

**PEFC LV 02:2022**

**Requirements for certification bodies carrying out PEFC forest management certification**



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The original version of the document is in Latvian. When there is doubt in regard to language interpretation, the English version is the reference.

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## 1. The scope of the document

The document sets out the minimum requirements for certification bodies to be able to carry out forest management certification according to PEFC FMS:2022 Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard. This document also contains general guidelines and procedures for ensuring forest management compliance for both individual and group certification.

This document has been approved at the association PEFC Latvija on 21<sup>st</sup> of July, 2022 and last edited version has been approved on 27<sup>th</sup> of February, 2025.

## 2. Normative references

The document has been developed and approved at the association “PEFC Latvija” on the basis of:

- Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard PEFC FMS:2022;
- Annex 1 PEFC Terms and Definitions to the Technical Document of the PEFC International Council;
- Annex 6 Certification and Accreditation Procedures to the Technical Document of the PEFC International Council;
- EN ISO 19011:2018 – Guidelines for Management System Auditing;
- EN ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 – Conformity Assessment. Requirements for Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of Management Systems;
- LVS EN ISO 9000:2015 – Quality Management Systems. Basic Principles and Glossary of Terms.

## 3. Terms and definitions

- 3.1. **Accreditation** – a third-party validation of a conformity assessment body that has demonstrated the competence required to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks (ISO/IEC 17011:2017).
- 3.2. **Accreditation body** – an authorized body that carries out accreditation (ISO/IEC 17011:2017).
- 3.3. **Audit group** – one or more persons carrying out the audit, assisted where necessary by technical experts (LVS EN ISO 19011: 2018).
- 3.4. **Audit report** – an assessment report on the compliance of the activities with the requirements of the applicable standard.
- 3.5. **The audit client (auditee)** – a forest manager, i.e. any natural or legal person or a group of forest owners applying for certification and/or certified individually or as a group, and are subject to an audit (ISO 9000: 2015).
- 3.6. **Auditor** – a person who performs an audit (ISO 9000: 2015).
- 3.7. **Audit** – a systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining and evaluating objective evidence to determine the extent to which audit criteria are met (ISO 19011: 2018).
- 3.8. **Forest management scheme** – a set of standards, guidelines and other binding documents that include forest management criteria, certification arrangements, procedures and requirements for organisations and certification bodies.
- 3.9. **Independent third party** – a person or organisation recognised as independent of the other parties involved.
- 3.10. **PEFC Forest Management Certificate (also – Certificate)** – a document issued by the certification body certifying that the activities in the particular **forest management unit** comply with the requirements of the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard.
- 3.11. **Certification organisation** – an organisation independent of the manufacturer and the consumer, offering certification services in accredited certification areas, assessing and monitoring **certificate** holders.

- 3.12. **Standard** – the standard according to which the certification is made, i.e. the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard.
- 3.13. **Technical expert** – a person, other than the auditor, who has specific knowledge and experience in a particular area to be audited which this person can provide to the audit team.

#### 4. Requirements for certification bodies

- 4.1 A certification body wishing to carry out PEFC forest management certification in Latvia shall:
- be accredited by the Latvian State Agency “Latvijas Nacionālais akreditācijas birojs” (the Latvian National Accreditation Bureau – LATAK) or by a member organisation of the European Accreditation (EA) or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF);
  - meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021-1;
  - include forest management certification in its scope of accreditation.
- 4.2 An accredited certification organisation carrying out PEFC forest management certification in Latvia must have a recognition agreement concluded with the association “PEFC Latvija”.
- 4.3. PEFC forest management certification must be carried out by independent **certification organisation** that is not involved in the process of standard development as a decision-making body, is not involved in the forest management and is independent of the **auditee**.

#### 5. Recognition of certification bodies

- 5.1 So that a certification body which is accredited in accordance with the requirements set out in Paragraph 4 of this document can carry out PEFC forest management certification in Latvia, it must conclude an agreement on PEFC certification with the association “PEFC Latvija”. The agreement between the certification body and “PEFC Latvija” includes at least the following sections:
- administrative arrangements (e.g. information exchange and communication between the certification body and “PEFC Latvija”);
  - financial arrangements (a recognition fee of a certification body and fees for certified forest areas);
  - conditions for ensuring the accreditation requirements of certification bodies.
- 5.2 Before concluding the agreement, the certification organisation must provide “PEFC Latvija” with evidence that it has a valid accreditation with the Latvian National Accreditation Bureau or accreditation with a member organisation of the European Accreditation (EA) or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) to carry out PEFC forest management certification in Latvia.

#### 6. Competence criteria for the staff of certification bodies

- 6.1 The certification body must ensure that the staff involved in the assessment of forest management certification have adequate knowledge of forest management (including economic, social and environmental impacts), the certification process and forest management certification requirements.
- 6.2 The staff involved in the assessment of forest management certification must be familiar with the Binding Documents of the PEFC International Council and the documentation of the national PEFC Forest Management Scheme.
- 6.3 The certification body must have procedures in place for the competence of auditors and technical experts. The minimum requirements for auditors involved in the assessment of forest management certification, they:
- must meet the requirements of ISO 19011:2018;
  - must have at least a second level higher professional education or a bachelor's degree in forestry, biology or environmental sciences;
  - have professional experience of no less than 3 years in a field related to forest management;

- d) must be familiar with the binding documents developed by the certification organisation;
- e) must have had no involvement with the audited entity in the last 2 years (ISO/IEC 17021-1).

## 7. Certification procedures

7.1 The certification body must develop internal procedures for forest management certification that meet the requirements of:

- a) ISO/IEC 17021-1;
- b) ISO 19011:2018.

7.2 The certification body must:

- a) inform the association “PEFC Latvija” of all PEFC forest management certificates issued, as well as of any changes in the certification status and/or scope of activities;
- b) undertake monitoring of the use of the PEFC trademark;
- c) note that the certificate is issued for a period of 5 years;
- d) note that the maximum period between annual audits must not exceed one year;
- e) ensure that the summary of the audit report is made publicly available on the certification body’s website. The public summary includes at least the following information:
  - i. the scope of certification;
  - ii. a description of the compliance of a certification applicant or certificate holder with the relevant standard, including any identified non-conformities (the indicator in the standard, the wording of the non-conformity, the timeframe for its rectification);
  - iii. a validity period of the certificate;
  - iv. comments received from the stakeholders and their assessment.

## 8. Certification process

8.1. Types of audits:

- a) *Certification audit.* The initial certification audit is conducted in order to determine the compliance of the auditee with the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard, which leads to a decision on the issue of a certificate. A certificate can be issued only after the elimination of major non-compliances. During the certification audit, the compliance of the auditee with all the indicators of the Standard must be verified. A certificate can be issued if no major non-compliances are found during the audit, or after the elimination of major non-compliances.
- b) *Surveillance audit.* During the validity period of the certification, at least once a year the certification body carries out a certification surveillance audit, assessing whether the auditee complies with the requirements of the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard. Surveillance audits include a review of previous non-conformities, i.e. corrective actions taken by the auditee since the previous audit. During the annual surveillance audit, the certification body verifies the compliance of the auditee’s overall management system with Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 of the Standard, along with at least two criteria for assessing management activities from Chapter 8 of the Standard.
- c) *Recertification audit.* Recertification is carried out before the expiry date of the certificate issued. During a recertification audit, the certification body verifies the auditee’s compliance with all indicators of the Standard.
- d) *(Extraordinary) audit for closure of major non-compliances.* An auditor’s extraordinary visit to the site or company is only necessary if documentary evidence is insufficient to close the non-compliance.

Major non-compliances must be closed by the certification body within 3 months from the date of their establishment.

8.2. The certification process includes a public consultation process during which all stakeholders (including non-governmental organisations) may comment on the forest management practices of the audited forest. Information about the public consultation must be sent to the stakeholders at least 14 days before the start of the certification and recertification audits.

8.3. Forest management audits (certification, surveillance and recertification) consist of:

- a) an opening meeting during which the certification body informs the auditee of the audit process;
- b) gathering and assessing of information and evidence. The certification body carries out an assessment of the forest management of the audited forest (review of planning, management practices and documentation), assessing compliance with the requirements of the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard. During the audit, the auditor contacts a number of stakeholders to obtain information on the management practices in the audited forest. If the management of the audited forest does not comply with any of the requirements of the Standard, a non-compliance is raised. The certification body determines the number and extent of the areas to be physically surveyed according to the scale and intensity of the forest management activities to be audited.

Note: The certification body may decide to reduce the number of inspections when auditing PEFC-certified contractors by subjecting non-certified contractors to more inspections.

- c) closing meetings at which the audit team gives a verbal summary of the observations and non-compliances identified during the audit.

8.4. Decision making – after the audit, the certification body decides whether to issue/renew a certificate, based on an the assessment of all the information gathered.

8.5. Types of non-compliances:

- a) Major non-compliance. Non-compliance with one or more requirements of the standard or a failure to achieve and ensure conformity with one or more requirements that may pose a systemic or significant risk to sustainable forest management. The time limit for correcting a major non-compliance is 3 months from the date of its occurrence.

*Note:* A major non-compliance may also arise from a number of minor but interrelated non-compliances, which together may be upgraded to a major non-compliance.

- b) Minor non-compliance. Non-compliance with some of the requirements of the standard that is not of a systematic nature and which does not pose a systemic or significant risk to the implementation of sustainable forest management. The time limit for correcting a minor non-compliance is 12 months from the date of raising the non-compliance or until the next audit.
- c) Observation. An observation made during the audit which is not a non-compliance with the standard but which is perceived by the audit team as an opportunity for improvement of the forest management system. An observation may also be raised where the audit has not provided sufficient evidence of non-conformity with the standard, but this aspect needs to be investigated during the next audit. Observations do not have a time limit for their rectification.

## 9. Confidentiality

The certification body must inform the auditee that the certification body has the right to pass the auditee's information to the accreditation body, the International PEFC Council and the association "PEFC Latvija" in order to ensure the issue or maintenance of the certificate. The agreement between the certification body and the auditee must include clauses on non-disclosure and data protection in accordance with national legislation.

## 10. Forest management certificate

10.1 The certificate contains at least the following information:

- a) name, address of the auditee;
- b) applicable standard;
- c) date of issue, extension or renewal of the certificate;
- d) validity period of the certificate;
- e) certificate number;
- f) name of the certification body;
- g) reference to accreditation;
- h) PEFC logo with the licence number of the PEFC trademark of the certification body;
- i) type of certification (individual or group certification);
- j) scope of certification (in case of group certification, with a list of all members of the group enclosed to the certificate, i.e. the name of the member, area certified).

10.2 Numbering of certificates: the certificate number consists of the abbreviation of the name of the certification body, a dash, PEFC-FM, a dash, the number assigned to the certificate by the certification body (e.g. XXXX-PEFC-FM-00001).

10.3 Suspension or revocation of a certificate is carried out by certification bodies in accordance with their internal procedures.

## 11. Complaints and appeals

Complaints and appeals related to the application of the Latvian National PEFC Forest Management Standard which cannot be resolved between the auditee and the certification body, or which are beyond the responsibility and competence of the certification body, are forwarded for examination to the association "PEFC Latvija".