



PEFC - Promoting Sustainable Forest Management

PEFC Council

2ème étage, 17 rue des Girondins, L-1626 Luxembourg

Telephone +352 26 25 90 59 Facsimile +352 26 25 92 58

E-mail: info@pefc.org Web: www.pefc.org

Did you know?

PEFC wants people to manage forests sustainably

1. What PEFC stands for and what PEFC wants to achieve

PEFC's aim is to assure that the world's forests are managed sustainably and that their functions are protected for present and future generations.

PEFC certified timber and paper products are an independently verified assurance to consumers and companies that they are buying wood products from sustainably managed forests. By choosing PEFC, buyers can help combat illegal logging.

PEFC's role, as an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, is to secure that the same high standards are applied by all its endorsed certification systems globally and thus by forest managers, paper and timber companies and their external certifiers.

See leaflet for consumers "[It's good to buy certified wood](#)"

See leaflet for companies "[PEFC – the responsible choice](#)"

2. Why PEFC was established

Forest certification grew out of concerns for the preservation of tropical forests and as a proactive alternative to timber boycotts.

It developed as a result of the UN "Earth Summit" in Rio in 1992, where the concept of 'sustainable development' was established as a common goal of human development.

Difficulties of the first developed certification systems to address the needs of family forest owners in Europe, led to the establishment of PEFC as a system to encompass all types of forests, from small family owned businesses to large multinational corporations.

At their inaugural meeting in Paris in 1999, the 11 founding countries of the PEFC Council agreed to base PEFC certification on the criteria for sustainable forest management, which have come out of the Rio 'Earth Summit' and its follow-up intergovernmental processes.

3. PEFC's aim is the mutual recognition of forest certification systems

The primary objective of the PEFC Council is to achieve compatibility between credible and independent forest certification systems and to implement and safeguard consistently high standards for sustainable forest management around the globe. To date PEFC Council has successfully achieved a mutual recognition (endorsement) of more than 20 certification systems globally, among them major systems like the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the US-Canadian Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

4. PEFC is an international certification system and not limited to European forests only

Most PEFC certified forests are outside Europe. Over two thirds of PEFC's endorsed forests are on other continents, e.g. North and South America and Australia.

PEFC initially started in Europe, but soon extended its geographical coverage and consequently adopted its current name "Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes" in November 2003.

PEFC is the world's largest forest certification system and resource of certified wood.

How PEFC helps forests and people

5. PEFC is a solution to address the global problem of illegal logging

PEFC timber and paper companies around the world buy wood from certified and uncertified forests. In the case of wood from PEFC certified forests, the independent certifiers not only guarantee its legality but additionally give the assurance that the wood comes from forest management, which is ecological, socially and economically sustainable.

The legality of uncertified wood, which timber and paper companies also buy, is assured through a safeguard mechanism, which is part of PEFC Chain of Custody standard (see [item number 17](#) of this document).

6. PEFC protects the rights of indigenous people

PEFC uses the criteria of the intergovernmental processes which grew out of the UN "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, such as the '[Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe](#)' or the '[African Timber Organization \(ATO\) and International Tropical Timber Organization \(ITTO\) Criteria & Indicator for sustainable management of African natural tropical forests](#)'. The criteria address people's land tenure, customary and traditional rights; protect historical, archaeological, cultural or spiritually significant sites; make use of indigenous related experience or knowledge and involve indigenous people and their communities in the consultation, decision making and implementation processes of PEFC.

At national level indigenous people can participate when PEFC certification systems are being developed or updated in consensus with other groups of society.

Last but not least, PEFC requires consultation with the public during the certification audits of individual forests, ensuring that indigenous and other forest dependent people's views are considered for the forests they live in, live near to or are dependent upon.

PEFC has published a Position Paper on "[Tribal and Indigenous people, local people, local communities, forest dependent communities and the PEFC Council](#)" at www.pefc.org > Documentation > [Position Papers](#).

7. PEFC safeguards communities', workers' and local people's rights

PEFC incorporates social issues through a range of international and national agreements, such as the ('Rio Earth Summit') intergovernmental processes and their Operational Level Guidelines (e.g. the PEOLG of the MCPFE). The PEOLG as used by PEFC demand that:

- *Forest management planning shall aim to maintain or increase forest and other wooded area, and enhance the quality of the economic, ecological, cultural and social values of forest resources, including soil and water. This shall be done by making full use of related services such as land-use planning and nature conservation.*
- *Appropriate silvicultural measures shall be taken to maintain the growing stock of resources at - or bring to - a level that is economically, ecologically and socially desirable.*
- *Conversion of abandoned agricultural and treeless land into forest land shall be taken into consideration, whenever it can add economic, ecological, social and/or cultural value.*
- *Areas that fulfil specific and recognised protective functions for society shall be registered and mapped, and forest management plans or their equivalents shall take full account of these areas*
- *Forest management planning shall aim to respect the multiple functions of forests to society, have due regard to the role of forestry in rural development, and especially consider new opportunities for employment in connection with the socio-economic functions of forests.*

- Working conditions shall be safe, and guidance and training in safe working practice shall be provided.
- *Forest management operations shall take into account all socio-economic functions, especially the recreational function and aesthetic values of forests by maintaining for example varied forest structures, and by encouraging attractive trees, groves and other features such as colours, flowers and fruits. This shall be done, however, in a way and to an extent that does not lead to serious negative effects on forest resources, and forest land.*

(Excerpts from the Pan European Operational Level Guidelines [PEOLG](#). The term “should” was changed to “shall” to reflect PEFC requirements. See [item number 19](#) of this document.)

PEFC was the first international forest certification system to make the International Labour Organization (ILO) Core Conventions an integral part of its certification requirements, following close talks with representatives of trade unions at international level.

For PEFC certification it is required that the ILO core conventions

- No 29 Forced Labour,
- No 87 Freedom of Associations and Protection of the Right to Organise,
- No 98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining,
- No 100 Equal Remuneration,
- No 105 Abolition of Forced Labour,
- No 111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) and
- No 138 Minimum Age for Admission to Employment

are respected ([PEFC Annex 3](#) - 3.3 International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions).

8. PEFC is supported by environmental organisations (eNGOs)

A large number of eNGOs actively participate in PEFC and its national members, among them renowned organisations such as FNE (France Nature Environnement), the national umbrella organisation of more than 3,000 regional groups and initiatives in France; the UWD (Umweltdachverband), the framework of 34 national eNGOs in Austria or CI (Conservation International), the international US-based eNGO, which works in more than 40 countries on four continents.

A number of these eNGOs participate in an international platform of ENGOs interested in PEFC certification and are in a continuous dialogue with PEFC through this platform. Furthermore, eNGO representatives are on the PEFC Council Board of Directors and directly involved in the decision making of PEFC at international level.

9. Social and environmental groups participate in PEFC’s decision making

All PEFC endorsed certification systems have a national forum or organisation, in which all interested parties can participate, e.g. environmental and social non-governmental organisations, trade unions, indigenous people, forest owners etc.

The forum’s decisions are based on the principle of consensus (see [PEFC Annex 2](#), 3.5. Participatory Process and PEFC [Council Guideline 5/2006](#) Requirements for Consensus in the Standard Setting Process). As the shape of the forum is adapted to the national circumstances, some PEFC member countries have chosen a chamber system where different stakeholders are divided into groups, while others have developed a national committee or council combining all groups. PEFC allows local stakeholders to determine for themselves the best way to organize themselves.

The PEFC Council Board of Directors is constituted to reflect an appropriate diversity of stakeholder interests (including representatives from social and environmental organisations), of geographic regions and size of country and of gender ([PEFC Statutes](#), Article 6 Board of Directors).

10. All people of society can participate in PEFC

In PEFC public participation happens:

1. During all individual certification audits at the level of the Forest Management Units.
2. During the standard setting of the national forest certification systems.
3. During the international assessment of national systems for PEFC endorsement.
4. During the development of the criteria of the intergovernmental process for sustainable forest management. As they change, PEFC's criteria change.

PEFC is the only international certification system that requires certification to take place, only after national standards have been developed with national and local multi-stakeholder participation. PEFC does not permit certification against so called *Interim Standards* (see [item number 20](#) of this document).

What others say about PEFC

11. PEFC has improved the standard of forest management.

A study including three of the PEFC re-endorsed systems, in Finland, Norway and Sweden, on the “*Effectiveness and Efficiency of FSC and PEFC forest certification on pilot areas in Nordic countries*” revealed that PEFC certification had improved the standard of forest management.

Mrs Hanna Nikinmaa of Savcor Indufor said during the presentation of the results that “*Certification has improved the standards of forest management in all three countries and has evened out some of the differences between the countries*”.

12. Independent studies confirm PEFC's high standards and quality

PEFC receives excellent ratings in independent studies comparing various certification systems globally, as demonstrated in the CEPI Comparative Matrix (www.forestrycertification.info – [Summary of Findings](#)).

Experts of Yale and Columbia Universities in collaboration with the World Economic Forum drew up the 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), ranking environmental sustainability at a national scale. PEFC certified forests were counted as one criteria contributing to the ESI. Several countries with a high percentage of PEFC certified forests, such as Finland, Norway, Sweden and Austria, ranked among the top ten of the 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index.

13. Governmental Public Procurement Policies specify PEFC certified products for public contracts to demonstrate legality and sustainability

PEFC is chosen by a wide range of governmental public timber procurement policies as evidence of legal and sustainable sourcing of timber and paper products. Public Procurement Policies from the following countries include PEFC: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

In addition the EU Parliament has passed a resolution in February 2006, recommending PEFC certification as “*suitable ... to give consumers assurances concerning sustainable forest management.*”

PEFC's safeguard mechanisms

14. The logo indicates that the products contains at least 70% certified material

Only products which contain at least 70% PEFC certified material can be labelled with the PEFC logo. This is the highest minimum level set by any international forest certification system for the use of its label.

15. Recycled material is included in PEFC certification

PEFC enables and encourages the use of recycled material in products. A combined label containing the PEFC logo and the Mobius Loop can be used by manufacturers on products which contain a minimum total content of certified and recycled material of 70%. The percentage of the proportion of the recycled material is stated inside the Mobius Loop.

16. Only timber and paper products from PEFC endorsed systems can be traded and labelled with the PEFC logo

Only national forest certification systems, which have successfully gone through the stringent PEFC endorsement process, can use the PEFC logo on and for their certified products.

17. PEFC assures that the uncertified content in PEFC certified products does not originate from illegal logging (controversial sources)

To help prevent wood from controversial sources and illegal logging finding its way into timber and paper products, PEFC has put in place a number of safeguards for the 'Avoidance of (wood from) Controversial Sources'.

PEFC certified companies who, in addition to certified material, also procure non-PEFC certified wood, have the obligation to put in place safety checks such as risk analyses, external assessments and on-site inspections, to ensure the legality of the uncertified wood. The scope and the intensity of the checks depend on the risk of procuring timber from illegal harvesting. Certified material from other certification systems, such as FSC, is considered as not requiring further checks.

Whenever companies and consumers buy PEFC certified paper and timber products, they have the assurance that the purchased product does not contain illegally logged wood. Both the certified and the uncertified content have been checked by certifiers and suppliers before them.

PEFC's safeguards have been in place since October 2004 and in October 2006 were further supplemented by a guidance for the *Avoidance of Controversial Sources*. The mandatory guidance is part of PEFC's Chain of Custody wood tracking system and available at www.pefc.org > Documentation > Technical Documentation > Annex 4 > [Appendix 7](#)

18. PEFC certification is based on several hundred very detailed criteria

PEFC uses at its basis the 8 intergovernmental processes for sustainable forest management which grew out of the United Nations "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as the foundation for its national standards. These processes are supported by 149 governments in the world covering 85% of the world's forest area. The sustainability criteria of the processes are specified for example by operational level guidelines such as the PEOLG that are mandatory for all certification systems endorsed by PEFC.

Together with international conventions on social and ecological issues, such as the International Labour Organization Core Conventions (e.g. against child and forced labour and for equal remuneration), ISO Guidelines, the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international treaties, there are up to 305 criteria, on which PEFC is based and which are used to measure the quality and credibility of national forest certification system during the PEFC endorsement process.

19. The ministerial PEOLG criteria PEFC uses, are mandatory

“The term “shall” is used throughout the PEFC Council documentation to indicate those provisions that are mandatory.” (Technical Document, chapter 2). This also applies for cases such as the PEOLG, where the original governmental text only uses the term “should” instead.

“The current Pan-European Operational Level Guidelines will form the reference basis when national or sub-national certification criteria are elaborated or revised. The forest certification criteria shall be compatible with the PEOLG. In case any of the guidelines of PEOLG are not relevant in national or sub-national conditions, detailed justifications for possible incompatibilities shall be presented in the scheme application.” (Technical Document, chapter 4.2)

“The Pan European Operational Level Guidelines form the reference basis when national and regional certification criteria are elaborated, amended or revised and assessed. The national certification criteria shall be compatible with the current PEOLG and any deviations, e.g., based on the non-adherence of an issue or its inclusion in normative regulation shall be justified.” (Annex 3, chapter 3.1.2)

20. PEFC verifies that its certification is applied at the same high level in all countries with PEFC endorsed certification systems

PEFC Council undertakes an open, transparent and independent benchmark endorsement process for national forest certification systems, which is unmatched by any other forest certification system globally. It ensures that a consistently high and stringent quality and performance level is applied by all PEFC endorsed certification systems globally (see www.pefc.org > Activities > [Scheme development and Recognition](#)).

Before PEFC endorsement, independent external assessors check an applicant forest certification system against a benchmark of up to 305 requirements, a set of minimum standards that national systems need to fulfil for endorsement. The steps of this process are laid down in the PEFC Council [Annex 7 Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of National Schemes and their Revision](#) and in the PEFC Guideline [GL 2/2005 PEFC Council Minimum Requirements Checklist](#), which together with all PEFC documentation are publicly available at www.pefc.org.

In order to guarantee equally high PEFC standards globally the external assessors' reports (PEFC Annex 7 chapter 6.4.3) for (re-)endorsement undergo a peer review by a 'Panel of Experts'. The members of the Panel act as a quality assurance team and provide advice to the PEFC Council Board of Directors. CVs of the Panel members are available at www.pefc.org > About PEFC > Who's who > [Panel of Experts](#).

PEFC does not permit certification against *Interim Standards*. These are locally limited standards, which are developed by the certifier himself for a client on an ad-hoc basis and consultations are only undertaken during a relatively short time span with selected stakeholders. PEFC is committed to the belief that *Interim Standards* are potentially damaging to the credibility of the forest certification process and cannot replace full and inclusive certification procedures.

21. PEFC certified forests and certified companies are inspected annually

The independent certifiers for PEFC certifications undertake yearly surveillance audits and a full re-assessment of the certificate holders is carried out every five years ([PEFC Annex 6](#), chapter 4 Certification Procedures).

22. Certifiers in PEFC are independently checked for their qualifications and independence

All certifiers who certify against PEFC standards need to be accredited by official accreditation bodies, which are usually governmental institutions. The Accreditation Bodies

verify that the certifiers are qualified to perform the required tasks. The Accreditation Bodies are members of the International Accreditation Forum IAF, a global benchmark framework that assures an equally high level of requirements globally.

23. PEFC certification audit reports are publicly available

A summary of the certification report, including a summary of the findings on the auditee's conformity with the forest management standard is made available to the public by the auditee ([PEFC Annex 6](#), chapter 4 Certification Procedures).

24. PEFC's requirements and documents are publicly available

All documentation of PEFC endorsed certification systems and for the PEFC Council is available at the PEFC Council website www.pefc.org:

- [PEFC Council Documentation](#) (PEFC Council's documents)
- [PEFC Members & Schemes](#) (Documents of endorsed certification systems)

25. The PEFC's endorsement process (in brief)

The process to PEFC endorsement includes the following steps:

1. **A national forest certification standard / system is developed** by affected and interested society groups in a country.
2. **The certification systems is submitted to the PEFC Council** (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) to undergo the assessment process prior to PEFC endorsement.
3. **An independent assessor is appointed to analyze the applicant system** against the PEFC benchmark requirements.
4. **An international 60-days public consultation takes place**, to collect comments from interested groups and the general public.
5. **The independent assessor compiles a report**, based on its findings and comments from public consultation.
6. **The assessor's report is peer reviewed by a Panel of Experts**, who check the quality and the robustness of the report and make recommendations to the PEFC Council Board of Directors.
7. **The PEFC Council Board of Directors decides on the conformity** of the system and if the decision is positive recommends its endorsement to the General Assembly.
8. **The PEFC Council members vote on whether or not to endorse** the applicant certification system.
9. **The decision is announced and the assessor's full report is published** on the PEFC website www.pefc.org.
10. **Only after endorsement a national certification system** is recognized by PEFC and **can its timber products be traded as PEFC certified** or the PEFC logo be used on them.

For further details see chart at www.pefc.org > Activities > [Scheme development and recognition](#) and the [PEFC Annex 7](#) at www.pefc.org > Documentation > Technical Documentation.

Where to find PEFC certified products

26. Where to find PEFC certified products

PEFC databases are available where consumers and customers can find PEFC certified products. The following sites are currently available:

Austria: www.pefc-einkaufsratgeber.at

Belgium: www.pefc.be

France: www.pefc-france.org

Germany: www.pefc.de

Luxembourg: www.pefc.lu

Canada and USA: www.certifiedwoodsearch.org

27. How you can be sure that a PEFC certificate is valid

PEFC forest and Chain of Custody certificates are listed at the PEFC Council Interactive Database at www.pefc.org. The database lists contact details for the company, the certifiers and the PEFC logo number of the company. The validity of a PEFC certificate can be verified by contacting the responsible certification body.

This document is available from the PEFC Council website www.pefc.org.

If you have further questions about PEFC contact your [national PEFC office](#) or the [PEFC Council](#) directly.

(PEFC Council April 2007)