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Group Forest Certification Requirements

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1 Requirements for group entity and group organization

- 1.1 Group entity shall represent the group participants in relation to forest certification including
 - a) communication with the certification body
 - b) communication with the national governing body (HFC Council)
 - c) submission of an application for certification
 - d) contractual relationship with the certification body
 - e) providing 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.
- 1.2 Those quitting or having been excluded from the group organization shall not be granted admission as group participants within 5 years.

2 Administration

- 2.1 Group Entity's operation shall be based on written procedures.
- 2.2 Group entity shall have written procedures regarding the inclusion and exclusion of group participants.
- 2.3 Group entity shall administer all information relevant to the group organization's conformity with sustainable forest management standard and other parts of the HFC scheme.
- 2.4 Group entity shall keep records on group participants including:
 - a) Name of participant
 - b) Address of participant
 - c) Contact details
 - d) Contact person
 - e) Forest area on which participant is a registered forest management
 - f) Other wooded area used by the participant
- 2.5 Records specified in 2.4 shall be updated no later than every two years.
- 2.6 Group entity shall have contract or other written agreement with all group participants including:
 - a) the long-term commitment of the group participant to the principles of sustainable forest management and to the participation in HFC
 - b) declaration of the group participant on not taking part in other group organizations, or individual forest certification under HFC
 - c) the group participants commitment to comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable parts of the HFC scheme on all its forest area and other wooded land
 - d) the group participants commitment to subject itself to external audit
 - e) the right of the group entity to carry out internal monitoring
 - f) the right of the group entity to implement and enforce any preventive or corrective measures
 - g) the right of the group entity to exclude the group participant in the event of non-conformity with the sustainable forest management standard
- 2.7 Group entity shall issue document confirming participation in the group organisation.
- 2.8 Group entity shall keep records on the internal monitoring programme including all topics specified in 3.2.
- 2.9 Group entity shall keep records on the certification body's reports.
- 2.10 Group entity shall make the summary of the certification body's reports publically available with due considerations to confidential information.

3 Conformity with the sustainable forest management standard

- 3.1 Group entity shall provide group participants with all relevant information and guidance that required for the effective implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 3.2 Group entity shall operate a review of conformity with the sustainable forest management standard that includes
 - a) evaluation of conformity with requirements in correspondence with the scope of certification (see MER 1003 v1 3.3)
 - b) reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme
 - c) reviewing the certification body's evaluations and surveillance
 - d) list of group participants with non-conformities
 - e) corrective and preventive measures if required
 - f) evaluation of the effectiveness of corrective actions taken.
- 3.3 When applying for certification group entity shall provide the following information to certification body:
 - a) name and address of group entity
 - b) person legally representing the group entity
 - c) scope of certification
 - d) list of group participants with details described in 2.4 a) e) and f)
 - e) review of conformity

4 Responsibilities of the group participants

- 4.1 Group participant shall show long-term commitment to sustainable forest management and to participating in HFC.
- 4.2 Group participant shall provide the group entity with a written agreement in accordance with 2.6.
- 4.3 Group participant shall provide the group entity with the data listed in 2.4
- 4.4 Group participant shall not take part in more than one instance of forest certification under HFC.
- 4.5 Group participant shall hold a valid forest based product chain of custody certification, if it sells timber from sources other than its certified area.
- 4.6 Group participant shall take part in forest certification under HFC with the entire forest area and other wooded land under its management.
- 4.7 Group participants shall comply with the sustainable forest management standard and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.
- 4.8 Group participant shall 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.
- 4.9 Group participants shall implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the group entity.
- 4.10 It is the obligation of the group participant to inform the group entity in due course about any important circumstances or changes regarding the responsibilities listed above.

5 Internal monitoring programme

- 5.1 Group entity shall operate an annual internal monitoring programme that
 - a) provides sufficient confidence in the conformity of the whole group organization with the sustainable forest management standard (MER 1001 v1)
 - b) provides for the evaluation of the participants' conformity with the certification requirements.

- 5.2 All group participants shall be subject to the internal monitoring programme.
- 5.3 The monitoring programme shall be based on evaluating
 - a) sample of group participants with less than 5.000 hectares of certified area
 - b) sample of group participants with 5.000 hectares or more certified area
 - c) group participants with non-conformities
 - d) participants joining after the beginning of the assessment audit
- 5.4 Sample of participants mentioned in 5.3 a) and b) shall be
 - a) drawn randomly
 - b) cover at least 5% of the total certified area respectively
 - c) optionally modified by excluding participants showing compliance the previous year
- 5.5 Group participants belong the category identified by 5.3 c)
 - a) if either internal monitoring, or assessment audit or surveillance audit finds non-conformities
 - b) as long as the non-conformity is corrected
 - c) shall be excluded from 5.3 a) or b)
- 5.6 Group participants joining the certification group after the beginning of the assessment audit shall
 - a) belong to 5.3 d) until their first internal monitoring is completed.
 - b) be excluded from 5.3 a) or b)
- 5.7 Internal monitoring shall utilize primarily
 - a) questionnaire in case of 5.3 a)
 - b) personal interview including field inspection in case of 5.3 b) and c)
 - c) questionnaire or personal interview including field inspection in case of 5.3 d) suitable for the certified area.
- 5.8 Internal monitoring may not cover all requirements of MER 1001 v1 Sustainable Forest Management Requirements.
- 5.9 The scope of internal monitoring shall focus on requirements
 - c) relevant to the size of the certified area of the participant
 - d) against which non-conformities occurred
 - e) that are recommended by the certification body.