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Group certification procedures

SAFAS

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1. Introduction

This standard is part of the SAFAS Scheme Standards.

2. Scope

This document was adopted by the SAFAS Council on 2018-05-22.

This standard includes implementation of the SAFAS forest certification system for individuals and groups.

3. References

The SAFAS Scheme comprises the following documents:

- 3.1 SAFAS 1:2017 SAFAS Council Statutes
- 3.2 SAFAS 2:2018 Standard Setting Procedure
- 3.3 SAFAS 3:2018 Standard Development Report
- 3.4 SAFAS 4:2018 Forest Management Standard
- 3.5 SAFAS 5:2018 Group Certification Procedures
- 3.6 SAFAS 6:2018 Certification and Accreditation Procedures
- 3.7 SAFAS7:2018 Notification of Certification Bodies
- 3.8 SAFAS 8:2018 Issuance of PEFC Logo use licenses by SAFAS
- 3.9 SAFAS 9:2018 Dispute resolution procedures
- 3.10 PEFC ST 2002:2013 Chain of Custody Standard
- 3.11 PEFC ST 2003:2012 CB Requirements for Chain of Custody
- 3.12 PEFC ST 2001:2008 Logo Usage

4. Terms and definitions

The terms and definitions for SAFAS certification are included in standard SAFAS 4:2018 Forest Management Standard.

In this standard, the following terms and their definitions apply:

4.1 Certified area

A total area of the certified forests. In the case of a **group forest certificate** it is the sum of forest areas of the **participants**.

4.2 Certificate holder

The certificate holder is an organization or legal entity that is responsible for assuring that the requirements defined in the SAFAS certification documents and required by the certification system are complied with in the certified forest holdings.

4.3 Group entity

An entity that represents the **participants**, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the **certified area** to the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme. The group entity may also be referred to as the applicant.

4.4 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 certification scheme.

4.5 Group forest certification

Certification of the **group organisation** under one **group forest certificate**.

4.6 Group management system

Set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organisation to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the sustainable forest management standard.

4.7 Group organisation

A group of **participants** represented by the **group entity** for the purposes of implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and its certification. A contractual relationship needs to be established between a participant and the group entity.

The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “regional organisation” if the group is defined by regional boundaries or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

4.8 Internal audit

Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact or other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which specified requirements are fulfilled, undertaken by the group organisation itself (first party audit).

4.9 Document confirming participation in group forest certification

A document issued to an individual **participant** that refers to the **group forest certificate** and that confirms the **participant** as being covered by the scope of the **group forest certification**.

5. Implementation of forest certification

5.1 Scope of certification

The Scope of forest certification under SAFAS is the management of plantations, the associated infrastructure and unplanted areas logically associated with the plantations. This includes unplanted areas which lie within the plantations or adjacent to the plantations. The forest manager shall define the extent of the forest management unit accordingly. The certified forest area is reported as the area of certified productive plantation land. The unplanted areas logically associated with the productive land get reported separately.

5.2 Options for implementation

Certification can be:

- (a) Individual certification, where the certificate is issued for one or several forest holdings belonging to a forest owner or
- (b) Group certification, where a number of forest holdings are grouped under a group entity. Certification of a landscape or region is a form of group certification.

5.3 Standards

The standard documents for certification include SAFAS 5: 2018 (Implementation of the SAFAS Forest Certification Scheme) and SAFAS 4: 2018 (SAFAS Forest Certification Standard).

5.4 Obligations of the certificate holder to provide information

The certificate holder shall promptly submit the following information to the SAFAS Council for publishing:

- 5.4.1 Information concerning the issuance of the certificate, potential changes in its validity period and its possible withdrawal.
- 5.4.2 Contact information of the person responsible for responding to enquiries and complaints concerning the certification.
- 5.4.3 Report annually on the area covered by the certificate.
- 5.4.4 Report annually on the results of an external audit including any documented non-conformities due to activities not complying with the criteria for certification.

The certificate holder shall provide on request a summary of the forest management plan excluding any confidential data.

5.5 Appeals procedure

Refer to SAFAS 9: Dispute resolution procedures

Note: Complaints and appeals relating to the decisions and activities of a certified entity; an accredited certification body or an accreditation body shall be dealt with by the complaints and appeals procedures of the relevant accredited certification body or the responsible accreditation body.

6. Individual certification

6.1 Certificate holder

The certificate holder may be a forest owner or entity responsible for forest management on the certified area. Individual certification covers one holding or an entity formed from several holdings.

6.2 Obligations of the certificate holder

The certificate holder is responsible for:

- a) assuring that the requirements in the SAFAS Standard are met within the certified forest holding.
- b) the administration of the system.
- c) communication with SAFAS Council and stakeholder groups.

7. Group management system

- 7.1 There shall be a group management system ensuring participants' conformity with the sustainable forest management standard. It shall be centrally administered and subject to central review. All participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring programme.
- 7.2 The group management system shall define the internal monitoring programme that provides sufficient confidence in the conformity of the whole group organisation with the sustainable forest management standard
- 7.3 Where the group organisation has centralised sales of forest based products the management system shall include the product flows and chain of custody system.

8. Functions and responsibilities of a group entity

The group entity or applicant is responsible for the following:

- 8.1 To represent the group organisation in the certification process, including in communications and relationships with the certification body, submission of an application for certification, and contractual relationship with the certification body.
- 8.2 To provide a commitment on behalf of the whole group organisation to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 8.3 To establish written procedures for the management of the group organization.
- 8.4 To keep records of:
 - (a) the group entity and participants' conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard, and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme,
 - (b) all participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and its/their size(s),
 - (c) the certified area,
 - (d) the implementation of an internal monitoring programme, its review and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken.

- 8.5 To establish a written agreement with all participants which shall include the participants' commitment to comply with the sustainable forest management standard. The group entity shall have a written contract or other written agreement with all participants covering the right of the group entity to implement and enforce any corrective or preventive measures, and to initiate the exclusion of any participant from the scope of certification in the event of non-conformity with the sustainable forest management standard;
- 8.6 To provide participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification.
- 8.7 To provide all participants with information and guidance required for the effective implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 8.8 To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the participants' conformity with the certification requirements.
- 8.9 To operate a review of conformity with the sustainable forest management standard, that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme and the certification body's evaluations and surveillance; corrective and preventive measures if required; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of corrective actions taken.
- 8.10 Where an individual forest owner is covered by additional group or individual forest management certifications, a non-conformity by the forest owner identified under one forest management certification is addressed in any other forest management certification that covers the forest owner.

9. Functions and responsibilities of participants

- 9.1 To provide the group entity with a written agreement, including a commitment on conformity with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 9.2 To comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 9.3 To provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the group entity or certification body for relevant data, documentation or other information; allowing access to the forest and other facilities, whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise.
- 9.4 To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.

10. Internal auditing programme

The group management system shall define the requirements for an annual internal auditing programme that provides information on implementation of the SAFAS group management requirements by the group entity and the conformance of participants with the SAFAS sustainable management standard.

10.1 Auditing frequency

- 10.1.1 The group entity shall annually review the group management system and undertake an internal audit programme.

- 10.1.2 The participants will be selected for auditing on a sample basis. Sampling must be done in such a way as to select an audit sample that is representative of the entire group.
- 10.1.2 The minimum sampling size for internal auditing is \sqrt{n} , n =total number of group members.
- 10.1.3 Sampling may also be modified by the application of a risk assessment approach where prioritization according to risk can be objectively demonstrated.

10.2 Conditions for raising of non-conformances

- 10.2.1 Major non-conformances are raised when there is evidence that the non-conformance is a result of complete breakdown in the system or will have a substantial impact on the sustainability of the forestry operation.
- 10.2.2 Minor conformances are raised when the non-conformance is significant but an isolated or infrequent event or for an issue that if allowed to persist could lead to a Major non-conformance.
- 10.2.3 Observations are raised for aspects that if allowed to persist could lead to non-conformances.
- 10.2.4 A review of the management system must be done annually to incorporate findings