental impacts.

4.2.1.4.3. Conversion of degraded forest into plantations

The forest owner shall when considering conversion of severely degraded forests to forest plantations, take into account that it must add economic, ecological, social and/or cultural value. Precondition of adding such value are circumstances where the conversion:
• is in compliance with national and regional policy and legislation applicable for land use and forest management and is a result of national or regional land-use planning governed by a governmental or other official authority; and
• is established based on a decision-making basis where affected stakeholders have opportunities to contribute to the decision-making on conversion through transparent and participatory consultation processes; and
• has a positive impact on long-term carbon sequestration capacity of forest vegetation; and
• does not have negative impacts on ecologically important forest areas, culturally and socially significant areas, or other protected areas; and
• safeguards protective functions of forests for society and other regulating or supporting ecosystem services; and
• safeguards socio-economic functions of forests, including the recreational function and aesthetic values of forests and other cultural services; and
• has a land history providing evidence that the degradation is not the consequence of deliberate poor forest management practices; and
• is based on credible evidence demonstrating that the area is neither recovered nor in the process of recovery.

4.2.1.5. Prevention and management of damage due to overpopulation by large ungulates

4.2.1.5.1. General

• Ensure balanced forest-large game management using all the resources at his disposal so that he can meet his obligations under the PEFC standards.
• Commit to reading the information brochure on the challenges of forest-game balance that is made available by the organisation.
• Carry out an initial inventory of damage linked to large ungulates in his forest when he enters group certification, in collaboration with his stakeholders and in particular with the hunting rights concession holder / his hunter. Carry out a periodical update/revision of the inventory at least once every three years.

4.2.1.5.2. In regard to forest management

• Take into account the reception capacity in the management of his territory.
4.2.1.5.3. In regard to collaboration with the holder of the hunting rights concession for his property (NB: if the owner hunts himself, these requirements apply to him directly)

- Inform the holder of the hunting rights concession on his property about the PEFC framework and what it involves.
- Explicitly set out the PEFC requirements in the hunting rights concession contract when he is able to do so, as soon as possible and at the latest when it is renewed. This requirement is compulsory for owners of more than 50 contiguous hectares.
- In addition to the requirements set out above, if the property amounts to more than 50 contiguous hectares:
  - Ensure that the hunting rights concession holder undertakes to inform the owner about his actions relating to control of large game. Keep abreast of how the balance is evolving and ensure compliance with the hunting quotas defined by his hunting council.
  - Use the organisation’s standard hunting rights concession contract template or at least the compulsory clauses to guarantee:
    - That the hunting rights concession holder undertakes to inform the owner of his actions relating to control of large game.
    - Maintenance of a list of the results of each hunt.
    - Define the feeding conditions for the wild boar species ranging from authorisation of feeding in periods when there is an imminent risk to crops (from March 1 to October 31 only) to total prohibition and provide for the conditions for modifying these during the term of the hunting rights concession contract if unacceptable damage is identified.
    - The conditions for submitting a request for a cull by the hunting rights concession holder and/or by the owner.
    - Management of game populations to prevent or reduce unacceptable negative impacts related to excess populations.
    - Conditions for the modification / termination of the current hunting rights concession contract.
    - Provide for the possibility of modifying feeding conditions and setting harvest quotas (species / sex / weight / age) in case of unacceptable damage.
    - In the event of repeated non-compliance with progressive and proportional measures over time, the owner should take action to regulate the population himself, or instruct an authorised third party to do so.
- Commit to integrating these clauses in the hunting rights concession contract, as soon as possible and at the latest when it is renewed, to allow him to control negative impacts related to excess large game at the time when he signs the new membership document.
- Define, if unacceptable negative impacts are found, an overall strategy in consultation with affected stakeholders to take various measures from a panel of tools that are appropriate for the situation and context of his property in order to reduce the negative impacts to an acceptable level.

4.2.2. The forest owner may:

- Use the communication tools to inform the public, explaining the need for a forest-game balance and the need to regulate large ungulates.
4.3. Implementation:

4.3.1. The forest owner shall:

4.3.1.1. Legislation

• Respect the laws, decrees and regulations applicable to his forest.

4.3.1.2. Information and training

• Undertake regular training in sustainable forest management.

• Inform all those involved in the management of his property about the PEFC requirements (including operators, forestry contractors and hunters).

• Inform non-professional forest workers about safety at work and ensure that they are trained where applicable.

4.3.1.3. Appropriate woodland management

• Guarantee the quality and quantity of woodland productivity in terms of area and over time, in conditions appropriate for the site and taking into account the evolution of climatic conditions.

• Monitor the health and vitality of his forest and inform the organisation if significant health and climate problems are identified (particularly the main biotic and abiotic factors that can affect the health and vitality of forest ecosystems, such as pests, diseases, overstocking, fires and damage caused by climatic factors, atmospheric pollutants or forest management operations).

4.3.1.4. Regeneration

• Plan and carry out natural regeneration and/or planting using appropriate species for the site. Use diversified provenances and/or origins on his property and keep certificates of origin.

• Take into account the presence of elite trees or stands on his property so that harvesting of seeds can be considered.

• Undertake not to use GMOs and invasive species (from list A of invasive species in Belgium) in his forest.

4.3.1.5. Mixing

• Diversify his forest by using a mixture of species (in groups, strips, clumps or compartments, or tree by tree), ages and structures, as far as the site conditions and the structure of the property allow this.

• Give priority to rare or supporting species during clearing, thinning and cutting.

4.3.1.6. Inputs

• Prohibit all use of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, with the exceptions defined by the Walloon Government and insofar as these exceptions do not concern categories 1A and 1B of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) of the United Nations (UN). Within the framework of these exceptions, and including rodenticides, use these products only as a last resort, and in the absence of satisfactory alternative methods. Do not use pesticides within 12 metres of watercourses, bodies of water or springs.

• Use improvement products appropriately and based on a reliable soil analysis demonstrating a need to correct mineral imbalances that are impairing the health of the stand.

• Refrain from using fertilisers in his forest.
4.3.1.7. Wet areas

• Limit high-pressure ground traffic to periods of frost or «dry» ground (sufficiently settled) except for operational enclosure.

• Refrain from creating new drainage ditches.

• When renewing coniferous stands, avoid planting conifers within 12 metres of the banks of watercourses and bodies of water.

• Refrain from promoting the development of natural conifer seedlings within 12 metres of the banks of watercourses and bodies of water.

4.3.1.8. Other areas of special biological interest

• Preserve or even restore areas of special biological interest (e.g. forest margins, clearings, ponds and lakes).

4.3.1.9. Dead wood and trees of biological interest

• In deciduous stands, as far as the characteristics of the property allow, maintain a network of dead wood in the forest (standing and/or on the ground), hollow trees and old trees, within the required phytosanitary and safety limits.

• Keep and designate:
  – during thinning, at least one such tree that is more than 125 cm in circumference per hectare;
  – and/or areas of older or senescent trees covering 2% of the property.

4.3.1.10. Forestry operations and harvesting

• Monitor to ensure that forest operations are conducted in line with his requirements and take action in case of damage to (1) roads, (2) remaining trees and stands, (3) soils and (4) water resources, dumping of exogenous waste or non-compliance with safety conditions.

• Avoid removing organic horizons and consider ways of harvesting stumps, residues or fine fractions to avoid degrading the soil balance.

• Take action if damage is caused during operations and manage the situation in accordance with the complaints and non-compliance procedure as defined by the organisation.

• For the owner’s own operations:
  – Remove waste produced during these operations.
  – Provide information and training to operatives on working safely in the forest.
  – Put in place and implement the necessary emergency procedures to minimise the risks of pollution relating to accidental hydrocarbon spillage.

4.3.1.11. Prevention and management of damage due to overpopulation by large ungulates

4.3.1.11.1 In regard to forest management:

• Take reception capacity into account in his woodland management operations to ensure dilution of the pressure from major ungulates.

4.3.1.11.2 If unacceptable negative impacts are observed:

• If negative impacts are observed that are detrimental to biodiversity and/or regeneration and/or the quality of woody and non-woody regeneration:
Inform the following about the situation:

- the hunting rights holder,
- the organisation responsible for group certification,
- if the problem is confirmed after three years, inform the local hunting council (for owners of more than 50 contiguous hectares).

Implement the overall strategy defined in consultation with affected stakeholders to take various measures from a panel of tools that are appropriate for the situation and context of his property in order to reduce the negative impacts to an acceptable level.

Specifically for wild boar and for properties of more than 50 contiguous hectares:

- Request takings based on qualitative sex-age-weight ratios.
- In the year following the observation of the imbalance, the owner should authorise dissuasive feeding (from March 1 to October 31) accompanied by other measures to apply population pressure to return to an acceptable level of negative impact.
- In the absence of convincing results after two hunting seasons following the finding, prohibit feeding until the damage is reduced to an acceptable level.

4.3.1.12. Socio-recreational forest

- Do not hinder or dissuade access to legally accessible public forest roads crossing or skirting your property, except temporary prohibitions imposed for safety reasons.
- Allow access to private forest roads on the property under conditions at the owner’s discretion, in the context of leisure, cultural or educational activities, in a way that respects forest ecosystems, particularly when there is a clear advantage in terms of safety or the footpath network to using a slow route that is not open to traffic.
- In addition to the legal stipulations, do not allow motorised recreational activities to take place off the roads and paths.
- Take into account elements of historical, cultural and landscape value in the management of the forest.

4.3.2. Those working in the forest shall:

- Respect the forest owner’s requirements as set out in specifications or equivalent making it possible to ensure, depending on the risks related to the type and location of the intervention, avoidance of damage (1) to roads, (2) to remaining trees and stands, (3) to soil and (4) to water resources.
- Remove waste produced during these operations.
- Provide information and training to operatives on working safely in the forest.
- Put in place and implement the necessary emergency procedures to minimise the risks of pollution relating to accidental hydrocarbon spillage.
### 5. Document History

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