

Certification Guide for PEFC certified companies and CBs in India affected by restrictions due to COVID-19

1. Background

Due to the spread of COVID-19 worldwide and consequent travel restrictions, affecting auditing activities, NCCF is issuing this guidance document in line with the guidance issued by PEFC, in order to give some flexibility to the certification bodies and certified companies affected by the restrictions, to take up and complete their work, within the framework prescribed by PEFC in such a situation.

The main approach to ease the consequences of travel restrictions is to follow the remote audits, and where this is not sufficient, the extension of time period affecting the certificate is to be given. This guidance is originally developed by PEFC, based on IAF documents and the recently revised PEFC requirements for CBs operating CoC audits: PEFC ST 2003:2020. This guidance enters into force and can be applied by CBs from the date of publication (06.04.2020;v1), date of revision (04.06.2020;v3) and is applicable until NCCF revokes the guidance.

2. Reference documents

- a. [PEFC COVID-19 – guidance \(v5 \(25/05/2020\)\)](#)
- b. [PEFC COVID-19-guidance for Forest Management \(v2 05/11/2020\)](#)
- c. PEFC ST 2003:2012, Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard
- d. PEFC ST 2003:2020 Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard
- e. IAF Informative Document on the Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting ABs, CABs and Certified Organizations (IAF ID 3: 2011 - Issue 1)
- f. IAF Mandatory Document for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes (IAF MD 4:2018 - Issue 2)
- g. ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems

3. Guidance

Guidance documents on COVID-19 as issued by PEFC International shall be followed.

3.1 Chain of Custody

- 3.1.1 [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Chain of Custody](#) as issued by PEFC International shall be followed.
- 3.1.2 In brief:
 - a. Initial audits can be conducted remotely
 - b. On-site surveillance audit may be replaced by other audit techniques (documentation/record review)
 - c. Re-certification audits refer [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Chain of Custody](#)
 - d. Multi-site organisations refer [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Chain of Custody](#)
 - e. Verification of corrective actions refer [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Chain of Custody](#)
 - f. CBs may consider extending validity of certificates by a reasonable period, but not more than 12 months

3.2 Forest Management

- 3.2.1 [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Forest Management](#) as issued by PEFC International shall be followed.
- 3.2.2 In brief:
 - a. Initial (Pre-evaluation) audit can be conducted remotely
 - b. Re-certification audit, can be conducted remotely, else validity of certificate may be extended by 6 months.
 - c. Surveillance audits refer [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Forest Management](#)
 - d. Non-conformities refer [PEFC COVID-19 guidance for Forest Management](#)
 - e. CBs may consider extending validity of certificates by a reasonable period, but not more than 12 months

Note: As soon as travel restrictions are lifted, audits shall be conducted as per applicable standards and any other applicable procedures.