

PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF A PAFC CERTIFICATION SYSTEM FOR THE CONGO BASIN



Description of the PAFC Congo Basin forest certification system

PAFC Gabon – PAFC Cameroun – PAFC Congo



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1. Scope of the document

This document describes how the PAFC Congo Basin certification system operates in the following countries: Gabon, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo:

- ✓ The structure of the documentation common to all of the national PAFC organisations and that which is specific to each of them;
- ✓ A schematic representation of how the PAFC certification systems operate, in particular the link between all of the players within the system;
- ✓ A reminder of how PAFC forest certification standards are developed;
- ✓ A description of how the scheme is administered.

2. Structure of the PAFC documentation

The PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo systems all operate in a similar way.

On the one hand, they are structured around a corpus of regional implementation requirements that are:

- PAFC Congo Basin sustainable forest management system requirements (*Exigences en matière de système de gestion forestière durable PAFC Bassin du Congo*), PAFC/NORM-001-2019, the development of which is described in section 3 and which have been adopted by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo;
- PEFC chain of custody requirements (PEFC ST 2002), international requirements adopted by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo;
- Requirements for PEFC chain of custody audit and certification bodies (PEFC ST 2003), international requirements adopted by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo;
- Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of PAFC Congo Basin sustainable forest management (*gestion forestière durable PAFC Bassin du Congo*), PAFC/NORM-002-2020, which have been adopted by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo;
- Requirements for the use of PEFC trademarks (PEFC ST 2002), international requirements adopted by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo.

On the other hand, the national organisations, or associations, PAFC Cameroon, Gabon and Congo administer the scheme on their national territory according to the PEFC Council's requirements (PEFC GD 1004_2009), the main tasks of which are described in the following procedures:

- ✓ Handling of complaints and appeals (*Traitement des plaintes et des appels*) (PAFC/PROC-002-2020);
- ✓ Notification of certification bodies (PAFC/PROC-003-2020 for sustainable forest management (*pour la gestion forestière durable*) and PAFC/PROC-004-2020 for chain of custody (*pour la chaîne de contrôle*));
- ✓ Licensing of the PEFC registered trademarks (*Délivrance des licences d'utilisation des marques déposées PEFC*) (PAFC/PROC-005-2020);

Lastly, the regional standards body, ATIBT, worked according to the PAFC/PROC-001-2019 standard development procedure, which itself complies with the PEFC standard development requirements (PEFC ST 1001), in order to develop the forest management and chain of custody standards.



Reference documents for the PAFC scheme in Gabon, Cameroon and Congo	International reference document
<u>Regional requirements</u>	
Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements (<i>Gestion durable des forêts – Exigences</i>) PAFC/NORM-001-2019	Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements PEFC ST 1003:2018
Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements PEFC ST 2002:2020	
Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard PEFC ST 2003:2020	
Requirements for bodies carrying out PAFC sustainable forest management audits and certification (<i>Exigences pour les organismes procédant à l’audit et à la certification de la gestion forestière durable PAFC</i>) PAFC/NORM-002-2020	Certification and Accreditation Procedures Annex 6 - 2007
PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements PEFC ST 2001:2020	
<u>Administration of the scheme by the PAFCs</u>	
Notification of certification bodies (<i>Notification des organismes de certification</i>) PAFC/PROC-003-2020 et PAFC/PROC-004-2020	
Licensing of PEFC registered trademarks (<i>Délivrance des licences d’utilisation des marques déposées PEFC</i>) PAFC/PROC-005-2020	Administration of PEFC scheme PEFC GD 1004:2009, Issue 1
Handling of complaints and appeals (<i>Traitement des plaintes et des appels</i>) PAFC/PROC-002-2020	
Participation in the PEFC Registration system	
<u>Development of regional standards</u>	
Procedure for the development of PAFC certification standards for the Congo Basin PAFC/PROC-001-2020	Standard Setting – Requirements PEFC ST 1001:2017

3. Schematic representation of the functioning of the PAFC system in Gabon, Cameroon and Congo

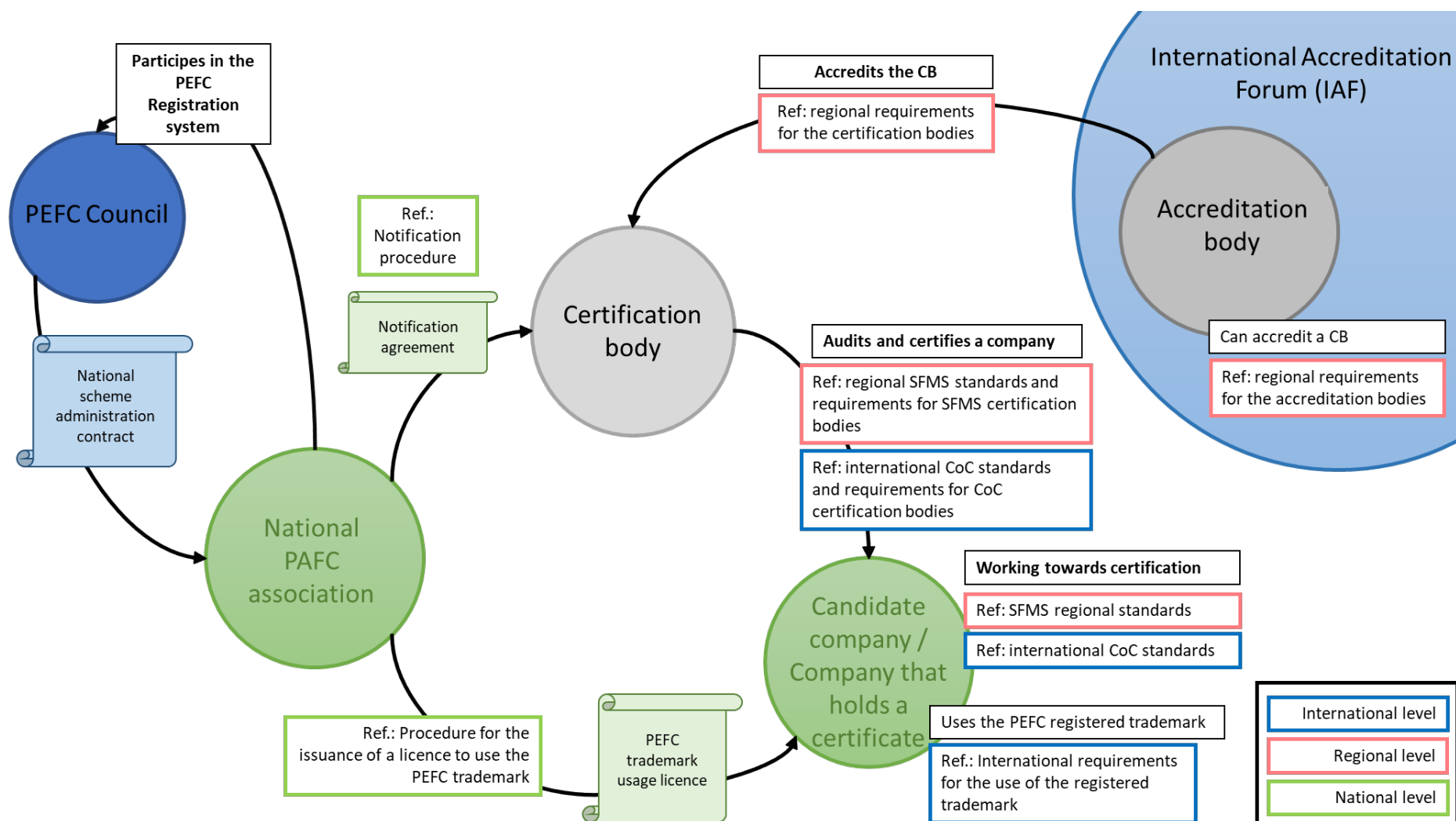


Figure 1 – Schematic description of how the PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo schemes operate, with reference to the documentation.

4. Process for the development of a common regional standard

4.1. Standards body

ATIBT (*Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux* - International Tropical Timber Technical Association) is the **standardizing body** for the development of the Congo Basin PAFC scheme due to its reputation and experience in the field of sustainable and certified forest management for over 20 years in the various countries of the sub-region.

ATIBT was launched in France in 1951, with the support of the FAO and the OECD, in the form of an association governed by the French law of 1 July 1901 of owners' trade union associations, company foundations and endowment funds.

The Board of Directors is designated as the body in charge of the formal approval of forest management (FM) and chain of custody (CoC) standards.

4.2. Consultative body: the PAFC Congo Basin Forum

The PAFC Congo Basin Forum (or Forum) is the **temporary consultative body** in charge of developing PAFC Congo Basin forest management and chain of custody standards, by consensus. It must recommend a final version of the standards, established by consensus, for approval by ATIBT.

The members of the Forum fall into four different interest categories:

- Owner and government administration interests;
- Logger and processor interests;
- Nature preservation interests;
- Interests related to the preservation of populations' livelihoods and the living and working conditions of employees.

The members of the Forum were selected from among the stakeholders who expressed their interest and appointed a representative according to the following process:

- Having balanced representation: in order to achieve this balance, the number of members from the various interest categories presented above will be equivalent (+ or - one person);
- Include stakeholders from each country covered by the PAFC Congo Basin standards and regional stakeholders;
- Include, as much as possible, at least one representative from each identified stakeholder group. Otherwise, alternatives will be explored;
- Include at least 50% of stakeholders who have been identified as key stakeholders¹. Their participation will be proactively sought. If this isn't possible, alternatives will be explored;
- Include at least 40% of stakeholders who have been identified as materially and directly impacted by the implementation of the standards.

¹Key stakeholders are those whose participation is considered key for the successful development/revision of forest management standards..

4.3. The process

The regional sustainable forest management standard was developed using ATIBT's development procedure (PAFC/NORM-001-2019-1) in order to meet the requirements of the PEFC Council (PEFC ST 1001-2017).

The process was carried out as presented in Table 1.

Tableau 1 – Process of developing regional PAFC Congo Basin forest certification standards

Stage of the process	Timeframe
Preliminary steps (stakeholder mapping, project document and drafting of the development procedure)	June 2019 - September 2019
Public announcement of the start of the process and invitation to stakeholders to express their interest	1 October 2019
Creation of the Forum and review of the development process	30 October 2019
Development of a version of the standards for public consultation	24-29 November 2019
First public consultation (60 days)	13 December 2019 - 14 February 2020
Pilot test	March - April 2020
Second public consultation (38 days)	22 May 2020 - 28 June 2020
Development and validation by consensus of a final version by the Forum	26-27 October 2020
Approval of the standards by ATIBT	18 December 2020
Adoption of the standards by PAFC Gabon, PAFC Cameroon and PAFC Congo	PAFC Gabon : 27 November 2020 PAFC Cameroun : 3 December 2020 PAFC Congo : 28 November 2020
Submission to PEFC Council for recognition	22 December 2020
Publication of the standards by ATIBT	31 December 2020

4.4. PAFC certification standards

PAFC certification standards are based on two standards: sustainable forest management and chain of custody.

Note: there is currently no standard for group certification.

4.4.1. Sustainable forest management standard

The PAFC Congo Basin sustainable forest management standard was developed while taking into account international forest management requirements (PEFC ST 1003:2018) as well as national forest management issues.

The standard applies to forest management activities in long-term sustainable forest management titles and aims to:

- maintain or expand forests and their ecosystem services, as well as maintain or enhance the economic, ecological, cultural and social value of forest resources;
- maintain or improve the health and vitality of forest ecosystems as well as restore damaged forest ecosystems wherever possible, by taking into account economic capacities and by making the best use of both structures and processes and employing biological prevention measures;
- maintain the forests' capacity to produce a range of timber and non-timber forest products and services on a sustainable basis;
- maintain, preserve or enhance biodiversity at the landscape, ecosystem and species levels;
- maintain or enhance the ecosystem services of forests that can benefit society, such as their potential role in terms of erosion control, flood prevention, water purification, climate regulation or carbon storage;
- respect all of the forests' socio-economic functions, in particular the taking into account of affected indigenous peoples and local communities' formal and customary land rights and the guarding of their livelihoods.

The standard is structured around the following requirements:

- Requirements in terms of sustainable forest management systems;
- Legality requirements;
- Requirements in terms of the sustainable production of forest products;
- Environmental and biodiversity requirements;
- Requirements relating to the living conditions of local communities and indigenous peoples;
- Requirements relating to the living and working conditions of workers and their dependants.

These requirements are supplemented by more specific additional guidelines presented in annexes 1 and 2. In addition, annex 3 outlines the PEFC Council's international requirements that were not included in the PAFC standards for the Congo Basin (and the rationale for their non-inclusion).

Note: The PEFC Council standard includes details on the Trees Outside Forest requirements. The PAFC standard has not been adapted for these cases.

4.4.2. Chain of custody standard

The chain of custody requirements are the PEFC Council's requirements: PEFC ST 2002-2020.

A translation of these requirements has been done by PEFC France and is the one used by PAFC but the reference in the event of a dispute remains the English language version of these requirements (PEFC Council document).

4.5. Requirements for certification and accreditation bodies

Forest management and chain of custody certificates are issued by **accredited certification bodies**.

They are issued to managers whose activities comply with the PAFC standards, namely the PAFC/NORM-001-2019 forest management standard (*norme de gestion forestière*) and/or the PEFC ST 2001 chain of custody standard adopted by the PAFC associations.

In order to be accredited and be able to issue accredited certificates, certification bodies must meet the PAFC Congo Basin regional requirements for bodies carrying out forest management audits and certification (PAFC/NORM-002-2020) and/or the international requirements for bodies conducting PEFC chain of custody audits and certification (PEFC ST 2003). These requirements specify in particular the requirements for accreditation, audit processes, the auditor's skills, etc. The translation into French of the PEFC ST 2003 Requirements for Chain of Custody Certification Bodies was carried out within the elaboration of the PAFC Congo Basin Scheme.

Compliance with these requirements is verified by accreditation bodies, which must themselves meet the regional PAFC requirements (Annex 1 of PAFC/NORM-002-2020). These requirements specify, in particular, that the accreditation bodies must be members of the IAF (International Accreditation Forum).

4.6. Requirements for the use of the PEFC registered trademark

The PAFC associations, which are under contract for the administration of the PAFC Congo Basin scheme with PEFC Council, will be in charge of issuing licenses for the use of PEFC registered trademarks to users in their respective territories (Gabon, Congo, Cameroon).

These users will then have to comply with the international PEFC trademark usage rules (PEFC ST 2001).

5. Administration of the national schemes

The PAFC associations in Gabon, Cameroon and Congo are bodies that are authorised to administer forest certification schemes in their respective countries. They have signed an administration delegation contract with the PEFC Council.

In addition to their activities related to the governance of their structure (General Assembly, Board of Directors and Executive Board meetings), the PAFC associations undertake several activities related to the administration of the PAFC system in their countries:

- Notification of certification bodies;
- Issuance of licenses to users for the use of PEFC trademarks;
- Handling of complaints and appeals related to these activities;
- Participation in the PEFC Registration System.

The PAFCs are also in charge of promoting the PAFC Congo Basin certification system.

Note: the termination of a contract between a PAFC association and PEFC Council has the immediate effect of rendering any activity or decision taken (even previously) by this PAFC null and void. Thus, PAFC notifications and PEFC trademark usage licences become null and void, for example.

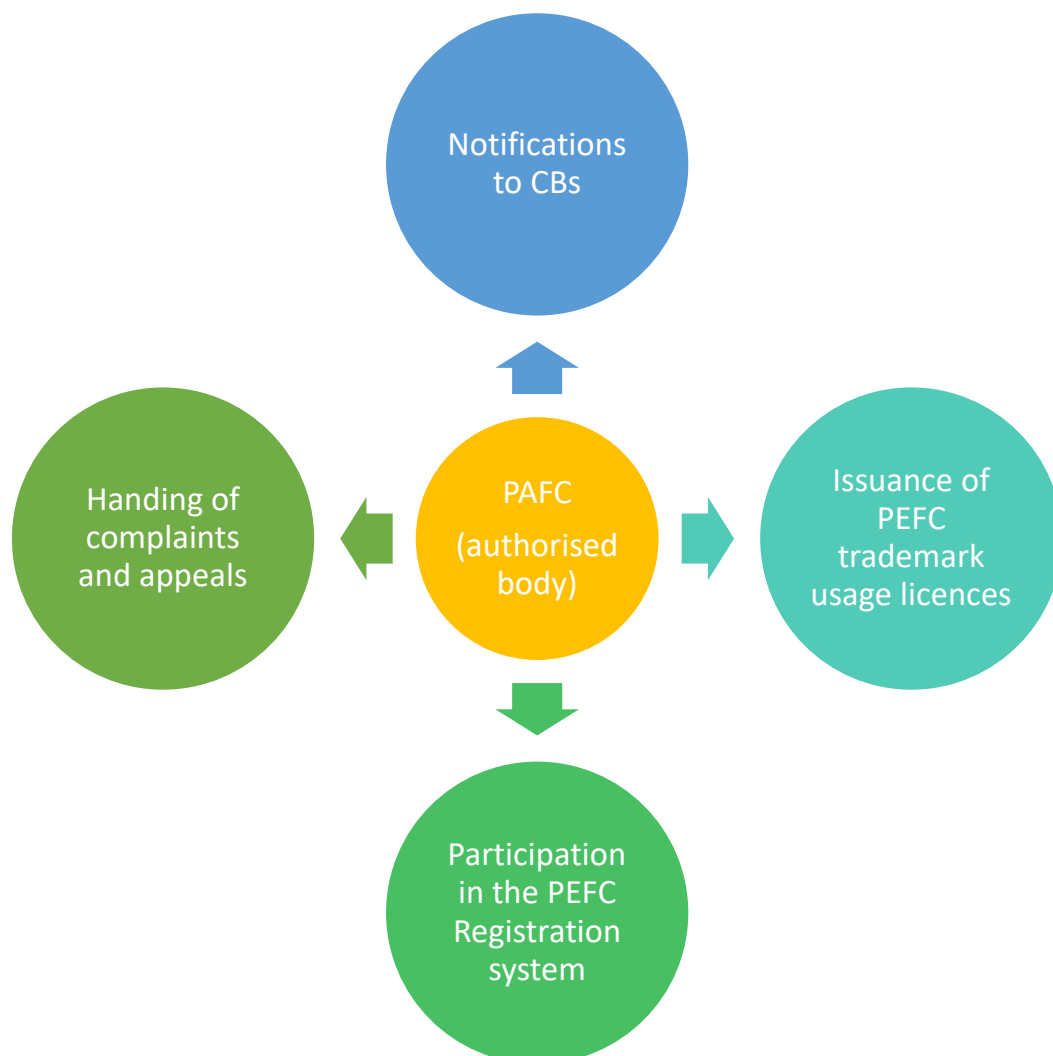


Figure 2 – The PAFC's main tasks in terms of its administration of the PAFC forest certification scheme

5.1. PEFC notification of certification bodies

PAFC/PROC-003-2020-1 and PAFC/PROC-004-2020-1

Notification by the PAFC associations establishes the necessary link between the accredited certification bodies and the PAFC associations. The notification allows the certification bodies to issue certificates recognised by the PAFCs.

The PAFC associations use two procedures to issue notification to certification bodies: one for CBs that provide sustainable forest management system certification and one for CBs that provide chain of custody certification.

The notification request is mandatory for a certification body to issue a certificate, and it must be made prior to the issuance of any certificate.

The notification is formalised in the form of a contract between the PAFC association and the certification body.

5.2. Licensing of the PEFC trademark

PAFC/PROC-005-2020-1

The PAFC associations will issue licenses to use the PEFC registered trademarks in their respective territories and in accordance with the relevant procedure.

This procedure describes, in particular, the types of users that may apply for licences, the conditions necessary to obtain a licence, the fees and the licence validity periods.

Usage licences are subject to the applicant entity's commitment to comply with the rules for the use of the PEFC registered trademark in accordance with the PEFC ST 2001 requirements (in effect).

5.3. Handling of complaints and appeals

PAFC/PROC-002-2020-1

All operations carried out by the PAFC associations, or their decisions within the framework of the administration of the scheme, may be subject to complaints and, if necessary, appeals by third parties.

All complaints or appeals are considered to be an opportunity for progress. Corrective and preventive measures are continuously implemented to improve services, especially following the handling of complaints and appeals.

The PAFC associations therefore have a procedure for the filing and processing of complaints and appeals which details the conditions for their admissibility, the way in which they are examined by the PAFC associations and the notification of the decision to the requester.

Note: Complaints and appeals relating to:

- an activity or a decision by a certified entity are handled according to the complaints and appeals resolution procedure of the certified entity's certification body;
- an activity or a decision by the certification access entity (in the case of group certification) are handled by the entity's certification body;
- an activity or a decision by a certification body are handled according to the complaints and appeals resolution procedure of the certification body's accreditation body;



- an activity or a decision by an accreditation body are handled according to the International Accreditation Forum's (IAF) complaints and appeals resolution procedure.

5.4. Participation in the PEFC Registration system

The PAFC associations participate in the PEFC Registration System, in which they have to submit information about the following entities:

- a) holders of forest management certificates and chain of custody certificates, including information on the PEFC-certified products;
- b) users of PEFC registered trademarks that hold a licence issued by the PAFC associations;
- c) certification bodies notified by the PAFC associations.

The information is recorded in a manner that complies with the PEFC Council's rules and instructions.

The PAFC associations must ensure that the information recorded in the PEFC Registration System can be made public, including by the PEFC Council. The PAFC associations include clauses and provisions to this effect in the notification contracts, in the PEFC trademark usage licences and in the certification body requirements.