

Estonian Forest Certification Council

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PEFC EST 4

**Guidelines for Certification Bodies and Auditors to
conduct Forest Management
and Chain of Custody certification**

1. Aim of the document

This document defines the requirements for Certification Bodies and Auditors to perform PEFC Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification in Estonia.

2. Scope of the document

This document specifies the minimum requirements for Certification Bodies notification in Estonian Forest Certification Council to perform the certification in accordance with:

- PEFC National Forest Management Standard for Estonia;
- PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements.

PEFCC Technical Document PEFC ST 2002:2013 “Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements” is adopted as the PEFC chain of custody standard for Estonia.

In this document are included also general requirements for:

- * ensuring forest management planning and forest management in accordance with PEFC national forest management standard for Estonia (individual Forest Management certification and forest owner group Forest Management certification);
- * Chain of Custody certification.

3. Normative references

This document is established and approved by Estonian Forest Certification Council based on:

- * PEFC national forest management standard for Estonia;
- * PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 “Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements”
- * PEFC Council Technical Document Annex 1 “Terms and Definitions”;
- * PEFC Council Technical Document Annex 6 “Certification and Accreditation Procedures”;
- * ISO 19011 – Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing;
- * PEFC EST 3 The qualification criteria for external auditors and certification bodies, and certification procedures

4. Terms and definitions

For the characterizing of the PEFC Estonia Scheme, the relevant definitions are given in PEFC Council Technical Document Annex 1 “Terms and Definitions”.

5. Certification Procedure

5.1 Phases of Certifying Process

The certification process consists of temporally and functionally consecutive actions:

1. Application by the auditee to the certification body,
2. Review of the application and present material by the certification body,
3. Voluntary pre-audit,
4. Certification audit,
5. Assessment/decision by the certification body, and
6. Surveillance audits.

Before sending the application to the certification body, the auditee must comply in its operations with appropriate sections of the *PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 “Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements”*

The purpose of the pre-sent material and voluntary pre-audit is to ensure that the requirements of the *PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 “Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements”* are adequately taken into account and appropriately applied by the auditee or its units.

5.2 Auditing

5.2.1 General Principles

The definition of the objective of the audit is always the responsibility of the auditee. The scope and limits are defined so that the objective of the audit is achieved. The scope of the audit is defined by the lead auditor nominated by the certification body. The purpose of the audit is to evaluate whether the evidence collected from the auditee or its units conform to the auditing criteria.

The auditing criteria are primarily the requirements of the PEFC national forest management standard and *PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 “Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements”*. In addition, the auditee may define other auditing criteria, e.g., policy, legislation, guidelines, practices and procedures.

The objective, scope and auditing criteria are documented in the auditing plan, which guides the execution of the audit. The auditing plan must also indicate the timetables, places, persons and other information, for which preparations are required in advance by the auditee or its units.

The audit is carried out by an audit team. In addition to the lead auditor, the audit team has an adequate number of auditors. The sectoral competence of auditors may be complemented, if necessary, with technical experts who are not auditors. The audit team is set up by the certification body, which ensures competence and independence and other appropriateness to the task of the team members.

Auditing includes the following phases:

1. An initial meeting,
2. Collection of audit evidence,
3. Evaluation of audit evidence,
4. Final meeting and
5. Audit report on the conformance to the audit criteria.

The audit team collects sufficient amount of audit evidence, based on which the conformity of operation to the criteria is evaluated. The evaluation results of the audit evidence (especially

those relating to non-conformities) are reviewed with the auditee. In the final meeting, the audit results of all the units audited are collectively presented to the auditee. The audit observations, which are not in conformity with audit criteria are always documented in the audit report.

The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the PEFC national forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (e.g. government agencies, community groups, conservation organizations, etc.) as appropriate.

A summary of the certification report, including a summary of findings on the auditee's conformity with the PEFC national forest management standard for Estonia, written by the certification body, shall be made available to the public by the Estonian Forest Certification Council. The requirements for public consultation and public availability of the certification report's summary shall be implemented at all operational levels within six months of the official adoption of this document. For certificates, which have been issued before the adoption of these requirements by national forest certification schemes, these requirements shall be implemented by the next surveillance audit.

5.2.2 Forest Management

When auditing forest management, the audit team must include at least one auditor qualified in forest management and one auditor qualified in environmental issues. Technical experts may complement the forest management and environmental competence of the auditors.

Possible other auditing criteria are agreed upon with the auditee, but their results have no effect on the certification decision conforming to the EFCS Standard requirements.

5.2.3 Chain of Custody of Wood

The team auditing the control of the chain of custody of wood must have at least one auditor qualified in wood procurement, and one auditor qualified in forest industries. Technical experts may complement the wood procurement and forest industry competence of the auditors.

The criteria for the chain of custody of wood, as defined in *PEFC Technical Documentation, PEFC ST 2002:2013 "Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements"*, include:

- criteria for the verification of wood raw material and its origin,
- criteria for the identification of certified and uncertified wood raw material with the aid of accounting of material flows or physical segregation,
- criteria for the control of information on the origin of wood raw material contained in semi-processed products as well as by-products and end products, and
- minimum requirements for monitoring and assessment periods.

Possible other auditing criteria, such as monitoring of the requirements on the use of environmental/product labels, are agreed upon with the auditee, but their results have no effect on the certification decision conforming to the PEFC standard requirements.

5.3 Certification

5.3.1 Audit by Certification Body

The certification decision is made by the certification body on the basis of the audit report. The decision may be positive, conditional or negative. A positive decision leads to immediate certification and issuance of the certificate.

The basis for a conditional or negative certification decision is based on nonconformity against certification criteria. A conditional certification decision requires an implementation plan for corrective action and correction of non-conformities according to a timetable to be separately agreed upon. The certificate may be conditionally issued when the plan of corrective action is approved.

5.3.2 Non-conformities and Corrective Action

Non-conformities to the certification criteria must always lead to corrective action and possibly to the rejection, postponing or withdrawal of the certificate. Non-conformities are classified as minor and major. Minor non-conformities are not necessarily an obstacle for certification. Major non-conformities always prevent the issuance of the certificate.

In the group certification of forest management, non-conformities are divided into group-level non-conformities and member-level non-conformities. A member-level non-conformity may lead to the expulsion of a forest owner or other actor from the certification group unless corrective action agreed upon is implemented. The decision to expel a member from the certification group is made by the group entity.

5.3.3 Follow-up and Surveillance Audits

If the certification decision has been negative, a follow-up audit can be arranged (within a time period to be agreed upon) in order to verify corrective actions. If corrective action is adequate, the certificate is granted to the applicant. Surveillance audits are carried out at least once a year during the validity of the certificate, provided that the interval between the audits does not exceed 365 days. The scope of surveillance audits may be more limited than that of certification audits. In the surveillance audits, the completion of corrective actions or the progress in their implementation is always assessed. The surveillance audits may also concentrate on certain elements of certification criteria only.

5.3.4 Amendments

If the content of the certification standards is revised, the criteria valid during the audit are applied. The auditee has a transition period of maximum one year to adapt its operations to the new criteria.

5.3.5 Validity of Certificate

The certificate is valid for a maximum of five years. The certification body may withdraw a granted certificate permanently or suspend it for a specified time period. The withdrawal, or suspension, decision and its justification are communicated to the auditee in writing.

The auditee may denounce the certificate any time during its validity. The denouncement takes effect immediately after the certification body has received a notice in writing.

6. Information of Certificate

Certification body shall provide the Estonian Forest Certification Council with information about all issued forest management and chain of custody certificates and changes concerning the validity and scope of these certificates.

7. Appeals and complaints

This procedure (hereinafter as *Procedure*) establishes the rules for the appeals and challenges (hereinafter as *appeal*) to the certification of forest management and chain of custody according to the Estonian PEFC forest certification scheme.

The application of this procedure is compulsory for the members and board of Estonian Forest Certification Council (hereinafter as *EFCC*).

The appointed worker of the EFCC (hereinafter as *technical worker*) is responsible for the appeal related organizational and technical measures. Additionally he/she will organize retaining of the appeal procurement related documents according to the valid operations procedure.

7.1 Registration of appeal and challenge

Any natural or legal body (or by its official representative), whose forest management or chain of custody has been audited (certified), has the right to file an appeal. Appeal shall be filed to the board of EFCC in written, within thirty days as of the official decision of the certification organisation was made.

The technical worker is responsible for immediate registration of the appeal to the corresponding register and for delivery it to the commission for settlement of appeals (hereinafter as *Commission*).

Personal data and contact information of the person filing the appeal, date of filing the appeal and the content of the protest as well as notification about added documents shall be entered into the register.

If an appeal does not comply with the requirements set out above, § 78 of Estonian Administrative Procedure Act shall be applied. Appeal won't be registered and proceeded, if:

1. the appeal is filed anonymously;
2. the person does not have the right to file the appeal;
3. the person filing the appeal has failed to eliminate the deficiencies in the appeal within the designated term;
4. judicial or liquidation proceedings are being conducted concerning the person filing the appeal;
5. review of an appeal is not within the competence of an EFCC.

7.2 Commission for settlement of appeal

Commission has three members:

- Representative of EFCC;

- The person filing the appeal or his/her authorised representative
- The person or his/her authorised representative against whom the appeal has been filed (certification body).

The representative of EFCC (hereinafter as *chairman of the Commission*) to the Commission will be nominated and recalled back by the chairman of EFCC. In the case of reassignment or recalling back, the chairman of EFCC will appoint a new chairman of the Commission. The chairman of the Commission has to be independent of the deliberation of the appeal.

7.3 Proceeding of appeal in the commission

The chairman of the Commission shall chair the meeting of the Commission. All participants shall have an opportunity to explain and reason his/her positions. The chairman of the Commission shall determine the date, time and place of the session taking into consideration the opinions of the members of the Commission.

Commission examines the circumstances of the appeal and adopts decision on the reasoning of appeal and measures to be applied on the basis of that, within 10 workdays after registration of the appeal. All members of the Commission shall take part in the session. Hearing of the appeal is organized as a closed session. The statements and decisions made in the session will be recorded in the minutes. The chairman of the Commission determines the keeper of the minutes.

The decision of the Commission (hereinafter *decision*) will be adopted as a simple majority of the votes. If the votes distribute equally the casting vote belongs to the chairman of the Commission.

The chairman of the Commission shall deliver a copy of the decisions to the board of EFCC as well as to the parties involved with the appeal within two working days after the meeting of the Commission.

Decision of the Commission (an extract from the minutes) shall be delivered to the person filing of the appeal by registered letter.

The decision is final. The Commission shall not handle repeated appeal on the same matter. Difference of opinions related to the decision shall be settled according to the Estonian legislation.