PEFC/01-00-01

26-10-2026



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for the PEFC Chain of Custody Working Group

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Document name: Terms of Reference for the PEFC Chain of Custody Working Group

Introduction

This Terms of Reference defines the mandate, composition and working arrangements for the PEFC Chain of Custody Working Group established to support the revision of PEFC ST 2002, *Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements*, and PEFC ST 2003, *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*.

The revision aims to clarify and strengthen requirements, improve consistency in their implementation, and address recurring interpretation issues, and better demonstrate the contribution of PEFC chain of custody to integrity, traceability, international accessibility, and practicality

1. Establishment

The PEFC Council's Chain of Custody Working Group (hereafter, the WG) was established by the PEFC Council's Board of Directors (the Board), as a permanent WG, based on PEFC PR 001:2026*, PEFC Council Documentation Structure, Development, and Maintenance Process – Internal*. Its composition should be reviewed every two years.

2. Normative basis

The work of the WG is based on and follows PEFC PR 001:2026*, PEFC Council Documentation Structure, Development, and Maintenance Process – Internal*

3. Scope

The scope of the WG's work is to:

a) Revision of the PEFC chain of custody related standards, including development and building consensus around the enquiry drafts, addressing comments from the consultations, and the final draft.

b) Maintenance of the existing standards: provision of guidance, clarification and/or interpretation on the implementation, according to the PEFC procedures.

c) Development of tools and technical documentation related to the PEFC chain of custody.

As part of the revision, the WG provides overall coordination and act as the central decision-making body. Where the Thematic Task Forces sit under the WG, the WG is responsible to review proposals, and decide whether to adopt, reject, modify, or counter propose alternative wording or solutions.

The revision scope also includes clarifying expectations, reducing ambiguity, strengthening selected requirements where evidence supports change, improving coherence and auditability, supporting implementation, and coordinating with related PEFC workstreams.

The following list of documents falls under the scope of this WG:

1. PEFC ST 2002*, PEFC Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements*
2. PEFC ST 2003*, Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*
3. Associated implementation or guidance documents

The WG is advisory to the PEFC Board of Directors.

4. Membership

4.1 Nomination and appointment

Nominations for the WG are made through the online form available here: PEFC Nomination Form for Working Groups and Task Forces – Fill out form.

Nominations can be submitted by the organisation or individual themselves, or by another organisation (a nominating organisation). The deadline for nominations is 31 December 2026.

WG members are appointed by the PEFC International Secretary General based on nominations received.

The Secretary General can revoke the appointment of WG members at any time, e.g., if the Secretariat has the view that a WG member is not complying with WG members responsibilities (see chapter 5).

In addition to appointed WG members, the Secretariat may provide stakeholders (e.g., Board members, students, experts) with the opportunity to participate in WG meetings as observers but without voting rights.

4.2 Stakeholder groups

WG members must meet the one or more of the following criteria:

a) Stakeholders with expertise or practical experience in traceability, chain of custody certification; implementation of PEFC ST 2002 and PEFC ST 2003; standard setting, auditability of requirements, accreditation, sustainability claims, forest and tree supply chains, legal compliance, internal audits and management of non-conformities.

b) Have expertise or practical experience in, or represent stakeholder interests relevant to, traceability, chain of custody, including environmental and social matters and consumer, customer, and market perspectives.

c) Stakeholders familiar with the development of technical documentation and willing to develop in-depth knowledge of CoC to support PEFC with this expertise.

The WG may establish additional Thematic Task Forces in accordance with PEFC PR 001:2026 to develop targeted technical analysis, recommendations and draft proposals on defined topics. Operating under the oversight of the WG, Task Forces may include WG members and additional experts appointed for the relevant technical work.

Each Task Force shall have a representative from the WG with relevant expertise, who shall act as liaison and present the Task Force's work and outputs to the WG for review and decision. WG members may nominate themselves for this role; where no suitable member volunteers, the PEFC Secretariat shall nominate one.

To ensure a balanced representation of stakeholders' interests, the WG consists of the following stakeholder groups, with the advisory amount of seats indicated for each group in brackets:

a) Certified PEFC scheme users (e.g., forest and tree based related industries), (5)

b) Uncertified PEFC scheme users (e.g., PEFC scheme assessors; certification bodies; accreditation bodies; consultants), (5)

c) Customers and consumers (e.g., retailer organisations; consumer organisations; institutional consumers of forest-based products, including governments, etc.), (5)

d) Civil society (e.g., science, environmental, social, and other interest groups), (5)

e) PEFC National Governing Body members, (5)

The WG also consists of the Chair, appointed by the PEFC Board of Directors, and the Project Leader, appointed by the PEFC Secretariat. The Chair and Project Leader seats are functional, and ex-officio seats tied to the respective role, not personal appointments, and are not subject to the stakeholder group seat limits.

In addition, a balanced representation of gender and geographical location is aimed for.

Stakeholder groups and amount of seats can be amended by the Secretary General.

4.3 Types of WG seats

Seats in the WG can be appointed to individuals or organisations. The decision to grant membership status to an individual or an organisation is made by the Secretary General, who can change this decision at any time. If not specified, members hold seats as individuals.

Members shall inform the PEFC Secretariat about any change in their professional or organisational status.

Members can apply to the Secretariat for the designation of a Second, to represent them at WG meetings on their behalf. To ensure balanced representation of stakeholders and to avoid that the discussion is dominated by a few parties, the Member and the Second shall not participate in a WG meeting at the same time, unless approved in advance by the Secretariat and they participate as observers with no intervention and voting rights.

5. WG Member responsibilities

WG Member responsibilities are as follows:

a) participating in the CoC WG in accordance with its Terms of Reference

b) attend at least 80% of the meetings per year as the general expectation for active participation

c) actively participate in WG discussions

d) follow up WG communications by PEFC SharePoint site or email

e) provide feedback on the documents, in preparation to, and during, meetings

f) contribute to building consensus

g) maintain appropriate confidentiality

h) inform the Secretariat in advance in case of non-attendance to a WG meeting.

A WG member who fails to attend or fails to send a duly notified second or alternate to two consecutive WG meetings without prior notice to the Secretariat shall be considered to have forfeited their seat and will be replaced. A replacement nomination from the same constituency may be accepted on a streamlined basis, without a full new nomination and appointment cycle, where the incoming nominee's professional profile or CV is substantially similar to that of the outgoing member, at the Secretariat's discretion.

WG members are expected to engage constructively and act as problem solvers and decision makers. Members are expected to help move the standard-setting process forward and support progress towards consensus. When raising concerns or disagreeing, with a proposal under discussion, members should explain the basis for their position and, when possible, clearly articulate concrete alternative solutions towards a constructive path forward.

By accepting appointment to the WG, members, including Thematic Task Force representatives, confirm that they have read and agree to comply with these Terms of Reference.

6. Working style

6.1 Meetings

The WG will meet on specified pre-determined dates. If need arises, additional meetings will be called.

Online meetings will be scheduled to maximise participation across geographies. As a result, stakeholders in different time zones may need to participate outside normal working hours.

Meetings are convened by the WG lead and/or the Secretariat.

The agenda of an upcoming meeting and related papers should be distributed to the WG at least seven calendar days before the meeting.

Members can submit comments, requests for discussions, documents, etc., to the Secretariat up to ten days before the meeting with the request that these are considered at the meeting.

6.2 Consensus building

Decisions at WG level shall be based and follow the consensus building requirements outlined in PEFC PR 001:2026, *PEFC Council Documentation Structure, Development, and Maintenance Process - Internal*.

6.3 Conflict of interest

WG Members will declare any conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest and absent themselves from voting on these matters as necessary and this will be noted in the minutes of the meeting.

6.4 Communication

The communication will happen through emails and a dedicated workspace on SharePoint. WG members need to ensure that they have access to the system.

7. Confidentiality

The PEFC Secretariat can inform the PEFC members about the discussions in, and the outcome of, WG meetings.

WG Members can communicate with their own stakeholders on topics arising within the WG, but they are not expected to do so in an inappropriately public manner, such as on websites, in newsletters, etc. Any information that is requested to be kept as confidential by any of the WG Members, or the PEFC Secretariat, needs to be kept confidential.

In addition, the following antitrust policy of PEFC applies for all meetings of the WG:

a) It is the policy of the PEFC Council and its members to comply with laws and regulations applicable to their activities.

b) The PEFC Council respects antitrust laws that prohibit fixing prices, allocating geographic markets, unfair or deceptive practices, setting profit levels; boycotts, and most other anticompetitive actions. The PEFC Council will neither permit nor condone anti-competitive behaviour, whether wilful or inadvertent, in connection with any PEFC Council meeting or activity.

c) Conversations involving discussion of matters that may violate applicable laws and regulations should always be avoided, even in private settings, and cannot be tolerated in connection with any PEFC Council meeting or activity. Persons engaging in possible violations of PEFC Council policy during meetings or activities will be required to cease such activities, and if necessary, are subject to ejection by the presiding officer of the meeting.

Questions concerning antitrust or other laws or regulations connected to PEFC Council activities should be referred immediately to the PEFC Council's Secretary General.

8. Costs

Expenses incurred due to a WG member's participation in the WG, such as for travelling, accommodation, phone bills, meals and working time, will not be reimbursed by PEFC, unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing with the Secretary General.

9. Data protection

9.1 Collection and purposes

The PEFC Council collects and processes personal data necessary to assess nominations and applications, establish the WG, organise meetings, facilitate the exchange of information and maintain appropriate records of the revision process.

The information collected may include the applicant's name, organisation represented, job title, professional email address, country, stakeholder category, relevant experience and motivation to join the WG. Where applicable, the name and professional email address of the nominating organisation's contact person are also collected.

Photographs and short professional biographies may also be collected or prepared for external communications, subject to the arrangements in 9.3.

9.2 Internal access and sharing

Application information shall be accessible only to persons involved in the selection and appointment process and authorised personnel supporting that process.

During WG activities, members' names, organisational affiliations and professional contact details may be shared with other WG members and persons supporting the WG where necessary for meetings, communication and collaborative work.

Service providers supporting these activities may receive only the personal data necessary to provide their services, subject to appropriate data protection safeguards.

9.3 Public information and external communications

The PEFC Council may publish the stakeholder categories and organisations represented within the WG.

To explain the WG's composition and expertise, the PEFC Council may also publish members' names, job titles and short summaries of their relevant professional experience. Members shall be informed in advance of the information and publication channels concerned and given an opportunity to check its accuracy and object to publication. Requests not to be individually identified in external communications shall be respected without affecting WG membership.

Photographs identifying members may be used on the PEFC Council's website, social media and in publications reporting on or promoting WG activities, subject to prior informed consent covering the intended uses and channels. For group photographs, members shall be informed before the photograph is taken and shall be free to decline participation.

Tagging a member's personal social-media account or publishing or disclosing their professional contact details to external stakeholders shall require their prior consent. Alternatively, the PEFC Secretariat may forward an external enquiry to the member.

Application documents and motivation statements shall not be published. Short professional biographies shall be checked with the member before publication.

External requests for information shall be addressed in accordance with these arrangements. This does not prevent disclosures required by applicable law.

9.4 Legal basis

The PEFC Council relies on its legitimate interests in selecting and administering the WG and maintaining appropriate records of the revision process, where these interests are not overridden by the rights and freedoms of the individuals concerned.

9.5 Retention

Public information about the WG's current composition shall be updated when membership changes.

Personal data shall be retained only for as long as necessary for the purposes for which they were collected.

Records necessary to document a member's appointment, participation and contribution to the revision process may be retained for up to five years after their participation ends. Information no longer needed shall be deleted or anonymised earlier. Longer retention shall be limited to records required to meet applicable legal obligations or establish, exercise or defend legal claims.

Information concerning unsuccessful applicants shall be deleted or anonymised once the selection process and any related complaints or appeals have concluded, unless a further retention period is specifically justified and communicated.

Access to retained internal records shall be restricted to authorised persons who need them for the relevant recordkeeping purposes.

Public information about current WG membership shall be updated when membership changes. Photographs, biographies and other external communications shall be reviewed periodically and removed when no longer needed or when the applicable consent is withdrawn.

9.6 Individuals' rights

Applicants, WG members and nominating organisations' contact persons may exercise their rights under applicable data protection law, including requesting access to or correction of their personal data and, where applicable, erasure, restriction or objection to processing.

Requests may be sent to privacy@pefc.org. Further information on individuals' rights is available in the PEFC Council Privacy Notice.

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