



Accreditation and Certification Requirements for the CBs under NCCF FM Certification Scheme

NCCF -STD- ACR- 01 /2017

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF)

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Foreword

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) is a not for profit organization registered under Societies Registration Act, 1860. NCCF is involved in developing Forest Certification scheme in the country. It is an institutional mechanism to ensure collaborative and streamlined efforts for development of National Forest Certification System and Standards. It aims to promote the implementation of improved Forest practices in the country and further the development of healthier, sustainable: economically beneficial, environmentally responsible and socially appropriate in accordance with national policies, institutional frameworks and sustainability usage norms.

The Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF) is the National Governing Body of the National Forest Certification Scheme and Standards (NFCSS) and has overall responsibility for the smooth working/functioning of the NFCSS while maintaining its credibility.

This document describes the procedures to be followed for the accreditation and certification requirements for CBs operating the NCCF FM certification scheme.

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1. Scope

This document defines the requirements for the Certification Bodies intending to operate with the Forest Management certification standards established by Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF).

2. Normative References

- a. *ISO/IEC 17065: Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services*
- b. *PEFC Annex 6: Certification and Accreditation Procedures*
- c. *PEFC ST 2003:2012: Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*
- d. *ISO 9000:2005 Quality Management systems - Fundamentals and vocabulary*
- e. *ISO 9001 Auditing practices group guidance on third party auditor impartiality and conflict of interest, 2005*
- f. *ISO/IEC 17000:2004 Conformity Assessment - Vocabulary and general principles*
- g. *ISO/IEC 17024:2012-11 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies operating certification of persons*
- h. *ISO 19011:2011 Guidelines for auditing management systems*
- i. *ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004 Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary*
- j. *ISO/IEC Guide 60:2004 Code of good practice for conformity assessment*
- k. PEFC ST 2001, , PEFC Logo Usage Rules - Requirements (hereinafter PEFC Logo usage rules)
- l. NCCF –STD-LOGO-01/2017, NCCF Logo usage requirements

3. Terms and Definitions

Accreditation Body: An accreditation body is an organisation delegated to make decisions, about the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of a CB. In case of NCCF FM certification, an accreditation body should be signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA).

Appeal: Formal request by client to CB or NABCB for reconsideration of a decision made.

Appellant: Individual or organization filing an appeal.

Application Reviewer: the person(s) that is (are) responsible for the application review, prepares the audit process and checks if an applicant for certification appears to be ready and prepared for an audit.

Audit: Systematic, independent, documented process for obtaining records, statements of fact and other relevant information and assessing them objectively to determine the extent to which applicable requirements are fulfilled.

Auditor: a person competent to conduct an audit.

Audit team: is made up of one or more auditors, one of whom is appointed to be the audit team leader. When necessary, audit teams are also supported by technical experts and/or further personnel (e.g. interpreter), who assist auditors but do not themselves act as auditors.

Audit Team Leader: an auditor who is competent to lead the audit and the audit team.

CB: Third –party Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) operating certification scheme.

Certification: third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons.

Certified Area: The forest area covered by a certificate. In case of a group forest certificate the area represents the sum of forest areas of the participants

Chain of Custody Standard: PEFC ST 2002: Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements.

Client: Organization, including a multi-site organization, that is applying for or whose Forest Management has been certified.

Certificate: a document issued under the rules of a certification system, indicating that adequate confidence is provided that a duly identified product, process or service is in conformity with a specific standard or other normative document.

Competence: the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to achieve intended results.

Complainant: Person or organization filing a complaint.

Complaint: Written expression of dissatisfaction (other than appeal) by any person or organization presented to a CB relating to the NCCF activities of that CB and/ or the NCCF activities of their clients. In the context of NCCF, a complaint includes the name and contact information of the complainant, a clear description of the issue and evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint.

Conflict of Interest: situation in which a party has an actual or perceived interest that gives, or could have the appearance of giving, that party an incentive for personal, organizational, or professional gain, such that the party's interest could conflict, or be perceived to conflict with, the conduct of an impartial and objective certification process.

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.

Group Forest Certification: Certification of the group organisation under one group forest certificate.

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.

Note: The term “group organisation” is a specific form of a “multisite organisation”.

Defendant: Person or organization against whom a complaint has been filed.

Dispute: Umbrella term covering the complaints and appeals submitted to/related to NCCF.

Major Non-Conformity: The absence of, or failure to implement and maintain, one or more applicable requirements of the standard, that may result in a systemic risk to the function and effectiveness of the forest management and/or effects confidence in the client organization’s claims on certified raw material.

Note: A major non-conformity may be an individual nonconformity or a number of minor but related nonconformities, that when considered in total are judged to constitute a major nonconformity.

Minor Non-conformity: A single failure to fulfil the requirements of the standards that may result in no systemic risk to the function and effectiveness

Observation: An evaluation finding that does not warrant nonconformity but is identified by the audit team as an opportunity for improvement.

Note: The definitions given in ISO 19011, ISO/IEC 17000 and PEFC ST 2003:2012 are applicable.

Verbal forms for the expression of provisions:

“**shall**”: indicates requirements strictly to be followed to conform to the standard.

“**should**”: indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. A CB can meet these requirements in an equivalent way provided this can be demonstrated and justified.

“**may**”: indicates a course of action permissible within the limits of the document.

“**can**”: used for statements of possibility and capability, whether material, physical or causal.

4. Role of NCCF, CB and NABCB:

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF): NCCF is a standard setting organisation and developed the standards for forest management certification of forest products.

Certification Body (CB): Third –party Conformity Assessment Body operating NCCF certification scheme.

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB): NABCB provides accreditation to Certification Bodies based on assessment of their competence as per the Board's criteria and in accordance with NCCF Standards and Guidelines contained here with

5. General Requirements

- ❖ The criteria against which the client organisation's Forest Management is evaluated are those outlined in latest version of the Forest Management Standard, Group Management Certification Standard and relevant mandatory appendices.

Note: *The latest version of the NCCF standards and their amendments are available at NCCF Website www.nccf.in.*

- ❖ **Accreditation Scope:** The CB shall conduct its certification operations according to their granted accreditation scope and in conformity with the requirements specified in this standard.
- ❖ CB shall be accredited by an accreditation body that is signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification.
- ❖ CB shall comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, ISO 19011 and be accredited with ISO/IEC 17065.
- ❖ The CB shall inform the affected clients within 30 days after the reduction, withdrawal or suspension of their accreditation scope. The clients shall be informed to seek certification from another accredited CB within 6 months to keep their certification valid, as applicable.

5.1. Legal Requirement

Legal Responsibility: CB shall conform with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17065 Certification

- CB Shall conform with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17065
- The CB shall have a legally enforceable certification agreement signed by the CB and the client prior to the main evaluation. Certification agreement shall consider the responsibilities of the CB and its clients and the same shall be made available to NABCB or NCCF upon request

5.2. The CB shall ensure that its certification agreement requires the clients comply to:

- a. the client shall inform the CB within 10 working days, of changes that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements.

Note: *Examples of changes can include the following:*

- *the legal, commercial, organizational status or ownership,*
- *organization and management (e.g. key managerial, decision-making or technical staff),*
- *modifications to the product or the production method,*
- *contact address and production sites,*
- *major changes to the quality management system.*

- b. Regarding the obligations of the client

- i. conform with all applicable certification requirements including any conditions set by the CB for granting or maintaining certification;
 - ii. disclose current or previous application or certification with any other forestry certification schemes in the last five (5) years, if any;
 - iii. agree to the conduct of evaluations at the required intervals, including the CB's right to carry out unannounced or short notice audits; participation of the observers, if applicable.
 - iv. agree to witness audits and other surveillance activities of the accreditation body;
 - v. agree, that a complaint is first handled according to the CB's dispute resolution procedure and if not resolved, then referred to accreditation body (NABCB) and ultimately to NCCF, in case of disagreement with audit findings related to NCCF normative documents;
 - vi. making claims regarding certification consistent with the scope of certification and not making any claims of conformity (or near conformity) with NCCF certification requirements until and unless certification is granted;
 - vii. the client does not use its product certification in such a manner as to bring the CB into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its product certification that the CB may consider misleading or unauthorized;
 - viii. the client keeps a record of all complaints made known to it relating to compliance with certification requirements and makes these records available to the CB when requested, and
 - takes appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in products that affect compliance with the requirements for certification;
 - documents the actions taken;
 - ix. the client provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety.
 - x. agree, that in case of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the scope of CB's NCCF accreditation, the certification of the affected clients will be suspended within six (6) months after the date of reduction, suspension or withdrawal of the respective scope of NCCF accreditation;
- c. Regarding the rights of the CB, NABCB and NCCF
- i. agree, that the CB has the right to delay or postpone its decision on certification, in order to take account of new or additional information which has not already been considered in its audit report and which, in the opinion of the CB, could affect the outcome of its evaluation;
 - ii. agree, that the CB shall not be obliged to grant or maintain certification, if activities of the client conflict with the obligations of the CB as specified in its accreditation contract with NABCB, or which, in the sole opinion of the CB, reflect badly on the good name of the CB;
 - iii. agree, that the CB and NCCF have the right to revise the requirements of certification within the period of validity of the certification, including the revision of costs and fees;

- iv. agree, that the CB, NCCF and NACCB have the right to access confidential information, examine documentation deemed necessary, and access to the relevant equipment, location(s), area(s), personnel, and bodies providing outsourced services to clients;
- v. agree, that the CB has the right to use information which is brought to its attention, to follow up on misuses of the NCCF trademarks and of the intellectual property rights held by NCCF;
- vi. acknowledge the title of the NCCF's intellectual property rights and that NCCF retains full ownership of the intellectual property rights and that nothing shall be deemed to constitute a right for the client to use or cause to be used any of the intellectual property rights;
- vii. agree, that the CB has the right to suspend and/ or withdraw its certification with immediate effect if, in the sole opinion of the CB, the client is not in conformity with the conditions specified for the maintenance of certification;

Management of Impartiality:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065:2012

The certification body shall identify risks to its impartiality on an on-going basis. This shall include those risks that arise from its activities, from its relationships, or from the relationships of its personnel. However, such relationships may not necessarily present a certification body with a risk to impartiality. If a risk to impartiality is identified, the certification body shall be able to demonstrate how it eliminates or minimizes such risk. This information shall be made available to the NCCF.

- 5.2.1. Within a period of 3 years, personnel shall not be used to review, audit or make a certification decision of clients for which they have provided consultancy or worked for

5.3. Liability and Financing

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

5.4. Non-Discriminatory Conditions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

5.5. Confidentiality

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- 5.5.1. The CB shall inform the client that it is obliged to provide information to the NCCF. To comply with this requirement, the CB shall have the written consent of the client organization for the information disclosed to the NCCF.

5.6. Publicly Available Information

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

The CB shall maintain its impartiality statement, (through publications, electronic media or other means), and make available upon request.

6. Structural Requirements

6.1. Organizational structure and top management

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- 6.1.1. The management of the CB shall identify the board, group of persons, or person having overall authority and responsibility for each of the following:

- complaint mechanism;
- impartiality of NCCF certification;

6.2. Mechanism for safeguarding Impartiality:

6.2.1. General Requirements

6.2.1.1. The CB shall ensure its integrity always in its verification/certification activities, and shall work in a credible, independent, non-discriminatory and transparent manner.

6.2.1.2. The CB shall act impartially and avoid any conflict of interest that may compromise its ability to make impartial decisions.

6.2.1.3. The CB shall ensure that there are no constraints that might influence its judgment or endanger its independence of judgment in relation to its verification/certification activities,

inter alia, by having sufficient human resources, either through internal or external resources, and financial resources and stability.

6.2.1.4. If the CB is part of a larger organization, it shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between its verification/certification functions and the functions of other parts of the organization.

6.2.1.5. If the CB has related bodies, the CB shall ensure that no conflict of interest exists between its verification/certification functions and the functions of the related bodies.

6.2.1.6. The CB shall ensure that it and its personnel (internal and external) have no relationship that creates threats to its impartiality.

6.2.2. Safeguarding impartiality at the Policy Level

6.2.2.1. The CB shall establish, document and implement a policy on safeguarding impartiality, demonstrating its understanding of the possible influence that can be exerted on it as an organization and/or on its personnel when performing its verification/certification functions, and stressing its commitment to fully address that issue.

6.2.2.2. The CB shall ensure that its policy on safeguarding impartiality is understood and implemented at all levels of the organization.

6.2.2.3. The CB shall ensure its impartiality at the policy level, inter alia, by:

- a. having the top management's commitment to safeguarding impartiality in the CB's verification/certification functions as evidenced through a defined institutional structure and impartiality policy and procedures, appropriate implementation of such policy and procedures and operation and conduct of its activities;
- b. having a statement that describes its understanding of the necessity of impartiality in verification/certification functions, how it manages conflict of interest and how it ensures the objectivity of verification/certification functions;
- c. taking action to respond to any threats to its impartiality arising from the actions of other parts of the organization, persons outside of the organization, outsourced entities, related bodies or other bodies or organizations;
- d. maintaining a professional environment and culture in the organization that supports behavior of all personnel that is consistent with impartiality.
- e. the CB shall make publicly available its policy for safeguarding impartiality.

6.2.3. Safeguarding impartiality at the Organization Level

- 6.2.3.1. A CB shall have a documented structure that safeguards impartiality of its operations.
- 6.2.3.2. The CB shall have a committee (optional) that safeguards the CB's impartiality in its verification/certification functions and ensures that the policy on safeguarding impartiality and related procedures and other systems are effectively implemented.
- 6.2.3.3. The impartiality committee (if exist) shall:
- a. be independent from all verification/certification operations of the CB, and shall report directly to the CB's top management;
 - b. have in its composition the participation of key interested parties with a balanced representation of each of them;
 - c. have a chairman who shall be a person independent from the activities of the certification program;
 - d. have documented terms of reference. This committee shall meet regularly, at least once a year, and a complete record of its proceedings shall be maintained;
 - e. approve the conflict of interest analysis and the mitigation measures as well as monitor and review the implementation of the systems to safeguard the CB's impartiality (conflict of interest analysis, procedures and mitigation strategies and actions);
 - f. have access to all verification/certification files or records and be able to review them, if needed. This committee need not intervene in or review each verification/certification activity, but may need to review them to fulfill its mandate;
 - g. prepare an annual synthesis report of its activities, which shall be included in the CB's annual report to the Board to be submitted in accordance with the NCCF accreditation procedure. This report shall be presented to the NABCB upon request.
- 6.2.3.4. In cases where the impartiality committee identifies issues through the monitoring or review of the implementation of the CB's systems to safeguard impartiality, it shall report the instance to the CB's top management. If the top management does not follow the advice of the impartiality committee, this committee shall have the right to report the instance to the Board through the NCCF secretariat.
- 6.2.3.5. The CB shall enable a NCCF assessment team, upon request, to observe meetings of the impartiality committee, as part of the CB's accreditation process.

6.2.4. **Safeguarding impartiality at the Operational Level**

- 6.2.4.1. Analysis of threats against Impartiality:

- a. The CB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for analyzing potential threats against impartiality.
- b. CB are required to carry out a conflict of interest analysis at least once a year and whenever a significant change occurs in the CB activities, such as changes in the organizational structure or of the legal status and mergers with or acquisitions of other organizations.
- c. In the conflict of interest analysis, the following activities of the CB or its related bodies, but not limited to those activities, shall be considered as threats to impartiality:
 - Consultancy related to Certification activities;
 - Providing training on NCCF FM activities;
 - Offering/payment of commissions for promotion or new business;
 - Other organizational considerations such as performance targets in financial terms or in terms of a specific number of NCCF certification scheme.
- d. While carrying out the conflict of interest analysis, the CB shall:
 - i. Identify and document its actual/proposed involvement in NCCF certification activities other than verification/certification and carry out and document an analysis of actual and potential risk to impartiality;
 - ii. Identify and document all related bodies and identify actual/potential risks to impartiality, including potential conflicts arising from any such relationships;
 - iii. Disclose and document, in a transparent and comprehensive manner, the following information, as a minimum: the general types of activities carried out by the CB, its parent organization, related bodies, and personnel. The disclosure and documentation shall be detailed for all organizations and personnel listed above with regard to activities related to CB project activities;
 - iv. Clearly define the functions of its related bodies and their relationships with the CB when describing its organizational structure. Mitigation of threats against Impartiality.

6.2.4.2. The CB shall establish, document, implement and maintain a procedure for the mitigation of threats against its impartiality.

6.2.4.3. The procedure referred to in above clause shall describe which mitigation strategies and actions are to be taken and how they will be implemented and shall include the review of the mitigation strategies and actions whenever a change in the conflict of interest analysis has occurred. The mitigation actions may be through, inter alia:

- a. Prohibitions - certain defined activities shall not be carried out;
- b. Restrictions - certain defined activities may be carried out, but in a restricted manner with clearly defined control points to ensure mitigation;
- c. Disclosures.

6.2.4.4. The procedure for mitigation shall ensure the following, at a minimum:

- a. The CB shall not conduct the certification of a NCCF scheme if the parent organization, an outsourced entity or a related body has been engaged in any function that has been identified as a threat to impartiality, such as those listed in conflict of interest analysis, relating to the NCCF certification Project activity;
- b. The CB shall not outsource any function to an outsourced entity that is engaged in the verification/certification of NCCF certification activity;
- c. The CB's activities shall not be marketed or offered as linked with the activities of an organization that provides services in respect of development, financial assistance and consultancy for NCCF certification activities. The CB shall not state or imply that the verification/certification of a NCCF FM project activity would be simpler, easier, faster or less expensive if a specified consultancy/financing organization is used;
- d. The CB shall require its personnel, internal and external, to reveal any potential conflict of interest known to them. The CB shall use this information as input to identify threats to impartiality raised by the activities of such personnel or by the organizations that employ them, and shall not use such personnel, internal or external, unless any potential conflict of interests has been addressed and the measures taken to address these potential conflicts have been documented and implemented. If during the course of a verification/certification, such instances become known, the personnel concerned shall be removed from the verification/certification immediately;
- e. The CB shall require its personnel, internal and external, to report any situation of influence or pressure from project participants that may threaten their independence during the verification/certification of NCCF Standards. Based on such report, the CB shall take appropriate actions to ensure its independence in its verification/certification activities;
- f. The conditions in the CB's contracts with project participants shall not link the CB's payments to the final outcome of the verification/certification activities;
- g. The CB's personnel involved in verification/certification activities shall be bound by the CB's impartiality policy and act impartially in their work through contractual or employment conditions and assignment conditions for each verification/certification;

6.3. **Review of Effectiveness**

- 6.3.1. The CB shall analyze and review, at least once a year, all data and information relevant to impartiality, such as the conflict of interest analysis, the mitigation strategies and actions undertaken, any non-conformity raised regarding impartiality and the corrective actions implemented to correct the non-conformities.
- 6.3.2. Based on the data/information referred to above, the CB shall carry out, once a year, an analysis of the process to safeguard impartiality and a review of its effectiveness.

- 6.3.3. The recommendations of actions resulting from the review of the process of safeguarding impartiality shall be reported to the CB's top management. The CB shall keep a record of this review.

7. Resource Requirements

7.1. General Considerations

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- 7.1.1. The CB shall ensure that all personnel carrying out the key activities, such as technical review, auditing, granting of certification, monitoring of auditors, etc. have the relevant and appropriate competencies corresponding to these activities.

7.2. Management of competence for personnel involved in the certification process

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

7.3. Contract with the personnel

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

7.4. Requirements for Personnel involved in the certification activities

7.4.1. Requirements for FM Auditors

7.4.1.1. Educational and professional experience:

- Tertiary education (college or university qualification) in forestry.
- Five (5) years of professional experience in the forest sector
- Successful completion of IRCA-registered or equivalent (e.g. QCI registered) "ISO management standard auditor course" ISO 9001:2015 and trained in ISO 19011 course on auditing techniques ensuring that the auditor satisfies and fulfills the requirements of both the standards

- Successful completion of auditor training *of FM at NCCF
- Participation in audit
 - a. As observer in one evaluation audit
 - b. As observer in one surveillance audits
 - c. As Auditor under supervision of CB's approved Lead Auditor
- For maintaining the qualification of auditor, the CB shall ensure that auditor participated in two (2) on site audits every year.

* NCCF will provide provisional approval to the Auditors having experience and training completed for any other Forest Management Certification Scheme operating in the Country. This is applicable until NCCF starts its Standard Training Program for Auditors. Once operated all the auditors will be required to undergo mandatory NCCF Training to continue their auditor status for NCCF FM scheme

Note: *CBs are required to contact NCCF regarding the auditor training schedule for FM trainings.*

7.4.1.2. CB shall be responsible both for ensuring that the training program remains current with scheme changes, and for updating it, as needed, to improve its effectiveness.

7.4.1.3. **Competencies:** The CB shall ensure that FM Auditors demonstrate ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- i. principles, requirements, criteria or indicators of the forest management standard, as applicable;
- ii. knowledge of the socio-demographics and cultural issues in the region of application of the forest management standard;
- iii. audit principles, procedures and techniques: to enable the auditor to apply those appropriate to different audits and ensure that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner.
- iv. organisation situations including organizational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes and related terminology and cultural and social customs such as knowledge of the client organisation working language: to enable the auditor to comprehend the organisation's operational context.
- v. legislation, regulations or other relevant requirements – enabling the auditor to operate in the right legal framework and to be aware of the legislative requirements applicable to the client organization which is the subject of the audit;
- vi. the principles of forest management based on techniques involving inventories, forest cropping, planning, protection and the management of forest ecosystems – to enable the auditor to examine the forest management scheme and to decide whether it is being adequately applied;

- vii. natural environment science, environmental technology and the economic principles applicable to forest management – to give the auditor a grasp of the fundamental relations between human activities and sustainable forest management;
 - viii. technical aspects of forestry operations associated with exploitations, technology and derived uses – to allow the auditor to grasp the activities of the client organization audited and their effects on the management itself and the territory.
- 7.4.1.4. **Performance Review:** The CB shall provide evidence of annual monitoring of auditors applying methods such as audit witnessing, reviewing audit reports or client organisations' feedback, etc. based on the frequency of their usage and the level of risk linked to their activities. In particular, the CB shall review the competence of its personnel in the light of their performance in order to identify training needs. The auditors shall be witnessed onsite at least once in 3 years.
- 7.4.2. **Audit Team:** The audit team shall be comprised of by auditor(s) fulfilling the requirements. In some cases, technical experts may be required to support the required auditor competency in a particular technical area by providing appropriate technical expertise.
- 7.4.3. **Further CB Staff:** Further CB staff involved in the NCCF FM certification activities shall have at least basic knowledge of the NCCF system and competent as per their roles and responsibilities.

8. Management System Requirements

8.1. General Requirements

- 8.1.1. The certification body shall establish and maintain a management system that can achieve the consistent fulfillment of the requirements of this standard.
- 8.1.2. The management system of the certification body shall address the following:
- general management system documentation (e.g. manual, policies, definition of responsibilities) (see 8.2);
 - control of documents (see 8.3);
 - control of records (see 8.4);
 - management review (see 8.5);
 - internal audit (see 8.6);
 - corrective actions (see 8.7);
 - preventive actions (see 8.8).

8.2. General management system documentation

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.3. Control of documents

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.4. Control of Records

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.5. Directory of certified clients

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.6. Management Review

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.7. Internal Audits

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.8. Corrective Actions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.9. Preventive Actions

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.10. Records

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

8.11. Complaints and Appeals

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

9. Supplementary Requirements:

- 9.1. The CB shall comply with the additional requirements of NABCB for the Accreditation, such as the requirements for using logo and text of accreditation body

10. Process Requirements

10.1. General Requirements:

10.1.1. Application:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

For application, the CB shall obtain all the necessary information to complete the certification process in accordance with the relevant NCCF certification scheme.

Application review:

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.1.2. Audit team selection and assignment

10.1.2.1. The CB shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including audit team leader. The translators used in the audit shall be independent from the client organization. In cases non-independent translators are not available the names of translators and their links with the client organization shall be included in the audit report.

10.1.2.2. The certification body shall have a process for selecting and appointing the audit team, considering the competence needed to achieve the objectives of the audit.

10.1.2.3. An audit team shall always include at minimum a qualified Lead auditor, technical expert, social and local expert (if required)

Note: *The 'team' may consist of a single qualified auditor who is then also the leader of the 'team'.*

10.1.2.4. At least one (1) audit team member shall be:

- a. familiar with the local language of the area in which the audit takes place;
- b. resident of India.
- c. a designated independent interpreter (if required), who is not an employee or consultant of the client under evaluation; or
- d. fluent in the corporate language, if the client provides a written declaration that confirms that all of the following criteria are met:
 - i. all relevant records and procedures relating to FM requirements are written and understood in the corporate language; and
 - ii. all management staff and those with FM responsibilities can communicate fluently in the corporate language.

10.1.2.5. A forest management audit team shall include auditor(s) and/ or technical experts with the experience and qualifications to audit all aspects of the NCCF Principles and Criteria, taking account of the scale and complexity of the area to be assessed. Key considerations for the selection of auditors and technical experts for an audit shall include experience and qualifications in relation to relevant forest management, social, environmental and economic issues, as described in 7.4.1 of this document.

10.1.2.6. The competence of an audit team may be supplemented by that of technical expert(s). In this case the following requirements shall apply:

- a. the time spent by technical experts shall be specified separately in the audit plan;
- b. their participation in the audit shall be limited to the task they are requested to do and each technical expert shall be assigned to the responsibility of a specific auditor in the audit team;
- c. the technical expert(s) should be accompanied by the auditor to whom they are assigned;
- d. if deemed necessary, the technical expert(s) may be allowed to perform interviews and other specified tasks unaccompanied, as instructed by the audit team leader;
- e. technical expert(s) shall neither make conclusions on the conformity with certification requirements nor communicate them to the client.

10.1.3. Determination of audit time by a CB

- The CB shall have documented procedures for determining audit time, and for each client organisation the CB shall determine, with input from the auditor and / or technical expert, the time needed to plan and accomplish a complete and effective audit of the client organisation’s forest management. The audit time determined by the CB, and the justification for the determination, shall be recorded.
- In determining the audit time, the CB should consider among other things, the following aspects:
 - a) the requirements of the forest management standard(s),
 - b) size and complexity of the client organisation’s operation, geographical and natural conditions
 - c) any outsourcing of any activities included in the scope of forest management standard,
 - d) the results of any prior audits, including those of client organisation’s management systems,
 - e) number of sites and multi-site considerations,
 - f) quality/ level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme.

Forest Area	Number of audit days On-site
< 1000 ha	1 to 2

1,001 – 5,000 ha	2 to 4
5,001- 10,000 ha	4 to 8
10,001 – 25,000 ha	8 to 12
25,001 – 75,000 ha	12 to 16
75,001- 150,000 ha	16 to 18
1,50,001 – 3,00,000 ha	18 to 22
3,00,001 – 6,00,000 ha	22 to 26
6,00,001-10,00,000 ha	26 to 32
>10,00,000 ha	32 to 40

The above is an indicative table with the range of on-site audit days for calculating audit days on field. It is most probable that the calculated on-site audit days by individual CBs will be within the mentioned range, however, CBs can modify the audit days, if required, with a proper justification. The audit days can only be decreased on in the following cases –

- a. The site is very small to the number of personnel (for e.g. forest complex only)
- b. Mature Management system and no outstanding Major and Minor non-conformities from previous year audit.
- c. Pre-assessments or pre-preparedness audits
- d. Single generic activities

10.1.4. **Audit plan:** The standard requires that the CB shall have documented procedures to ensure that an audit plan is established for each audit to provide basis for agreement regarding the conduct and scheduling of the audit activities. The audit plan shall be communicated, and the dates of the audit shall be agreed upon, in advance with the client organization.

10.1.5. Information Requirements

10.1.5.1. Public Information

- ❖ The CB shall inform the NCCF about upcoming scheduled Evaluation, Re-Evaluation and Surveillance audits of Forest Management before 1 month of main evaluation. NCCF will make this information publicly available via NCCF website.

- ❖ The CB shall inform and provide the information about certificate issued to NCCF within 7 working days from the date of issuance of the certificate
- ❖ The CB shall make a summary of FM Audit Report which shall be made publicly available by NCCF within 90 days from the date of audit. Confidential data can be excluded. The summary shall include at least the following:
 - Information about the certificate holder
 - Name and contact information, Scope of Certificate (area details, Certificate type, management units), Group members, Production Forest details, Conservation areas details, etc.
 - Audit scope and objectives
 - Audit plan (dates and locations, activities, etc.)
 - Audit team (Name, Qualification and brief experience)
 - Audit results (weaknesses and strengths found, corrective action requests)
 - Stakeholder comments (if any)
 - Use of pesticides and other chemicals used; Certificate Decision

10.1.6. Evaluation

Stage 1 Audit – Pre-Assessment

The stage 1 audit has the function of a “Readiness Review for the main evaluation”. The scope of this audit comprises:

- i. to confirm scope and objective of the certification audit
- ii. to audit the client’s forest management documentation
- iii. to evaluate forest management area specific conditions
- iv. to carry out analysis and description of the forest management units proposed for inclusion within the scope of the evaluation in conformity with the requirements of the standard.
- v. to evaluate procedures for internal audits and management system integrity and the effectiveness of their implementation.
- vi. determine the conformity of the client organisation with the PEFC/NCCF logo usage rules and its effective implementation

- vii. to prepare a written report on the pre-evaluation, which should be made available to the applicant. A summary of the main results shall be included in the main evaluation report.
- viii. to finalize the audit plan for stage 2 audit.

Note: *Pre-assessments are not required in the case of re-evaluation.*

10.1.7. Preparation for main evaluation

- ❖ The CB shall use the results of pre-evaluations in the preparation of a subsequent main evaluation.
- ❖ Preparation for main evaluation shall include:
 - The CB shall inform NCCF at least 45 days prior to the onsite visit of main-evaluation. The NCCF shall release a 30 days stakeholder announcement via NCCF Website which states the client's intention to pursue the NCCF Certification. The stakeholder announcement shall invite stakeholders to meet with audit team, or to submit written submission if preferred.
 - Stakeholders comments/response pertaining to the client's operations and certification shall be addressed by the CB as a part of main evaluation report.
 - For stakeholder announcement, the CB shall provide the following information to NCCF:
 - a. Name of client;
 - b. Name and Contact Details of CB;
 - c. Name and address of sites to be audited;
 - d. Description of evaluation are;
 - e. Type of forest Area;
 - f. HCV area (if declared/disclosed)
 - g. A brief outline of the process that stakeholders should follow to meet the audit team or submission of comments.
 - an explicit analysis of the overall responsibility for full compliance with the applicable NCCF forest management requirements (e.g. by land owner, resource manager) as well as of the delegated responsibilities for the implementation of selected requirements (e.g. by contractors).
 - Documents and records: The CB shall collect copies of key documents or records that may be used in preparation for the main evaluation, such as management plans, inventory results, management system documentation, maps, legal documents, etc.
 - National legislation and guidance: The CB shall identify and obtain copies of relevant national and local laws and administrative requirements which apply in the country or region in which the evaluation is to take place.

- Potential main evaluation team members: The CB may contact, interview and/or brief potential personnel for a subsequent main evaluation.

10.1.8. Planning of Audits

10.1.8.1. Determining audit objectives, scope and criteria

- i. Audit scope determined by the CB shall describe the extent and boundaries of the audit, such as sites, organizational units, activities and processes to be audited.
- ii. CB shall plan the tools and technologies which will be used to gather evidence. It shall be clearly defined for which purpose the tools and technologies are used and which requirements are covered, if applicable.
- iii. The standard requires that the CB when defining the scope shall consider the following criteria:
 - a. Representation: the client's operations and processes shall be randomly but representatively considered.
 - b. Protection: Areas with high impact on the archived objectives of the management system shall be considered.
 - c. Correction: difficult and areas with previously identified nonconformities shall be considered.
 - d. Prevention: The client organization shall not be able to fully predict the chosen areas.

Stage 2 Audit: Main Evaluation

- ❖ Stage 2 shall take place at the office and the area of the client organisation. The audit plan for the stage 2 audit is adapted based on the findings of the stage 1 audit and shall be submitted to the client at least three weeks before the onsite audit.
- ❖ The CB shall conduct an explicit analysis of the area included in the scope of the evaluation in term of forest management units and the structure and system in place. This will form the basis for the subsequent evaluation of the management and for sampling of the population of forest management units.
- ❖ The CB shall assess the documentation and records applicable at each level of the management and display conformance to the standard requirements (Refer Annex 3 for the suggestive list of documents).
- ❖ The CB shall evaluate the tracking and tracing of forest products within the scope of the certification from the forest area up to the forest gate and the procedure for the identification of products

- ❖ The CB shall select the forest management units (FMUs) for the evaluations as followings –
 - Classify the FMUs in the scope of evaluation as sets of ‘like’ FMUs for sampling, based on the forest type, management type, natural vs. plantations, etc.
 - For each set of ‘like’ FMUs, the CB shall select a minimum number of units ‘S’ for evaluation by applying the following formula –

Table 1. Sample Category and number of management units to be evaluated

Sample category	Size Class (ha)- (X)	Main evaluation	Surveillance	Re-evaluation
Category (A) Management Units (State Government Forest/ JFMCs/VFCs)	>15,000	$S = X$	$S = 0.7 * X$	$S = 0.7 * X$
	1,000-15,000	$S = 0.4 * X$	$S = 0.2 * X$	$S = 0.3 * X$
Category (B) Management Units (Famers/Individuals/ Community)	100-1,000	$S = 0.8 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$
	Less than 100	$S = 0.6 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.3 * \sqrt{X}$	$S = 0.4 * \sqrt{X}$

- S is the management units that must be evaluated and must be rounded to the upper whole number to determine the number of units to be sampled.
- X is the total number of the management units in a set of categories.
 - ❖ The auditors shall visit a sufficient variety and number of sites within each FMU selected for evaluation as to make direct, factual observations as to conformity with the requirements of the NCCF standard. Examples of sites that may be assessed are listed in Annexure 4.
 - ❖ Auditors shall also select sites for inspection based on the critical areas of risks, high intensity managed forests, etc.
 - ❖ Stage 2 shall assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the forest management standard on the defined forest management area.

10.1.9. Audit Report

- Report on the Stage 1 audit along with findings shall be presented to the organization prior to the Stage 2 audit.
- The content of all reports on Stage 2 audits, surveillance audits and reassessment audits shall:
 - i. include a recommendation on certification by the audit team to the CB;
 - ii. be sufficient for the CB to make an informed decision on certification;

- iii. allow for traceability of the objective evidence upon which the evaluation was based to establish conformance or non-conformance with the requirements of the forest management standard;
 - iv. include a summary of the most important observations, positive as well as negative, regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the forest management system;
 - v. where possible, include suggestions for continuous improvement;
 - vi. support the conclusions reached by the audit team.
- Additionally, the report shall contain a summary of the certified forest area and the audit results (i.e. a Summary Report).
 - CB shall submit the draft report to client within 45 days of audit for review of findings and factual correction. Client must submit their confirmation to CB on Draft Report within 30 days of submission.
 - CB shall submit the Final Report to client within 75 days of date of audit.
 - Where applicable, reports (e.g. of surveillance and recertification audits) shall document the clearing of each nonconformity revealed previously.

10.1.10. **Technical Review of Audit Report**

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall ensure that the reviewer is competent to review the documents and taking final decision.

10.1.11. **Certification Decision**

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The certification cycle is no longer than 5 years.

10.1.12. **Identifying and recording audit findings**

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall inform the client of all nonconformities.

- b. Audit findings shall be classified as Major Nonconformities, Minor Nonconformities and Observations. Definitions of Major, Minor or Observations shall be followed while grading the non-conformities.
- c. If Major Non-Compliances are issued in Evaluation Audit or Re-certification Audit, CB shall not issue the Certificate until unless Major Non-compliances are satisfactorily closed. If the client doesn't address the Major Non-conformity within 6 months of detection, then another on-site evaluation shall be required.
- d. Major and minor nonconformities identified in the surveillance audits shall result in corrective action(s) by the client organisation resolving the nonconformities. The corrective action plan, including a timeframe shall be reviewed and accepted by the CB. The time period for completion of the corrective action(s) for major nonconformities identified in surveillance audits and their verification by the CB shall follow the rules of the CB but not exceed 3 months. Corrective action(s) for minor nonconformities shall be verified in 12 months or next audit whichever is earlier. If Minor Non-Compliance(s) is not closed within 12 months, then CB shall upgrade the Minor Non-compliance into Major Non-compliance with 3 months time.
- e. Corrective action(s) for all nonconformities identified in audits shall be verified by the CB by site visit or other appropriate forms of verification.
- f. The standard requires that if specific natural conditions do not allow the implementation of corrective actions of Major non-conformities within the timeframes, the CB can give an exemption. The maximum time-period is 6 months and the justification shall be documented.
- g. The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from external parties (e.g. government agencies, community groups, conservations organizations, etc.) as appropriate.
- h. If 5 or more Major Non-compliances are issued in surveillance audit, then CB shall suspend the Certificate of client and it'll be reinstated only after successful closure of all Major-Non-Compliances.

10.1.13. Certification documentation

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

- a. The CB shall provide the client with formal certification documentation that clearly conveys, or permits identification of the following:
 - i. the name and address of the CB;
 - ii. the date certification is granted (the date shall not precede the date on which the certification decision was completed);
 - iii. the name and address (s) of the client;

- iv. product(s);
- v. the scope of certification;
- vi. validity of certificate
- vii. normative standards reference
- viii. signature or other defined authorization of the person(s) of the CB assigned such responsibility.

10.2. Maintaining certification

10.2.1. Surveillance activities:

- a. The CB has to organize an annual surveillance of the client's organization. The CB shall carry out a surveillance evaluation to monitor the certificate holder's continued conformity with applicable certification requirements at least annually.
- b. For a certificate having 5 years duration, at least four surveillance evaluations shall take place before the certificate expires.
- c. The surveillance activities must be planned in a way that representative areas and functions of the client's organization are covered.
- d. At each surveillance audit at least, the following aspects shall be included:
 - i. Compliance with legislation and regulations relevant in the areas and functions selected for the particular surveillance audit
 - ii. Review and follow up on all non-conformities raised during previous audit.
 - iii. Review of progress of planned activities
 - iv. Sample of forest management activities in the field.
- e. Surveillance audits shall be conducted at least once a year. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit. 3 months extension can be given to the client for completing annual audit after justification and CB shall document it.

10.2.2. Re-certification

10.2.2.1. The CB may re-issue a certificate that has expired, based on the re-evaluation of the certificate holder's conformity with all aspects of the applicable NCCF and additional (e.g. contractual) certification requirements.

10.2.2.2. Re-evaluation shall follow the same procedures as for the main evaluation.

10.2.2.3. The revaluation shall be completed, and decision taken before expiry to avoid the Termination.

10.2.2.4. CBs can request NCCF (subject to request acceptance) to extend the validity of the certificate for one month if the audit is fixed. If certificate is not renewed within extended 30 days then Certificate will be terminated.

10.2.3. **Special Audits**

10.2.3.1. CB shall carry out short-notice and unannounced audits, if required, in case of any complaint received, Accreditation Body requirement, NCCF's compliance visit, etc.

10.3. **Suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope of certification**

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.3.1. The CB shall advise the NCCF in writing, within 2 business days if there is any changes in the validity and scope of the certification, certification is suspended or withdrawn, or where there are any changes in decisions relating to the status of certification of an organization, and the reasons for those decisions. When a nonconformity with certification requirements is substantiated, either as a result of surveillance or otherwise, the CB shall consider and decide upon the appropriate action.

10.3.2. If client has not resolved the cause of suspension within 12 months, then CB shall terminate the certificate.

10.4. **Changes affecting certification**

CB shall conform with ISO/IEC 17065

10.4.1. When NCCF introduces new or revised requirements that affect the client, the CB shall ensure these changes are communicated to all clients. The CB shall verify the implementation of the changes by its clients and shall take actions.

10.5. **Information exchange between a CB and its clients**

10.5.1. **Certificate Transfer:** In case of the transfer of a certification to a new CB, existing CB shall ensure that its clients provide information on any other CB they are enrolled with for forest management certification.

10.5.1.1. CBs shall have documented procedures to handle certificate transfers including:

- the outbound transfer of their own clients to a different CB; and
- the inbound transfer of clients from a different CB.

10.5.1.2. Should a client opt to change CBs at any point after certification (i.e., transfer of certificate during surveillance) the client shall:

- notify NCCF in writing of the details of the certificate transfer, including the reason for the transfer;
- provide the current CB with a notice of NCCF certificate transfer, identifying the new CB; and
- provide the new CB with a copy of their last assessment report.

10.5.1.3. Prior to accepting a client transfer, the new CB shall review all available information regarding previous conformity assessments.

10.5.1.4. Where the new CB has doubts or concerns about the status of non-conformities that were raised in audits by the previous CB, or any other material aspect of previous conformity assessments, the client shall authorize the previous CB to share additional audit history information with the new CB to ensure that all outstanding non-conformities are resolved.

Note: *The new CB may determine, after having completed a desk-based review of the information, that it is necessary to perform a surveillance audit or conformity assessment of the transferring client before issuing a certificate.*

10.5.2. Considering the requirements on impartiality, the CB may provide advice or knowledge to the client in case that information originates NCCF, such as FAQ's, guidance documents, etc.

10.5.3. The CB informs its clients about the conditions which result in short notice or unannounced audits.

11. Abbreviations

- a. CoC: Chain of Custody
- b. FM: Forest Management
- c. CB: Certification Body
- d. NCCF: Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests
- e. NABCB: National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies

Annexes

Annexes to this document provide requirements for or guidance on issues that are not enforced through the accreditation process.

Annex 1 – Accreditations accepted by the NCCF

- a. NCCF requires that forest management certification shall be carried out by certification bodies who are accredited by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) (a member signatory of the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification). The scope of the accreditation shall explicitly cover the NCCF FM standard in its valid version and/or with reference to any future changes and amendments adopted by the NCCF and presented at the NCCF official website (www.nccf.in) . The scope of accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17065, this document and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed

- b. The F M certificates issued by the NABCB accredited Certification Body (and its affiliates) shall bear the (NABCB) accreditation body logo/symbol.

Annex 2 – Notification of certification bodies

- a. For performing the certifications against NCCF FM certifications, the Certification Bodies shall be notified by the NCCF and its certificates, recognised by the NCCF (refer NCCF procedures notification to certification bodies)
- b. The NCCF notification requires the CB to pay PEFC Notification Fee and PEFC Logo Fee (to be collected from Certificate holder) as specified by the NCCF. Fee Policy is available at NCCF Website.

In order to ensure the independence of certification bodies, NCCF notification conditions decided by the NCCF shall only cover:

- a. administrative conditions (e.g. communication of the CB with the NCCF Council, transfer of information, etc.)
- b. financial conditions (fees imposed on certified entities),
- c. compliance with requirements for certification bodies verified through accreditation as described in this standard.

The NCCF notification conditions shall not discriminate against certification bodies or create trade obstacles.

Note: -- For the issuance of PEFC chain of custody Certificates, CBs are required to refer PEFC 2003:2012. NCCF does not set additional, scheme specific requirements for CBs intending to operate in CoC certification.

Annexure 3 – Examples of Documentation and Records

Note: *This not a complete list nor is the certification body required to inspect all documents listed here. Document review process may vary from forest and management type*

- Copies of applicable laws
- Management plan / working plan
- Concession agreements
- Documentation showing tenure and land use rights
- Land/forest map
- Work instruction
- SOPs for contractor; contractor contract
- Agreement with communities
- SOPs for silvicultural activities
- Wildlife management and evaluation plan
- Environmental impact assessment
- Social impact assessment
- Harvesting and production records
- Chemical use records
- Communications with stakeholders
- Purchasing and sales documentation

Annex 4 – Examples of Sites

Note: *This not a complete list nor is the certification body required to select all the sites listed here surveillance. Sites selection may depend on various factors including - forest type, silvicultural operations, management type, etc.*

- Harvested sites
- Areas under harvesting
- Working coups
- Seed orchards
- Nurseries
- Protected areas
- Areas with high conservation area
- Workmen facilities – accommodation, amenities, drinking water
- Areas used by communities/forest dwellers/ scheduled tribes within or near the forest area
- Water catchment – within the forest boundaries
- Sites where chemicals – pesticides or fertilizers have been used and storage area
- Monitoring sites
- Trial plots
- Areas jointly managed by communities and forest department
- Production forest areas in a sufficient variety of conditions including slopes, different silvicultural systems including areas of:
 - a. Marked for thinning
 - b. Recently thinned
 - c. Marked for harvesting
 - d. One/five/ten after harvesting

Bilbography

- a. FSC-STD-20-001 V4-0 EN: General Requirement for FSC® Accredited Certification Bodies*
- b. VRIKSH EPCH-VRSH–STD-02: General Requirements for Certification Bodies operating “VRIKSH” Scheme for Timber and Timber Products*
- c. AWS Certification Requirements version 1.0*
- d. CDM Accreditation Standard CDM-EB46-A02-STAN Version 06.0*
- e. PEFC ITALY Annex 6 ITA 1003-1: SFM and SPM Accreditation Minimum Requirements*
- f. ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards V1-0*
- g. ISEAL, Managing conflict of interest in standards and assurance, 2013*
- h. ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015-07 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems*