



Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Chain of Custody certification Service Information

The Chain of Custody certification of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) provides independent and verified assurance that the certified forest-based material contained in a product originates from well-managed forests.

Responding to market and consumer demands

From small and medium-sized enterprises to global brands, more and more companies along the timber value chain are looking to demonstrate that the forest-based materials they use come from responsible sources.

Additionally, international legislation and regulatory requirements, request evidence that raw materials come from responsible sources. For manufacturers, traders, distributors, and wholesalers, to mention a few, the PEFC Chain of Custody certification can be used as part of their due diligence procedure to demonstrate compliance with these regulations.

Regardless of the motivation, companies have realized the relevance of having a mechanism, like the **PEFC Chain of Custody certification**, to provide verifiable information that they source from responsibly managed forests.

Access to PEFC labels

Companies that become PEFC Chain of Custody certified can use the PEFC label and claims on or off-products to enhance their communication about responsible sourcing.

Experience that counts

Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and climate in **100+ countries**. With **30 years** of experience, Preferred by Nature has provided forestry certification services against international and recognised schemes like PEFC and the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™).


Preferred by Nature holds accreditation for PEFC Chain of Custody certification worldwide. We have certified over 33 million hectares of FSC and PEFC forestland in more than 30 countries, providing Supply Chain and Chain of Custody certification services to more than 3,000 companies around the world.

Added value of engaging with us

We also offer [Carbon Footprint Support](#) and [Preferred by Nature Certification](#) services that could complement your Chain of Custody certifications. Our Preferred by Nature Certification based on the Sustainability Framework that is aligned with the [EU Deforestation Regulation \(EUDR\)](#) and can help you meet its requirements.

Contact us

[Connect with one](#) of our experts to know more.



The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is a global alliance of national forest certification systems that promotes sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.

Third party certification ensures that the certified wood contained in a product comes from responsibly managed forests.

20,000 PEFC Chain of Custody certified companies in 70 countries.



What is PEFC Chain of Custody certification?

PEFC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification is an essential part of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC), a global system for certification and labelling of responsibly produced timber. Its main purpose is to control the flow of certified products throughout the supply chain. Your auditor will therefore focus on procurement, processing, volume accounting, sales and labelling of certified material to ensure the integrity of PEFC claims and trademark usage.

What are the key roles and responsibilities within the PEFC system?

PEFC is an international organisation that owns the PEFC system and develops the certification standards and requirements that certified companies need to follow. PEFC certification bodies are accredited by national accreditation bodies and need to follow applicable accreditation rules published by ISO and PEFC International. PEFC is nationally represented by PEFC National Governing Bodies (NGB), which may set additional accreditation rules. Preferred by Nature is accredited for PEFC Chain of Custody certification by ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB).

Which certification standards apply to my company?

The main CoC certification standard ([PEFC ST 2002:2020 Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products](#)) applies to all CoC certified companies and sets out general requirements for material handling. A separate standard ([PEFC ST 2001:2020 PEFC Logo Usage Rules](#)) regulates usage of PEFC logo and applies to companies that want to use PEFC trademarks on products or for promotion. You can find these documents and further guidance on PEFC's website www.pefc.org.

What is the cost structure?

The certification cost consists of the costs related to the auditing services and a fee which is collected by the National Governing Bodies (NGB). This fee is called a notification fee and helps cover the work of NGBs. Each NGB determines the fee size and thus it varies between countries. It may depend on the turnover of your company. In some countries, the notification fee is payable to Preferred by Nature, who will forward it to the NGBs; in other countries, the fee is payable directly to the NGB. Please submit an [application](#) to receive a non-binding price offer.

What about impartiality and confidentiality?

To check correct accounting for certified volumes, the CoC auditors will need access to confidential information, such as your suppliers, buyers and conversion factors. Preferred by Nature's Quality Management System includes several [policies](#) that allow our organisation to provide assurance services credibly in compliance with accreditation requirements. These include the [Impartiality Policy](#), which ensures impartiality, transparency and independence in all of our activities, and the [Confidentiality Policy](#), which describes our rigorous approach to safeguarding confidential data and information our clients provide. Additionally, our [Anti-corruption Policy](#), establishes control to ensure our employees behave ethically and with integrity.

However, keep in mind that all PEFC CoC certificates are publicly listed in the [PEFC database](#), along with information about the scope of your certificate, such as product types and sites.

What does the certification process entail?

PEFC certificates are issued for a five-year period. An initial assessment is conducted as a basis for certification, and subsequent annual audits are required to maintain the certificate.

Which trademarks can be used?

If you are a PEFC CoC certificate holder, you can use the PEFC logo on certified products and for promotional purposes. However, a logo agreement shall be signed first between your organisation and the PEFC National Governing Body (NGB). The NGB also determines if any fee is to be paid in relation to this.



Certification process



Your preparation: A certification agreement must be signed before Preferred by Nature initiates the certification process. Once the proposal and agreement is signed, we will appoint a specific contact person for your organisation, meanwhile you need to prepare for certification by ensuring compliance with all the certification requirements. This includes assigning responsibilities, developing Chain of Custody procedures and training relevant staff.



Main evaluation: PEFC audits are normally conducted on-site and last up to one workday per site. Interviews, document review, visiting your facilities and review of your volume accounting system are common parts of an on-site audit. In case your company does not physically handle material, we may decide to conduct a desk-based evaluation.



Reporting and certification issuance: after the audit, we prepare a written report describing the results of the audit. Any identified non-conformities are also described and these need to be corrected before the certificate can be issued. The report is quality reviewed and submitted to you for any comments. Upon positive certification decision, the certificate is issued and sent to your company. We will notify the National Governing Body (NGB), which will update the public PEFC database with information about your certified status.

You need to comply with the PEFC certification requirements to remain certified, and this is verified through annual audits. Preferred by Nature helps you stay up to speed on the requirements by providing

regular updates on system changes that require adjustment from you.

If non-conformities are identified in your system, you must take appropriate and effective action to address these. To secure the integrity of the PEFC system, rigorous requirements apply to the follow-up on non-conformities, which are graded as major or minor. Minor issues are commonly verified during the next annual audit; if they have been insufficiently addressed, they are upgraded to major.

Major non-conformities must be addressed within maximum three months, thus requiring an additional audit to verify your timely compliance. Failure to address major non-conformities, or the discovery of five or more major non-conformities during an audit, will lead to suspension of your certificate. A certificate can be reinstated once the issues have been addressed; however, an additional audit is required prior to the reinstatement.

When is my certification suspended?

The following situations will lead to the suspension of your PEFC CoC certificate: a) serious breaches of the certification requirements, b) Lack of payment of applicable fees and invoices, and c) Lack of willingness to plan and undergo scheduled audits

When is my certification terminated?

Your certificate might be terminated for the following reasons: a) Failure to sufficiently address the issues leading to suspension within the suspension period, b) Failure to undergo renewed assessment within the suspension period after addressing the issues leading to suspension, c) Deliberate fraud or very serious breaches of the certification requirements, and d) Failure to undergo renewed assessment prior to certificate expiration.

Resources

We have developed a sample for [PEFC CoC procedures for traders](#) and a [PEFC CoC sample procedure](#) that will help you prepare for your PEFC CoC certification or next audit. These guides and templates are available on our [website](#) and could be beneficial to your suppliers too.