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Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against PEFC Romania Forest Management Standards

National Standard for Forest Management

PEFC Romania
Email: office@pefc.ro
Web: www.PEFC.ro

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Foreword

The PEFC Council requires that forest management certification shall be carried out by certification bodies who are accredited by accreditation bodies that are signatories of the International Accreditation Forum's Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (IAF MLA) for Management Systems Certification and according to the requirements of this document. Under exceptional circumstances, the PEFC Council may also accept accreditation for Product Certification, as per Appendix 4 of this document.

Accreditation bodies who are signatories of IAF MLA are required to operate to the highest standard. They are admitted to the IAF MLA only after a stringent evaluation of their operations by a peer evaluation team that is charged to ensure that the applicant complies fully with both international standards and IAF requirements, and they are evaluated at regular intervals by IAF.

Certification bodies accredited by signatories of the IAF MLA are required to comply with appropriate IAF Documents. The IAF MLA ensures the acceptance of accredited certification everywhere in the world.

The text of this document has been developed by a multi-stakeholder Working Group coordinated by the Secretariat of the PEFC Council and approved by the PEFC Council General Assembly on 15 05 2024.

The development was undertaken in an open, transparent, consultative, and consensus-driven process covering a broad range of stakeholders in line with the requirements specified in the PEFC Council Technical Documents Development Procedures (PEFC GD 1003).

With the publication of this document, *Annex 6, Certification and Accreditation procedures* of the previous *PEFC technical documentation,* is no longer valid.

Introduction

The PEFC Council requires that certification bodies operating forest management certification against PEFC endorsed forest management standards meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1.

PEFC forest management is considered management system certification in accordance with ISO/IEC 17021-1. In exceptional cases, PEFC may accept that endorsed national or regional forest **certification systems** base their accreditation requirements for certification bodies on ISO/IEC 17065. In those cases, the endorsed system shall follow this standard, and the additional requirements set out in Appendix 4 of this standard.

This document is based on ISO/IEC 17021-1. It does not include the text of this standard, which can be obtained from ISO or national standard organisations.

1. Scope

This document lays out the PEFC international benchmark requirements for certification bodies operating sustainable forest management certification.

This standard defines the minimum international requirements for certification bodies to be adopted by the national and regional forest certification systems, and indicates the specific benchmark requirements that shall be further developed by the national or regional **certification systems** and be adapted to their local conditions, following PEFC's bottom-up approach principle.

The following requirements within this standard are benchmark requirements: 7.1.4.4 (specification of indicators to be evaluated by the certification body during its risk assessment), 7.1.5.1 (requirements for calculating and determining the audit time) and Appendix 1, 4.3.4.1 (adaption to the sampling for group forest certificates, when applicable).

National or regional forest **certification systems** may add additional requirements to ensure comprehensive and functional certification procedures.

Interpretations for Trees outside Forests (TOF) are outlined in Appendix 5 to this document. All requirements within the standard referring to "forest" and "forestry" are also applicable to TOF unless otherwise indicated in Appendix 7.

All requirements within the standard referring to "forest" also cover plantations, as per Appendix 1 of PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements*.

In this standard, the following verbal forms are used: "shall" indicates a requirement; "should" indicates a recommendation; "may" indicates a permission; "can" indicates a possibility or a capability. Further details can be found in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this standard. For both dated and undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendment) applies.

ISO/IEC 17000, *Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles*

ISO/IEC 17021-1, *Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems – Part 1: Requirements*

ISO 19011, *Guidelines for auditing Management systems*

PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements (available from www.pefc.org)*

PEFC-RO ST 8000 2024 PEFC Romania Sustainable Forest Management Certification Scheme

Annex 01 PEFC-RO ST 8001 2024 Criteria and indicators

PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements (available from www.pefc.org)*

Annex 08 PEFC-RO ST 8010 2024 Group forest management certification – Requirements

PEFC ST 2001, *PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements* (hereinafter PEFC Trademarks standard), *(available from www.pefc.org)*

3. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the relevant definitions given in ISO/IEC 17000, ISO/IEC 17021-1, PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management*, and PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification*, apply, together with the following definitions:

3.1 Accreditation body

Authoritative body that performs accreditation, where accreditation is the third-party attestation related to a conformity assessment body conveying formal demonstration of its competence to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks (Source: definition is based on ISO/IEC 17011).

3.2 Affected stakeholder

A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by implementation of a standard, or a stakeholder who might be a user of a standard and therefore is subject to the requirements of the standard.

Note 1: Affected stakeholders include neighboring communities, Indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the standard (e.g., NGOs, scientific community, civil society) is not equal to being affected.

Note 2: A stakeholder who might be a user of the standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g., a forest manager in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

3.3 Audit programme

Arrangements for a set of one or more audits planned for a specific time frame and directed towards a specific purpose (Source: definition is based on ISO 19011:2018 clause 3.4).

3.4 Audit plan

Description of the activities and arrangements for a specific audit (Source: definition is based on ISO 19011:2018 clause 3.6).

3.5 Certificate

A document issued by a **certification body** under the provision of this document confirming that the requirements as set out by a PEFC endorsed forest management standard, or standards and other applicable requirements, are fulfilled.

Note: Certificates are sometimes referred as “certification documents”.

3.6 Certification decision maker

A person or a group of persons (e.g., a committee) that has not been involved in the audit process and is assigned by the **certification body** to make the certification decision.

3.7 Certified area

The forest area covered by a sustainable forest management system according to the PEFC Sustainable Forest Management Standard (PEFC ST 1003).

In the **group certification** context, the **certificate** area represents the sum of forest areas of the group **participants**.

3.8 PEFC Council certification scheme

Set of rules and procedures for the management of similar or related conformity assessment systems. The PEFC certification scheme is maintained at PEFC Council level, and adapted to the local conditions through the implementation of the PEFC endorsed forest certification systems.

3.9 PEFC national or regional forest certification systems (certification system)

A certification system is the application of a certification scheme to a particular set of specified requirements in a specific geographical area. In terms of PEFC, a certification system is the application of the PEFC Council certification scheme to a particular geographical area. The specified set of requirements are the adaption of the PEFC SFM Benchmark to the specific geographical area through the sustainable forest management and related standards developed by the system, in compliance with the rules of the scheme.

3.10 Certification body

A certification body is a third-party conformity assessment body operating certification against a PEFC endorsed forest **certification system**, which is accredited for that system according to ISO/IEC 17021 by an **accreditation body** member of IAF MLA.

3.11 Client organisation (client)

Organisation, including a **group organisation**, that is certified or is seeking certification of its forest management system.

Note: The client is the holder of a **certificate** and is responsible for ensuring that all requirements of the forest management standard are met with respect to the **certified area** covered by that **certificate**.

3.13 Corrupt practice

Corrupt practices include bribery of public officials; embezzlement, trading in influence, abuse of function, and illicit enrichment by public officials; and bribery and embezzlement in the private sector, as well as money-laundering and obstruction of justice, in alignment with the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

3.14 Documented information

Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation using any format and media, from any source.

3.15 Expired certification

The certification is not renewed after the certificate expiry date.

3.16 Group certification

Certification of the **group organisation** under one **group forest certificate**.

3.17 Group entity

A legal entity that represents the **participants**, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the **certified area** to the PEFC endorsed forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest **certification system**. For this purpose, the group entity is using a group management system.

Note: The structure of the group entity should follow the operations, number of **participants** and other basic conditions for the **group organisation**. It may be represented by one person.

3.18 Group forest certificate

A document confirming that the **group organisation** complies with the requirements of the forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest **certification system**.

3.19 Group organisation

A group of **participants** represented by the **group entity** for the purposes of implementation of the forest management standard and its certification.

Note 1: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “regional group” if the group is defined by regional boundaries or other terms chosen by the relevant forest **certification system** and complying with the content of this definition.

Note 2: The term “group organisation” is a specific form of a “multisite organisation”.

3.20 Information and communication technologies

Information and communication technologies, ICT, is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analysing, and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. The use of ICT may be appropriate for auditing/assessment both locally and remotely (Source: IAF MD4:2023).

3.21 Major nonconformity

The absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more requirements of the PEFC Sustainability Benchmarks or the regional, national, or sub-national forest management standard/s endorsed by PEFC against which the audit is carried out, that may result in a systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the forest management.

Note 1: A major nonconformity may be an individual nonconformity or a number of minor but related nonconformities that when considered in total are judged to constitute a major nonconformity.

3.22 Minor nonconformity

A failure to fulfil the requirements of the PEFC Sustainability Benchmarks or the regional, national, or sub-national forest management standard/s endorsed by PEFC against which the audit is carried out that does not result in systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the forest management.

3.23 Participant

A forest owner/manager covered by the **group forest certificate**, who is able to implement the requirements of the forest management standard in a **certified area**.

Note: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right, tenure right or traditional or customary tenure rights to manage the forest and would disqualify one-off contractors from becoming participants in group certification.

Where regional or national systems allow contractors without long term management rights for a specific forest area to participate in group forest certification, the system shall ensure that these contractors can only make PEFC claims for material originating from certified areas of participants or individually certified forest owners/managers with long term legal or tenure management rights.

3.24 PEFC authorised body

The PEFC authorised body is an entity that has permission from the PEFC Council to issue PEFC trademarks licenses and to notify **certification bodies** on behalf of the PEFC Council. Usually, the authorised bodies are the **PEFC National Governing Bodies**.

3.25 PEFC National Governing Bodies (PEFC NGBs)

The PEFC National Governing Bodies (PEFC NGBs) are independent, national organisations established to develop and implement a PEFC system within their country. A list of the PEFC NGBs and their contact details can be found at the PEFC website. PEFC NGBs are often also the **PEFC authorised body**.

3.26 PEFC recognised database

Databases hold by the PEFC NGBs, or by the certificate holders of group forest certificates, where any data necessary to implement the forest management certification, such as up to date participants data and area covered by the certificate, is captured and maintained and properly protected.

3.27 Special audits

Special audits are unplanned, or otherwise outside the audit programme, and may be done on short notice.

Note: Special audits may be necessary due to scope extension, or to investigate complaints or substantiated concerns.

3.28 Reviewer

A person or a group of persons (e.g., a committee) that has not been involved in the audit process and is assigned by the **certification body** to review all the information and results related to the audit.

3.29 Substantiated concern

Information or complaint supported by proof or evidence, indicating a serious failure to conform with the requirements of the PEFC endorsed system and/or there is a reputational risk for PEFC.

Note 1: Substantiated concerns can be concerns by third parties, as well as concerns of the **client** itself.

3.31 Suspended certification

The certification is temporarily invalidated by the **certification body**.

3.32 Technical expert

Person who provides specific knowledge or expertise to the audit team (Source: definition based on ISO/IEC 17021:2015, clause 3.14.).

Note: Specific knowledge or expertise is that which relates to the organisation, the process, or activity to be audited.

3.33 Terminated certification

The certification has been voluntarily cancelled by the **client** during the validity of the certification cycle.

4. General requirements

4.1 Legal and contractual matters

4.1.1 Certification agreement

4.1.1.1 The **certification body** shall establish a legally enforceable certification agreement with the **client**.

4.1.1.2 The certification agreement with the **client** shall clearly specify:

a) The applicable ISO/IEC standard/s against which the **certification body** is operating.

b) The certification body's accreditation status, scope of accreditation, and the **accreditation body** that issued the accreditation; and,

c) The PEFC notified certification body status, scope of the notification, and the **PEFC authorised body** that has issued the notification.

4.1.1.3 The certification agreement shall include, at least, the following content:

- Implementation of the requirements:

a) Client's commitment to fulfil the certification requirements, including appropriate implementation.

b) Client's commitment to implement changes in an agreed transition period when there are changes in the certification requirements.

c) Client's commitment to keep records for the compliance with the certification requirements for the duration of the current cycle plus the previous certification cycle.

d) Client's obligation to inform the **certification body** within 30 days of changes that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements.

- Audit process:

e) Client's commitment to provide access during the certification process to observers from **accreditation bodies**, PEFC Council and/or the **PEFC authorised bodies** as well as representative/s of workers and trade unions (e.g., for witnessing activities or validation audits) upon request.

f) Client's commitment to make the necessary arrangements for the conduction of the audits and investigation of complaints.

g) The conditions under which the **certification body** may conduct **special audits**, as per 7.6.3, and the client's commitment to accept those.

- Trademarks use:

h) Client's commitment to use the PEFC trademarks and the accreditation trademarks and

certification body trademarks in compliance with any applicable requirements and consistent with the scope of certification, and to not make any references or claims that may be misleading or unauthorised or may bring PEFC, **certification bodies** or **accreditation bodies** to disrepute.

i) Upon suspension, withdrawal, or termination of certification, client's commitment to discontinue its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference to the certification and take action and measures as required by the **certification system** (e.g., the return of certification documents), as appropriate.

j) Upon suspension, withdrawal, or termination of certification, or if PEFC's endorsement of the system or standard they are certified against is suspended or terminated, client's commitment to stop any use of the PEFC claims or PEFC trademarks.

k) If the **client** provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety or as specified in the **certification system**.

l) Client's commitment to keep records of all complaints and **substantiated concerns** received that relate to compliance with certification requirements.

m) Client's commitment to take appropriate action with respect to complaints and any deficiencies that affect compliance with the requirements for certification.

n) Client's commitment to make records of all complaints and **substantiated concerns** available to the **certification body**, PEFC Council, the **PEFC authorised body**, and/or the **accreditation body**, on request.

4.2 Management of impartiality

4.2.1 The **certification body** shall put in place procedures to ensure that personnel involved in the certification activities are free from conflict of interest and independent from the **client**.

4.3 Confidentiality

4.3.1 The **certification body** shall comply with all applicable privacy and data protection laws.

4.3.2 The **certification body** shall commit to a data protection related agreement with the PEFC Council and when appropriate, also with **PEFC authorised bodies**. The agreement shall specify the rights and obligations of each party concerning the protection of personal data. It regulates the particularities of data processing – such as its scope and purpose – as well as the relationship between the controller and the processor.

4.4 Risk based approach

Certification bodies operating sustainable forest management certification shall follow a risk-based approach.

5. Resource requirements

5.1 Personnel involved in the certification activities

5.1.1 General

5.1.1.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that personnel involved in the certification activities have the relevant and appropriate knowledge and competencies corresponding to these activities, including PEFC specific knowledge.

5.1.1.2 Any personnel involved in PEFC certification shall have at least basic knowledge of the PEFC system and certification criteria appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

5.1.1.3 The certification body should ensure a workplace that is safe, provides equal opportunities, is non-discriminatory, promotes gender equality, and is free from workplace intimidation and harassment. Appropriate trainings and internal policies should be implemented.

5.1.2 Auditors

5.1.2.1 General

The **certification body** shall have a documented process to ensure that auditors have personal attributes, knowledge, and skills in accordance with the requirements of the PEFC endorsed forest management system.

5.1.2.2 Education

5.1.2.2.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education.

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

5.1.2.2.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors have taken formal forestry related courses.

5.1.2.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the **certification body** can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.

5.1.2.3 Working experience

5.1.2.3.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that the auditor has a minimum of three years full time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g. forestry, trees outside the forest, biodiversity, natural resources management).

5.1.2.3.2 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry, biodiversity, or natural resources management.

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

5.1.2.4 PEFC forest management training

The **certification body** shall ensure that new auditors have received and successfully completed initial training recognised by the PEFC Council on the PEFC endorsed sustainable forest management **certification system** or systems for the country/countries where they conduct audits before they start their auditing activities.

Note: The PEFC website provides further information on training options.

5.1.2.5 Audit training

The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011.

5.1.2.6 Audit experience

For the first qualification of an auditor, the **certification body** shall ensure that the auditor has performed, as auditor-in-training, at least 40 hours of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year.

Note: The 40-hour period as auditor-in-training should cover different types of audits (initial, surveillance and recertification).

5.1.2.7 Competencies

5.1.2.7.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors demonstrate ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard Benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003 and 1002, as implemented by the endorsed national and/or regional forest **certification system**, as applicable.

b) Audit principles, procedures, and techniques, and how to apply them appropriately to different audits while ensuring that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner.

c) Managing an organisation, including organisational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes, risk management and cultural and social aspects.

d) Appropriate knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where applicable, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements.

e) Knowledge of legislation, regulations, or other relevant requirements, including:

   i. Contracts and agreements and/or collective bargaining agreements (as applicable).

   ii. Forest governance and law enforcement system of the country, including those covering social, workers and trade union rights and occupational safety and health of workers.

   iii. International conventions relating to worker rights (ILO core conventions).

   iv. International treaties and conventions relating to forestry, forest trade, and tree-based products.

f) The principles of forest management based on techniques, including: inventory, planning, protection, management of forest ecosystems, identification and management of ecologically important forest areas, carbon stocks and biodiversity, as well as technical aspects of forest operations, and their potential impacts.

g) Understanding of and ability to interpret Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as it applies to forest monitoring and management.

h) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and protection; and

i) Application of risk assessment techniques.

5.1.2.7.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that the audit team consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.

5.1.2.8 Maintenance of the qualification as an auditor

5.1.2.8.1 *PEFC forest management training*

5.1.2.8.1.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the **certification body** shall ensure that qualified auditors participate in a PEFC forest management refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council whenever a new version of the forest management standard(s) they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.

5.1.2.8.1.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before conducting audits against the revised standard.

5.1.2.8.2 *Audit experience*

5.1.2.8.2.1 To maintain the auditor qualification, the **certification body** shall ensure that the auditor has performed a minimum of forty hours of forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) per year.

5.1.2.8.2.2 In exceptional circumstances, such as statutory leave, long-term illness, or inability of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 5.1.2.8.2.1 shall perform twenty hours of forest management audits under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or a formal evaluation of competencies by the **certification body** prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.

5.1.3 Audit team

5.1.3.1 General requirements

5.1.3.1.1 The audit team shall comprise auditor(s) fulfilling the requirements defined in 5.1.2.7.

5.1.3.1.2 The **certification body** shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including the audit team leader.

5.1.3.1.3 The **certification body** shall consider gender balance within the audit team.

5.1.3.2 Technical experts

5.1.3.2.1 The **certification body** may engage **technical experts** to support the audit team. **Technical experts** shall be independent of the **client**, and their names, qualifications and affiliations shall be included in the audit report.

5.1.3.2.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that any potential conflict of interest is declared and managed.

5.1.3.2.3 The **certification body** shall ensure that technical experts report to the audit team leader, only operate under their scope, do not make certification decisions and do not create findings.

5.1.3.3 Translators and interpreters

5.1.3.3.1 Translators and interpreters used in the audit shall be independent of the **client**.

5.1.3.3.2 In cases where independent translators and/or interpreters are not available, the names of the translators and their links with the **client** shall be included in the audit report.

5.1.3.3.3 The **certification body** shall make sure that any potential conflict of interest is managed.

5.1.4 Reviewers and certification decision makers

5.1.4.1 General

5.1.4.1.1 The **certification body** shall be responsible for and shall retain authority of its decisions relating to certification.

5.1.4.1.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** and the **certification decision maker** are independent of the audit team and the **client**.

5.1.4.1.3 The **certification body** shall ensure that the personnel involved in the reviewing and decision-making process have a legally binding relationship with the **certification body** that covers personnel's compliance with the requirements in this standard.

Note: The **reviewer** and the **certification decision maker** may be the same individual.

5.1.4.2 Education

5.1.4.2.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that **reviewer** and **certification decision maker** have the knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education.

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

5.1.4.2.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors have taken formal courses in forestry.

5.1.4.2.3 The specific education relating to forestry (requirement 5.1.4.2.2) can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the **certification body** can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.

5.1.4.3 Working experience

5.1.4.3.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** and **certification decision maker** have relevant experience according to the type of audits to be reviewed.

5.1.4.3.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** and **certification decision maker** have a minimum of three years full time experience in conformity assessment.

5.1.4.3.3 The number of years of total work experience may be reduced by one year if the **reviewer** and/or **certification decision maker** has completed a tertiary education in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, trees outside the forest, biodiversity, or natural resources management).

Note: Tertiary education, also referred to as third stage, third level, and post-secondary education, is the educational level following the completion of a school providing a secondary education. Tertiary education can be obtained, among others, at universities, technical schools, or colleges.

5.1.4.3.4 A qualified PEFC forest management auditor is considered as already meeting the minimum working experience required.

5.1.4.4 PEFC forest management training

5.1.4.4.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that new **reviewers** and **certification decision makers** have received initial training recognised by the PEFC Council on the PEFC endorsed sustainable forest management **certification system** or systems for the country/countries they conduct audits.

5.1.4.4.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that new **reviewers** and **certification decision makers** have successfully completed the training before they start their certification activities.

Note: The PEFC website and PEFC endorsed systems' websites provides further information on training options.

5.1.4.5 Audit training

The **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** and **certification decision maker** have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011.

5.1.4.6 Audit experience

For the first qualification of a **reviewer** or **certification decision maker**, the **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** or the **certification decision maker** has participated as an observer in forest management audits or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) covering at least eight hours. The observation shall include the opening meeting, a part of office assessment, a part of field assessment, and the closing meeting.

5.1.4.7 Competencies

5.1.4.7.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that the **reviewer** or **certification decision maker** demonstrate ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

a) Principles, objectives, requirements, criteria, and indicators of the PEFC forest management standard benchmarks, PEFC ST 1003 and 1002, as implemented by the endorsed national and regional forest **certification system**, as applicable. (In Romania that are PEFC-RO ST 8000:2024 and PEFC-RO ST 8001:2024)

b) Knowledge of the socio-demographics, sustainability issues, and cultural issues (including gender equality), indigenous interests and values and indigenous treaties, where application, and industrial relations in the region of application of the forest management requirements.

c) General knowledge of legislation, regulation or other relevant requirements pertaining to forest management, labour issues, and data privacy and protection.

d) The principles of forest management.

e) Management and control of online documents, data and records, confidential data, data privacy and data protection; and

f) Application of risk assessment techniques.

5.1.4.7.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that the team of **reviewers** and **certification decision makers** consists of individuals who collectively have all the required competencies for the scope of the audit.

5.1.4.8 Maintenance of the qualification as a reviewer or certification decision maker

5.1.4.8.1 *PEFC forest management training*

5.1.4.8.1.1 To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the **certification body** shall ensure that the qualified **reviewer** or **certification decision maker** participate in a PEFC forest management refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council whenever a new version of the PEFC forest management standard(s) they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.

5.1.4.8.1.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that such refresher training is successfully completed before conducting audits against the revised standard.

5.1.4.8.2 *Audit experience*

To maintain the reviewer or certification decision maker qualification, the **certification body** shall ensure that the qualified **reviewer** or **certification decision maker** has participated as observer in forest management or equivalent audits (e.g. trees outside the forest, ISO 9001, 14001 or 45001 auditing experience in the forestry or related sector, biodiversity, natural resources management) covering at least sixteen hours every two years, which includes a part of office assessment and a part of field assessment and a closing meeting.

Note: The observation may take place remotely using **ICT**.

5.2 Personnel records and annual monitoring

5.2.1 The **certification body** shall maintain records of personnel's compliance with the requirements of this chapter.

Note: Records can be available in digital format.

5.2.2 The **certification body** shall monitor the performance of forest management auditors annually, applying methods such as reviewing audit reports or clients' feedback, etc., based on the frequency with which they conduct audits and the level of risk linked to their activities.

5.2.3 As part of the monitoring, the **certification body** shall conduct an observation of each forest management auditor at least every five years.

5.2.4 The **certification body** shall maintain **documented information** of the performance of forest management auditors.

5.2.5 The **certification body** shall use the monitoring of auditor performance and observations to identify training needs.

Table: Overview of qualification requirements

	Auditor	Reviewer and certification decision maker
Education	• Knowledge corresponding to at least a tertiary education. • Formal forestry related courses • Specific education relating to forestry can be substituted by working experience in this sector if the **certification body** can demonstrate it is equivalent to the required education.	
Working experience	• Minimum of 3 years of full-time professional experience in a relevant discipline (e.g., (e.g. forestry, trees outside the forest, biodiversity, natural resources management). • May be reduced by 1 year, if the auditor has completed a tertiary education in forestry, biodiversity, or natural resources management.	• Relevant experience according to the type of the audits to be reviewed. • Minimum of 3 years full time experience in conformity assessment. • May be reduced by 1 year, if the **reviewer** and/or **certification decision maker** has completed a tertiary education in in a relevant discipline (e.g., forestry, tres outside the forest, biodiversity, natural resources management).

		• A qualified PEFC forest management auditor is considered as already meeting the minimum working experience required.
Training	• Initial training on PEFC sustainable forest management certification recognised by the PEFC Council before the start of auditing activities • ISO/IEC 19011	
Audit experience	• The auditor within the last 3 years has performed, as auditor-in-training, at least 40 hours of forest management or equivalent audits under the leadership of a qualified audit team leader within the last year	• The **reviewer** or the **certification decision maker** has participated as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits covering at least 8 hours. The observation shall include the opening meeting, a part of office assessment, a part of field assessment and the closing meeting.
Competencies	See requirement 5.1.2.7.	See requirement 5.1.4.7

Maintenance of the qualification		
Training	• Refresher training recognised by the PEFC Council before conducting audits against the revised standard whenever a new version of the standard (s) they are qualified to audit, or the standards with requirements for SFM certification bodies, is published.	
Audit experience	• Minimum of 40 hours of forest management audits per year, including at least 16 hours of forest management or equivalent audits. • In exceptional circumstances such as statutory leave, long term illness or inability of opportunities to provide certification services, auditors unable to comply with 5.1.2.8.1 shall perform at least 20 hours of forest management audits under the supervision of a qualified auditor within two years, or a formal evaluation of competencies by the **certification body** prior to the auditor taking back auditing activities.	• Participate as an observer in forest management or equivalent audits covering at least 16 hours every two years that includes a part of office assessment and a part of field assessment and a closing meeting.

Note: This table is a summary of the qualification requirements for auditors, **reviewers**, and **certification decision makers**. The actual requirements are in the text of this standard.

6. Information requirements

6.1 Public information

6.1.1 General

6.1.1.1 On request, the **certification body** shall provide **clients** and potential **clients** with details of their fee structure and the estimated cost of obtaining and maintaining certification.

6.2 Certification documents

6.2.1 Certification documents

6.2.1.1 The **certificate** shall include, as a minimum, the following information:

a) identification of the **certification body**

b) name and address of the **client**

c) unique certificate code

d) type of **certificate** (individual or group forest)

e) place and date of issue

f) the date of granting, extending or renewing certification and the expiry date or recertification due date

g) logo and/or signature of issuing party

h) scope of certification and standard or standards against which certification is issued

i) accreditation mark of the **accreditation body** as prescribed by the accreditation number (including accreditation number where applicable)

j) the logo of the endorsed system and the PEFC logo with the certification body's PEFC trademarks licence number (with a link to the PEFC website and a note that indicates that information on endorsed systems by PEFC is publicly available on the PEFC website); and,

k) note indicating that the updated information on the number of hectares covered by the **certificate** and the number of **participants** (if **group forest certificate**) can be checked on the PEFC database.

6.2.1.2 The effective date on a certification document shall not be before the date of the certification decision.

6.2.1.3 The certificate code shall be comprised of four pieces of information, each of them separated by a dash, in this order: AAACC-PEFCXX-FM-#######(-#), where:

- AAA is the abbreviation of the **certification body**. "AAA" is a variable length upper-case abbreviation of the **certification body** that issued the **certificate**. It only contains upper case English alphabet characters (A-Z) without any spacing. "CC" is the ISO 3166 Alpha 2 country code (https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#search) used to differentiate national certification body offices from their central office.
- PEFCXX. XX is the abbreviation of the country where the forest management standard belongs. For endorsed systems that have their own trademarks or abbreviations (i.e., they do not use 'PEFC' in their name), PEFCXX can be replaced by the abbreviation of the endorsed sustainable forest management system.
- FM. If a national, regional, or subnational **forest certification** system has more than one forest management standard endorsed by PEFC, or for forest management specific standards, such as

Tress Outside Forests (TOF), the FM abbreviation can be adapted accordingly, in coordination with the PEFC Council and/or the **PEFC authorised body**.

- ######: The numeric identification of the certified entity given by the **certification body**.
- (-#) Optionally, the numeric identification of the group **participant** given by the **certification body**, if any.

Note 1: The brackets () should not be included in the certificate number, they are for indication only.

Note 2: The **certification body** can decide on the numeric identification, in terms of length and digits, and also of the optional numeric identification of the group **participants**.

Example 1: XWZ-PEFCRO-FM-877506 (XWZ is a hypothetical abbreviation for a non-existing **certification body**).

Example 2: XWZ-SFI-FM-877506 (XWZ is a hypothetical abbreviation for a non-existing **certification body**).

Example 3: XWZ-PEFCIN-TOF-877506 (XWZ is a hypothetical abbreviation for a non-existing **certification body**).

6.2.1.4 The **certification body** shall coordinate its abbreviation with the PEFC Council prior to use. Two **certification bodies** shall not have the same abbreviation.

Note: The accepted abbreviation for a **certification body** is displayed on the PEFC website, under the Find Certification Bodies section.

6.2.1.5 **Certification bodies** shall use the same abbreviation with all certificate codes on any PEFC recognised **certificate** they issue against a PEFC endorsed forest management standard.

6.2.1.6 If an individual **certificate** covers several forest areas, those areas shall be described on the **certificate**, or an appendix to the **certificate.** Otherwise**,** the certificate shall include a reference to the PEFC database or the corresponding PEFC recognised database for the information related to the certified areas.

Note: PEFC recognised databases are available from the PEFC International database, accessible from the PEFC website.

6.3 Reference to certification and use of marks

6.3.1 Where the **certification body** uses the PEFC trademarks on the certification document, or for any other purposes linked to the PEFC forest **certification system**, the use shall only be carried out based on a valid license issued by the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body**, and in accordance with the PEFC ST 2001, PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements.

6.3.2 The **certification body** shall advise the **client** that the PEFC trademarks on the issued **certificate** only refer to the client's compliance with the PEFC forest **certification system** and do not confer any right to the **client** to use those trademarks unless the **client** holds a valid PEFC trademark license.

Note: The **client** can obtain a PEFC trademark license from the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body** based on the country where the **client** has its headquarters.

6.4 Confidentiality

6.4.1 The **certification body** shall limit the collection of personal data from the **client** to what is essential for the certification purposes. Collection of personal data shall always be conducted in compliance with any applicable legislation.

Note: A way to achieve this is providing generic information as contact person, and generic emails instead of personal emails, e.g., certification manager, certificationmanager@xmail.com.

6.5 Information exchange between the certification body and PEFC Council and/or the PEFC authorised body

6.5.1 The **certification body** shall immediately inform the relevant **PEFC authorised body**, or the PEFC Council where the **PEFC authorised body** does not exist, when certification is granted, suspended, terminated, withdrawn, its scope is changed or any other changes affecting the certification or the information that **certification bodies** shall report to PEFC.

6.5.2 The **certification body** shall collect and report information, as required by the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body**.

6.5.3 The **certification body** shall verify the area in hectares at each audit and advise the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body** of any change at least annually.

6.5.4 On request, the **certification body** shall provide to the PEFC Council or/and the **PEFC authorised body**, any information related to the certification process and the **client**, such as the full audit report or information on open nonconformities, when there is a concern of reputational risk for PEFC.

6.6 Engagement of affected stakeholders

6.6.1 General

6.6.1.1 The certification body shall verify the effectiveness of the client's process for engagement of **affected stakeholders** during the audit process.

6.6.1.2 During the audit process, the **certification body** shall consider the information, if any, provided by the **affected stakeholders**.

Note: This engagement process is not intended to bypass the regular complaints process of the **client** and the **certification body**.

6.6.2 Engagement process for affected stakeholders

6.6.2.1 The **certification body** shall have documented procedures for the engagement of **affected stakeholders**. This procedure shall ensure that any such engagement does not adversely impact impartiality, independence, and confidentiality with respect to the operations of the **certification body** or the **client**.

6.6.2.2 The certification body's procedure for the engagement of **affected stakeholders** shall include the following steps:

a) Verification of the effectiveness of the identification of stakeholders by the client

b) Ensuring public notification of the audit by the **client**.

c) Engagement with **affected stakeholders** during the audit process, as necessary.

d) Summary of affected stakeholder engagement process in the summary audit reports.

6.6.3 Identification of affected stakeholders

6.6.3.1 The **certification body** shall require the **client** to provide, in advance of the audit:

a) information on the client's identification of **affected stakeholders**

b) the relevant needs and expectations of these stakeholders

Note: The *PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management*, requires in clause 4.2 that the PEFC SFM certification holders shall determine the relevant needs and expectations of the affected stakeholders. This bullet b) refers to such identification, as reflected on the applicable national or regional certification system.

c) how they are considered within the forest management

6.6.3.2 The **certification body** shall consider such information when planning the audit.

6.6.4 Public notification of the audit

6.6.4.1 The **certification body** shall ensure that the dates of an initial or recertification audit are publicised to **affected stakeholders**, no less than 30 days prior to the audit.

6.6.4.2 The announcement may be made by the client or by the certification body itself.

6.6.4.3 The announcement shall explain that during the audit process, the auditors will assess the client's engagement with **affected stakeholders** and shall require the **client** to seek expressions of interest, in writing, from **affected stakeholders**.

6.6.5 Engagement with affected stakeholders during the audit process

6.6.5.1 The **certification body** shall consider feedback received and evaluate its relevance to the assessment of the certification requirements. The **certification body** shall consult with **affected stakeholders** as part of the audit process, as appropriate to the feedback received and to any requirements of the standards.

6.6.5.2 The **certification body** shall employ effective, culturally appropriate means to consult **affected stakeholders**.

6.6.5.3 The **audit plan** should allocate sufficient time for engagement with **affected stakeholders.**

6.6.6 Summary of affected stakeholder engagement process in summary audit reports

6.6.6.1 The summary audit report shall describe the **affected stakeholder** engagement process, including how affected stakeholder's comments were taken into account and any issues arising from the process.

6.6.6.2 The **certification body** shall ensure that the summary audit report does not include any confidential information provided by the affected stakeholders.

7. Process requirements

7.1 Pre-certification activities

7.1.1 Application

The **certification body** shall require the applicant **client** to provide the following information as part of the application for forest management certification:

a) Name and address of applicant **client**, corporate entity (if applicable), and legal status (including legal business registration).

b) Whether it is an individual or a group forest certificate

c) Area proposed for certification

d) Brief description of the forest proposed for certification and its management

e) Summary of technical facilities or resources (e.g., chemical storage, depots, maintenance facilities, firefighting facilities, administrative offices, etc.).

f) Any relevant information to assess if the application is to be treated as a transfer of certification instead of a new application.

g) Declaration on participation of the applicant **client** or the legal predecessor in PEFC or in another **certification system** for the purpose of forest management in the last five years. This shall include, but not be limited to, suspension, withdrawal, or termination of the certification in the last five years, identified nonconformities, certification decision, justification and any corrective actions that may have been taken and their resolutions.

h) Name of consultant/s engaged for PEFC certification implementation purposes, if any.

Note 1: The information does not have to be obtained at first contact with the applicant **client**, but at least before the application review takes place.

Note 2: The **certification body** may require additional information.

7.1.2 Application review

7.1.2.1 The **certification body** shall consider applications when all information listed under 7.1.1 has been provided.

Note: 7.1.2.13, 7.1.2.14 and 7.1.2.15 describe the requirements that the **certification body** shall follow when the application is a transfer of an existing **certificate** from one **certification body** to another and not a new application.

7.1.2.2 The **certification body** shall have a documented procedure for the review of applications.

7.1.2.3 The **certification body** shall ensure that the application review identifies and assesses the complexity and scale of the activities covered by the forest management subject to certification.

7.1.2.4 The **certification body** shall have a documented procedure to ensure that it has the competence and capability to provide certification services to the applicant **client**.

7.1.2.5 The certification body shall maintain a record of the justification for the decision to accept an application.

7.1.2.6 The **certification body** shall refuse to provide certification services if it lacks the competence or capability to do so.

7.1.2.7 Prior to acceptance, the **certification body** shall define criteria for the acceptance of the applicant **client**.

7.1.2.8 The criteria for acceptance shall identify any current or historic engagement in **corrupt practices** of the applicant **client**, or any legal predecessor.

7.1.2.9 The **certification body** shall evaluate the applicant **client** against the criteria, including, when relevant, any legal predecessors, and keep records of the evaluation. The evaluation shall determine the suitability of the applicant **client** for certification prior to acceptance.

7.1.2.10 The **certification body** shall reject applications where there is evidence of current engagement in **corrupt practices**.

7.1.2.11 In the case of historic engagement in **corrupt practices**, the **certification body** shall not accept the application unless there is evidence that the engagement in **corrupt practices** has stopped and that the applicant **client** or its legal predecessor is not subject to any ongoing investigation and/or sanctions.

7.1.2.12 The **certification body** shall assess information provided by the applicant **client** on its participation, or its legal predecessor's participation, in PEFC or in another **certification system** for the purpose of forest certification. If the participation in PEFC or in another **certification system** was suspended, withdrawn, or terminated, the **certification body** shall investigate the commitment and capacity of the applicant **client** to comply with PEFC certification requirements. If the investigation shows an inability or significant likelihood of failure to comply, the application shall not be further processed until the applicant **client** has demonstrated that it has the ability and commitment to comply.

7.1.2.13 When the **certification body** determines that the application is to be treated as a transfer of an existing **certificate** issued by another accredited **certification body**, the **certification body** shall operate according to IAF MD2.

7.1.2.14 In the case of transfer of certification, the **certification body** shall ensure that any open **major nonconformities** are closed prior to accepting the transfer of the **certificate**.

7.1.2.15 Transfer of certification is only possible if the accepting **certification body** is recognised by PEFC for the same system and according to the same accreditation standard.

7.1.2.16 The **certification body** shall communicate to the applicant **client** the result of the application review in writing. If the application is rejected, the **certification body** shall provide the justification to the applicant **client** in writing.

7.1.3 Audit programme

7.1.3.1 The **certification body** shall develop an **audit programme** that covers at least a certification cycle. The **audit programme** shall be maintained as **documented information**.

7.1.3.2 The **certification body** shall confirm the **audit programme** with the **client**. The **certification body** shall ensure that the **client** agrees with the way the audit will be conducted and the schedule of the audit.

7.1.3.3 The certification cycle shall not exceed 5 years.

7.1.3.4 When defining the **audit programme**, the **certification body** shall consider the information and the results of the application review and the information from prior audits (where applicable).

Note: Guidance for preparing the **audit programme** is provided by ISO 19011, clause 5.

7.1.3.5 The **certification body** shall identify season-specific activities and ensure that these are covered within the 5-year **audit programme.**

Example: Season-specific activities are, e.g., forest establishment, seeding and planting or forest fire reduction and related site preparation activities, or inventory may only happen at certain season.

7.1.3.6 The **certification body** shall include in each audit (surveillance audits and initial and re-certification audits) assessment of any requirements that cover the following areas, as appropriate:

a) Forest conversion and requirements related to degraded forest.

b) Maintenance, conservation, or enhancement of biodiversity and significantly high carbon stock.

c) Requirements related to ecologically important forest areas.

d) Compliance with fundamental ILO conventions.

e) Legal compliance obligations.

f) Indigenous peoples' rights, customary and traditional rights related to the forest land.

g) Health, safety and working conditions.

7.1.3.7 Where the **certification body** considers that feedback is critical to assess the client's compliance with certification requirements that may impact **affected stakeholders**, such as those related to human rights, local communities, customary and traditional rights related to forest land, and health, safety and working conditions, or any other requirements, the **certification body** shall seek feedback from **affected stakeholders**.

7.1.4 Risk-based approach

7.1.4.1 The **certification body** shall determine and document the risk profile associated with each **client**.

7.1.4.2 The **certification body** shall periodically review the risk profile and adjust the **audit programme** and the **audit plans** accordingly.

7.1.4.3 The **certification body** shall ensure that the **audit programme** and **audit plans** for each **client** are developed in consideration of the client's risk profile.

7.1.4.4 The indicators to be considered as part of the risk assessment in Romania categorized by importance are:

High-Risk Indicators:

Illegal Logging Hotspots: Clients operating in regions known for illegal logging activities or where enforcement of forestry regulations is historically weak.

Protected Areas: Clients with operations adjacent to or within protected areas, where compliance with conservation regulations is critical.

Corruption Risk: Clients operating in regions with a high risk of corruption or regulatory capture, which may compromise compliance efforts.

Fragmented Forest Structure: Clients operating in areas characterized by fragmented forest landscapes, where forests are divided into smaller, disconnected patches due to historical land-use patterns, infrastructure development, or land ownership structures.

Medium-Risk Indicators:

Variable Compliance History: Clients with a history of intermittent compliance issues, reflecting challenges in maintaining consistent adherence to regulations.

Small to Medium-Sized Administration: Administrators with limited resources and capacity for comprehensive compliance management, posing moderate risks.

Community Relations: Clients with operations in areas where community conflicts or grievances related to forestry activities are occasionally reported.

Limited Monitoring and Control: Clients with operations in remote or difficult-to-access areas, where

monitoring and control of forestry activities may be challenging.

Low-Risk Indicators:

Certified Forest Management Units: Clients with certified forest management units or operations adhering to recognized sustainable forestry standards, indicating a strong commitment to compliance.

PEFC certified service providers: Clients exclusively or predominantly utilizing PEFC certified service providers across their activities like harvesting or planting, ensuring that all aspects of their operations adhere to PEFC standards and reducing the risk of non-compliance.

Investment in Technology: Clients leveraging technology for improved monitoring, data collection, and compliance management, enhancing transparency and accountability.

Active Engagement: Clients actively engaged in stakeholder dialogue, community consultation, and collaborative initiatives to address environmental and social concerns.

By focusing on these specific risk indicators tailored to Romania's context, certification bodies can conduct more targeted risk assessments and allocate resources effectively to ensure the integrity and credibility of PEFC certification in the country.

Note 1: The risk profile will assist in determining the duration of the initial and Stage 2 (certification) assessments and the development of the **audit programme** and **audit plans**, including surveillance and recertification assessments.

Note 2: Information on how to conduct a risk assessment can be found in ISO 31000.

7.1.5 Determining audit time

7.1.5.1 Detailed requirements for determining audit time

a) area covered by the certificate and changes to the certified area

Certification bodies shall:

Document the total certified area: Ensure accurate measurement and documentation of the total area under certification.

Monitor changes in the certified area: Track any expansions or reductions in the certified area since the last audit.

Adjust audit time based on area size: Larger areas should correspond to longer audit times due to the increased scope and complexity.

b) forest types, locations, silviculture, and geography

Certification bodies shall:

Identify and document forest types: Record the diversity and specific types of forests within the certified area.

Assess geographical complexity: Evaluate the terrain, including mountainous, hilly, or flat areas, which may impact the audit process.

Evaluate silvicultural practices: Examine the forest management practices in place, such as selective logging, clear-cutting, or agroforestry.

Adjust audit time based on diversity and complexity: More diverse and geographically complex areas require more detailed audits.

c) number of participants, size, and structure

Certification bodies shall:

Maintain a registry of participants: Keep an updated list of all participants involved in the forest

management unit, including their roles and responsibilities.

Evaluate organizational size and structure: Assess the complexity of the organizational hierarchy and the number of participants.

Adjust audit time based on participant number and structure: Larger and more complex organizations should be allocated more audit time.

d) number of effective full-time workers (including contractors and subcontractors)

Certification bodies shall:

Collect data on workforce composition: Document the number of full-time employees, contractors, and subcontractors.

Assess the scale of subcontracting: Evaluate the extent to which forest management activities are outsourced.

Adjust audit time based on workforce size and subcontracting: More workers and extensive use of subcontractors necessitate additional audit time.

e) number and location of offices, depots, workshops, visitor facilities, fire towers, and other infrastructure

Certification bodies shall:

Map all critical infrastructure: Record the locations of all offices, depots, workshops, visitor facilities, fire towers, and other relevant infrastructure.

Evaluate the dispersion and accessibility of infrastructure: Consider the distribution and ease of access to these facilities.

Adjust audit time based on infrastructure complexity: More dispersed or numerous facilities require more audit time.

f) outsourcing of activities

Certification bodies shall:

Identify all outsourced activities: Document any forest management activities performed by third-party contractors.

Evaluate the performance of outsourced activities: Review contracts, performance records, and compliance of outsourced activities with forest management standards.

Adjust audit time based on the extent of outsourcing: Significant outsourcing should lead to increased audit time to ensure compliance.

g) season-specific activities

Certification bodies shall:

Document season-specific activities: Identify activities that occur only in certain seasons, such as planting or harvesting.

Plan audits to coincide with these activities: Schedule audits during periods when season-specific activities are taking place.

Adjust audit time to cover season-specific activities: Allocate additional time to ensure thorough assessment of these activities.

h) other issues (transport, roads, sale of forest products)

Certification bodies shall:

Evaluate logistical aspects: Assess the condition of transport infrastructure, road accessibility, and logistics related to the sale and transport of forest products.

Adjust audit time based on logistical complexity: Areas with difficult access or complex logistics require more audit time.

i) management system, including complaints resolution process, and internal monitoring

Certification bodies shall:

Assess the effectiveness of the management system: Review the forest management system, including policies, procedures, and documentation.

Evaluate internal monitoring and complaints resolution processes: Examine the internal audit reports, complaint logs, and resolution actions.

Adjust audit time based on management system performance: Effective systems may reduce audit time, while systems with deficiencies require more thorough audits.

j) results of prior audits

Certification bodies shall:

Review prior audit findings: Analyse reports from previous audits to identify areas of concern or improvement.

Consider historical non-conformities and improvements: Use past audit data to guide current audit planning.

Adjust audit time based on previous audit results: More time should be allocated to areas with past non-conformities.

k) risk indicators and results from the risk assessment as per 7.1.4.

Certification bodies shall:

Conduct a comprehensive risk assessment: Use a standardized framework to evaluate potential risks.

Identify high and low-risk clients: Categorize based on their risk profile.

Adjust audit time based on risk level: High-risk clients should receive more audit attention, while low-risk may require less time.

l) geolocation of the forest management unit and remote sensing

Certification bodies shall:

Utilize geolocation and remote sensing tools: Implement technologies such as satellite imagery to monitor the forest management unit.

Identify areas at risk for deforestation or degradation: Use remote sensing data to highlight potential problem areas.

Adjust audit time based on remote sensing findings: Allocate more time to areas identified as high-risk through remote sensing analysis.

7.1.6 Sampling

7.1.6.1 The **certification body** shall develop a sampling plan that considers the results of the risk assessment.

7.2 Planning

7.2.1 Determining audit objectives, scope, and criteria

7.2.1.1 The **certification body** shall clearly define the scope, the extent, and the boundaries of the audit, such as **participants**, organisational units, activities, and processes to be audited.

7.2.1.2 The **certification body** shall plan the tools and audit techniques that will be used during the audit.

It shall be clearly defined for which purpose the tools and techniques are used and which requirements are covered by which tools and techniques, if applicable.

7.2.1.3 The **certification body** shall consider the following criteria when defining the scope:

a) Representation: the client's operations and processes shall be randomly but representatively considered. The **certification body** shall determine the processes that it considers important to be evaluated. The effectiveness of these processes shall be reflected in the audit report.

b) Protection: areas with high impact on the achievement of the objectives of the forest management standard and identified ecologically important forest areas shall be considered.

c) Correction: high risk areas and areas with previously identified nonconformities shall be considered.

d) Prevention: the areas to be audited shall be determined by the **certification body** after its risk assessment.

7.2.2 Audit plan

7.2.2.1 The **certification body** shall have documented procedures to ensure that a risk-based **audit plan** is established for each audit and selected **participant**. The **audit plan** shall provide the basis to conduct and schedule the audit activities.

7.2.2.2 The **certification body** shall consider existing complaints and **substantiated concerns** when planning the audit.

7.2.2.3 The **audit plan**, including the dates for the audits, shall be communicated no less than ten days in advance and agreed upon with the **client**.

Note: Guidance for preparing the **audit plan** is provided by ISO 19011:2018, clause 6.3.2.

7.2.2.4 The **certification body** shall define the timelines for the submission of the audit report by the **certification body** to the **client** for confirmation of the findings.

Note: The **certification body** may increase the timelines for submission of the audit report in circumstances where more time is needed to fully assess information that has come to hand during an audit. In such circumstances, the **certification body** shall advise the **client** accordingly and provide written justification for the additional time. The **certification body** shall note any such change in the Summary Audit Report.

7.3 Initial certification

7.3.1 Stage 1

7.3.1.1 The Stage 1 audit has the function of a document and "readiness" review. The scope of this Stage 1 audit shall comprise, at least:

a) Confirming the scope and objective of the certification audit.

b) Confirming the **participants**, locations, and activities covered by the sustainable forest management system.

c) Auditing the client's forest management documentation.

d) Evaluation of any forest management area specific conditions, as applicable.

e) Evaluating the client's procedures for internal audits and management system integrity and the effectiveness of their implementation.

f) Determining the conformity of the client's procedures for the use of the PEFC trademarks and the use of the PEFC endorsed systems trademarks, if applicable.

g) Evaluating the client's identification of **affected stakeholders**, their needs and expectations, and how those are considered within the forest management, and consider feedback received from **affected stakeholders** during the public notification of the audit and evaluate its relevance .

h) Determining risks to be considered in the Stage 2 audit.

i) Finalising the **audit plan** for Stage 2.

7.3.1.2 The Stage 1 audit may be conducted remotely using ICT, according to 7.4.3.

7.3.2 Stage 2

7.3.2.1 The **certification body** shall assess the client's implementation of the system requirements, including its forest management system, processes, and procedures. The Stage 2 audit shall include in-the-forest assessment of the client's forest management activities. Where appropriate, the **certification body** may conduct parts of the Stage 2 audit remotely using **ICT**, in accordance with 7.4.3.

Note: Examples of elements of the **audit plan** where **ICT** could be used are interviews with employees, and review of information in electronic format.

7.3.2.2 The **audit plan** for the Stage 2 audit shall be adapted based on any **substantiated concerns** and the findings from the review conducted in the Stage 1 audit.

7.4 Conducting audits

7.4.1 Conducting the opening meeting

In cases where some or all elements of the audit are conducted remotely, the **certification body** may conduct the opening meetings remotely using **ICT** according to IAF MD4, and any other requirements established by this standard.

7.4.2 Conducting the closing meeting

7.4.2.1 The audit team leader shall conduct a closing meeting with the certification management and senior management of the **client** to present the audit findings, and any recommendations related to continued certification. The list of attendees in this meeting shall be recorded.

7.4.2.2 The audit team leader shall ensure that the **client** is able to understand the conclusions and especially all the nonconformities found.

7.4.2.3 In cases where some or all elements of the audit are conducted remotely, the **certification body** may conduct the formal closing meeting remotely using **ICT** according to IAF MD4 and any other requirements established by this standard.

7.4.3 Remote audits

7.4.3.1 The **certification body** may use, where appropriate, ICT methods to conduct remote audits for:

- Stage 1 of the initial certification
- Elements of the surveillance audits or a full surveillance audit,
- **Special audits;**
- Non-field parts of stage 2 of the initial certification audit
- Non-field parts of the recertification audit

Example: Non-field parts of the stage 2 of the initial audit or recertification audit are the closing meeting, closure of nonconformities or administrative work.

7.4.3.2 Audits may include **ICT** methods beyond requirement 7.4.3.1 when exceptional circumstances do not allow the auditors to conduct in field visit of the **client.**

Note: Exceptional circumstances are, for example, restrictions because of national or local rules or health risks.

7.4.3.3 The **certification body** shall have documented procedures for conducting remote audits or parts of

audits remotely using ICT, which includes, as a minimum:

a) criteria and indicators to assess the appropriateness of the use of **ICT**

b) risks associated with its use and how they may impact audit effectiveness

c) available technology and how it will be used

d) eligibility criteria of the **client** (e.g., accessibility of digital files, access to documented management system)

e) **client** capacities

7.4.3.4 The **certification body** shall conduct an assessment of the risks and opportunities associated with the use of **ICT** and the justification of their use. The **certification body** shall maintain **documented information** of this assessment.

7.4.3.5 Certification processes may include **ICT** when:

a) The effectiveness and/or efficiency of the audit can be increased with **ICT** while maintaining the integrity of the audit/assessment process.

b) The **certification body** can justify that the audit techniques used deliver sufficient confidence in the client's compliance with the certification criteria;

c) The certification body's assessment as per 7.4.3.4, according to its procedure to conduct remote audits as per 7.4.3.3, results in a low risk when conducting the audit or part of the audit remotely; and,

d) the **client** has a centrally controlled management system accessible remotely and provides the **certification body** with the necessary records required to conduct the audit or parts to the audit remotely.

7.4.3.7 The **certification body** shall ensure that auditors using **ICT** have been provided with appropriate training and are qualified for the use of **ICT**.

7.4.3.8 The **certification body** shall seek confirmation of acceptance from the **client** prior to the use of **ICT** during the audit.

7.4.3.9 Prior to the conduct of the audit, the **certification body** shall define the **ICT** to be used and make sure of its efficiency and effectiveness through testing and any other means, as appropriate.

7.4.4 Summary audit report

7.4.4.1 In addition to the audit report, the **certification body** shall prepare a summary of the audit report.

7.4.4.2 The summary audit report shall include, as a minimum, the following information:

a) Name and description of the **certification body**, name and description of the **client**, and date of the report.

b) Number of hectares at the time of the audit.

c) Description of the **certified area**.

d) Audit scope, objectives, and process, including standard/s and applied certification criteria, summary of risk assessment, and if remote technology is used, technology and justification for the use.

e) Summary of the **audit plan**, including dates, stakeholder engagement process, locations and activities assessed, audit duration (split by proportion spent on-site and remotely – where relevant) and number of **participants** on the audit team, its qualifications and experience.

f) Audit results:

   i. summary of findings demonstrating conformity or nonconformity

ii. brief description of any **major nonconformities** and verification of effectiveness of the actions taken to address the nonconformities,

iii. brief description of **minor nonconformities,**

iv. evaluation of the effectiveness of the action taken to address any **minor nonconformities** in previous audit reports, and, and

v. recommended certification decision.

7.4.4.3 The summary audit report shall not include confidential data.

7.4.4.4 The **certification body** shall provide a copy of the summary audit report to the **client**, the PEFC Council, and/or the **PEFC authorised body**.

7.4.4.5 On request by either the **client**, the PEFC Council, or the **PEFC authorised body**, the **certification body** shall provide a copy of the summary audit report in English.

7.4.4.6 The summary of the audit report shall be made publicly available on the PEFC database which is externally accessible through the PEFC website.

7.4.5 Cause analysis of nonconformities

7.4.5.1 The **certification body** shall classify nonconformities identified during the audit as major and minor.

7.4.5.2 The **certification body** shall require the **client** to:

a) determine the root cause of the nonconformity

b) develop a corrective action plan to address the identified cause

c) specify timeframe for completion, and

d) assign responsibilities for the implementation of the action plan

7.4.5.3 Before the action plan is implemented, the **certification body** shall assess the action plan provided by the **client**, including the timeframe and personnel responsible. As part of the assessment, the **certification body** shall verify that the action plan adequately addresses the nonconformities.

7.4.5.4 In case where an action plan is rejected, the **certification body** shall provide an explanation as to why the action plan has been rejected and provide an opportunity for the **client** to review and re-submit the action plan.

7.4.6 Effectiveness of corrections and corrective actions

7.4.6.1 The certification body shall evaluate effectiveness of corrective action(s) for all nonconformities identified in audits prior to closing the nonconformities.

7.4.6.2 The **certification body** shall verify **major nonconformities** on-site unless verification can be undertaken without on-site verification using **ICT**. The certification shall justify and document why verification can be undertaken through **ICT**.

7.4.6.3 The time period for completion of the corrective action(s) for **major nonconformities** identified in audits and their verification by the **certification body** shall follow the rules of the **certification body** but not exceed three months.

7.4.6.4 If specific natural conditions or extraordinary circumstances do not allow the implementation of corrective actions within the timeframes described in 7.4.5.3, the **certification body** may give an exemption. The maximum time period is 12 months, and the justification shall be documented.

Example: Extraordinary circumstances could include a pandemic situation, civil conflict, lack of security, or a natural disaster.

7.4.6.5 The certification body shall verify the effectiveness of corrective action(s) for **minor nonconformities** no later than at the next audit.

7.4.6.6 Where the actions taken to address a **major nonconformity** have not effectively addressed the issue within the time frame agreed with the certification body, the **certification body** shall either suspend or withdraw the **certificate**, as appropriate,

7.4.6.7 The **certification body** shall have procedures for immediate suspension or withdrawal of the **certificate** in cases of identification of non-reversible nonconformities or in case of intentional corrupt or fraudulent activities by certified organisations.

Note 1: Non-reversible nonconformities are deliberate, serious, and significant **major nonconformities** that cannot be remedied in a reasonable time frame.

Note 2: Fraudulent activities include infringement of legislation.

7.5 Certification decision

7.5.1 General

7.5.1.1 Before granting initial certification and recertification, the certification body shall:

a) review, accept and verify the correction and corrective actions for any major nonconformities, and

b) review and accept the client's plan for correction and corrective action for **minor nonconformities**.

7.5.2 Certification status

7.5.2.1 The **certification body** shall define the status of the certification as:

a) Valid

b) Suspended

c) Withdrawn

d) Terminated

e) Expired

Note: Additionally, when a national or regional forest management standard or forest **certification system** loses PEFC endorsement or the endorsement is suspended, the PEFC Council considers any **certificates** issued against the standard or system that is no longer endorsed or which endorsement is suspended as not-PEFC recognised. The status is correspondingly updated on the PEFC website and **client** affected by the suspension or termination are no longer allowed to make PEFC claims or use the PEFC trademarks in any way.

7.5.2.2 If certification is terminated, suspended, or withdrawn, or PEFC Council suspends or terminates the endorsement of the national or regional forest **certification system**, the **certification body** shall inform the **client** that any further use of the PEFC trademarks and claims is not allowed. In case of suspension, the **certification body** shall monitor whether the **client** is in compliance.

7.6 Maintaining certification

7.6.1 Surveillance activities

7.6.1.1 Surveillance audits shall be carried out at least annually. The **certification body** shall carry out at least four surveillance audits before the expiry date of the **certificate**.

Note 1: Annually means once every twelve months, plus or minus three months.

Note 2: If the **certificate** is valid for less than five years, the number of surveillance audits can be reduced accordingly.

7.6.1.2 In justified circumstances, the frequency of surveillance audits may be increased by the **certification body** according to the level of overall risk related to the profile of the **client** and the results of previous audits.

7.6.1.3 Parts of the surveillance audit or the full surveillance audit, where appropriate, may be conducted

remotely using **ICT** in accordance with 7.4.3 if:

a) no **major nonconformity** was raised during the previous audit

b) **minor nonconformity/ies** can be verified remotely, and

c) the **client** has a centrally controlled management system accessible remotely and provides the **certification body** with all the records required to conduct the audit

7.6.1.4 The **certification body** shall not carry out more than two consecutive full surveillance audits using completely remote means.

7.6.2 Recertification

7.6.2.1 The recertification audit shall take place on-site. Certain parts of the recertification audit, for example the opening meeting, the closing meeting, closure of **minor nonconformities** or other administrative processes, e.g., system documentation, review of the internal audit or of the client's management review, may take place remotely, as per 7.4.3. The **audit plan** shall identify which components of the audit can be effectively conducted remotely.

7.6.3 Special audits

7.6.3.1 General

7.6.3.1.1 The **certification body** may conduct different types of **special audits**, according to the requirements of this chapter.

7.6.3.1.2 Certain components of the **special audits** or the full **special audit**, such as the opening and closing meetings, or closure of **minor nonconformities** and administrative processes, may take place remotely, as per 7.4.3. The **audit plan** shall identify which components of the audit can be effectively conducted remotely.

7.6.3.2 Expanding scope

The **certification body** may conduct expanding scope audits when a request for scope extension made by the **client.** Scope expansion requires assessment in order to decide whether the extension can be granted.

Note: Expanding scope audits may happen where there is a significant change to the defined certified forest area. An expansion of scope may happen, for example, to accommodate new forest types or a change on the significant change on the forest management.

7.6.3.3 Unannounced or short-notice audits

7.6.3.3.1 Unannounced audits may take place when the **certification body** has a **substantiated concern** that the **client** is knowingly breaching a requirement in the standard.

7.6.3.3.2 The certification body may suspend or withdrawn a certificate if the client does not accept an unannounced or short-notice audit without justified circumstances.

7.6.3.3.3 The **certification body** shall define the conditions under which it carries out short-notice and unannounced audits and inform the **client** accordingly.

7.6.3.3.4 The conditions shall include the investigation of **substantiated concerns** and other reasons.

7.7 Appeals

7.7.1 The **certification body** shall have a documented appeals process whereby **clients** can appeal certification decisions.

Note: The term appeal is defined in ISO 17000:2020.

7.7.2 The **certification body** shall make publicly available its appeal procedure, including clear timelines.

7.8 Complaints

7.8.1 The **certification body** shall have a documented complaints process whereby any person or organisation can raise complaints in relation with the certification process.

Note: The term complaint is defined in ISO 17000:2020.

7.8.2 These actions shall include at least a publicly available mechanism for stakeholders to report instances of potential misrepresentation or corruption.

7.8.3 The **certification body** shall make publicly available its complaints process, including clear timelines.

7.8.4 The **certification body** shall inform the complainant about its investigations, the corresponding results and in case, the action to be taken by each party.

7.8.5 The certification body shall inform the **PEFC authorised body** within 7 days of becoming aware of a substantiated concern. Where appropriate, the certification body shall also inform the client and/or the PEFC Council.

7.8.7 The **certification body** shall provide to the **PEFC authorised body**, on request, the details of investigation, including the results, related to a substantiated concern and complaint about a **client**. On request, the information shall also be provided to the PEFC Council.

7.8.6 On request by the PEFC authorised body, the **certification body** shall provide a summary of the complaints they have received, as they pertain to the PEFC endorsed system. On request by the **PEFC authorised body**, this summary shall be provided in English.

Note: The PEFC authorised body will specify the specified period of time that the summary should cover and the information the summary should cover. This summary may cover:

a) identification of the appellant/complainant (subject to disclosure)

b) identification of the **client**, including certificate number (if **group forest certification**, identification of the **participant/s** affected by the complaint)

c) description

d) subject of the complaint

e) summary of the complaint handling process

f) requirement not complied with

g) evidence

h) outcome/resolution of the complaint

7.8.7 The **certification body** shall provide to the PEFC Council and the **PEFC authorised body**, on request, any information of their investigation of a substantiated concern received against a **client**.

8. Management system requirements

8.1 General

8.1.1 The **certification body** shall have a system in place to maintain knowledge of and track changes in local, national, and international legislation on forest management applicable to its **clients**.

Note: A list of applicable legislation can be found on Appendix 4.

8.1.2 On request, the **certification body** shall provide to the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body** any information necessary for PEFC monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, management of risks of conflict of interest or impartiality and certification body rules and procedures for identifying and dealing with non-compliance by **clients**.

8.1.3 In addition to the complaints and appeals mechanisms, the **certification body** shall conduct monitoring activities to identify and mitigate misrepresentation or corruption.

8.1.4 The **certification body** shall protect the confidentiality and safety of **affected stakeholders** or any other person providing information in relation to PEFC certification, such as complaints and appeals.

8.2 Internal audits of the certification body

8.2.1 On request, the **certification body** shall provide a summary of results of its annual internal audits, limited to the performance of PEFC forest management certification, to the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body**.

Appendix 1 (normative): Group Forest Management Certification

1. Introduction

This appendix includes complementary requirements to those on the main body of this ST 1004, to be implemented by **certification bodies** operating **group certification**. This Appendix shall be implemented together with the main text of the standard. The objective of these complementary requirements is to ensure that the audit provides adequate confidence in the conformity of the group certification client's forest management with the forest management standard, across all **participants**, and that the audit is practical and feasible in both economic and operative terms.

2. Legal and contractual matters

2.1 Certification agreement

2.1.1 The certification agreement shall allow the **certification body** to carry out the certification activities for all **participants** of the **group certification**.

3. Information requirements

3.1 Certification documents

3.1.1 Certificate

3.1.1.1 For **group forest certification**, the **certification body** shall issue one single **certificate** with the name and address of the **group entity** of the **client**. The **certificate** shall include a reference to a PEFC recognised database for the information of the **participants** on the **certificate**. The scope or other reference on the **certificate** shall make clear that the scope of the management system covers all **participants** in the list.

Note: PEFC recognised databases are available from the PEFC International database, accessible from the PEFC website.

3.1.1.2 For **group forest certification**, the **certification body** shall issue one single **certificate** with the name and address of the **group entity** of the **client**. The **certificate** shall include a reference to the PEFC database or the corresponding PEFC recognised database for the information relating to the **participants** covered by the **certificate**. The scope or other reference on the **certificate** shall make clear that the scope of the management system covers all **participants** in the list.

Note: PEFC recognised databases are available from the PEFC International database, accessible from the PEFC website.

3.1.1.3 The **certification body** shall have access to the list of all **participants**, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and its/their size(s), and any other information as required by the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body**, that the **group entity** maintains. This information shall also be accessible to the **PEFC authorised body** and/or the PEFC Council.

3.1.1.4 Where a sub-certificate is issued to the **participants**, it shall contain the same scope, or a sub-scope of that scope, and include a clear reference to the main **certificate**. The sub-certificate shall include a statement saying, "the validity of this sub-certificate depends on the validity of the main **certificate**, which shall be verified in the PEFC database". In cases where the sub-certificate also includes a sub-certificate number, it shall be linked to the main certificate number and be included in the **certificate**.

4. Process requirements

4.1 Pre-certification activities

4.1.1 General

4.1.1.1 The **certification body** shall provide information to the **client** about the eligibility criteria and applicable requirements for **group forest certification**, before starting the audit process.

Note 1: Eligibility criteria for the **group forest certification** organisation, including definitions, are included in PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*, as implemented in the national or regional forest **certification system**. In addition to general eligibility criteria, PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements,* as implemented in the national or regional system, contains requirements concerning functions and responsibilities of the **group entity** and the **participants** of a **group forest certification** model.

Note 2: In Romania PEFC-RO ST 8010:2024 - Group Certification

4.1.2 Application review

4.1.2.1 The **certification body** shall require the applicant **client** to provide the following information as part of the application for forest management certification:

a) In addition to the name and address of applicant **client**, corporate entity (if applicable), and legal status (including legal business registration). For a **group forest certificate**, number of **participants**, summary of their forest area, location and access to the **documented information** where the register of participants is maintained.

4.1.2.2 The **certification body** shall identify the **group entity** of the **client** that is its contractual partner and has full responsibility for the performance of the applicant **client**.

4.1.2.3 The **certification body** shall reject the application (if initial audit) or suspend the **certificate** (if surveillance or recertification audit), if any of the eligibility criteria for the **group certification** are not met.

4.2 Planning

4.2.1 Audit programme

4.2.1.1 The **certification body** shall have documented procedures for **group certification**.

4.2.1.2 The **certification body** shall establish the way the **certification body** satisfies itself, inter alia, that the forest management requirements are applied to all the **participants** and that the management system certification is effectively implemented by all the participants and ensures that the criteria in the forest management standard are met.

4.2.2 Determining audit time

4.2.2.1 The **certification body** shall be able to demonstrate its justification for the time spent on group certification audits in terms of its overall policy for allocation of audit time and as determined by the national or regional forest **certification system**.

4.3 Sampling

4.3.1 General

4.3.1.1 The **certification body** shall have procedures for the selection of **participants** in the **audit programme/plans**. As a minimum, these procedures shall include:

a) determination of sample categories

b) determination of the sample size

c) selection of the **participants**

4.3.2 Determination of the sample size

4.3.2.1 Generally, the size of the sample to be audited individually should be:

For initial and recertification audits, the square root of the number of the **participants** to be visited during the internal audits, rounded to the upper whole number.

$y=\sqrt{x}$

y = number of **participants** to be visited during the external audit

x = total number of **participants** visited during the internal audit

For surveillance audits: the square root of the number of the **participants** to be visited during the internal audit, reduced by a factor 0.5 and rounded to the upper whole number.

$y= 0.5 \sqrt{x}$

y = number of **participants** to be visited during the external audit

x = total number of **participants** visited on the internal audit

Note: The number of **participants** refers to the minimum number of **participants** to be visited according to the PEFC ST 1002:2018.

4.3.2.2 The size of the sample for external audits can be adapted taking into account one or more of the following indicators:

a) Based on the risk-based classification, the sample size for external audits shall be adjusted as follows:

i. High Risk: Increase the sample size by 30% to ensure a more rigorous assessment.

$y= 1.3 \sqrt{x}$ - rounded to the upper whole number

ii. Medium Risk: Maintain the standard sample size.

iii. Low Risk: Decrease the sample size by 30% if justified by strong internal controls and historical performance. results of internal audits or previous certification audits

$y= 0.7 \sqrt{x}$ - rounded to the upper whole number

b) quality / level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme. The certification body shall review the results of internal audits and previous certification audits to identify trends, recurring issues, or areas of concern.

Adjustments to the sample size shall be made based on these findings:

i. Categories with higher instances of non-conformities may require larger sample sizes.

$y= 1.2 \sqrt{x}$ - rounded to the upper whole number

ii. Categories with consistently good performance may justify a reduced sample size.

$y= 0.8 \sqrt{x}$ - rounded to the upper whole number

c) use of technologies allowing the gathering of information concerning specific requirements may decrease the sample size by up to 50%.

$y= 0.5 \sqrt{x}$ - rounded to the upper whole number

Note 1: Such technologies may include the use of remote sensing, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Forest Monitoring and Data Management Tools, Remote Monitoring Platforms, Analytical Tools and Artificial Intelligence which allow compliance statements for specific requirements of a sustainability standard.

4.3.2.3 The calculated sample shall be distributed between the categories.

4.3.2.4 When appropriate, the **certification body** shall increase its sampling frequency according to results from previous internal and external audits.

4.3.3 Selection of participants

The risk-based selection of participants that will be audited shall be based on the same indicators as defined in chapter 7.4.1

4.3.3.1 The sampling method shall include random selection. Random selection shall represent at least 25% of the sample. The **participants** selected for the audit through the sampling shall vary from year to year, unless specific circumstances that require the some of the participants to be audited in consecutive audits (e.g. size of the forest area).

4.3.3.2 In selecting the **participants**, the **certification body** shall select a sample of **participants** that have undergone internal auditing during the current certification cycle of five years, in order to be able to inspect the system stability, and a sample of **participants** that have not undergone the internal audit.

Note: Requirements for group forest certification and internal audits are described in PEFC ST 1002 and the corresponding national and regional adaption of this standard. In Romania that is PEFC-RO ST 8010:2024.

4.4 Conducting audits

4.4.1 Cause analysis of nonconformities

4.4.1.1 When nonconformities are found at any individual **participant**, either through the client's internal auditing or through the certification body's audit, an investigation shall take place to determine whether the other **participants** may be affected.

4.4.1.2 The **certification body** shall require the **client** to conduct a root cause analyses to review the nonconformities to determine if there is risk of a forest management system deficiency applicable to all **participants**.

4.4.1.3 If risks of a forest management system deficiency applicable to all **participants** are identified, the **certification body** shall require the **client** to implement corrective actions at both **group entity** and **individual participant** levels.

4.4.1.4 If during the audit the **certification body** identifies a nonconformity at one or more **participants** that may lead to a systemic failure, the nonconformity shall be raised at group level.

4.4.1.5 If the number of nonconformities in individual **participants** identified during the audit may signify a systematic problem with the group's internal management system, nonconformities shall be issued to the whole group.

4.4.1.6 It shall not be admissible that, to overcome the obstacle raised by the existence of a nonconformity at one single **participant**, the **client** seeks to exclude from the scope the "problematic" **participant** during the certification process.

Appendix 2 (normative): Accreditations accepted by the PEFC Council

1. Forest management or product certification shall be carried out by **certification bodies** who are accredited by **accreditation bodies** that are signatories of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement of IAF or a regional organisation such as the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), Interamerican Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC), Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (APAC) etc. The **accreditation body** shall be signatory to the IAF MLA with a main scope of ISO/IEC 17021-1.

Note: Under exceptional circumstances, the PEFC Board of Directors may endorse PEFC forest **certification systems** based on ISO/IEC 17065. Specific accreditation requirements for **certification bodies** providing certification against systems based on ISO/IEC 17065 are included on Appendix 4 of this standard.

2. The scope of accreditation shall explicitly mention the PEFC endorsed forest management standard/s and when applicable, group forest certification standard/s, against which the accreditation is hold, including the version and the year of the standard the accreditation **certificate** covers.

Note: The list of PEFC endorsed forest **certification systems**, including the standards, is publicly available from the PEFC website.

3. The scope of accreditation shall explicitly state the **certification body** is accredited against ISO/IEC 17021-1.

Note: As part of the accreditation assessments, **accreditation bodies** should consider conducting stakeholder consultation of the performance of the **certification body,** in addition to in-field evaluation.

4. On request, the accreditation **certificate** shall be available in English.

Appendix 3 (normative): PEFC notification of certification bodies

(Requirements are not applicable to the accreditation of the certification body)

1. **Certification bodies** operating PEFC recognised forest management certification shall be notified by the PEFC Council or the relevant **PEFC authorised body** of the specific country in which they operate.
2. The notification shall require that the **certification bodies** shall have a valid accreditation according to Appendix 2 of this document.
3. The **certification body** shall provide the relevant **PEFC authorised body** with information on granted certifications as specified by the relevant **PEFC authorised body**.
4. If required by the relevant PEFC authorised body, the **certification body** shall pay a PEFC notification fee to the **PEFC authorised body**.
5. To ensure the independence of **certification bodies**, the PEFC notification conditions implemented by the PEFC Council or the **PEFC authorised body** shall only cover:
   a) administrative conditions (e.g., communication of the **certification body** with the **PEFC NGBs** or the PEFC Council, transfer of information, etc.)
   b) financial conditions (fees imposed on certified entities)
   c) compliance with requirements for **certification bodies** verified through accreditation as described in this standard
6. The PEFC notification conditions shall not discriminate against **certification bodies** or create trade barriers.
7. Notification contracts shall include any necessary clauses to cover obligations and responsibilities regarding confidentiality and data use.

Appendix 4 (informative): List of forest management related legislation applicable to client organisations

Applicable local, national, or international legislation on forest management includes legislation, legal obligations, requirements, regulations, codes and nationally ratified international treaties, conventions and agreements codes covering and/or regulating

- land tenure rights, including customary rights as well as management rights, obtained according to the legally prescribed procedure
- anti-corruption legislation, including bribery & fraud
- the issuing of rights and licences according to the legally prescribed procedure, specifying legally-gazetted boundaries
- legal business registration, obtained according to the legally prescribed procedure
- concession licenses and ensuring that licences only cover legally gazetted areas, obtained according to the legally prescribed procedure
- management planning, including conducting forest inventories, having a forest management plan and related planning and monitoring, including approval by respective authorities.
- harvesting permits and/or licenses, or other legal documents required for specific harvesting operations, obtained according to the legally prescribed procedure prior to the implementation of forest harvesting activities
- forest harvesting specific fees such as royalties, payment of stumpage fees and other volume-based fees, as well as land area taxes or fees, based on correct classification of quantities, qualities and species.
- VAT and other taxes (including income and profit tax) that apply to the material being sold, including selling material as growing forest (standing stock sales).
- harvesting techniques and technology including the timing of harvest, selective cutting, shelter wood regeneration, clear felling, transport of timber from felling **participants** and seasonal limitations
- protected areas and protected, rare or endangered species and their habitats and potential habitats, including identification of protected areas
- environmental impact assessment in connection with harvesting, acceptable levels of damage and disturbance of soil resources, the establishment of buffer zones (e.g., along watercourses, open areas, breeding **participants**), maintenance of retained trees on felling **participants**, seasonal limitations on harvesting, and environmental requirements for forest machinery
- personal protection equipment for persons involved in harvesting activities, use of safe felling and transport practice, establishment of protection zones around harvesting **participants**, and safety requirements to machinery used, and safety requirements in relation to chemical usage
- employment of personnel involved in harvesting activities, including contracts and working permits, obligatory insurances, certificates of competence and other training requirements, and payment of social and income taxes
- minimum working age and minimum age for personnel involved in hazardous work, legislation against forced and compulsory labor and discrimination and legislation allowing for freedom of association
- customary rights relevant to forest harvesting activities, including sharing of benefits

- “free prior and informed consent” in connection with transfer of forest management rights and customary rights to the organisation in charge of the harvesting operation
- rights of Indigenous people as far as it’s related to forestry activities
- classification of harvested material is in terms of species, quantities, and qualities in connection with trade and transport
- trading permits and transport documents that accompany the transport of wood from forest operations
- offshore trading and transfer pricing
- CITES permits
- export/import licenses, and product classification related to customs (codes, quantities, qualities, and species)
- due diligence/due care procedures
- Disposal of Hazardous waste; use of forest chemicals (herbicides/pesticides); training/licensing for chemical applicators; and water quality

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