

Preferred by Nature Certification

Certification **service guide**



Land Use



CoC/Traceability and Due Diligence



Carbon Footprint Management



Welcome to the comprehensive guide on how to achieve [Preferred by Nature Certification](#). Within these pages, you will find detailed information regarding the certification process. This includes the certification procedure, cost structure, permissible trademarks and claims, confidentiality and impartiality measures, as well as the protocol for handling complaints or instances where certification may be refused, terminated or the scope altered.

Preferred by Nature Certification in brief

Built on experience: Our Sustainability Framework is the cornerstone of Preferred by Nature Certification crafted through years of collaborative expertise. Rooted in decades of engagement with diverse stakeholders across the supply chain, this robust framework ensures comprehensive sustainability solutions.

Prioritising performance: Our system is finely tuned to prioritise performance, ensuring tangible results for land managers, retailers and every stakeholder in between.

From compliance to best practice: Preferred by Nature Certification can be used to help businesses progress from legal compliance to best practices in sustainability.

Comprehensive sustainability: We unify vital sustainability elements across various sectors and environments, fostering tangible impacts regardless of the setting.

Tailored for all: Whether you are a small forest operator or a global manufacturer, our adaptable framework fosters continuous improvement at every stage. With flexibility tailored to your position in the supply chain, integrity remains steadfast in commitment and implementation strength.

Top priority: People, Nature and Climate: Above all, our commitment is to protect people, nature and the climate, ensuring that sustainability remains at the forefront of all endeavours.



Application

You will need to submit an [application](#) for service to Preferred by Nature, which will be used to prepare a budget proposal and [Certification Agreement](#) for your organisation.

Agreement

Upon signing the agreement, we will assign a contact person who will be available to respond to your questions during the entire audit process.

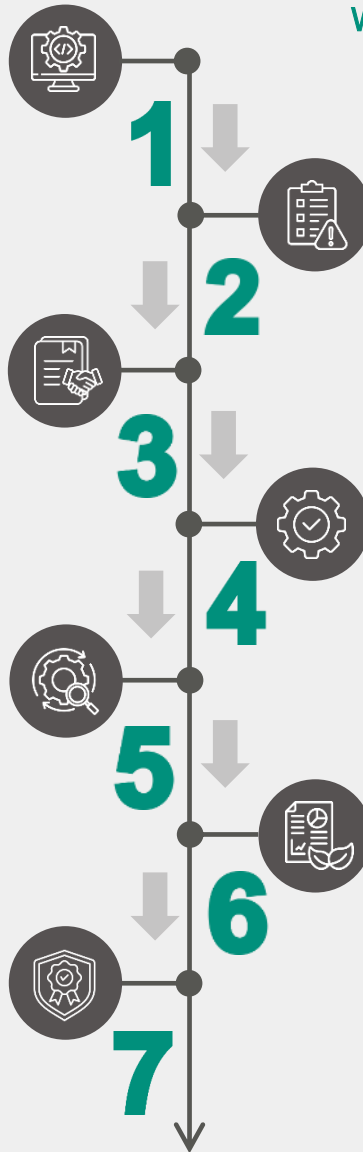
Audit

Preferred by Nature Certification audits are normally conducted onsite. Interviews, document reviews and touring your facilities are common parts of an onsite audit.

Certificate

Upon a positive certification decision, we issue your certificate, and the [Preferred by Nature Certification database](#) is updated on our website.

What does the certification process and cycle entail?



Risk evaluation

In the next phase, Preferred by Nature carries out a risk assessment.

Preparation

You need to prepare for certification by ensuring compliance with all the certification requirements (assigning responsibilities, developing procedures and training relevant staff).

Report

After the evaluation, we prepare a written report describing the results of the audit. Any identified non-conformities are also described, and major issues need to be corrected before the certificate can be issued. The report is quality reviewed and submitted to you for comments.

Certificates are renewed every 5 years.





Which standards apply to my organisation?

The Preferred by Nature Certification process is aligned with the guidelines outlined in the Sustainability Framework, and it also incorporates other relevant [standards](#). Our certification programme is designed to accommodate a diverse range of organisations, with requirements that are finely tailored to suit the specific characteristics of each entity.



Mandatory



Conditional requirements that may or may not be applicable, depending on the scope - refer to footnotes for details.

The standards applicable to your organisation depend on the type of certification you are pursuing: Land Use, Chain of Custody („CoC”) or Due Diligence („DD”), as well as the Scope of certification, which may encompass either sustainability (Sustainability Scope (SS)) or regulatory aspects (Regulatory Scope (RS)). Kindly refer to the **table provided below** for an outline of **standards and requirements applicable to different certification categories and scopes** (claim types):

		Land Use Certification		Chain of Custody Certification		Due Diligence Certification	
		SS	RS	SS for processing	RS	SS****	RS
PBN-01 Sustainability Framework	Full Sustainability Framework	Mandatory				Mandatory	
	EUDR-aligned Indicators		Mandatory				Mandatory
	Processing requirements			Mandatory		Mandatory	
	Annex A*	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
PBN-02 System Requirements Standard	System Requirements	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
	Group and multi-site requirements**	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional	Conditional
PBN-03 DD System Requirements Standard				Conditional	Conditional	Mandatory	Mandatory
PBN-04 DD Seal Use Policy***		Conditional		Conditional		Conditional	
PBN-05 CoC and Traceability Standard	CoC and Traceability requirements			Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory	Mandatory
	CoC for land managers	Mandatory	Mandatory				

*Applies solely when an organisation needs to implement remediation measures. | **Reserved for companies managing a group or multi-site scope. | *** Specifically for organisations interested in utilising the Preferred by Nature Seal. If they opt out of using the Seal, they will not be assessed against the Policy. | **** When implementing a due diligence system, the risk assessment should encompass relevant requirements of the Sustainability Framework.

? Which trademarks and claims can be used?

The **Preferred by Nature Hummingbird Seal** represents a significant opportunity for organisations to showcase their dedication and achievements in fostering sustainable business practices. The Seal serves as a symbol of assurance, signalling to consumers and stakeholders alike that the product originates from farms or forests managed with care for people, nature and the climate.

Organisations holding a valid certificate can also make **claims** about their certified status. These **claims** can be used to communicate the scope of the certification through either Sustainability Scope or Regulatory Scope to potential buyers. The main claim can be further bolstered by a traceability claim, furnishing additional details regarding the type of CoC or traceability system employed.

Detailed specifications regarding such claims are outlined in the Preferred by Nature "[Chain of Custody and Traceability Standard](#)" (PBN-05).

More than just a symbol, **the Hummingbird Seal** serves as an additional visual representation of a commitment to fostering positive impacts on people, nature and the climate in alignment with the standards set forth by Preferred by Nature.

Adherence to specific additional requirements governing the use of the Seal further underscores an organisation's dedication to upholding the highest principles of sustainability and ethical business practices.



The [Seal use policy](#) outlines the rules for Seal use, which can be used in 3 ways:



Certified status

To indicate the certified status of the organisation (i.e. NOT in relation to final product)

Available to all Preferred by Nature-certified organisations



Segregation marking

To use as marking during manufacturing and for B2B communication in the supply chain - for intermediate products only!

Available to all Preferred by Nature-certified organisations



Final product

To use for final products or promote towards end consumers

Available to Preferred by Nature-certified organisations that meet additional requirements (GHG emission compensation and compliance with our [Carbon Footprint Management standard](#))

? What is the cost structure?

The cost of Preferred by Nature Certification depends on various factors, including the scale of your production and the specific aspects you seek to certify. The certification process entails evaluating multiple facets of your operations, supply chain and sustainability practices.

Given the diverse nature of these factors, please contact our designated representative within your company. Share detailed operational information for a thorough analysis. We will then provide precise cost details for the Preferred by Nature Certification tailored to your needs.

Alternatively, if you are certified under schemes like [Forest Stewardship Council](#)™ (FSC™) or [Rainforest Alliance](#), consider our [add-on certification](#) process. We integrate Preferred by Nature Certification into your upcoming audit to minimise costs and streamline the process, ensuring effective evaluation of both sets of requirements while reducing staff time needed.



When can certification be refused?

- Certification is refused when Preferred by Nature concludes that the audited company does not meet the requirements of the applicable standard(s) or [Preferred by Nature Policy of Association](#).



How do I maintain my certificate?

- Conformance with certification requirements is essential for maintaining certification, verified through annual audits. Preferred by Nature facilitates adherence by providing regular updates on system changes. Nonconformities must be promptly and effectively addressed.

Rigorous procedures govern the follow-up on nonconformities, categorised as major or minor. Minor issues are typically reviewed during the subsequent annual audit, while major nonconformities must be rectified within

three months, necessitating an additional audit for verification. Failure to rectify major nonconformities or encountering five or more during an audit results in certificate suspension, which can be reinstated upon achieving compliance verified through an audit. Reassessment, involving a full assessment, is required after the certificate validity period, with positive results resulting in a new certificate issuance bearing the same registration code. Reassessments must occur before the certificate anniversary date to avoid automatic termination.



When is certification suspended?

- Your certification may be suspended if:
 1. Five or more major nonconformities are discovered in an annual audit.
 2. Major/critical nonconformities are not addressed within the specified timeline.
 3. Serious breaches of certification requirements occur.

4. Applicable fees and invoices remain unpaid.
5. Scheduled audits are refused.
6. Force Majeure events (e.g., natural disasters, political unrest) occur.

A suspended certificate may be reinstated once the identified issues are resolved, and compliance is verified through an audit within the required timeframe.



When is certification terminated?

- Your certificate may be terminated for the following reasons:
 1. Inadequate resolution of suspension issues within the specified period.
 2. Failure to undergo reassessment within the suspension period after addressing the issues leading to suspension.
 3. Failure to address one or more major nonconformities by the specified timeline.

4. Engaging in deliberate fraud or serious breaches of certification requirements.
5. Neglecting to undergo a reassessment before certificate expiration.
6. Failing to undergo reassessment after the suspension period expires.

Upon certificate termination, a renewed assessment is required to obtain a new certificate; reinstating the previous certificate is not possible. Subsequent to suspension or termination, the company cannot claim conformity with certification standard(s) or sell products with certification trademarks.

Can I change the scope of certification?

As a certificate holder, you can modify or expand your certification scope during your annual audit or between audits. Notify Preferred by Nature if any of the following circumstances arise, necessitating formal changes in your certificate's scope:

- Addition of new product lines for certification.

- Incorporation of new types of inputs beyond current certification scope.
- Alterations in the system for controlling claims.
- Expansion or removal of sites or production areas covered by the certificate.

Scope changes outside scheduled audits typically require an additional audit, which may be conducted onsite, desk-based, or both, depending on the nature of the change.

What about confidentiality?

During audits, auditors need access to confidential information, including your suppliers and buyers, with strict confidentiality protocols in place. Rest assured, your data is rigorously protected.

As part of our transparency commitment, we provide a summary of your Preferred by Nature Certification report on our website. This concise overview showcases key findings, demonstrating your organisation's compliance with Sustainability Framework requirements and communicating your sustainability

achievements to stakeholders and the public. Access current public summaries at <https://preferredbynature.org/certification/pb-n-certification/certified-organisations>

While the detailed report may contain sensitive or confidential information, the summary captures essential aspects of the certification, showcasing the positive strides your organisation has made towards sustainability.

For information shared with third parties, please refer to the [Certification Agreement](#) for guidelines.

What about quality assurance?

At Preferred by Nature, quality assurance is paramount. Our robust Quality Management System incorporates multiple [policies](#) and procedures, enabling us to deliver assurance services with credibility and adherence to accreditation standards.

Central to our approach is the [Impartiality Policy](#), ensuring impartiality, transparency and independence. Our [Confidentiality Policy](#) underscores our commitment to safeguarding client data. These reflect our dedication to upholding integrity and professionalism in every aspect of our operations.

What is the procedure for complaints and appeals?

For complaints management, we utilise our [Disputes Resolution Policy](#). If your organisation has concerns about the certification process, you can follow our outlined dispute resolution process. This structured approach ensures transparency and resolution of any disputes or grievances.

What are rights and duties of applicants and clients?

For the rights and duties of applicants and clients, please refer to the detailed information provided in the [Certification Agreement](#).

EXPLORE



Preferred by
Nature Certification



Tailored
Services



Searching for a partner with global experience and local presence?



Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and the climate for **30 years**.



Our approach combines sustainability certification services, projects, awareness-raising and capacity building.



We have certified over **1 million farms and forest units** and contributed to the establishment of **100+ protected areas**.



With nearly **400 staff** and a network of consultants, we have operations on **six continents** and have the know-how and capacity to carry out **5,000+ audits per year**.



We work with small businesses, large corporations, communities, Indigenous People, state forests and environmental NGOs - all of them are equally important to us.

Reach out to us to discuss your needs and together we will explore the possibilities:

<https://preferredbynature.org/contact-us>



www.preferredbynature.org