

This document explains the certification steps for the FSC/PEFC chain of custody certification. For further information, do not hesitate to contact our office.

NOTE: The present document mixes requirements from FSC and PEFC

The preliminary steps in order to achieve the FSC and/or PEFC certification are to sign a certification agreement with Interface and, **only in the case of FSC**, sign the TLA (trademark license agreement). Please note that multiple sites and the use of outsourcers are important information for planning the audit, so please be sure to provide all relevant information during the application process.

Once the Company has set an internal system in order to comply with the Chain of Custody standard requirements, the Certification Body appoints a lead auditor and an assessment is planned to certify the Company compliance to standards.

The certification steps are:

Pre-Assessment Visit (Optional)

This is an optional step and provides the company with a Gap Analysis, this will allow you to identify any weaknesses in your system prior to Auditing.

The Assessor will have detailed discussions with you over the implementation and extent of your Chain of Custody System(s) and also be able to explain and clarify aspects of the standard you are unsure about. An Assessment report will be produced and this will be presented and explained at the end of the meeting. From this report you will have a clear understanding of how it is currently meeting the requirements of the standard(s) and where it is not.

Main Assessment

Your dedicated Lead Assessor will contact you to conduct a document review of your system and an onsite visit. The Assessor will be looking at how your documents meet the requirements of the standard(s) and talk through in detail the business processes that you operate, the controls you have over these in relation to the standard(s).

The audit determines whether you meet the requirements on a practical and evidential level. The Auditor will review all areas within the agreed scope to determine compliance.

Certification

Following the Auditor's recommendation, your assessment will be reviewed independently and if approved your certification will be confirmed. During the audit, the lead auditor shall evaluate each nonconformity identified in the audit to determine whether it constitutes a minor or major nonconformity. The certification decision depends on the **nonconformities** raised during the audit, which could be:

- **Minor condition:** A temporary lapse, or an unusual/ non-systematic nonconformity, or if the impacts of the nonconformity are limited in their temporal and organizational scale, and it does not result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant requirement.
- **Major/pre-condition:** A non-conformity which results in, or is likely to result in a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant requirement within the scope of the evaluation. Such fundamental failures may be indicated by nonconformities which continue over a long period of time, or are systematic, or affect a wide range of the production, or affect the integrity of the FSC and/or PEFC system, or are not corrected or adequately addressed by the client once they have been identified.

FSC only: At MA/RA the certification cannot be issued if there are one or more major/pre- condition.

PEFC only: At MA/RA the certification cannot be issued if there are one or more minor/major/pre-condition.

Once finalised the certification decision, if no pre-conditions are present according to what explained above, the certificate is issued for a period of 5 years.

Annual Surveillance Visits

To maintain Certification and to ensure your Company is continually meeting the requirements of the relevant Standard, annual visits will be conducted to ascertain this for the following 4 years.

The first surveillance visit (S1) will be carried out 10 months later the certificate issue.

During the surveillance visit the auditor may raise some nonconformities, that shall be addressed and closed by the company in a specific timeframe:

- **Minor nonconformity:** The closure of a **minor** condition can be managed within 12 months and evidence of closure can be collected during the next audit by the lead auditor. If not closed in the timeframe, it becomes a major nonconformity and shall be corrected within a maximum period of three (3) months (or in exceptional and justified circumstances six (6) months).
- **Major nonconformity:** The closure of a **major** condition shall be corrected within a maximum period of three (3) months (or in exceptional and justified circumstances six (6) months). If not closed in the timeframe, it shall lead to immediate suspension of certification.

At surveillances, in case of 5 or more Major nonconformities finalized, the company's certification shall be immediately suspended.

Interface can also conduct short-notice or unannounced visits to the Company.

A **Re-Certification Audit** is required at the end of the final year to enable us to re-issue a Certificate.

If you decide to go ahead with us:

Application and Contracting

Firstly, contact us and we'll guide you through completing an application form for Certification to the relevant Standard(s)

Secondly, we'll send you a Certification Proposal and Contract for you to evaluate, sign and return to us along with a FSC Trademark License Agreement (if applicable).

Auditing

Please discuss with us if a pre-assessment site visit would be useful. The pre-assessment report will provide recommendations for improvements prior to your certification assessment and allow you to develop a compliant system ready for Certification.

After the main assessment, the auditor will write a report detailing all the observations made during the visit, listing any identified non-compliances with the standard(s) and describing anything that needs to be corrected or could be further improved.

Certification

With your new certificate(s), you can now use the FSC and/or PEFC logos.

Trademark use

Once Certified, you can use the scheme trademarks (FSC and/or PEFC) on your certified products (using on-product labels), and promote your products using the trademarks in promotional advertising materials and on your website.

We will be happy to advise you on the correct use of the trademarks. We also need to see it in situ so we can approve the way you're planning to use it.

Non-compliances

Your audit might highlight issues that mean a certificate can only be granted with conditions attached, or in rare instances, not at all. These are categorised as 'majors' and 'minors', and carry different timescales and actions.

Ultimately, not complying with the rules about correction to these conditions will mean your certificate is suspended, revoked or in some instances, not issued at all.

Complaints procedure

If you have a complaint about our decision or service, you have a right to complain which will not prejudice your Certification status.

We have a procedure you can follow. If we can't resolve it directly with you, you can lodge a formal complaint with ASI or PEFC, as appropriate.

You can view our Appeal and Complaints Procedure on our Website.