
Regional Committees of Forest Certification

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Document name: Regional Committees of Forest Certification

Document title: PEFC FI 1004:2009

Approved by: PEFC Finland **Date:** 18.3.2009

Issue date: 9.11.2009

Application date: 1.1.2010

Transition date: one year from the official announcement of the PEFC re-endorsement decision (for the certificates issued before the Application date)

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1. Introduction

This standard is part of a series of seven Finnish PEFC forest certification standards. The series follows the SMS standard series drafted in 1997 and 1998 and FFCS standard series drafted in 2002 and 2003. Finnish PEFC standard series will be implemented after the endorsement of the PEFC Council taking into consideration the timelines of the transition periods.

Other standards of the Finnish PEFC standard series cover vocabulary, implementation and criteria, certification procedures and criteria setting.

PEFC Finland manages the Finnish PEFC standard series and owns the standards.

2. Purpose and Scope of Application

This English translation is based on the original Finnish PEFC forest certification standard PEFC FI 1004:2009 that was approved by PEFC Finland on 18.3.2009. The Finnish original standard applies in case of interpretational dispute.

The original Finnish standard and its English and Swedish translations are available from PEFC Finland website or upon request.

The standard includes the model regulations for regional committees of forest certification.

3. References

This standard is used together with other standards belonging to the Finnish PEFC certification system:

- PEFC FI 1000:2009; Forest Certification Vocabulary
- PEFC FI 1001:2009; Implementation Levels of the Forest Certification System
- PEFC FI 1002:2009; Criteria for Group Certification; Level of a Forestry Centre or a Forest Management Association
- PEFC FI 1003:2009; Criteria for Certification; Level of Forest Holdings of Individual Owners
- PEFC FI 1004:2009; Regional Committees of Forest Certification
- PEFC FI 1005:2009; Qualification Criteria for Certification Bodies and Certification Procedures
- PEFC FI 1006:2008; Standard Setting Process for Forest Certification

4. Terms and Definitions

The terminology on PEFC certification in Finland is included in standard PEFC FI 1000:2009; Forest Certification Vocabulary.

5. Regional Committees of Forest Certification

5.1 Name of the Committee

The name of the forest certification committee is (name of a region) Forest Certification Committee and its domicile is (domicile of an organisation applying for a certificate).

5.2 Purpose

The Committee promotes the implementation of the Finnish PEFC Forest Certification System.

The purpose of the Committee is to manage tasks related to the application of a certificate and its maintenance in the area of (name of a region) forestry centre/forest management association.

5.3 Policy of the Committee

Transparency is the guiding principle in participation to the committee work and in the committee working procedures.

The Committee is responsible for ensuring that no individual operator will use any confidential information revealed during the process of certification for their own benefit, and that this information is not revealed to any external party without the Committee's authorisation.

5.4 Composition of the Committee

Representatives from organisations participating in certification are the members of the Committee. Each of them has a named deputy.

The following organisations participating in certification may, if they so wish, nominate a member and a vice member to the Committee: forest owners union (name); forest management associations (names); forestry centre (name); Metsähallitus (Forest and Park Service); largest timber procuring (and processing) organisations (names of enterprises depending on the region); entrepreneurs' organisations (such as the Trade Association of Finnish Forestry and Earth Moving Contractors, and METO – Forestry Experts' Association); and trade unions and organisations representing forestry workers and experts (METO – Forestry Experts' Association, and the Wood and Allied Workers' Union).

The Committee nominates other optional members and their deputy members aiming at a balanced and representative composition of all the relevant parties participating in forest certification.

The nominated committee members participate in the committee work on the expense of the party they represent.

A person nominated by the holder of the certificate chairs the Committee.

The committee chairman is the person the holder of the certificate has nominated to the Committee.

The Committee elects a vice-chairman and a secretary among its members for a one year period.

The Committee may invite, if needed, external experts. The experts will have the right to attend and to speak in the meetings.

5.5 Calling Assemblies and Their Quorum

The Committee meets upon the call for meeting by the chair or the vice-chair at least twice a year. The call for meetings shall be submitted as agreed by the Committee, at least seven days prior to the meeting.

The Committee has a quorum if at least half of the committee members in addition to the chair or the vice-chair are presenting attendance.

The Committee makes decisions by consensus.

As specified below in Chapter 5.7 in cases of non-conformity the suspected party shall not participate in processing of an issue or in decision making.

Possible cases of disagreement within the Committee concerning regional implementation of forest certification can be submitted for processing to the Appeals Panel of PEFC Finland via PEFC Finland member organisations. The Panel is convened for each case separately.

Minutes are prepared of all the meetings and they are signed by the chair and the secretary of the meeting.

5.6 Tasks of the Committee

Tasks of the Committee include:

- 1) maintaining a register according to the standard PEFC FI 1001:2009 of forest owners and parties enrolled for certification;
- 2) monitoring the level of compliance of parties enrolled for certification with the requirements of standards PEFC FI 1001:2009 and PEFC FI 1002:2009 during the validity of the certificate;
- 3) organising internal data collection in the region according to the data collection standard approved by the Committee;
- 4) making the decision on the application for a certificate. The Committee decision shall be made after corresponding decisions made by (name of the certificate applicant) and other

organisations that the Committee has been informed of according to the requirements of the standard PEFC FI 1001:2009;

- 5) preparing, if needed, proposals to improve the preconditions for the conformance to the criteria of the management and use of forests (PEFC FI 1002:2009) to be implemented by parties enrolled for certification, as well as enhancing compliance with the criteria in general;
- 6) deciding upon sharing costs among the participating organisations concerning payments to the certification body, and other possible Committee approved expenses incurring from certification;
- 7) deciding upon measures to be taken in possible cases of non-conformities to forest certification requirements among parties participating in certification in accordance with Chapter 5.7 specified below;
- 8) maintaining a register of the non-conformities to the criteria concerning suspected cases of neglect and misconduct of which the representatives nominated by committee member organisations have been informed, and when necessary, contacting the suspected party for non-conformity in order to clarify the issue in accordance with Chapter 5.7 specified below;
- 9) informing forest owners and other operators participating in certification as well as other regional parties in the region of the results of external audits as considered appropriate by the Committee;
- 10) informing PEFC Finland without delay of the issuance of the certificate, of possible changes in its validity, and of its possible withdrawal;
- 11) providing PEFC Finland with the regulations approved and implemented by the Committee, with possible revisions made to these regulations, with yearly reports of the results of external audits, and with the data on the scope of the certificate; and
- 12) maintaining a register of members, vice-members and experts nominated to the Committee, and submitting this register for the information of PEFC Finland.

5.7 Procedures in Cases of Non-conformity to the Forest Certification Criteria and to Regulations of the Committee

5.7.1 Procedures in Cases of Non-conformity

Each member of the Committee shall inform without delay the committee chairman of any cases of suspected non-conformities to the certification requirements caused by neglect and misconduct by the respective party or its member participating in certification. The information shall include all cases reported in writing to the organisation represented by the committee member, except pendent cases which are under authoritative procedures. Suspected cases of neglect and misconduct of parties that are not represented in the Committee are submitted to the committee chairman.

The Committee shall process the notification within a period of two months after being notified of the case – if not otherwise indicated e.g., due to the schedule of the authoritative procedure – and

decide whether it considers the actions taken as against the certification requirements. The Committee shall hear the party suspected of neglect or misconduct before making a decision.

5.7.2 Written Notice

If the Committee concludes, considering the content and scope of the activity, that a party participating in certification has acted essentially against the requirements of certification the Committee shall without delay give a written notice on the issue to the party in question. The notice shall specify the activity not conforming to the requirements of certification and the measures taken by the Committee on the issue.

The Committee shall monitor the operations of the party that has received the notice on issues related to certification, taking place in the certification area during the monitoring period following the notification, separately in internal data collection and in audit of operations.

If the Committee states that an operator participating in certification as a member of some party has operated essentially against the requirements of certification, the Committee shall, in cooperation with the respective party, ensure through individual consultation that the operator in question is aware of (i) the requirements in the certification system that apply to his/her work, (ii) the commitment to forest certification through the membership of the respective party, and (iii) the possibility of resigning from the commitment to participate in certification of the region as a member of the respective party.

The Committee maintains a register on operations it has considered to be essentially in non-conformity with the certification criteria and informs the certification body of this register.

5.7.3 Written Notice on Expulsion from Forest Certification

If the Committee states that a party participating in certification has repeatedly acted against the certification requirements it shall without delay give a written notice to the respective party on the date when the party will be expelled from forest certification.

If the Committee states that an operator participating in certification as a member of a committee member party has repeatedly acted against the certification requirements despite the individual consultation given, the Committee shall without delay after considering the situation give a written notice to the respective operator on the date when the operator will be expelled from forest certification.

If the Committee states that the non-confirming activities processed by the Committee have included aggravating circumstances the Committee shall without delay after considering the situation inform the respective party or the operator participating in certification as its member of the date when the respective party or its member will be expelled from certification, even when the issue in question is not the above mentioned repeated activity.

The Committee maintains a register of actions it has considered to be aggravating circumstances related to operations essentially in non-conformity with the certification requirements and informs the certification body of this register.

5.7.4 Expulsion from Forest Certification

The Committee makes the decision on expulsion from forest certification until further notice or for a fixed term. The Committee shall hear the party to be expelled before making the decision.

If the party to be expelled from forest certification is a forest owner, the forests under his/her management will be removed from the database of certified forests.

5.7.5 Non-conformities Identified in External Audits

The Committee shall ensure that a party or its member that has received a non-conformance note in audits or in surveillance audits presents a plan for corrective actions to the Committee in a required schedule. If needed, the Committee supports the plan preparation within the available resources. The Committee discusses the corrective actions, if needed supplements them, and informs the party or its member of the revised plan. When the parties agree that the planned actions are adequate the Committee submits an approved plan for the certification body.

If the above mentioned party or its member does not make a plan or does not participate in the preparation of a plan in a manner the Committee requires, or if the party does not implement the corrective actions according to a plan approved by the Committee, the Committee will take measures to implement the procedures specified in Chapters 5.7.2, 5.7.3 and 5.7.4.