

Australian Forestry Standard Protects Forest Values

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Safeguarding the biodiversity values that forests provide is at the heart of PEFC's approach to sustainable forest management, Ben Gunneberg, Secretary General of PEFC International, said in a statement today. "Responsible forestry must ensure that the benefits that forests provide are maintained and enhanced, that our children can enjoy the same or more forest values that we enjoy today."

Recent statements by local NGOs claim that the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS), which is endorsed by PEFC, does not sufficiently protect 'high conservation value forests' and 'primeval forests'. "PEFC has strict requirements concerning the protection of ecologically important forest areas," said Mr. Gunneberg. "The Australian Forestry Standard has achieved endorsement by PEFC and meets our requirements."

PEFC International's Sustainability Benchmark includes a number of requirements safeguarding critical forest areas, including

- Areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- Areas containing globally, regionally and nationally significant concentration of biodiversity values, endangered species
- Areas that provide basic ecosystem services in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control)
- Globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape-level areas where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance
- Areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health),
- Areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity

Read [PEFC's Requirements for Sustainable Forest Management](#) for further information.

PEFC's endorsements process is unique and applies a level of rigour unmatched in the world of forest certification. The Geneva-based organization requires all standards to be developed at national level in consensus-driven, multi-stakeholder processes and subject to a national public consultation.

To achieve endorsement (or re-endorsement) by PEFC, national standards must submit to a comprehensive and thorough assessment process, including independent evaluation and public consultation. A full final report of this process is then made publicly available. The endorsement is normally limited to five years only and requires national standards to be revised in order to be eligible for re-endorsement.

A permanent mechanism, the complaints and appeals process, is available to stakeholders at all times to enable them to monitor compliance of endorsed national systems with PEFC's Sustainability Benchmark and draw attention to non-compliance at any point in time.

"We are committed to investigate any potential non-compliance, yet any such investigation can only take place based on evidence. The claims made by the NGOs have unfortunately so far not been backed up by any such evidence," said Ben Gunneberg. "We are therefore confident that forests managed in compliance with the AFS standard are sustainable, safeguarding biodiversity values and balancing environmental, social and economic interests."

Further information

- [AFS Sustainable Forest Management Standard](#)
- [Extract: AFS criteria dealing with forest biodiversity](#)
- [PEFC's Sustainable Forest Management Requirements](#)
- [PEFC's Endorsement Process](#)