

**PEFC Austria  
Standard**

**PEFC AT ST 1004:2024**

**2025-04-10**

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**Requirements for Certification Bodies for Forest  
Management Certification**



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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:** Requirements for Certification Bodies for Forest Management Certification

**Document title:** PEFC AT ST 1004:2024

**Approved by:** PEFC Austria General Assembly

**Date:** 09.04.2025

**Issue date:** 10.04.2025

**Date of entry into force:** 27.04.2025

**Review date:** 27.05.2029

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## 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 an organisation responsible for the standard setting and the administration of the Austrian PEFC scheme.

PEFC 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

Certification of sustainable forest management provides assurance that the organization has effectively implemented practices conforming to specified requirements of a standard for sustainable forest management.

This document specifies requirements for certification bodies. Observance of these requirements is intended to ensure that certification bodies operate forest management certification in a competent, consistent and impartial manner, thereby facilitating the recognition of such body and the acceptance of their certifications on a national and international basis.

Certification bodies' conformity with the requirements of this document is evaluated, monitored and confirmed by an accreditation body that is a member of European cooperation for Accreditation (EA) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

This document is based on and requires compliance with ISO/IEC 17065 and IAF (International Accreditation Forum) documents relating to the application of ISO/IEC 17065. It provides additional requirements necessary for certification and auditing of sustainable forest management within the PEFC scheme in Austria. This document does not include the text ISO/IEC 17065 and IAF documents which can be obtained from ISO, national standardisation organisations or the IAF.

ISO/IEC 19011 provides additional guidance for the auditing of management systems.

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

This document provides requirements, additional to ISO/IEC 17065 and relating IAF documents for certification bodies operating certification according to the standards of sustainable forest management within the PEFC scheme in Austria. The appendices 1 and 2

regulate the accreditation and notification of certification bodies and are binding. The other appendices contain specific requirements for the

- Group Certification in Natural Growth Regions
- Group Certification in General
- Individual Certification

and are binding for the particular field of application.

## **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 1001 PEFC-Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in Austria
- PEFC AT ST 1002 Criteria and Indicators for the Determination of Sustainable Forestry in Austria
- PEFC AT ST 1003 Group Forest Management Certifications according to the PEFC-System in Austria – Requirements
- PEFC ST 2001 PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements
- ISO/IEC 17065 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- ISO 19011 Guidelines for auditing management systems
- ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity assessment -- General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
- PEFC ST 1004 (PEFC International)
- Annex 6 (PEFC International)

## **3 Definitions**

For the purpose of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

### **3.1 Certified area**

The forest area covered by a certificate. In case of a group forest certificate the area represents the sum of forest areas of the participants.

### **3.2 Client organisation**

Organisation, including a group organisation, that is applying for or whose forest management has been certified.

### **3.3 Group forest certificate**

A document confirming that the group organisation complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest management certification scheme.

### **3.4 Group forest management certification**

Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

Note: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “group certification in natural growth regions” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest management certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition. The term “group certification in natural growth regions” is to be understood as “group forest management certification” limited by geographical boundaries.

### **3.5 Group organisation**

A group of participants represented by the governing body of the group for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification.

Note 1: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “region” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest management certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

Note 2: The participants can have in common to be located in a specific geographic area or to be member of an organisation. However, this is not a prerequisite for applying for a group forest certificate.

### **3.6 Major non-conformity**

The absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more requirements of the forest management standard, that may result in a systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the forest management and/or effects confidence in the client organisation’s claims on material originating from certified forests.

Note: A major nonconformity may be an individual nonconformity or a number of minor but related nonconformities, that when considered in total are judged to constitute a major nonconformity.

### **3.7 Minor non-conformity**

A single failure to fulfil the requirements of the forest management standard that may result in no systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the chain of custody and/or effects confidence in the supplier’s claims on material originating from certified forests.

### **3.8 Observation**

An evaluation finding that does not warrant nonconformity but is identified by the audit team as an opportunity for improvement.

## **4 Principles**

The principles laid down in ISO/IEC 17065 form the basis for the following specific requirements. These principles shall provide orientation in situations that were not foreseeable when this document was developed. These principles do not constitute requirements.

## **5 General requirements**

All requirements of clause 4 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

5.1 The certification body shall conduct forest management certifications according to the PEFC scheme in Austria as accredited certifications. This means it shall be accredited according to appendix 1 of this standard. Therefore, the certification body shall have established internal procedures for forest management certification.

## **6 Structural requirements**

All requirements of clause 5 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

## **7 Requirements for the certification body's personnel**

All requirements of clause 6 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

### **7.1 General requirements for the management and the personnel of certification bodies**

7.1.1 The certification body shall define the requirements for the competence of the personnel and shall ensure that the whole personnel that conducts central activities as contract review, conduction audits, issuing certificates, surveillance of auditors, etc. has the relevant competences and knowledge about the PEFC scheme in Austria in the following areas:

- a) Terminology, terms and definitions concerning forest management in Austria,
- b) Knowledge of the PEFC scheme in Austria, its requirements and central economical, ecological and social issues of forest management,
- c) audit techniques.

7.1.2 The certification body shall provide proof of an annual examination of the personnel in the form of witness-audits, revision of audit reports, feed-back of customers etc. – specifically depending on the risk associated with the task as well as on its frequency. The certification body shall particularly evaluate the competence and performance of the personnel in order to assess specific training required.

### **7.2 Auditors**

7.2.1 The certification body shall ensure that the audit team is comprised of auditors with appropriate knowledge and competencies based on their education, training, work and auditing experience.

7.2.2 In particular, the certification body shall ensure that the auditors:

- a) completed studies in forestry at a university or a technical college;
- b) have at least two years of full-time working experience in forestry;
- c) participated in a forest management certification training acknowledged by PEFC Austria within the last two years;
- d) have conducted as a first qualification at least four audit days (of which three audit days were on-site) within the last three years in PEFC forest management certification under guidance of an experienced auditor. To keep this qualification valid, the auditors shall conduct at least five audit days in PEFC forest management certification per year.



7.2.3 The auditors shall have the following knowledge and competences:

- a) Principles, procedures and methods of auditing according to ISO 19011 enabling the auditor to make appropriate use of them and to ensure that the audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic way.
- b) Terminology, terms and definitions concerning forest management in Austria.
- c) The PEFC scheme in Austria and in particular its requirements for sustainable forest management (PEFC AT ST 1001), criteria and indicators (PEFC AT ST 1002) and the group certification (PEFC AT ST 1003).
- d) Organisational conditions of the Austrian forest sector, with particular regard to the various types of forest ownership and property sizes, to the role of forest owners associations, to the relationship between forest enterprises, forest entrepreneurs and other societal groups in order to properly understand the organisational context and the relations.
- e) Relevant national legislation and other regulations relevant to the PEFC scheme in Austria to enable the auditor to comply with the same and to understand the legal framework in which the forest owners operate.

7.2.4 The certification body shall announce an audit team which consists of auditors (and technical experts where necessary) who jointly possess the competence to conduct an audit. The certification body shall define the specific requirements on the auditors' competence covering the specific aspects of the PEFC scheme in Austria. As required knowledge and competences regarding following aspects shall be considered:

- a) Forest inventories, forest management planning.
- b) Silviculture, particularly with regard to methods of rejuvenation, forest tending and harvest.
- c) Forest protection, particularly with regards to methods of integrated forest protection and the application of plant protective agents.
- d) Water and soil protection, particularly the impact of forest operations on water resources and soil, nutrient balance as well as impacts of liming and fertilisation.
- e) Biodiversity in forest ecosystems, particularly protection of rare species and biotopes and the encouragement of biotope trees.
- f) Wildlife management.
- g) Forest operations and technical knowledge, particularly safety and occupational health, accident prevention, labour rights and the deployment of forest entrepreneurs and private cutters.
- h) Socio-economic functions, such as the contribution of forestry to the regional economy and recreation.

7.2.5 The compliance of auditors with the requirements above is verified by an accreditation as described in appendix 1.

## **8 Information requirements**

All requirements of clause 4 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

### **8.1 Public available information**

The certification body shall make a summary of the audit report, including a summary of findings on the client organisation's conformity with the forest management standard, which shall be made publicly available by the certificate holder. Confidential data need not be published.

8.1.1 The summary of the audit report shall include:

- a) Identification of the forest enterprise or the group organisation, the certified forest area as well as the number and structure (types and sizes of forest properties) of the participants;
- b) Identification of the certification body and audit team performing the audit;
- c) Summary description of the conformity with the certification requirements;
- d) Summary description of non-conformities found;
- e) Recommendations for certification decision.

## 8.2 Certification documents

8.2.1 After positive evaluation, the certification body shall issue the applicant a certificate, which comprises the following:

- a) identification of the certification body,
- b) name and address of the client organisation,
- c) scope of the certification granted,
- d) accreditation mark as prescribed by the accreditation body, including accreditation number where applicable,
- e) the date of granting, extending or renewing certification and the expiry date. The effective date on a certification document shall not be before the date of the certification decision.

8.2.2 In the event of termination or withdrawal of a group certificate (e.g. certificate of the group certification in natural growth regions), the participating forest owner's confirmations of participation (see 3.9, PEFC AT ST 1003) become invalid.

## 8.3 Passing on information

The certification body shall inform the client organisation that it is obliged to provide information to PEFC Austria and the PEFC Council. In order to comply with the ISO/IEC 17065, chapter 4.5, the certification body shall have the written consent of the client organisation for the information disclosed to PEFC Austria and the PEFC Council.

# 9 Process requirements

All requirements of clause 7 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply. The applied auditing procedures shall fulfil or be compatible with the requirements of ISO 19011. The compliance with all process requirements is verified by an accreditation as described in appendix 1.

## 9.1 General requirements

### 9.1.1 Audit plan

9.1.1.1 The certification body shall have documented procedures according to ISO/IEC 17065 to ensure that an audit plan is established for each audit to provide basis for agreement regarding the conduct and scheduling of the audit activities. The audit plan shall be communicated and the dates of the audit shall be agreed upon, in advance with the client organisation.

9.1.1.2 In the case of a group organisation certification, the list of participants shall be considered for the sampling.

### 9.1.2 Audit team selection and assignment

The certification body shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including audit team leader.

#### 9.1.3 Audit time

The audit time shall be determined accordingly that an effective audit concerning the implementation of the standard for sustainable forest management and other applicable documents through the client organisation can be conducted through the certification body.

9.1.3.1 Following factors shall be considered in determining the audit time, as applicable:

- a) the requirements of the forest management standard (s),
- b) size and complexity of the client organisation's operation, geographical and natural conditions
- c) any outsourcing of any activities included in the scope of forest management standard,
- d) the results of any prior audits, including those of client organisation's management systems,
- e) number of participants in case of group organisations,
- f) quality/ level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme.

#### 9.1.3.2 Minimum audit time

The certification body shall comply with the minimum audit time, as defined in the corresponding appendices 3-5.

#### 9.1.4 Sampling in case of group organisations (multi-site sampling)

Requirements for sampling in case of group organisations are defined in the corresponding appendices (3 and 4).

#### 9.1.5 Audit-Report

9.1.5.1 A report on the stage 1 audit shall be presented to the organization prior to the stage 2 audit.

9.1.5.2 The content of all reports on stage 2 audits, surveillance audits and re-certification audits shall contain following elements:

- a) include a recommendation on certification by the audit team to the certification body;
- b) include sufficient information and evidence, which verifies the recommendation of the audit team, they shall be sufficient for the certification body to make an informed decision on certification;
- c) allow for traceability of the objective evidence upon which the evaluation was based to establish conformance or non-conformance with the requirements of the forest management standard;
- d) include a summary of the most important observations, positive as well as negative, regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the forest management system;
- e) where possible, include suggestions for continuous improvement.

9.1.5.3 The report shall contain a summary of the certified forest area and the audit results (i.e. a Summary Report) that the forest manager can make publicly available to relevant stakeholders.

9.1.5.4 Where applicable, the report shall document the clearing of non-conformities revealed previously.

## 9.2 Initial audit and certification

### 9.2.1 Application

9.2.1.1 The following shall be included in the application for certification:

- a) description of the client organisation (name, address, legal entity), in case of a group organisation also of the governing body and the applicant in charge (responsibility, education, etc.),
- b) description of the organisation of the applicant, in case of group organisations the number of participants and the size of the area including a list of/or an access to the data of the individual participants (contact details, data regarding the forest property and its area),
- c) sustainability report
- d) documented procedure for system stability,
- e) in case of a surveillance or re-certification audit, information on the implementation of the internal monitoring programme, particularly the management report.

9.2.2 Initial certification audit

9.2.2.1 Stage 1 audit

9.2.2.1.1 In course of the stage 1 audit at least following points shall be evaluated:

- a) Description of the client organisation (structure, responsibilities...)
- b) Evaluation of the procedures for system stability and implementation of the internal monitoring programme
- c) Evaluation of the system and the documents for certification, particularly the sustainability report or, in case of an individual certification, the forest management plan (evaluation of completeness in terms of the formal requirements) (see appendices 4 and 5).
- d) Evaluation of local/regional specific conditions in forest management
- e) Determining the audit plan for the stage 2 audit (particularly scope and objectives).

9.2.2.1.2 The certification body shall consider any relevant information regarding the compliance with the PEFC-standards and other applicable requirements, from external bodies, such as governmental bodies, NGOs, etc. that it has received and shall use it as audit evidence to determine the client organisation conformity with the certification requirements.

9.2.2.1.3 The stage 1 audit need not be performed at the client's premises.

9.2.2.1.4 In course of the stage 1 audit it shall be evaluated, if the organisation is ready for the stage 2 audit („readiness-review“). The certification body shall communicate the result of the stage 1 audit to the client organisation.

9.2.2.2 Stage 2 audit

9.2.2.2.1 The stage 2 audit shall take place at the office and the area of the client organisation. The audit plan for the stage 2 audit is adapted on the basis of the findings of the stage 1 audit.

9.2.2.2.2 The stage 2 audit shall assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the forest management standard on the defined forest management area, it shall comprise following:

- a) procedures comply with the scheme in the regional group to be audited, particularly the procedures for reporting and drawing up a plan of measures
- b) the specification, planning, implementation and effectiveness of the procedures for system stability

- c) detailed planning for implementation of measures to ensure that targets are achieved, i.e. suitability of the instruments for achieving the set targets
- d) fulfilment of targets (in the case a new sustainability report is available)
- e) decision-making process that led to selection of the "target criteria"
- f) consideration of relevant information from external interest groups in the scope of audits (government bodies, associations, environmental groups, etc.) in as far as sensible and appropriate
- g) adherence to general legal regulations for forestry
- h) compliance with the PEFC Trademarks Rules (PEFC ST 2001)

### 9.2.3 Audit findings

9.2.3.1 Audit findings shall be classified as major nonconformities, minor nonconformities and observations.

9.2.3.2 Major and minor nonconformities identified in the surveillance audits shall result in corrective action(s) by the client organisation resolving the nonconformities. The corrective action plan, including a timeframe shall be reviewed and accepted by the certification body. The time period for completion of the corrective action(s) for major nonconformities identified in surveillance audits and their verification by the certification body shall follow the rules of the certification body but not exceed 3 months. Corrective action(s) for minor nonconformities shall be verified no later than during the next audit.

9.2.3.3 Corrective action(s) for all nonconformities identified in initial, surveillance and re-certification audits shall be verified by the certification body by site visit or other appropriate forms of verification.

### 9.2.4 Information for granting initial certification

9.2.4.1 The certification body shall make its certification decision on the basis of the available reports and all other relevant information

9.2.4.2 The certification body shall issue a certificate in case of a positive evaluation, i.e. declaration of conformity of the procedure with the requirements of the certification scheme. In the case of a negative decision, the procedure is terminated.

## 9.3 Surveillance activities

9.3.1 The certification body has to organize an annual surveillance of the client's organisation. The surveillance activities have to be planned in a way that representative areas and functions of the client's organisation are covered.

9.3.2 At each surveillance audit the conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard, and other applicable requirements of PEFC Austria and the compliance with the general legal regulations for forestry in shall be evaluated, particularly following shall be audited:

- a) Matters of stage 1 audits (see 9.2.2.1.) where significant changes have occurred regarding the organisation (the group organisation or the forest enterprise in case of an individual certification), its documentation or the framework conditions.
- b) Matters of stage 2 audits (see 9.2.2.2) to confirm that conformity with the certification requirements still persist.

9.3.2.1 The surveillance audit shall particularly comprise:

- a) procedures for system stability

- b) implementation of measures for achieving the set targets
- c) implementation of the internal monitoring programme (management report and management evaluation)
- d) on-site inspections (see appendices 3, 4, 5)
- e) implementation of corrections from the last surveillance audit (if required)
- f) compliance with PEFC Trademarks Rules (PEFC ST 2001)

Note 1: An evaluation of the sustainability report shall be done only in case the periodic revision of the report is due.

Note 2: Sustainability reports shall be drafted on a regular basis (see PEFC AT ST 1003, 4.2.3.2.1)

- For sustainability reports which are based on data of the enterprise the interval to the last report shall not exceed five years.
- If the sustainability report is based on the Austrian Forest Inventory (ÖWI), report shall be drafted in the year after the finalisation of the inventory, if possible. The interval to the last report principally shall not exceed ten years.

9.3.3 If individual items were not implemented and cannot be inspected (if no internal controlling was conducted, e.g.), this is to be classified as a major non-conformity. If implementation cannot be proven:

- a. in the required scope (e.g. number/volume of random inspections) or
- b. according to appropriate quality criteria,

then this is to be classified as a minor non-conformity.

9.3.4 Surveillance audits shall be conducted at least once a year. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit.

## 9.4 Recertification

9.4.1 Certification is issued for five (5) years and a recertification audit shall be performed in the fifth year prior to expiration of the certification.

9.4.2 The recertification shall be planned and implemented to evaluate:

- c) Matters of stage 1 audits (see 9.2.2.1.) where significant changes have occurred regarding the organisation (the group organisation or the forest enterprise in case of a single-site certification), its documentation or the framework conditions.
- d) Matters of stage 2 audits (see 9.2.2.2) to confirm that conformity with the certification requirements still persist.

Note: An evaluation of the sustainability report shall be done only in case the periodic revision of the report is due.

## 9.5 Suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope of certification

9.5.1 The certification body shall advise PEFC Austria in writing, within a defined period if

- a) certificates are suspended or withdrawn, or
- b) where there are any changes in decisions relating to the status of certification of an organization, and the reasons for those decisions.

## 9.6 Complaints

9.6.1 The complaint procedure of a certification body shall include procedures for the following aspects:

- a) Acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint

- b) Provision of progress reports and the outcome to the complainant
- c) Giving formal notice of the end of the complaint-handling process to a complainant.

## **10 Management system requirements for certification bodies**

All requirements of clause 8 of ISO/IEC 17065 apply.

## **Appendix 1 Requirements for accreditation of certification bodies operating forest management certification**

1. Certification bodies operating forest management certification according to the Austrian PEFC scheme shall have valid accreditation issued a national accreditation body which complies with ISO/IEC 17011 and is member of the European co-operation for Accreditation and fulfil other requirements for certification bodies defined by the national accreditation body.
2. The scope of the accreditation shall explicitly cover documents of the PEFC Austria scheme relating to forest management certification in their valid version and/ or with reference to any future amendments adopted by PEFC Austria (PEFC AT ST 1001, PEFC AT ST 1003).
3. The scope of the accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17065, this document and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed.
4. Non-conformance with the accreditation requirements, results in the certification bodies not being regarded as having met PEFC Council requirements and their certifications not be considered as certified for PEFC purposes.



## **Appendix 2 Requirements for notification of certification bodies operating forest management certification**

1. The certification body operating forest management certification against the Austrian PEFC scheme, shall be notified by PEFC Austria.
2. The notification requires that the certification body shall have a valid accreditation recognised by PEFC Austria (see appendix 1).
3. Conditions for granting the notification are specified in the PEFC Austria's procedural document (see PEFC AT PB 4003).
4. The PEFC notification conditions shall not discriminate against certification bodies or create trade obstacles.

## **Appendix 3 Specific requirements for the group certification in natural growth regions**

### **1 Scope**

This appendix defines the requirements for the group certification in natural growth regions and is binding for this application area.

### **2 General requirements**

2.1 The certification body shall have procedures in place to determine the sample of the participants to be audited in the group certification in natural growth regions.

2.2. The certification body shall base their sampling on the list of participants provided by the group organisation

### **3 Sampling procedure**

3.1 The sample shall be selected considering the result of the internal monitoring programme according PEFC AT ST 1003, ch. 4.2.10.

Note 1: The sampling shall create sufficient confidence, that the whole group organisation complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of PEFC Austria and pursues the targets formulated in the sustainability report.

Note 2: Requirements for samples in the internal monitoring programme according PEFC AT see ST 1003 4.2.10.4.1-4.2.10.4.5

3.2 The size of the sample for the certification-, surveillance- and recertification-audits shall include 40 participants.

3.3 The sample shall be representative for the forest area (e.g. < 10 ha; 10 <200 ha; ≥200 ha), the ownership category and, if applicable, the geographic distribution of the participants and consider differences in the growth conditions.

3.4 The sample shall cover participants in the eight natural growth regions, and three size-classes of the forest area (< 10 ha; 10 <200 ha; ≥200 ha) and, if available, include one state forest enterprise and one forest cooperative in each natural growth region.

3.5 The audits shall represent a regional cross-section over the certification period (i.e. every year another part of a region shall be audited).

3.6 If a major non-conformity is determined at a participant, another participant of this category shall be audited on-site. As well the sample size can be adjusted considering one or more of following indicators, in order to ensure sufficient confidence in the compliance the requirements:

- a) Records of complaints and other relevant information of third-parties
- b) quality / level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme.
- c) results of previous audits
- d) An increase of the sample shall be conducted in the particular natural growth region and size-class, which is affected by the complaint or non-conformity.

3.7 For the selection of the participants the certification body shall consider following criteria:

- a) Participants that have not been audited before shall be preferentially selected to ensure a high coverage of the audits during the duration of the certificate;
- b) Participants already audited during the certification period are only to be chosen again in justified cases; regarding the state forests (Österreichische Bundesforste AG), which is audited annually (except for forest districts of the Austrian Federal Forests, which manage only national park areas), different forest areas / territories are to be chosen each time, if possible;
- c) The enterprises to be audited are to be determined by the certification body in consultancy with the group representative (regional representative).
- d) At least 25% of the participants should be selected at random.
- e) The results of former audits, discovered non-conformities and corrective measures shall be taken into account.
- f) Complaints or information from third parties regarding conformity with certification requirements shall be taken into account
- g) In selecting the enterprises, the certification body should also choose participants, which have undergone internal auditing, in order to be able to inspect the system stability.

## 4 Audits

### 4.1 Content

The on-site audits are an instrument of the group certification in natural growth regions enabling the inspection of those forest owners, who are participating in this form of group certification by signing a declaration of participation, in terms of their compliance with the PEFC requirements. The following is to be audited by the auditors of the certification body:

- a) compliance with the standard for sustainable forestry in Austria (PEFC AT ST 1001) and the legal stipulations concerning forestry
- b) implementation of the procedure for system stability
- c) implementation of the set measures on the level of the group and on enterprise level
- d) inspection of compliance with the PEFC Trademarks Rules (refer to PEFC ST 2001: PEFC Trademarks Rules - Requirements) for users of the PEFC trademarks
- e) In addition to the contents of the audits, the achievement of the relevant target indicators is evaluated in case a new sustainability report is available. Concerning the goals of each of the 10 target indicators, it must be determined whether:
  1. the tendency is in keeping with the desired goals
  2. no change can be determined, or
  3. the tendency is in contrast to the desired goals
  4. In the case of 1) and/or 2), corresponding measures have to be determined by the certificate holder, and evidence of their implementation has to be provided to the certification body.
  5. In the case of 3), the validity of the certification cannot be extended, if more than half of the target indicators show a development in the opposite direction. After a period of at least six months, the applicant may make a new request for certification.

In principle, audits cover the regional level down to the enterprise level. Everything that can be closely inspected on a higher level (region, forestry cooperatives), no longer requires appraisal on the enterprise level.

## 4.2 Procedure

The participants to be audited are to be determined by the certification body in consultancy with the group representative (regional representative). The selected participants are informed ahead of time by the certification body about the procedure and content of the audit. A group representative participates in the audit, in addition to the forest owner. Other interested persons may participate, if the forest owner agrees. Confidential information is only to be given to the auditor; corresponding precautions are to be taken during the audit.

### 4.3 Minimum audit time

At maximum three participants shall be audited per day.

### 4.4 Corrective and preventive measures

4.4.1 If the certification body determines deviations from the PEFC requirements, which need corrective and/or preventive measures, these must be implemented by the governing body of the group organisation (regional committee) within a period of time that is defined by the certification body, or evidence must be provided that the non-conformities have been corrected.

4.4.2 In the event of major non-conformities, the governing body of the group organisation (regional committee) must draw up measures for eliminating the non-conformities, and must provide written evidence describing their implementation within a deadline set by the certification body (guideline of 4 weeks, may vary in justified cases). The certification body decides in each individual case whether a chargeable on-site inspection is required to verify the evidence. If several of major non-conformities are determined in the course of an audit, a chargeable inspection must be conducted. In the event of more than three of major non-conformities in the course of an audit, the certification body has to temporarily suspend the certificate until evidence of their elimination is provided. The sale of certified wood is not possible during this time.

Note: In the event of termination or withdrawal of the regional certificate, the participating forest owner's confirmations of participation become invalid.

4.4.3 If systematic deficiencies are determined that make the functioning of the regional system questionable, the governing body of the group organisation (regional committee) has to define corresponding corrective measures. The group organisation has to provide evidence of implementing these measures within the deadline set by the certification body.

4.4.4 In the case of minor non-conformities, the governing body of the group organisation (regional committee) must undertake or commission measures, which are suited to rectify or exclude the repetition thereof.

4.4.5 If observances are made, these are to be discussed with the group representative; no measures need to be undertaken in this case.

### 4.5 Audit report, summary of the results

The certification body draws up a report on the evaluation and the results, which is sent to the governing body of the group organisation (regional committee) for the purpose of feedback. The regional committee receives the final report, as well as a summary of the final report from the certification body

4.6 The group organisation may terminate certification with the certification body at any time.

## **Appendix 4 Specific requirements for the group certification in general**

### **1 Scope**

This appendix defines the requirements for the group certification in general and is binding for this application area.

### **2 General requirements**

2.1 The certification body shall have procedures in place to determine the sample of the participants to be audited in the group certification in general.

2.2. The certification body shall base their sampling on the list of participants provided by the group organisation

### **3 Sampling procedure**

3.1 The sample shall be selected considering the result of the internal monitoring programme according PEFC AT ST 1003, ch. 4.2.10.

Note 1. The sampling shall create sufficient confidence, that the whole group organisation complies with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of PEFC Austria and pursues the targets formulated in the sustainability report.

Note 2: Requirements for samples in the internal monitoring programme according see PEFC AT ST 1003 4.2.10.4.1-4.2.10.4.5

3.2 The size of the sample for the certification-, surveillance- and recertification-audit shall be 25% of the sample of the internal monitoring programme.

3.3 The sample shall be representative for the forest area (e.g. < 10 ha; 10 <200 ha; ≥200 ha), the ownership category and, if applicable, the geographic distribution of the participants and consider differences in the growth conditions, if this is relevant for the group organisation.

3.4 If a major non-conformity is determined at a participant, another participant of this category shall be audited on-site. As well the sample size can be adjusted considering one or more of following indicators, in order to ensure sufficient confidence in the compliance the requirements:

- a) Records of complaints and other relevant information of third-parties
- b) quality / level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme.
- c) results of previous audits
- d) An increase of the sample shall be conducted in the particular area and size-class, which is affected by the complaint or non-conformity.

3.5 For the selection of the participants the certification body shall consider following criteria:

- a) Participants that have not been audited before shall be preferentially selected to ensure a high coverage of the audits during the duration of the certificate;
- b) Participants already inspected during the certification period are only to be chosen again in justified cases;

- c) The participants to be audited are to be determined by the certification body in consultancy with the responsible group representative.
- d) At least 25% of the participants should be selected at random.
- e) The results of former audits, discovered non-conformities and corrective measures shall be taken into account.
- f) Complaints or information from third parties regarding conformity with certification requirements shall be taken into account.
- g) In selecting the enterprises, the certification body should also choose participants, which have undergone internal auditing, in order to be able to inspect the system stability.

## 4 Audits

### 4.1 Checking the System and Documents for Certification

The sustainability report of the regional unit under evaluation, and particularly the measures resulting from it, as well as the procedures for system stability, serve as the basis for certification. Before the on-site audit, the certification body evaluates:

- a) the sustainability report, in terms of the complete criteria and indications, the plausibility of the data, and the credibility of the results
- b) the measures taken and the measurability of the targets, effectiveness of the measures, and whether respective measures were taken for the criteria considered significant

The certification body draws up a written report on the results of the evaluation. If neither changes nor supplements are required in the sustainability report, then this report is considered final. In the case of required changes and supplements, these are to be included in the sustainability report by the applicant, which is then to be incorporated in the final report. In the case of a positive result of the evaluation, the report and the measures to be taken are considered standard documents based upon which certification and evaluation can be based.

### 4.2 Procedure

The participants to be audited are to be determined by the certification body in consultancy with the group representative. The selected participants are informed ahead of time by the certification body about the procedure and content of the audit. A group representative participates in the audit, in addition to the participant. Other interested persons may participate, if the forest owner agrees. Confidential information is only to be given to the auditor; corresponding precautions are to be taken during the inspection.

### 4.3 Minimum audit time

At maximum three participants shall be audited per day.

### 4.4 Corrective and preventive measures

4.4.1 If the certification body determines deviations from the PEFC requirements, which need corrective and/or preventive measures, these must be implemented by the governing body of the group organisation within a period of time that is defined by the certification body, or evidence must be provided that the non-conformities have been corrected.

4.4.2 In the event of major non-conformities, the governing body of the group organisation must draw up measures for eliminating the non-conformities, and must provide written evidence describing their implementation within a deadline set by the certification body

(guideline of 4 weeks, may vary in justified cases). The certification body decides in each individual case whether a chargeable on-site audit is required to verify the evidence. If several of major non-conformities are determined in the course of an audit, a chargeable audit must be conducted. In the event of more than three of major non-conformities in the course of an audit, the certification body has to temporarily suspend the certificate until evidence of their elimination is provided. The sale of certified wood is not possible during this time.

Note: In the event of termination or withdrawal of the regional certificate, the participating forest owner's confirmations of participation become invalid.

4.4.3 In the case of minor non-conformities, the governing body of the group organisation must undertake or commission measures, which are suited to rectify or exclude the repetition thereof.

4.4.4 If observances are made, these are to be discussed with the group representative; no measures need to be undertaken in this case.

4.4.5 If observances are made, these are to be discussed with the responsible representative of the group organisation; no measures need to be undertaken in this case.

4.5 Audit report, summary of the results

The certification body draws up a report on the evaluation and the results, which is sent to the governing body of the group organisation for the purpose of feedback. The governing body receives the final report, as well as a summary of the final report from the certification body.

4.6 The group organisation may terminate certification with the certification body at any time.

## Appendix 5 Specific requirements for individual certification

### 1 Scope

This appendix defines the requirements for the individual certification and is binding for this application area.

### 2 Audits

#### 4.1 Checking the System and Documents for Certification

The sustainability report of the unit under evaluation, and particularly the measures resulting from it, as well as the procedures for system stability, serve as the basis for certification.

Before the on-site audit, the certification body evaluates:

- a) the sustainability report, in terms of the complete criteria and indications, the plausibility of the data, and the credibility of the results
- b) the measures taken and the measurability of the targets, effectiveness of the measures, and whether respective measures were taken for the criteria considered significant

The certification body draws up a written report on the results of the evaluation. If neither changes nor supplements are required in the sustainability report, then this report is considered final. In the case of required changes and supplements, these are to be included in the sustainability report by the applicant, which is then to be incorporated in the final report. In the case of a positive result of the evaluation, the report and the measures to be taken are considered standard documents based upon which certification and evaluation can be based.

#### 4.2 Procedure

The applicant is informed ahead of time by the certification body about the procedure and content of the audit.

#### 4.3 Minimum audit time

The audit time shall be determined on following guidance levels principally. Lower minor deviations are permitted. The guidance levels shall be only exceeded in justified circumstances after consultation with the client organisation.

Size of the forest area	Guidance level audit duration [man days]
Up to 1.000 ha	0,5
> 1.000 -5.000 ha	1
5.000 - 35.000 ha	2
> 35.000 ha	3*

\*The audit duration increases every other 100.000 ha about 1 man day (135.000 ha = 4 md, > 235.000 ha = 5 md, aso.)

#### 4.4. Corrective and preventive measures

4.4.1 If the certification body determines non-conformity with the PEFC requirements, which need corrective and/or preventive measures, these must be implemented by the applicant



within a period of time that is defined by the certification body, or evidence must be provided that the non-conformities have been corrected.

4.4.2 In the event of major non-conformities, the applicant must draw up measures for eliminating the non-conformities, and must provide written evidence describing their implementation within a deadline set by the certification body (guideline of 4 weeks, may vary in justified cases). The certification body decides in each individual case whether a chargeable on-site inspection is required to verify the evidence. If several of major non-conformities are determined in the course of an audit, a chargeable inspection must be conducted. In the event of more than three of major non-conformities in the course of an audit, the certification body has to temporarily suspend the certificate until evidence of their elimination is provided. The sale of certified wood is not possible during this time.

4.4.3 In the case of minor non-conformities, the applicant must undertake or commission measures, which are suited to rectify or exclude the repetition thereof.

4.4.4 If observances are made, these are to be discussed with the applicant; no measures need to be undertaken in this case.

4.5 Audit report, summary of the results

The certification body draws up a report on the evaluation and the results, which is sent to the applicant for the purpose of feedback. The applicant receives the final report, as well as a summary of the final report from the certification body.

4.6 The certificate owner may terminate certification with the certification body at any time.