

FFCS 1004:2007, Qualification Criteria for Auditors and Certification Bodies, and Certifying Procedures

This document is an unofficial translation (18 June 2007) of the original Finnish standard FFCS 1004:2007 text.

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1. Introduction

This standard belongs to the series of standards of the Finnish Forest Certification System (FFCS) preceded by a series of SMS standards elaborated in 1997-1998.

The other standards in the series address the implementation of the forest certification system, certification criteria and vocabulary. In verification of chain of custody of wood PEFC Technical Documentation, Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements standard is applied.

The Finnish Forest Certification Council has approved this standard in its meeting on 18 June 2007.

The series of FFCS standards are administered and possessed by the Finnish Forest Certification Council (Suomen Metsäsertifiointi ry).

2. Scope and Field of Application

This standard defines the qualification criteria for external auditors and certification bodies, and certification procedures.

This standard is applied in accordance with the Finnish Forest Certification System covering:

- certification of forest management, and
- verification of the chain of custody of wood.

3. References

FFCS 1000:2003 “Vocabulary”
 FFCS 1001:2003 “Alternative Implementation Levels of the Finnish Forest Certification System”.
 FFCS 1002-1:2003 “Criteria for Group Certification for the Area of a Forestry Centre”.
 FFCS 1002-2:2003 “Criteria for Group Certification for the Area of a Forest Management Association”.
 FFCS 1002-3:2003 “Criteria for Certification of Holdings of Individual Forest Owners”.
 PEFC Technical Documentation, Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements.
 SFS-EN ISO 19011:2002 “Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing (ISO 19011:2002)”.
 SFS-EN 45011 “General criteria for certification bodies operating product certification”.
 SFS-EN 45012 “General criteria for certification bodies operating quality system certification”.
 ISO/IEC Guide 66 “General requirements for bodies operating assessment and certification/registration of environmental management systems (EMS)”.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the definitions given in FFCS 1000:2003 “Vocabulary” apply.

5. Qualification Criteria for Auditors

5.1 Certification of Forest Management

The qualification criteria for auditors used in certification audits are based on the general auditing guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems, or the general criteria for certification bodies operating product certification, and complemented with sectoral expertise.

The auditors must:

1. Fulfil the general criteria, as appropriate, for environmental auditors defined in SFS-EN ISO 19011:2002 Guidelines for Quality and Environmental Management System Auditing, or SFS-EN 45011 General criteria for certification bodies operating product certification,
2. Have a good knowledge on the Finnish Forest Certification System with regard to forest management, and
3. Have general knowledge on forest management and its environmental impacts.

Professional expertise in forest management and its environmental impacts is proved on the basis of appropriate education and/or professional experience.

5.2 Verification of Chain of Custody of Wood

The qualification criteria for auditors used in certification audits are based on the general auditing guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems, complemented with sectoral expertise.

The auditors must:

1. Fulfil the criteria, as appropriate, defined in SFS-EN ISO 19011:2002 Guidelines for Quality and Environmental Management System Auditing,
2. Have a good knowledge on the Finnish Forest Certification standards with regard to the verification of chain of custody of wood, and
3. Have general knowledge on wood procurement and material flows in forest industries.

Professional expertise in wood procurement and material flows in forest industries is

proved on the basis of appropriate education and/or professional experience.

6. Qualification Criteria for Certification Bodies

6.1 Accreditation

Certification bodies carrying out forest management certification and/or chain of custody certification shall be accredited by a national accreditation body.

The accreditation shall be issued by an accreditation body which is a part of the European cooperation for Accreditation (EA) and/or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) umbrella and which implement procedures described in ISO Guide 61 and other documents recognised by the above mentioned organisations.

Information on accreditation shall accompany any issued forest certificate and chain of custody certificate.

6.2 Certification of Forest Management

The qualification criteria for the certification bodies used in certification audits are based on general criteria for certification bodies operating quality and environmental system certification and/or product certification, complemented with sectoral expertise and applied to forest management. The certification body must:

1. Fulfil the general criteria, as appropriate, for certification bodies defined in SFS-EN 45012 or SFS-EN 45011 or ISO Guide 66,
2. Use a documented method, according to which forest management may be audited and certified, and
3. Have general knowledge on forest management and its environmental impacts.

Professional expertise in forest management and its environmental impacts is proved on the basis of certification experience in the field and/or appropriate education and professional experience of the staff.

6.3 Verification of Chain of Custody of Wood

The qualification criteria for the certification bodies used in certification audits are based on the general criteria for certification bodies operating quality and environmental system certification and/or product certification, complemented with sectoral expertise and applied to wood procurement and material flows in forest industries. The certification body must:

1. Fulfil the general criteria, as appropriate, for certification bodies defined in SFS-EN 45012 or ISO Guide 66. Alternatively, standard SFS-EN 45011 on product certification may be applied,
2. Use a documented method, according to which the chain of custody of wood may be verified and certified, and
3. Have general knowledge on wood procurement and material flows in forest industries.

Professional expertise in wood procurement and material flows in forest industries is proved on the basis of certification experience in the field and/or appropriate education and professional experience of the staff.

7. Certification Procedure

7.1 Phases of Certifying Process

The certification process consists of temporally and functionally consecutive actions:

1. Application by the auditee to the certification body,

2. Review of the application and present material by the certification body,
3. Voluntary pre-audit,
4. Certification audit,
5. Assessment/decision by the certification body, and
6. Surveillance audits.

Before sending the application to the certification body, the auditee must comply in its operations with appropriate sections of the standards FFCS 1001:2003, FFCS 1002-1:2003, FFCS 1002-2:2003, FFCS 1002-3:2003 and PEFC Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements.

The purpose of the pre-sent material and voluntary pre-audit is to ensure that the requirements of the standards FFCS 1001:2003, FFCS 1002-1:2003, FFCS 1002-2:2003, FFCS 1002-3:2003 and PEFC Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements are adequately taken into account and appropriately applied by the auditee or its units.

Phases 4, 5 and 6 of the certification procedure are specified in Sections 7.2 and 7.3.

7.2 Auditing

7.2.1 General Principles

The definition of the objective of the audit is always the responsibility of the auditee. The scope and limits are defined so that the objective of the audit is achieved. The scope of the audit is defined by the lead auditor nominated by the certification body.

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate whether the evidence collected from the auditee or its units conform to the auditing criteria.

The auditing criteria are primarily the requirements of the forest certification standards FFCS 1001:2003, FFCS 1002-1:2003, FFCS

1002-2:2003, FFCS 1002-3:2003 and PEFC Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements. In addition, the auditee may define other auditing criteria, e.g., policy, legislation, guidelines, practices and procedures.

The objective, scope and auditing criteria are documented in the auditing plan, which guides the execution of the audit. The auditing plan must also indicate the timetables, places, persons and other information, for which preparations are required in advance by the auditee or its units.

The audit is carried out by an audit team. In addition to the lead auditor, the audit team has an adequate number of auditors. The sectoral competence of auditors may be complemented, if necessary, with technical experts who are not auditors. The audit team is set up by the certification body, which ensures competence and independence and other appropriateness to the task of the team members.

Auditing includes the following phases:

1. An initial meeting,
2. Collection of audit evidence,
3. Evaluation of audit evidence,
4. Final meeting and
5. Audit report on the conformance to the audit criteria.

The audit team collects adequate amount of audit evidence, based on which the conformity of operation to the criteria is evaluated. The evaluation results of the audit evidence (especially those relating to non-conformities) are reviewed with the auditee. In the final meeting, the audit results of all the units audited are collectively presented to the auditee.

The audit observations, which are not in conformity with audit criteria are always documented in the audit report. Otherwise, the

auditee and the lead auditor agree upon the contents of the audit report.

The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (e.g. government agencies, community groups, conservations organizations, etc.) as appropriate.

A summary of the certification report, including a summary of findings on the auditee's conformity with the forest management standard, written by the certification body, shall be made available to the public by the Finnish Forest Certification Council.

The requirements for public consultation and public availability of the certification report's summary shall be implemented at all operational levels within six months of the official adoption of this document. For certificates, which have been issued before the adoption of these requirements by national forest certification schemes, these requirements shall be implemented by the next surveillance audit.

7.2.2 Forest Management

When auditing forest management, the audit team must include at least one auditor qualified in forest management and one auditor qualified in environmental issues. Technical experts may complement the forest management and environmental competence of the auditors.

The criteria for forest management, as defined in the standards FFCS 1001:2003, FFCS 1002-1:2003, FFCS 1002-2:2003 and FFCS 1002-3:2003, include:

- criteria related to the implementation of group certification and certification of holdings of individual forest owners, and
- criteria measuring and describing the quality of forest management (28 in total) in group certification in the Area of a Forestry Centre, criteria (26 in total) for group certification in

the Area of a Forest Management Association, and criteria (25 in total) for certification of holdings of individual forest owners, or those of a group of individual forest owners.

Possible other auditing criteria are agreed upon with the auditee, but their results have no effect on the certification decision conforming with the FFCS Standard requirements.

7.2.3 Chain of Custody of Wood

The team auditing the control of chain of custody of wood must have at least one auditor qualified in wood procurement and one auditor qualified in forest industries. Technical experts may complement the wood procurement and forest industry competence of the auditors.

The criteria for the chain of custody of wood, as defined in PEFC Annex 4: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements, include:

- criteria for the verification of wood raw material and its origin,
- criteria for the identification of certified and uncertified wood raw material with the aid of accounting of material flows or physical segregation,
- criteria for the control of information on the origin of wood raw material contained in semi-processed products as well as by-products and end products, and
- minimum requirements for monitoring and assessment periods.

Possible other auditing criteria, such as monitoring of the requirements on the use of environmental/product labels, are agreed upon with the auditee, but their results have no effect on the certification decision conforming with the PEFC standard requirements.

7.3 Certification

7.3.1 Audit by Certification Body

The certification decision is made by the certification body on the basis of the audit report. The decision may be positive or negative. A positive decision leads to immediate certification and issuance of the certificate.

The basis for a negative certification decision is based on nonconformity to certification criteria.

7.3.2 Non-conformities and Corrective Action

Non-conformities to the certification criteria must always lead to corrective action and possibly to the rejection, postponing or withdrawal of the certificate. Non-conformities are classified as minor and major. Minor non-conformities are not necessarily an obstacle for certification. Major non-conformities always prevent the issuance of the certificate.

In the regional group certification of forest management, non-conformities are divided into group-level non-conformities and member-level non-conformities. A member-level non-conformity may lead to the expulsion of a forest owner or other actor from the certification group unless corrective action agreed upon is not implemented. The decision to expel from the certification group is made by the regional forest certification council.

7.3.3 Follow-up and Surveillance Audits

If the certification decision has been negative, a follow-up audit can be arranged (within a time period to be agreed upon) in order to verify corrective actions. If corrective action is adequate, the certificate is granted to the applicant. Surveillance audits are carried out at least once a year during the validity of the certificate. The scope of surveillance audits may be more limited than that of certification audits. In the surveillance audits, the completion of corrective actions

or the progress in their implementation are always assessed. The surveillance audits may also concentrate on certain elements of certification criteria only.

7.3.4 Amendments

If the content of the certification standards is revised, the criteria valid during the audit are applied. The auditee has a transition period of maximum one year to adapt its operations to the new criteria.

7.3.5 Validity of Certificate

The certificate is valid for a maximum of five years. The certification body may withdraw a granted certificate permanently or suspend it for a specified time period. The withdrawal, or suspension, decision and its justification are communicated to the auditee in writing.

The auditee may denounce the certificate any time during its validity. The denouncement takes effect immediately after the certification body has received the notice in writing.

8. Information of Certificate

Certification body shall provide the Finnish Forest Certification Council with information about all issued forest management and chain of custody certificates and changes concerning the validity and scope of these certificates.