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Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements



Malaysian Timber Certification Council

C-08-05, Block C, Megan Avenue II
No.12, Jalan Yap Kwan Seng
50450, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Tel: +60 (0)3 2161 2298, Fax: +60 (0)03 2161 2293
E-mail: info@mtcc.com.my, Web: www.mtcc.com.my

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1. SCOPE

- 1.1 This document defines the general requirements for group forest management certification which allow the certification of a number of forest owners/managers under one certificate under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS).
- 1.2 Group forest management certification requires establishing a specific management structure that includes the individual forest owners/managers. This entity represents the individual owners/managers in forest management certification in order to ensure the correct implementation of the sustainable forest management certification standard and provide a sufficient level of confidence in sampling-based certification activities.

Note: The term “group certification” is equivalent to the term “regional certification” or other terms chosen by individual forest certification schemes where a number of individual forest owners are certified under one certificate.

2. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

As an endorsed scheme of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), it is important to ensure that the requirements for group forest management certification under the MTCS are developed in compliance with the PEFC Council requirements as follows:

- a) PEFC ST 1002:2010 *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*.
- b) ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996 *Standardisation and related activities – General vocabulary*

3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2:1996 apply together with the following definitions.

3.1 Certified area

The forest area covered by a **group forest certificate** representing the sum of forest areas of the **participants**.

3.2 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.

Note 1: The term “group entity” is equivalent to the term “regional/group applicant”, etc.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

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 certification scheme.

Note: The term “group forest certificate” is equivalent to the term “regional certificate” or other terms

chosen by a relevant forest certification scheme which comply with the content of this definition.

3.4 Group forest certification

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

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

3.5 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.

Note1: The term “group organisation” is equivalent to the term “region” or other terms chosen by the relevant forest certification scheme and complying with the content of this definition.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

3.6 Participant

A forest owner/manager or other entity covered by the **group forest certificate**, who has the legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area, and the ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard in that area.

Note1: The term “ability to implement the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard” requires the entity to have a long-term legal right to manage the forest and would disqualify one-off contractors from becoming participants in group certification.

Note 2: The relationship between the terms “group organisation”, “group entity” and “participant” is shown in Figure 1.

3.7 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**.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR GROUP CERTIFICATION

4.1 General

4.1.1 Clear definitions are provided for the following terms, which are in conformity with the definitions of those terms presented in the PEFC ST 1002:2010 *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*:

- (a) the group organisation,
- (b) the group entity,
- (c) the participant,
- (d) the certified area,
- (e) the group forest certificate, and
- (f) the document confirming participation in group forest certification.

4.1.2 A forest owner or forest management unit can participate in only one individual or group forest management certification under the MTCS.

4.1.3 The participants of a group forest certification shall be managed by a group entity that is

centrally administered to ensure participants' conformity with the sustainable forest management standard and is subject to central review, and that all the participants shall be subject to an internal monitoring programme.

- 4.1.4 The group entity is responsible to develop and operate an annual internal monitoring programme to provide sufficient confidence in the conformity of the group organisation with the sustainable forest management standard. The elements of the internal monitoring programme shall include the following:
- (a) at the time of joining the group organization, individual participants shall undertake initial assessment against the sustainable forest management standard, either through a self-assessment or an assessment by the group entity. In the case of a self-assessment, the assessment shall be reviewed by the group entity;
 - (b) the group entity shall carry out internal audit on at least 20% of the total number of participants with regard to their conformity with the sustainable forest management standard on an annual basis;
 - (c) the group entity shall ensure that the internal audit is carried out by competent personnel that is impartial to the audited participant; and
 - (d) the group entity shall evaluate the information about conformity of the participants to the sustainable forest management standard that is obtained from publicly available sources and other interested parties.

4.2 Functions and responsibilities of the group entity

4.2.1 The functions and responsibilities of the group entity are as follows:

- (a) 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;
- (b) 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 MTCS;
- (c) To establish written procedures for the management of the group organisation;
- (d) To keep records of:
 - the group entity and participants' conformity with the requirements of the sustainable forest management standard, and other applicable requirements of the MTCS,
 - all participants, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and its/their size(s),
 - the certified area,
 - the implementation of an internal monitoring programme, its review and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken;
- (e) To establish connections with all participants based on a written agreement 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;

Note: The requirements for "participant' commitment" and "written contract or other written agreement with all participants" can also be satisfied by the commitment of and written agreement of

the forest owners/managers' association, where the association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the contract are enforceable.

- (f) To provide participants with a document confirming participation in the group forest certification;
- (g) 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 MTCS;
- (h) To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the participants' conformity with the certification requirements, and;
- (i) 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.

4.3 Functions and responsibilities of participants

The function and responsibilities of the participants are as follows:

- (a) 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 MTCS;

Note: The requirement for "written agreement" and participants' "commitment" is also satisfied by the written agreement of the forest owners/managers' association with the group entity, where the forest owners/managers' association can demonstrate that it has a legal mandate to represent the participants and where its commitment and the terms and conditions of the written agreement are enforceable.

- (b) To comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the MTCS;
- (c) 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;
- (d) To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.

Figure 1: Definition of the group organisation

