

**PEFC Austria
Standard**

PEFC AT ST 1001:2024

2024-05-28

**PEFC-Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in
Austria**



PEFC Austria

Marxergasse 2, 4. floor, 1030 Vienna

Tel: +43 676 3440118

E-Mail: office@pefc.at, Web: www.pefc.at

Copyright notice

© PEFC Austria 2024

This document of PEFC Austria is copyright-protected. The document is freely available from the PEFC website or upon request.

No part of the document covered by the copyright may be changed or amended. It must not be reproduced or copied in any form or by any means for commercial purposes without the permission of Austria.

Official language of the document is German. When there is inconsistency between versions, the English version of the document as endorsed by the PEFC Council is the reference document.

Document name: PEFC-Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in Austria

Document title: PEFC AT ST 1001:2024

Approved by: PEFC Austria General Assembly

Date: 27.05.2024

Issue date: 28.05.2024

Date of entry into force: 27.04.2025

Review date: 27.05.2029

INDEX

FOREWORD	3
INTRODUCTION	3
1 SCOPE	4
2 NORMATIVE REFERENCES	4
3 DEFINITIONS	5
4 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS	6
5 SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT	8
5.1 Criterion 1: Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Forest Resources and their Contribution to Global Carbon Cycles	8
5.1.1 Land use and forest area	8
5.1.2 Forest management – Planning and monitoring	9
5.2 Criterion 2: Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality	11
5.2.1 Soil	11
5.2.2 Foliage (see also 5.2.1 and 5.2.3).....	12
5.2.3 Damage to forests	12
5.3 Criterion 3: Maintenance and Encouragement of Productive Functions of Forests (wood and non-wood)	14
5.3.1 Timber increment and felling.....	14
5.3.2 Non-wood products	14
5.3.3 Services.....	15
5.3.4 Management practices	15
5.4 Criterion 4: Maintenance, Conservation and Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems	17
5.4.1 Diversity of genes, species and ecosystems	17
5.4.2 Endangered species and biotopes.....	18
5.4.3 Protection and utilization of genetic forest resources	19
5.4.4 Protected forests	19
5.5 Criterion 5: Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Protective Functions in Forest Management (notably soil and water)	20
5.5.1 General requirements	20
5.5.2 Soil protection.....	20
5.5.3 Environmental Function and Water Protection	20
5.5.4 Infrastructure Protection and Protection against Natural Hazards.....	21
5.6 Criterion 6: Maintenance of other Socio-Economic Functions and Conditions	22
5.6.1 Characteristics and Significance of the Forest Sector	22
5.6.2 Recreational Services	22
5.6.3 Professional Education and Training, Research and Information.....	23
5.6.4 Health and Safety at Work and Working Conditions.....	23
5.6.5 Public Awareness.....	24
5.6.6 Cultural Values	25
5.7 Compliance with legal requirements	25

5.8 Internal audit and improvement..... 26

APPENDIX 1 – REQUIREMENTS FOR WORKING IN THE FOREST27

Foreword

PEFC Austria (PEFC: Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) is a national organisation with the purpose of facilitating sustainable forest management through sustainable forest management certification and labelling of wood products. Consumers can trust that products carrying the PEFC label are made of raw material from sustainably managed forests, from recycling and/or non-controversial sources. PEFC Austria is a work group responsible for the standard setting and the administration of the Austrian PEFC scheme.

PEFC Austria standards are developed within an open and transparent procedure based on consensus and supported by consultation of a variety of stakeholders. Since 1999, PEFC Austria is full member of PEFC International whose strict endorsement procedure guarantees international recognition.

To improve the readability, the male form is used for all denominations of persons. It refers to all genders.

Introduction

The basic principle of PEFC timber certification in Austria is to maintain the high standards of forest management in Austria, to document them, to recognize and implement potential areas of improvement. The goal is a continual improvement of forest management. This way, Austria's forests can fulfil their multiple ecological, economic and social functions.

Sustainable forest management has a long tradition in Austria. Since 1852, regulations have existed for sustainable management; at present the maintenance and sustainability of the forests are regulated by the Forest Law (currently valid version dated 1975), which is strict in international comparison. The Forest Law also generally complies with the protocol of the Alpine Convention with regard to "Mountain Forests". The need for legal adjustments can be seen, e.g. in Art. 2 a) Mountain Forest Protocol – reduction of airborne emissions that are harmful to forests. The PEFC Timber Certification Scheme is to be understood as a general measure in the sense of guideline Art. 2 e) Mountain Forest Protocol, which reads: "In view of the importance of sustainable forest management for the economy and the maintenance of the forests, the contracting parties support the increased utilization of timber from sustainably managed forests."

The work undertaken by PEFC Austria is seen as a contribution to the discussion on sustainable forest management, as was encouraged by the global community in the follow-up process of the World Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The central reference document is the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was passed by the global community in 1992 and ratified by Austria in the year of 1994 (Federal Law Gazette 213/95). According to Article 6 of the CBD, each country has to develop national strategies, plans or programs for the maintenance and sustainable utilization of its biological diversity, or to adapt existing strategies. For the purpose of elaborating concrete national terms based on the biodiversity convention, the Austrian "Strategy on the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" was developed in 1998. In addition, supplementary instruments were developed as action plans for specific issues, such as the "Aktionsplan Neobiota" (Austrian action plan for non-indigenous species). The criteria and indicators of MCPFE form the basis of this standard.

1. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles.
2. Maintenance of forest ecosystems health and vitality.
3. Maintenance and encouragement of productive functions of forests (wood and non-wood).
4. Maintenance, conservation and appropriate enhancement of biological diversity in forest ecosystems.

5. Maintenance and appropriate enhancement of protective functions in forest management (notably soil and water).
6. Maintenance of other socio-economic functions and conditions.

Sustainable forest management serves as basis for the protection of the multifunctional effects regarding utilization, protection, welfare, recreation as well as climate protection (see also Austrian Forest Act §1).

The requirements for sustainable forest management defined in this document complement Austria's high level of sustainability in forest management. In principle, sustainable management in an assessment unit is proved by the catalogue PEFC AT ST 1002 Criteria and Indicators for Assessing Sustainable Management in Austria". Some guidelines refer to indicators of the catalogue and are desired goals, others are management principles.

The present guidelines were authored in an open and transparent process through the working group of PEFC Austria. Suggestions and comments were considered and the results of the discussions were discussed with interested parties. The aim is to achieve a broad consensus amongst the participating organizations and individuals.

PEFC Austria provides a public commitment to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the certification system and to improve the sustainable forest management system continuously.

The term "shall" is used throughout this document to indicate those provisions that, reflecting the requirements that are mandatory. The term "should" is used to indicate guidance that, although not mandatory, is provided as a recognised means of meeting the requirements. The term "may" used throughout this standard indicates permission expressed by this standard whereas "can" refers to the ability of a user of this standard or to a possibility open to the user.

1 Scope

The document defines the requirements for sustainable forest management within the assessment unit (group organisations / individual holdings) for certification, which are applicable for the voluntary participation in PEFC-forest management certification.

Note: In principle the requirements of this standard apply to the forest management unit level. Where a requirement applies to another level, e.g. a group organisation, the compliance at this level also ensures intended performance at the forest management level.

2 Normative References

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies:

- PEFC AT ST 1002 Criteria and indicators for the determination of Sustainable Forest Management in Austria

3 Definitions

Alpine Convention

The Alpine Convention is a binding contract according to international law, the stipulations of which have to be applied since its ratification in Austria on December 18th, 2002.

Forest

“Forest” is defined by the Austrian Forestry Law 1975. Forests are areas of at least 1 000 m² with woody plants, defined in the appendix of the Austrian Forestry Law (forest vegetation) with an average width of 10 meters. These are also areas without or temporarily removed forest vegetation as a result of wood use or other reasons and areas in a local context of forest operation and forestry.

Biotope Protection Forest

According to the Forest Act, natural forest reserves based on private agreements, forestlands in national parks, forestlands in nature protection areas, or those which are subject to FFH guidelines or bird protection guidelines, are all deemed biotope protection forests. Upon application by the forest owner or an official body that deals with forest issues, the authorities can proclaim exemptions from certain regulations of the Forest Act with the owner's agreement, if this is not in contradiction to the public interest in preserving the forests. Exceptions are possible in the case of reforestation, forest destruction, treatment or utilization of protection forests, measures for pest control, or the protection of immature stands.

Forest Stands That Protect Objects

Forest stands that protect objects are forests, which serve a protective or welfare function with regard to human settlement and complexes, or cultivated fields, particularly by protecting them from natural hazards or dangerous environmental influences, and which require special care to ensure they can fulfill their protective or welfare function.

Forest Stands That Protect Sites

Forest stands that protect sites are forests, whose site is endangered by wind, water or gravity, and which thus require special care to ensure the protection of forest soil and forest growth, as well as to ensure reforestation.

Forester, graduated forester:

Forester: forestry college with A-level exams (5 years) or a bachelor's degree in forestry, practical experience (2 years' minimum) and state examination.

Graduated forester: graduate in forestry or in torrent and avalanche control, appropriate practical experience (2 years minimum) and state exam.

Forest warden: forestry college without A-level exam.

Note: Definitions and requirements regarding forest organs according the Forestry Law are relevant.

Genetic Pool Conservation

For the genetic pool conservation of forest stands, forest populations, or population segments, are maintained in their natural habitats (in situ) being permanently exposed to adaptation processes (dynamic conservation strategy). If natural regeneration is not sufficient, complementary seeding or planting is allowed using recognized and, if possible, exclusively local propagation seeds and plants (preferably seed reserves of the same stand, wilding). For such treatments, forest owners can apply for financial support.

Hemerobia

Hemerobia designates the extent of human influence on ecosystems.

Immature stands:

Even-aged stands of non-rapid-growing tree species are considered unripe for felling if their age is below the age limit for unripe stands defined in the Austrian Forest Act as amended, and in uneven-aged stands if more than half of the stems are below this age limit. For fast-growing tree species, the deviating age limits defined in the Austrian Forest Act as amended apply.

Natural forest reserves

Natural forest reserves are those forest areas that should ensure natural development of the forest ecosystem and that lack of any immediate influence. They contribute to maintain and naturally develop biological diversity. They serve research, teaching and education. The "Austrian Programme on Natural Forest Reserves" aims at the systematic establishment of a representative network of natural forest reserves. The main forest communities in growth areas should be represented in at least one natural forest reserve.

Object protection forests

Object protection forests are forests that protect people, human settlements or facilities or cultivated soil, in particular from natural hazards or damaging environmental influences, and which require special treatment to achieve and safeguard their protective effect or welfare effect.

Site protection forests (forests on special sites)

Site protection forests are forests whose location is endangered by the erosive forces of wind, water or gravity and which require special treatment to protect the soil and vegetation and to ensure reforestation.

Forest accessibility

Forest accessibility serves to ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem services provided by the forest. This includes all existing roads as well as the ones, which are still to be built.

Types of Forest Biotopes

The revised list of endangered forest biotopes in Austria describes 93 different forest biotopes that exist in terms of their ecology, sites and total area, and also indicates how they are endangered, as well as listing their degree of endangerment (F. Essl, G. Egger & T. Ellmauer et al.; "Rote Liste gefährdeter Biotoptypen Österreichs. Wälder, Forste, Vorwälder. Umweltbundesamt, Wien, 2002).

4 General requirements

PEFC Austria shall determine the affected stakeholders that are relevant to the sustainable forest management and the relevant needs and expectations of these stakeholders and consider risks and opportunities concerning compliance with the requirements for sustainable forest management in general. Further PEFC Austria shall determine and provide the resources needed for the establishment, implementation, maintenance and continual improvement of the sustainable forest management system and document all relevant informations, which are considered as being necessary for inception and implementation of this standard.

Requirements for sustainable forest management for individual or group certifications include:

- a. Records demonstrating compliance with the PEFC forest standard and relevant legal requirements shall be maintained. The placing of timber on the market shall be documented in accordance with legal requirements.

- b. Responsibilities for the sustainable forest management and compliance with this standard shall be defined

Note: In case of the group certification in natural growth regions PEFC AT ST 1003 defines responsibilities and functions of different actors.

- c. All managers of forest areas shall comply with the requirements of this standard. Forest owners shall only engage contractors that meet the requirements of PEFC Austria for forest entrepreneurs.
For forest operations (timber harvesting and forest maintenance), only those service providers and contractors should be used who have a valid document (certificate, confirmation, certificate of participation, etc.) from a control- or certification-system recognized by PEFC Austria, provided that they are available regionally and offer comparable costs and services.
From 2029, this regulation will be mandatory for fully and highly mechanized timber harvesting (forwarder and harvester in the assortment method, chainsaw and skidder with processor in the whole-tree method or cable yarding system with processor in the whole-tree method).
Farmers' contractors (Bauernakkordanten) are exempt from this regulation and can also prove the quality of their work in other ways, e.g. by participating in PEFC forest management certification. In the event of machine capacity bottlenecks due to major calamities, the processing of calamity wood is exempt from this regulation. Forest owners should nevertheless favour certified forest entrepreneurs wherever possible. The use of forest entrepreneurs that are not in possession of a valid document from a control- or certification-system recognised by PEFC Austria in accordance with this regulation constitutes a minor non-conformity.
In the case of forest entrepreneurs that are not in possession of a valid document of a control- or certification-system recognised by PEFC Austria, the suitability is ensured by the documentation of the forest owner (see point 5.6.4.6).

Note: The list of forest entrepreneur certificates currently recognised by PEFC-Austria can be found at www.pefc.at. All forest entrepreneurs with a valid certificate can be found on the website of the respective certifier on a daily basis.

- d. A specification of "100% PEFC certified", or another system specific claim, as claim to be used to communicate the origin of products in an area covered by the standard to customers with a PEFC chain of custody.

Note: System specific claims of PEFC endorsed standards and PEFC Council approved abbreviations of such claims and the claim "100% PEFC certified", and their translations into languages other than English, are published online on the PEFC website www.pefc.org.

- e. Owners/managers of forests who are selling products from areas other than covered by the standard, shall ensure that only products from areas covered by the standard are sold with the claim "100% PEFC-certified" or a system specific claim
- f. Claims on the origin of products in an area covered by the standard shall only be made by forest owners/managers covered by a PEFC recognised certificate issued against the standard.
- g. PEFC Austria shall specify requirements concerning the information which need to be provided to a PEFC chain of custody certified customer.
- h. The forest owner's participation is generally limited to a period of 10 years after signing the PEFC declaration of participation. Further participation is possible at any

time by updating the data or by submitting a new declaration of participation. This process serves to renew data and ensure data quality at PEFC Austria.

Note: Each data update is equivalent to the submission of a new declaration of participation and results in an extension of participation for 10 years.

5 Specific requirements for sustainable forest management

5.1 Criterion 1: Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Forest Resources and their Contribution to Global Carbon Cycles

5.1.1 Land use and forest area

5.1.1.1 Forest management planning shall aim to maintain or increase forests and other wooded areas as well as the productive capacity, resilience and resistance and enhance the quality of the economic, ecological, cultural and social values of forest resources, including soil and water. Forest management plans or their equivalents shall take into account the different uses or functions of the managed forest area, also its capacity to store and sequester carbon. This shall be done by making full use of related services and tools that support land-use planning and nature conservation. The basis for inventory and mapping of forest resources is the national Forest Inventory (ÖWI).

5.1.1.2 Afforestation and reforestation activities shall be evaluated considering economic, ecological, social and/or cultural value aspects. In particular, the establishment and support of rare or endangered forest biotypes is viewed positively or afforestation and reforestation activities that contribute to the improvement and restoration of ecological connectivity. Afforestation must not be carried out on areas worth protecting from an environmental expert point of view. Conversion of abandoned agricultural and treeless land into forest land should be taken into consideration.

Afforestation of ecologically important non-forest ecosystems shall not occur unless in justified circumstances where the conversion:

- a. is in compliance with international, national and regional policy and legislation applicable for land use and forest management and is a result of national or regional land-use planning governed by a governmental or other official authority; and
- b. is established based on a decision-making basis where affected stakeholders have opportunities to contribute to the decision-making on conversion through transparent and participatory consultation processes; and
- c. does not have negative impacts on threatened (including vulnerable, rare or endangered) non-forest ecosystems, culturally and socially significant areas, important habitats of threatened species or other protected areas; and
- d. entails a small proportion of the ecologically important non-forest ecosystem managed by an organisation; and
- e. does not destroy areas of significantly high carbon stock; and
- f. makes a contribution to long-term conservation, economic, and social benefits.

Note: Legal Provisions see Forestry Act §4.

5.1.1.3 Conversion of forests to other types of land use shall not occur unless in justified circumstances, for example, in the case of public interest (including special issues concerning nature protection) where the conversion:

- a. is in compliance with international, national and regional policy and legislation relevant for land use and forest management and is a result of national or regional land-use planning governed by a governmental or other official authority including consultation with materially and directly interested persons and organisations; and
- b. entails a small proportion (no greater than 5%) of forest area on group level (8 PEFC regions in Austria) (this includes the consideration of prescribed compensation measures by the public authority); and
- c. does not have negative impacts on threatened (including vulnerable, rare or endangered) forest ecosystems, culturally and socially significant areas, important habitats of threatened species or other protected areas; and
- d. does not destroy areas of significantly high carbon stock; and
- e. makes a contribution to long-term conservation, economic, and social benefits.
- f. however not in the case of forest biotopes, which are directly threatened with extinction or highly endangered according to the “List of Endangered Species”

Note: Regarding any forest conversions the requirements included in the Forestry Act, including the registration are relevant (see Austrian Forestry Act §17-§19). The compensation measures prescribed by the Forestry Act provide sufficient mechanism for regulation of the maximum size of any conversion. **Conversions into forest plantations are not eligible according the Austrian Forestry Law.**

5.1.2 Forest management – Planning and monitoring

5.1.2.1 Forest management shall encourage climate positive practices in its management operations. Forest management shall comprise the cycle of inventory and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and shall include an appropriate assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of forest management operations. This shall form a basis for a cycle of continuous improvement to minimise or avoid negative impacts. Forest owners/managers shall have access to and make use of results of the national forest inventory while planning and performing forest management activities.

Note 1: The evaluation of impacts can be conducted on group level. The results can be also used for single-sites.

Note 2: The Forestry Law includes requirements to ensure a permanent forest inventory and sustainable use of forest resources. All forests are covered by the national forest inventory (ÖWI) (§130) and are subject to a forestry development plan (Waldentwicklungsplan) (§9), which is publicly available and considered to be an equivalent to forest management plans. Access to and use of the forestry development plan at the FMU level satisfies the requirement. In case of group certification in natural growth regions the inventory and mapping of forest resources are incorporated into the sustainability report that is based on the national forest inventory (ÖWI) (see PEFC AT ST 1003).

5.1.2.2 Inventory and mapping of forest resources shall be established and maintained, adequate to local and national conditions and in correspondence with the topics described in this document and the standards PEFC AT ST 1002.

Note: All forests are covered by a national forest inventory (ÖWI) (§130) and subject a forestry development plan (Waldentwicklungsplan) (§9). In case of group certification in natural growth regions the inventory and mapping of forest resources are incorporated into the sustainability report that is based on the national forest inventory (ÖWI) (see PEFC AT ST 1003).

5.1.2.3 Management plans or their equivalents, appropriate to the size and use of the forest area, shall be elaborated and periodically updated. They shall be based on legislation as well as existing land-use plans, and adequately cover the forest resources.

Note: All forests are covered by a forestry development plan (Waldentwicklungsplan), which is publicly available and considered to be an equivalent to forest management plans. Access to and use of the forestry development plan at the FMU level satisfies the requirement. In case of group certification in natural growth regions the inventory and mapping of forest resources are incorporated into the sustainability report that is based on the national forest inventory (ÖWI) (see PEFC AT ST 1003).

5.1.2.4 A forest management plan shall contain:

- a. A description of the current state of the forest / forest management (acc. PEFC AT ST 1002)
- b. Interpretation of the current state of the forest / forest management
- c. Derivation of short-term and long-term operational targets for the corresponding assessment unit (group organisations / individual holdings). For at least 10 system-relevant indicators (target indicators) operational and measurable targets and suitable measures, or plans for measures, have to be defined.
- d. For individual certification the average annual allowable cut and, where applicable, the annually allowable exploitation of non-timber forest products.

Note: The exploitation of berries and mushrooms (as main non-timber forest products) is regulated in the Austrian Forestry Law and in the state nature conservation laws. Further requirements see 5.3.2.1.

5.1.2.5 A summary of the forest management plan or its equivalent appropriate to the scope and scale of forest management, which contains information about the forest management measures to be applied, is publicly available. The summary may exclude confidential business and personal information and other information made confidential by national legislation or for the protection of cultural sites or sensitive natural resource features.

Note: All forests are covered by the forestry development plan (Waldentwicklungsplan), which is publicly available and considered to be an equivalent to forest management plans. In case of the group certification in natural growth regions a summary of the sustainability report (Regionenmerkblatt), is publicly available.

5.1.2.6 Monitoring of forest resources and evaluation of their management shall be periodically performed, and results fed back into the planning process. The results shall be illustrated in a management report and be retained as a documented information.

5.1.2.6.1 A management report shall contain:

- a. the implementation and the results of internal audits or an internal monitoring programme
- b. events and information, that concern the compliance with the requirements of the standard, other applicable requirements of PEFC Austria or the achievement of targets,
- c. the formulation and implementation of preventive and/or corrective actions
- d. the implemented activities and measures of the last year, especially the advancement regarding the achievement of targets which are formulated in the forest management.
- e. analysis and planning of measures: based on the results, if required, corrective and preventive measures in case of non-conformities, or potentials for improvement shall be identified and activities and measures for the following year shall be planned.
- f. changes in external and internal issues that are relevant to the management system
- g. opportunities for continual improvement.

Note 1: Basis for the management report for the group certification in natural growth regions is the audit checklist RL 3003.

Note 2: In case of the group certification in natural growth regions the setting of targets and monitoring of forest resources are described in a sustainability report (PEFC AT ST 1003).

5.1.2.7 Appropriate silvicultural measures shall be taken to reach and maintain a sustainable level of growing stock.

Note 1: Sustainable in consideration of economical, ecological and social aspects.

Note 2: Sustainable, multifunctional forest management is a basic requirement of the Austrian Forest Act. In order to ensure sustainability of forest production, a balance between the growth and harvest, and a sustainable growing stock, forest owners/managers shall conform to requirements relating to the minimum age for a final harvest, obligations relating to reforestation and maximum size of clear cuts as defined in the Forest Act.

5.1.2.8 The timber stock should be maintained at a favourable level in line with the forest communities and economic objectives in order to make the best possible contribution to carbon storage objectives. In the light of climate change, the associated silvicultural and economic risk should always be taken into account, particularly when building up stocks, and it should also be ensured that all forest effects can be fulfilled and positive regeneration dynamics are in place.

5.2 Criterion 2: Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality

Forest management shall encourage and maintain genetic, species and structural diversity to enhance the stability, vitality and resilience of the forests to adverse environmental factors and strengthen natural regulation mechanisms. Health and vitality of forests shall be periodically monitored by the results of the national Forest Inventory (ÖWI).

5.2.1 Soil

5.2.1.1 Forest management shall be conducted in a way that the functionality of the forest-ecosystem and the productivity of the site are maintained. Afforestation, tending and harvesting operations shall be carried out in time, and in a way that does not reduce the productive capacity of the site. The allowable cut and the withdrawal of non-timber products shall not effect a decrease in productivity due to a reduction of the nutrient regime or other negative impacts.

5.2.1.2 Techniques should be preferred applied where possible that minimise direct or indirect damage to forest, soil or water resources. In case of risks of degradation these should be considered in forest management planning (forest management plans or their equivalents). Rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems, shall be considered if this is possible by silvicultural means and economically viable.

5.2.1.3 Assessing the possibility of tree components removal, which go beyond the ordinary in the cut-to-length or stem extraction operation used parts (branches, twigs, needles / leaves, roots) is carried out by a multifactorial process. The more factors apply listed below, the more likely it is a biomass limited:

- Shallow ground
- Soil with a high proportion of coarse (gravel, stones, blocks)
- Bedrock nutrient (e.g. granite, gneiss, quartzite, quartz phyllite, serpentine, very pure limestones and dolomites)
- Historical forest uses (litter removal, pollarding)
- Low precipitation climate
- Relief: crest, upper slope, back, hummock
- Soil compaction: serious and / or soils influenced by tailwater

Note: When residual biomass is left in the forest, requirements regarding biotic threats need to be considered (see 5.4.1.2.9)

5.2.1.4 In a risk assessment derived from the site concerning biomass utilization, suitable measures to maintain the productive capacity of the soil have to be taken, depending on the level of risk (in ascending order):

- branches with needles (leaves) left and / or
- treetop left and / or
- parts of the crown left and / or
- Full-tree harvesting not for every use (mainly thinning) and / or
- Full-tree harvesting not on the entire service area

5.2.1.5 In principle, fertilising for the only purpose of increasing timber increment is omitted. Permitted fertilisers or soil additives are exclusively used controlled and in consideration of environmental impacts to support natural forest development (e.g. initial fertilisation in connection with reforestation) or to ameliorate sites, in order to stabilise the ecosystem.

5.2.1.6 Wood ash is only disseminated in forests in strict compliance with the recommendations of the expert advisory committee for soil fertility.

Note: Requirements regarding quantity and intervals are given in the guideline: „Richtlinie für den sachgerechten Einsatz von Pflanzenaschen zur Verwertung auf land- und forstwirtschaftlich genutzten Flächen“

5.2.1.7 Air pollution affects the health of forests but can hardly be influenced by forest management (see amelioration of forest soil). The effects are documented and interpreted with regard to feasible measures (see 5.2.3.1.1).

Note: Legal Provisions see Forestry Act §52.

5.2.1.8 Extensive passing over forest soil has to be in principle omitted. In drivable terrain a permanent precision infrastructure should be established, for ensuring that forest operations have a low impact on forest and soil. Leaving logging trails should be avoided even in clear-cuts and processing damaged wood. Especially for fully mechanized harvesting operations the distance between new created logging trails for driving should be approximately 20 m. When using logging trails, it should be paid attention to keep them permanently useable (especially through the utilization of suitable machinery/tyres, considering weather effects, using layers of brush-wood, etc.).

Note 1: The distance between two logging trails is measured between their axes.

Note 2: The corresponding minimum distance pertains to actually used logging trails. Logging trails from old, logging trail infrastructure which is not in use should not be considered.

Note 3: Exceptions for driving outside logging trails could be, for example, tillage, mulching, planting, seeding. These measures need to be limited to the utmost necessary extent.

Note 4: In case of specific topographic and site-specific situations as well as necessities concerning the operational layout, deviations from the prescribed scheme are allowed.

Note 5: The requirement regarding distances is not applicable for operations using cable crane and existing logging trail infrastructure.

5.2.2 Foliage (see also 5.2.1 and 5.2.3)

5.2.3 Damage to forests

5.2.3.1 Abiotic factors

5.2.3.1.1 Abiotic factors shall be monitored. Forest management shall best possible counteract the negative impacts of the abiotic factors, e.g. storm, snow and fire, which affect the sustainability of forest goods and services.

Note: PEFC AT ST 1002 (Criteria and Indicators for Assessing Sustainable Forest Management in Austria) provides a framework for the monitoring of abiotic factors.

5.2.3.1.2 Lighting of fires shall be avoided and is except in dedicated areas, only allowed to the forest owner, forestry-, forest protection- and hunting-authorities or persons with a permission of the forest owner.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act §40, § 41.

5.2.3.2 Biotic factors

5.2.3.2.1 Biotic factors shall be monitored.

Note: PEFC AT ST 1002 (Criteria and Indicators for Assessing Sustainable Forest Management in Austria) provides a framework for the monitoring of biotic factors.

5.2.3.2.2 Biotope and wildlife management as well as hunting have to be carried out in a way that does not threaten the maintenance of the forest and its functions, and that promotes natural biodiversity.

5.2.3.2.3 Game stock shall be kept on a level that facilitates regeneration within an appropriate period of time, and that does not threaten the mixture of tree species that is suited to the site conditions. The regeneration of tree species which are considered to be typical for the site conditions should in principle be able to happen following the natural potential. The game stock should be managed in a way that protection measures constitute an exception.

5.2.3.2.4 Grazing management is carried out respecting secured rights, socio-economic and ecologic functions as well as the objectives of sustainable forest management (see also 5.6.1).

Note: Legal provisions regarding grazing see Forestry Act § 37.

5.2.3.3 Anthropogenic factors

5.2.3.3.1 The proportion of stems damaged in the course of harvesting to the total number of stems is minimised.

5.2.3.3.2 Hauling is carried out, in principle, taking best care of the stand, soil, water resources and ecological conditions (notably threatened species). Only practices and systems are applied that correspond to modern forest technology. Appropriate careful planning and control are necessary.

5.2.3.3.3 Only biodegradable oils are used for the loss lubrication of chainsaw-, harvester-, processor- and feller buncher-chains.

5.2.3.3.4 Forestry machinery is in principle operated with rapidly biodegradable hydraulic fluids. Evidence of biodegradation must be provided.

Note 1: Exempted is machinery with no separate hydraulic circle or machinery for which no allowance from the equipment producer exists.

Note 2: If machinery, which is operated with mineral hydraulic oils, increased safety measures need to be applied in order to avoid oil contaminations in case of defects (e.g. vacuum pumps, increased volume of oil binding agents).

Note 3: e.g. Biodegradable hydraulic fluids acc. ISO 15380 ready biodegradability acc. OECD 301 B, accepted Eco-Labels: e.g. EU-Ecolabel, Blauer Engel

Note 4: Exceptions apply to machines that were put into operation before 1 January 2022 and were filled with a PAO oil.

5.2.3.3.5 To minimize loss of fuel closed fueling systems have to be used where possible. In addition, an oil binding agent system for a loss of at least 10 liters at a forest machinery use needs to be kept.

5.2.3.3.6 Biological, mechanical and physical measures are to be preferred to chemical ones. Wherever possible, natural processes and structures should be considered especially preventive biological measures. When using chemically synthesised pesticides and pest control agents, only authorised protective agents are used, subject to proper application and compliance with the safety regulations for employees. When using chemically synthesised pesticides and pest control agents, the application should be prepared by a responsible person with a valid certificate of competence (e.g. preparation and dosing of the spray mixture) and should only be carried out by trained workers.

Note: Legal provisions regarding forestry pests and use of pesticides see Forestry Act §43-§46.

5.2.3.3.7 WHO Type 1A and 1B pesticides and other highly toxic pesticides are prohibited, unless no alternative is available.

Note: If exceptions are defined, they will be published on the PEFC Austria website.

5.2.3.3.8 Pesticides, such as chlorinated hydrocarbons whose derivatives remain biologically active and accumulate in the food chain beyond their intended use, and any pesticides banned by international agreement, shall be prohibited.

5.2.3.3.9 The use of pesticides shall follow the instructions given by the pesticide producer and be implemented with proper equipment and training. Any use of pesticides shall be documented.

5.2.3.3.10 For forests in protected areas (biotope protection forests according to the Forest Act), an application by the forest owner to be exempted from forest protection measures (§44 and 45 of the Forest Act) must be made according to §32a of the Forest Act.

5.2.3.3.11 Fertilisers: see 5.2.1.5

5.2.3.3.12 Forest devastation and the indiscriminate disposal of waste shall be pursued based on the legal provisions. In designated areas for recreational purposes (camping sites, barbecue sites, or the like) shall be taken care of an environmentally-responsible disposal of waste.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act §16, § 172, § 174.

5.3 Criterion 3: Maintenance and Encouragement of Productive Functions of Forests (wood and non-wood)

5.3.1 Timber increment and felling

5.3.1.1 The average volume of harvested timber shall not exceed the average increment in the assessment unit with reference to a period of 10 years. Exceptions are made in the case of catastrophes and calamities as well as in other legitimate exceptional cases.

5.3.2 Non-wood products

5.3.2.1 It is permitted to collect 2 kg mushrooms and berries maximum each per day per person, provided that there are no other regulations on the protection of forest fruits or the maintenance of forest health.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act § 174.

5.3.2.2 Harvesting resin is only permitted at black pines, white pines and larches, provided that the maintenance of the forest and its functions is not threatened. Other traditional utilisation of non-wood products is to be limited to an ecologically sound extent.

5.3.2.3 The marketing of non-wood products, such as water, etc., may only take place in keeping with ecological sustainability, any nature protection regulations in the area concerned, as well as the granting of all the required permits from the authorities. In case that for the commercial use of certain non-timber forest products, no legal provisions exist, the forest owner/manager should take care of establishing and controlling corresponding regulations.

5.3.3 Services

5.3.3.1 Marketable infrastructure services are only offered to an extent that sustainable forest management is not threatened in ecological, economic or socioeconomic terms.

5.3.4 Management practices

5.3.4.1 Regeneration (see also 5.4.1.1)

5.3.4.1.1 Forest regeneration is carried out naturally wherever possible, especially if the genetic primary material is suitable for natural regeneration and the desired regeneration objective can be achieved.

5.3.4.1.2 When planting and sowing, suitable propagation material appropriate to the location is used in compliance with the recommendations on origin (e.g. herkunftsberatung.at, recommendations BFW, Forest Reproductive Material Act as amended). Negative influences on the genetic stock of native species and provenances should be avoided.

5.3.4.1.3 In principle, reforestation is carried out within a period of 5 years in case of planting, natural regeneration takes place within 10 years, in protection forests reforestation/regeneration does not exceed a period of 15 years in justified exceptional cases.

Note: Legal provisions regarding regeneration see Forestry Act §13.

5.3.4.1.4 For the selection of tree species and provenances future changed climatic conditions need to be considered.

5.3.4.2 Tending

5.3.4.2.1 In young growth and thickets existing tending arrears are to be reduced promoting ecologically important mixed forest stands, if possible. In pole forests thinning remains are to be reduced applying appropriate methods (e.g. crown thinning), if possible. In mature stands appropriate utilisation methods are to be applied. Thereby, dead wood is left if no comprehensible danger is given.

5.3.4.3 Utilisation: Strip-, increment-, regeneration-, selected felling, etc.

5.3.4.3.1 The aim of silvicultural operations is to establish the best possible conditions for the forest as a sustainable economic factor. All such operations have to consider the natural conditions of the site. Those utilisation methods are chosen, which ensure the sustainability of forest goods and services.

5.3.4.3.2 Final cutting of mature trees without complete advance regeneration, e.g. in order to promote trees requiring light or the structuring of large, uniform forest stands, must not exceed the following dimensions:

a) Clearing without complete reforestation: 0.5 hectares.

b) Clearing without complete reforestation at a width of 50 m: 2 hectares

c) Clearing without complete reforestation at a width up to 50 m: 600 m in length

Cases of b) and c) are subject to approval by forest authorities. More extensive removals are also permitted if ecologically reasonable, but they have to be legitimate, documented and approved. Utilisation of non-mature stands is prohibited (see definition). For remaining mature trees see 5.4.1.2.9 and 5.4.2.1.

5.3.4.4 Roads

5.3.4.4.1 The density of access roads should be oriented to the type of silvicultural operations and the structure of the forest property. Planning and construction of infrastructure for forestry shall be conducted in a way that minimises impacts on forest ecosystems and takes into consideration following aspects: necessity of access, alternative transport methods (e.g. cables), low utilization of surface area, ecological aspects (sensible forest ecosystems, taking into account threatened, or key species, in particular their migration patterns), landscape compatibility and non-destructive construction methods.

Note: Improving forest accessibility by roads (definition) is a prerequisite for sustainable forest management and modern, humane working conditions. However, this does involve interventions in nature. In order to minimize the ecological disadvantages, the type of forest access road has to be chosen under careful consideration of the natural biotope.

5.3.4.4.2 Construction of roads, bridges and other infrastructure shall be carried out in a manner that minimises bare soil exposure, avoids the introduction of soil into watercourses and preserves the natural level and function of water courses and river beds. Proper road drainage facilities shall be installed and maintained. Any damage shall be repaired after the road has been built. Seepage water from slopes is to be considered, marked trails are to be incorporated and slopes, in principle, are to be left to regain naturally their plant cover. If this is not the case after an appropriate period of time, the plant cover has to be re-established in a way as close-to-nature as possible.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act chapt. V (Bringung).

5.3.4.5 Pressure of animal populations: see 5.2.3.2

5.4 Criterion 4: Maintenance, Conservation and Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems

5.4.1 Diversity of genes, species and ecosystems

5.4.1.1 Regeneration (see also 5.3.4.1)

5.4.1.1.1 For regeneration under consideration of 5.3.4.1.1 und 5.3.4.1.2, natural regeneration is to be preferred. If the natural forest community is not sufficiently represented in the old-growth forest, suitable plants shall be used for reforestation. The selection of seeds and seedlings that are appropriate to their origin is a decisive criterion for healthy, resistant and stable forests.

5.4.1.1.2 Structural horizontal and vertical diversity shall be encouraged resp. maintained in order to strengthen the stability, vitality and resilience of forests and natural regulatory mechanisms and thus increase resilience to environmental influences and, in particular, to possible climate change.

5.4.1.2 Tree species composition, forest structure, naturalness

5.4.1.2.1 Consideration should be given to the conservation and improvement of biodiversity with regard to ecosystems, in particular species and genetic variability, and attention should be paid to this when implementing measures.

5.4.1.2.2 Where possible, forest management measures shall maintain and promote a diversity of horizontal and vertical structures and species and create spatial structural diversity - beyond the individual stand - at landscape level.

5.4.1.2.3 When establishing and maintaining stands (thinning), forest stands that meet the respective requirements and fulfil the functions must be used, taking into account the natural forest community (e.g. according to dynamic forest typing or similar, if available in the region). When establishing the stand, particular attention must be paid to the climatic fitness of the tree species and the origins of the tree species.

5.4.1.2.4 The cultivation of non-native tree species on ecologically valuable sites is generally avoided. Due to climate change, a small admixture of non-native tree species appropriate to the location can be useful in order to maintain the forest effects as best as possible. If non-native tree species are used, they should be introduced in a mixture with native tree species. Exceptions may be made in specially justified cases. Negative effects should be avoided.

Note: Ecologically valuable sites are e.g. dry grasslands, rubble and boulder heaps, moors, springs, etc.

5.4.1.2.5 Invasive species shall be treated according to the legal provisions.

5.4.1.2.6 If the distance from nature in a finding unit is so big that sustainability is at risk (e.g. orientation towards dynamic forest typification), measures are increasingly being taken towards greater closeness to nature.

5.4.1.2.7 The percentage of forest areas, which are classified as natural, close-to-nature or moderately modified according to the state of scientific knowledge (e.g. hemeroby study), is maintained or increased. The proportion of forests, which are classified as artificial or strongly altered, is reduced.

5.4.1.2.8 Traditional management measures that create and maintain rare forest ecosystems on suitable sites, such as "mixture of coppice and high forest management

(Mittelwaldbewirtschaftung)" and coppice forest management as well as plenter forest management, should be supported insofar as this is economically justifiable.

5.4.1.2.9 Deadwood and habitat structures shall be preserved and their development should be supported with measures to maintain or increase biodiversity and diversity at the landscape level, taking into account any influences on the health and stability of forests and surrounding ecosystems. This includes the conservation and support of small habitats and special structures in the forest, which are important habitats for many species:

- a. Habitat and biotope trees, veteran trees and/or rare tree species are preserved resp. supported wherever possible, as are old wood cells and old wood islands (groups of trees, stands).
- b. Single dying trees or individual trees damaged by abiotic factors especially with bigger diameters are left in the forest. When harvesting dead (biotope) wood at an advanced stage of decomposition is left on site. Exceptions are made in cases of comprehensible reasons for not leaving them.
- c. Residual biomass, e.g. branch and crown material, is left in the forest if the legally relevant phytosanitary situation permits or if removal is not necessary for the conservation of rare species or a rare habitat.
- d. Shrubs and rare tree species are to be maintained and promoted when regenerating, tending and thinning forests.
- e. Forest edges are to be maintained and enhanced with regard to their structural and biological diversity.
- f. Small features, like rocks or wet sites, have to be maintained, if possible.

Note 1: Habitat trees are living or dead trees with special micro-habitats or structures. They may have various types of cavities, rotten spots, rough branches, cracks, crevices, twigs, bark lesions, moss or lichen growth or be a rare tree species in the surrounding forest.

Note 2: Veteran trees are older than the rest of the stand. They provide habitat and are left to develop naturally. The preservation of habitat trees or veteran trees significantly increases the habitat diversity of a stand.

5.4.2 Endangered species and biotopes

5.4.2.1 Forest management takes into consideration the maintenance of natural communities of species as well as a sustainable use with regard to hunting, notably sites of special significance for wildlife (shelters for the winter, nesting trees, groups of old trees, capercaillie biotopes).

5.4.2.2 Protection and conservation measures for highly endangered habitat types and species are to be implemented wherever possible in line with regional nature conservation models (cf. BIMUWA project). Forest managers shall be informed about possible implementation measures in order to encourage them to make an individual contribution to the conservation of these special "protected assets". Known occurrences of highly endangered species and biotope types shall not be further jeopardized by management measures. These should be promoted through targeted measures.

Note 1: In terms of site, highly endangered habitat types and species are found more frequently in special and extreme habitats (e.g. dry grasslands, scree and boulder slopes, moors, springs, etc.) and hardly ever in the most productive commercial forests.

Note 2: Information on the targeted promotion of highly endangered species can be found at <http://www.pefc.at>

5.4.2.3 Where possible, old and dead wood and islands of old wood are supported or, if necessary, other measures are taken that are suitable for protecting or increasing the population of protected or endangered animal and plant species.

5.4.3 Protection and utilization of genetic forest resources

5.4.3.1 Those genetic pools, which are defined by the Austrian Federal Research and Training Centre for Forests, Natural Hazards and Landscape (BFW), should be maintained and appropriately considered by forest management. Forest management in genetic pools (see definitions) aims to pass on or further develop genetic information of tree and shrub populations by the means of natural regeneration.

5.4.3.2 No genetically manipulated seeds and plants are used.

5.4.4 Protected forests

The PEFC network makes every effort to support the further development of EU protected area targets at the biogeographical level. It is also committed to the renaturalisation of important habitats. The principles of voluntariness, efficiency and financial compensation as well as the EU bioeconomy strategy are observed.

5.4.4.1 In designated natural forest reserves and stepping stone biotopes, any direct impact shall be avoided.

Note 1: Defined natural forest reserves support the natural development of forest ecosystems and the maintenance of biological diversity. Natural forest reserves are established on the basis of private contracts between the forest owners, or entitled users, and the Republic of Austria. Natural forest reserves are documented.

Note 2: Stepping stone biotopes serve to connect habitats. Habitat connectivity is a key factor for the conservation and improvement of biodiversity. It forms the basis for ecological processes such as gene flow and migration. It also enables the spread and recolonisation of areas by endangered populations (animals, plants and fungi). They are based on private-law agreements between owners resp. authorised users and the BFW. Stepping stone biotopes are mapped and documented with regard to parameters relevant to forest biodiversity.

5.4.4.2 Designated nature protection areas and all other legally protected zones, such as Natura 2000 reserves, national parks or nature reserves, as well as rare, sensible, protected forests,

- a. for example, riparian areas and wetland biotopes according to the "list of endangered areas" of forest biotopes in Austria
- b. containing endemic species and habitats of threatened species, according to the "list of endangered areas" or endangered or protected genetic in situ resources
- c. globally, nationally or regionally significant large landscape areas with natural distribution and abundance of naturally occurring species.

are to be documented and mapped. Forest management shall follow the legal stipulations. Existing regulations, agreements and conditions are complied with. The "good condition" of forest habitats included in the coherent European Nature 2000 network according to the Birds and Habitats Directives shall be maintained or enhanced. Remnants of virgin forests shall not be managed. Suitable protection and management measures for forests of the endangered classes I and II according to the "list of endangered types of forest biotopes," are viewed positively.

Note 1: Legal provisions see Forestry Act § 32a.

Note 2: Access to and use of a publicly available plans (e.g. forestry development plan, plans regarding NATURA-2000 areas, etc.) or similarly satisfies the requirement.

5.5 Criterion 5: Maintenance and Appropriate Enhancement of Protective Functions in Forest Management (notably soil and water)

5.5.1 General requirements

5.5.1.1 Forest management planning shall aim to maintain and enhance protective functions of forests for society, such as protection of infrastructure, protection from soil erosion, protection of water resources and from adverse impacts of water such as floods or avalanches.

5.5.1.2 Areas that fulfil specific and recognised protective functions for society, especially for soil and water, shall be registered and mapped. Resulting measures shall be considered, especially in forest management planning.

Note: Protective forest stands for soil and erosion and for the protection of infrastructures are registered according the Austrian Forest Law. In forest management plans or their equivalents corresponding requirements be shall considered or referred to.

5.5.2 Soil protection

5.5.2.1 Maintenance, care and continuous stocking of protection forests are the precondition for efficient protection against soil erosion. The stability of protection forests is periodically controlled and enhancement of stability is aimed at, especially in forests with particular protective function. In this regard, respective promotion programs should be taken advantage of in the assessment unit.

5.5.2.2 Special care shall be given to silvicultural operations on sensitive soils and erosion-prone areas as well as in areas where operations might lead to excessive erosion of soil into watercourses. Inappropriate techniques such as deep soil tillage and use of unsuitable machinery shall be avoided in such areas. Appropriate measures shall be taken to minimise the impact on animal populations.

5.5.2.3 For use of machines on the forest floor: see also 5.2.1.8.

5.5.3 Environmental Function and Water Protection

5.5.3.1 Special management guidelines for forest stands, which are primarily managed for the purpose of water protection, as well as designated protective forest stands, have to be obeyed. The respective areas in the region are to be documented. Inappropriate use of chemicals or other harmful substances or inappropriate silvicultural practices influencing water quality in a harmful way shall be avoided. Special care shall be given when using chemicals.

Note: Protective forest stands for soil and erosion and for the protection of infrastructures are registered according the Austrian Forest Law and subject to certain requirements regarding planning and management.

5.5.3.2 Road construction material, brushwood and residual biomass should not in come into water systems.

5.5.3.3 In the course of silvicultural operations, large-scale interventions in the forest soil have to be avoided.

5.5.3.4 New facilities for the surface drainage of forest areas will not be built and existing ones will not be extended, with the exception of measures to prevent dangerous landslides. The slope water balance must be taken into account.

5.5.4 Infrastructure Protection and Protection against Natural Hazards

5.5.4.1 Forest stands, which have been designated for the protection of infrastructures or protection against natural hazards, or those which have been designated protective forests by the authorities, are to be managed according to the stipulations or forest management plans or their equivalents so that their protective function is maintained and improved.

Note: Protective forest stands for soil and erosion and for the protection of infrastructures are registered according the Austrian Forest Law. In forest management plans or their equivalents corresponding requirements be shall considered or referred to.

5.6 Criterion 6: Maintenance of other Socio-Economic Functions and Conditions

5.6.1 Characteristics and Significance of the Forest Sector

5.6.1.1 Forest management shall aim to respect the multiple functions of forests to society, give 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.

Note: Positive contributions to rural development can be achieved by employing regional workers, as well as through regional processing or marketing of timber and non-timber products. The training and further education of forest owners and forest managers, especially in small forests, is of particular importance in this context.

5.6.1.2 Forest management practices shall maintain and improve the forest resources and encourage a diversified output of goods and services over the long term.

5.6.1.3 Sustainable forest management shall promote the health of the rural population, strengthen rural areas and serve the long-term well-being of the local population through local value creation. Forestry, sawmilling and wood working industry should maintain and increase the social and economic welfare of owners and employees in the long term. With their know-how and skills, employees are an important success factor. Due consideration of their interests as well as integration and further development of their know-how and skills for operational procedures serve sustainable management.

5.6.1.4.. New opportunities for employment in connection with the socio-economic functions of forests shall be considered. Workforce should be employed the whole year.

Note: A social employment policy is an integral part of comprehensive sustainability in certified holdings of the forest industry. Sustainable forest management offers income possibilities for a lot of own employees in the forest, sawmill and woodworking industries. Certified enterprises in forestry industry consider the offer of regional employees and entrepreneurs.

5.6.1.5 Forest management shall aim to achieve sound economic performance through an optimum use of forest products. Therefore, studies and possibilities for new markets and economic activities in connection with all relevant goods and services of forests shall be considered.

Note 1: Relevant information are for instance provided through interest groups, cooperatives or group organisations.

5.6.1.6 Property rights and land tenure arrangements shall be clearly defined, documented and established for the relevant forest area. Utilization rights of third parties have to be respected.

5.6.1.7 In the case of imminent natural dangers, the forest owner is permitted to drive grazing stock into his forests for the duration of the danger and is obligated to let others' stock to be driven into his forest. In the latter case the forest owner is entitled to damages if his property has been affected (see also 5.2.3.2).

5.6.2 Recreational Services

5.6.2.1 Everybody has access to forests for recreational purposes, taking into account respect for ownership rights and the rights of others, the effects on forest resources and ecosystems. Thereof excepted are ecologically vulnerable areas, regeneration areas with trees lower than three metres as well as defined prohibited and protected areas. The

compatibility with other functions of the forest needs to be maintained. Negative effects through recreational utilization shall be minimized.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act §33, §34

5.6.2.2 Forest management operations shall take into account all socio-economic functions, Aesthetic values of forests which origin for instance in varied forest structures, attractive trees, flowers and fruits, shall be considered especially with regard to the recreational function.

5.6.3 Professional Education and Training, Research and Information

5.6.3.1 Forest organs are appropriately qualified and guarantee a professional implementation of the objectives of sustainable forest management according to PEFC.

Note: Legal provisions See Forestry Act § 104, §105

5.6.3.2 Forest holdings hire appropriately qualified people with special education and training in forestry (graduates in forestry, foresters, forest wardens) for forest management planning and controlling according to the Austrian Forest Law.

Note: Legal provisions see Forestry Act §104, §105, §106 and §113-§116.

5.6.3.3 Employees in forestry should attend training courses, which is supported by the employers.

5.6.3.4 For forest managers, contractors, employees and forest owners sufficient information shall be available and they shall be encouraged for a regular training regarding sustainable forest management as described in this standard.

5.6.3.5 Scientific research shall be considered in forest management. Adversely, experience and tradition of forest management shall contribute to the work of scientific institutions in research activities, which are concerned with sustainable forest management, where this is possible and reasonable.

Note: Drafting or assigning of scientific articles or contribution to research activities is carried out through organisations as interest groups, not through companies, due to the personal and economic capacities.

5.6.4 Health and Safety at Work and Working Conditions

5.6.4.1 Work in certified forestry operations is planned, organized and carried out in such a way that health risks and accident risks can be identified. Workers shall be informed about the risks and preventive measures. Workers shall be protected from work-related risks by means of appropriate measures. Comprehensive accident and health protection shall be guaranteed. The accident prevention regulations, in particular the provisions of the Employee Protection Act (ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetzes), the Work Equipment Ordinance (Arbeitsmittelverordnung), the Service Act (Dienstrechtsgesetzes), the Agricultural Labour Act (Landarbeitsgesetzes) and the Agricultural and Forestry Work Equipment Ordinance (land- und forstwirtschaftlichen Arbeitsmittelverordnung) are complied with. The recommendations of AUVA regarding evaluation, information, instruction, accident prevention and health protection are complied with.

5.6.4.2 Working conditions shall be safe. Employees in the forestry sector shall demonstrably receive adequate instruction for their work in a comprehensible form. Hazardous work (e.g. felling trees, processing wind and snow breaks, extraction of timber, working with cable

yarding systems) is only to be carried out by employees who are mentally and physically fit and have the necessary specialist knowledge and professional experience.

Note: For legal provisions, see Agricultural Labour Act (Landarbeitsgesetz, LAG) § 238.

5.6.4.3 If employees from different employers work together, there is a duty of coordination.

Note: The legal basis is the Employee Protection Act (ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz) and the Agricultural Labour Act (Landarbeitsgesetz).

5.6.4.4 Certified enterprises in forestry guarantee:

- a. The compliance with national and international labour rights, including especially the ILO-conventions.
- b. The legal right of employees to join trade unions and organisations and to elect workers' councils without being disadvantaged by the employer;
- c. Information for employees and workers councils on developments within the enterprise or incorporation according to the legal regulations (Austrian Labour Law, Law on Agricultural Labour, etc.);
- d. Compliance with regulations of the collective agreement (working hours, leave, wages, etc).

5.6.4.5 The responsible voluntary or compulsory workers' syndicates are conceded access by certified enterprises in forestry employing workforce, within the regulations of the industrial law in force and after previous information of the holding owner or his representative.

5.6.4.6 Certified enterprises in forestry demand from hired commercial companies a confirmation of their appropriate qualifications as condition for being engaged. In addition, the hired companies confirm:

- a. Registration of employees at social insurance
- b. Working permissions of foreign workers
- c. Compliance with regulations of collective agreement
- d. Workplace evaluation and instruction
- e. Use of appropriate protective clothing and personal protective equipment

These proofs may be waived if commercial operators possess a valid document (certificate, confirmation, certificate of participation, etc.) of a control- or certification-system that is recognized by PEFC Austria.

5.6.4.7 The responsible voluntary or compulsory workers' syndicates are committed to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and freedom from workplace harassment. Gender equality shall be promoted.

5.6.5 Public Awareness

5.6.5.1 Forest management shall provide for effective communication and consultation with local people and other stakeholders and shall provide appropriate mechanism for dispute settlement.

Note 1: In case of group certification, the communication and dispute settlement functions are performed at the group level.

Note 2: Instruments on regional or national group level can be also used by other groups or certified companies with an individual certificate.

Note 3: Forestry is very committed to public relations, e.g. by means of forest education and information on forest and sustainable forest management.

5.6.5.2 In forest management local knowledge about forest management practices such as those of local communities, forest owners, NGOs and local people shall be considered.

Note 1: This standard has been developed in a multi-stakeholder process and reflects opinions and needs of various stakeholder groups.

Note 2: In case of group certification, the application of the local forest-related experience is studied and considered at the group level.

Note 3: Instruments on regional or national group level can be also used by other groups or certified companies with a single-site certificate.

5.6.6 Cultural Values

5.6.6.1 Management does not influence sites or individual trees, which are protected for cultural, historical or spiritual reasons.

5.6.6.2 Sites with recognised specific historical, cultural or spiritual significance shall be particularly considered and managed or administered in a way that takes due regard of the significance of the site.

5.7 Compliance with legal requirements

5.7.1 PEFC Austria shall identify and have access to the legislation applicable to the Austrian forest management. Forest management shall comply with legislation applicable to forest management issues including forest management practices; nature and environmental protection; protected and endangered species; property, tenure and land-use rights for third parties; health, labour and safety issues; and the payment of royalties and taxes.

Note 1: All relevant and applicable legislation is available in the RIS (www.ris.bka.gv.at) and in the EUR-Lex (eur-lex.europa.eu).

Note 2: Surveillance regarding the payment of taxes is subject to financial authorities.

5.7.2 Forest management shall provide for adequate protection of the forest from unauthorised activities such as illegal logging, illegal land use, illegally initiated fires, and other illegal activities.

Note: Corresponding provisions in the Austrian Forest Act (forest protection, forest protection, treatment of the boundaries of the property, forest devastation, forest conversion, etc.) and official forest protection authorities provide for the protection against illegal activities. Forest owners and managers are obliged to inform the respective authority where illegal activities of a third party are known.

5.7.3 Compliance with national laws and the criteria of the PEFC AT Standard ensures that the sustainability criteria pursuant to the "Sustainable Forestry Biomass Ordinance (Nachhaltige forstwirtschaftliche Biomasse-Verordnung, NFBioV)" are monitored and complied with in the area of (timber) harvesting and beyond. The criteria listed here (NFBioV § 3, para. 2, 1-5) are concretised in the following points, among others:

1. The (timber) harvesting activities are legal (see 5.7).
2. Forest regeneration takes place on the (timber) harvesting areas (see 5.3.4.1).
3. Areas designated by international or national legislation or by the competent authority for nature conservation purposes are protected, including wetlands and peatlands (see 5.4.4).

4. Care is taken during (timber) harvesting to preserve soil quality and biodiversity in order to minimize adverse effects (see 5.2.1; 5.4.1; 5.5.2).
5. The long-term production capacities of the forest are maintained or improved through (timber) harvesting activities (see 5.3).

5.7.4 In the case of internal and external audits, the forest owner or person responsible for forest management is obliged to provide the auditor with information on administrative proceedings that are ongoing at the time of the audit or were concluded within a period of one year prior to the audit and that relate to forest management.

Any legally binding convictions of the audited persons that are directly related to forest management according to PEFC rules must be disclosed to the auditor.

In the event of subsequent, legally established violations of standards that are essential for maintaining PEFC certification, the forest owner/forest manager concerned shall be excluded from participation in the PEFC system for a period of 24 months:

- a) Violation in connection with clearings requiring authorization and notification (FG 1975, § 17 and § 17a)
- b) Violation in connection with forest roads requiring authorization and notification (FG 1975, § 62 and § 64)
- c) Violation in connection with the prohibition of large-scale clear-cutting (FG 1975, § 82 para. 2 or section 5.3.4.3.2. b and c)
- d) Serious violations of labour law during forestry work resulting in death.

Note 1: Compliance with labour law provisions required for participation in the PEFC system is not the responsibility of the forest owner/forest manager if the persons involved in the forest work are employed by commercial contractors who hold a valid document (certificate, confirmation, certificate of participation, etc.) of a control- or certification-system recognized by PEFC Austria.

Note 2: Serious violations of labour law require legally established intent or gross negligence on the part of the forest owner/forest manager.

In the case of other legally enforceable convictions, compensatory measures are taken in the course of the audits with a corresponding deadline. If the measures are not taken in due time, the forest owner/manager is denied participation in the PEFC system for 12 months, as well as in the case of offences that cannot be compensated by measures.

After the expiry of the exclusion period, the forest owner/manager concerned may reapply for participation in the PEFC system.

5.8 Internal audit and improvement

Objectives and organisation of the internal audit and the handling of nonconformities and corrective measures are written down in the national standard document **PEFC AT ST 1003:2024 „Group Forest Management Certifications according to the PEFC-System in Austria – Requirements”** and are also valid for single-business-certification.

For single-business-certification all functions and responsibilities of the governing body of the group organisation (4.2) switch to responsibility of PEFC Austria.

Appendix 1 – Requirements for working in the forest

Nr.	Criterion	Compliance	Note
1	Appropriate qualification of the employees including information about sustainable forest management according PEFC-criteria		
2	Use of adequate safety equipment (Persönliche Schutzausrüstung PSA)		
3	Having First-Aid material on sight		
4	Usage of suitable equipment and machinery with functional safety equipment		
5	Only biodegradable oils are used for the loss lubrication of chainsaw, processor and harvester chains		
6	Use of rapidly biodegradable hydraulic fluids Note: For existing machinery, which is run with mineralic hydraulic oils, additional arrangements need to be taken to avoid oil contaminations in case of incidents (vacuum pumps, increased amount of oil binding agents)		
7	Carry an oil binding system and a machine-adapted oil spill kit		
8	Driving is principally only permitted on logging trails, according 5.2.1.8		
9	Consideration of limitations through weather conditions for driving on forest soil		
10	Damages through harvesting should be avoided as possible; Wood hauling should be principally carried out sparing the forest stand, the water stand and ecological conditions as far as possible; Only those methods and machinery shall be used, according to the acknowledged rule of technology in forestry which are suitable for the application in forests;		
11	Before starting work the forest entrepreneur should ask the forest owner concerning possible constraints for forest operations		
12	Harvesting of the assigned trees is done under consideration of the law (forest law, nature protection law) and considering measures to maintain and appropriately improve the biological diversity (relevance of dead wood (standing on ground), preserving old trees with ecological relevance (Veteranenbäume))		
13	Pesticides should not be applied principally; Prevention shall be preferred; Biological, mechanical and physical measures are to be preferred to chemical ones		
14	Compliance with labour protection regulations and collective agreement requirements (business registration, proof of insurance (social security, liability insurance))		