

# WHY PEFC IS THE CERTIFICATION SYSTEM OF CHOICE



PEFC CHAIN OF CUSTODY



# ABOUT PEFC

**Founded in 1999, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) through independent third-party certification. It works throughout the entire forest supply chain to promote good practice in the forest and to ensure that timber and non-timber forest products are sourced with respect for the highest ecological, social and ethical standards.**

PEFC is an umbrella organization. It works by endorsing national forest certification systems developed collaboratively by all interested stakeholders and tailored to local priorities and conditions. Each national forest certification system undergoes rigorous third-party assessment against PEFC's unique Sustainability Benchmarks.

These Benchmarks are based on broad consensus by society, expressed in globally respected international and intergovernmental processes and guidelines for the promotion of SFM. The Benchmark criteria are regularly revised through

multi-stakeholder processes to take account of new scientific knowledge, societal change, evolving expectations and to incorporate the most up-to-date best practices.

Today, PEFC has recognized certification systems in about 30 countries. Together these account for over 220 million hectares of certified forests, making PEFC the world's largest forest certification system. It is the certification system of choice for small forest owners including family and community-owned forests. PEFC certified materials are accepted by numerous public and private procurement policies worldwide.



# INTRODUCTION

**Forests contain some of the most valuable and biodiverse ecosystems on the planet. They:**



- give food, heat, energy, medicines, and wood;
- promote biodiversity by giving habitats and shelter for all kinds of life;
- are an integral part of the Water and Carbon cycles; and
- prevent desertification and have a fundamental role in climate regulation.

Without forests, many of these services would be lost, while many of the species which rely on forests would also suffer or disappear. An estimated 1.6 billion people worldwide are believed to depend on forests and the services they provide for their livelihoods. Importantly, forestry and related industry sectors account for a significant share of the global economy.

Yet, forests are among the most vulnerable ecosystems. Threats to forests and forest landscapes include land conversion for agriculture and mining, development and urban expansion, unsustainable forestry practices and illegal logging. If forests

are to continue to deliver the full range of benefits that people and nature are dependent upon, they need to be conserved and managed sustainably.

One assurance of sustainability rests in forest certification. However, at present, only 8% of the world's forests are certified. PEFC's focus is on increasing the certified area, especially in the southern hemisphere.

Today, the sustainability imperative and increased environmental awareness mean that there is a desire by successful companies in the forest and forest-products sector to demonstrate that they are operating sustainably. Customers and consumers expect producers, suppliers and manufacturers to meet the highest environmental, economic and social standards.

PEFC Sustainable Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification meet these standards, and independent, third-party auditors verify that the standards are being applied in practice.

# PEFC STANDARDS

## CHAIN OF CUSTODY (CoC) CERTIFICATION

Sustainable Forest Management, while crucial to maintaining the valuable services forests provide, does in itself not establish the link from the forest to the market. In order to give assurances that wood and wood-based products can be traced back to sustainably managed forests, PEFC promotes Chain of Custody certification. CoC certification outlines requirements for tracking certified material from the forest to the final product.

PEFC CoC certification is essential for

- companies to implement and demonstrate sustainable business behaviour; and
- consumers to make responsible purchasing decisions.

For a product to qualify for certification, all entities along the supply chain must possess PEFC CoC certification. Only then are companies eligible to use the PEFC label on products and in product marketing to highlight their responsible sourcing of the raw material.

## SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (SFM)

**PEFC has adopted the definition for Sustainable Forest Management also used by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO):**

The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems.

PEFC's Sustainability Benchmarks are based on globally recognized principles, guidelines and criteria developed by international and inter-governmental bodies such as MCPFE, ITTO/IUCN and ITTO/ATO\*. These ongoing processes enjoy broad stakeholder consensus and are supported by 149 governments in the world, covering 85% of the world's forest area. Although many forests are sustainably managed, the best proof of this is through independent, impartial and credible third-party certification. PEFC promotes this independent certification and provides assurance mechanisms to demonstrate to consumers that the wood used in their products comes from sustainably managed forests.

# BENEFITS OF CHAIN OF CUSTODY CERTIFICATION

**With increasing demand for products from sustainably managed forests, business interest in CoC certification along the timber value chain is soaring. PEFC's CoC certification offers several important benefits.**

**Access to markets** – CoC certification provides companies with access to markets demanding environmentally responsible products and with a market advantage in relation to companies with uncertified products - it enhances brand value.

**Availability and choice** – two-thirds of the world's certified forest area is certified to PEFC. That is currently more than 220 million hectares, offering the widest supply of certified fibre and timber.

**A clear and transparent message** – the simple action of being able to include the PEFC logo on a product or product-line communicates to the customer in a clear, concise and transparent manner that wood and non-timber forest products have been sourced from sustainably managed forests.

**Business leadership on sustainability** – by opting for PEFC CoC certification, businesses in the wood and forestry sector can enhance their competitive advantage over other suppliers in the value chain.

**Traceability** – CoC certification offers assurances that the wood in the final product can be traced back to a sustainable source managed with due respect for environmental, economic and social standards.

**Risk management** – CoC certification includes a due diligence system to exclude wood from illegal and controversial sources.





## WHAT MAKES PEFC UNIQUE?

**As the largest forest certification system globally, PEFC remains the certification system of choice for small, non-industrial private forests, with hundreds of thousands of family-owned forests certified to comply with our Sustainability Benchmark.**

To date, some 8,000 companies have obtained PEFC CoC certification, offering tens of thousands of PEFC-certified products globally.

With alternative forest and Chain of Custody certification systems available, there are good reasons why so many people are opting for PEFC.

## **PEFC IS THE ONLY GLOBAL CERTIFICATION SYSTEM THAT:**

### **Based on Intergovernmental Agreements & Internationally Recognized Processes**

- bases its understanding of sustainable forest management on broad societal consensus expressed in international, intergovernmental, multi-stakeholder processes and guidelines involving thousands of interested parties
- supports the implementation of governmental agreements through a voluntary, market-based mechanism
- follows globally accepted ISO Guidelines for certification and accreditation

### **Level of Stakeholder Engagement Equally High for All Standards**

- strictly separates standard-setting, certification and accreditation to ensure complete independence and impartiality of these processes
- requires all standards to be independently developed with the open participation of all interested parties at the national level in a multi-stakeholder, consensus-driven process. This ensures local requirements and needs are incorporated
- requires that all standards undergo public consultation at national and international level and third-party assessment
- demands and implements regular revisions of national certification schemes to promote continuous improvement, ongoing stakeholder engagement, ensuring shared ownership of national processes
- membership is open to international stakeholders and national certification systems

### **Upholds Highest Sustainable Forest Management Standards Without Exception**

- requires compliance with all fundamental ILO conventions in forest management since 2001, setting new benchmarks for social issues
- is tailored to the specific needs of family- and community-owned forests since its beginnings, with lasting contributions to livelihoods and rural development
- offers well established processes for group and regional certification, providing small forest owners with access to certification and the marketplace for certified products
- sets highest standards for forest certification and sustainable forest management aligned with the majority of the world's governments, including
  - maintaining or enhancing biodiversity
  - sustaining the provision of ecosystem services
  - substituting chemicals with natural alternatives or minimizing them
  - protecting workers rights and welfare
  - encouraging local employment
  - respecting established traditions and indigenous peoples rights
  - abiding by all applicable laws.

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING CERTIFIED?

Companies in more than 50 countries have already achieved PEFC CoC certification. It is the preferred standard for public procurement policies worldwide. Its distinctive and easily-recognized logo transcends language barriers making it a truly global brand.

For further information about PEFC Chain of Custody certification, please contact the PEFC representative in your country. For a complete list, see

[www.pefc.org/national](http://www.pefc.org/national)

If your country is not listed, please contact PEFC International.

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\* (MCPFE) Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forests in Europe  
(ITTO/IUCN) International Tropical Timber Organisation/  
International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
(ITTO/ATO) International Tropical Timber Organisation/African Timber Organisation

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