

Certified ✓

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FROM THE EDITOR

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I have launched this newsletter to provide help and information to companies which have Chain of Custody certification (CoC), and those which are thinking of becoming certified but do not know how to go about it.

This newsletter will be published monthly, and as well as providing information to you, I intend to also use it as a medium to answer some of the questions you may have on CoC certification.

The newsletter will cover certification issues under the two main certification schemes—Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes.

The value of any newsletter depends on the feedback and input from its readers. I therefore encourage you not to be shy about letting me know what you think, as well as providing suggestions of issues and/or topics you would like me to cover in future issues.

I trust the newsletter will be a useful source of information to help you grow your business, by capitalizing on the advantages environmental certification gives you to differentiate yourself from competitors, and thereby increase market access and market share.

Kwame

What are the differences between a main Assessment Audit and a Surveillance Audit?

Main assessment audit takes place before your company becomes certified. The aim of the main assessment audit is to ensure that your company has in place systems and procedures that will enable you to consistently meet the requirements of the standard of your chosen certification scheme. During the main audit, the auditor will systematically go through the requirements of the standards of your certification scheme, and ask to see evidence or proof that you can meet or have met what the standard is asking for.

The first surveillance audit usually occurs about six months after the main assessment. Thereafter, there will be a surveillance audit once a year for the duration of your certificate, which is 5 years for both FSC and PEFC.

Surveillance audits tend to focus on checking that you are doing what the certification standards require you to do. Thus, it is more than just a systems audit.

During a surveillance audit, the auditor aims to satisfy himself or herself that, not only do you have systems and procedures in place to meet the requirements of the standard, but that you are actually doing things right.

To ensure that you go through surveillance audits with flying colours, it is advisable to do your own internal audit prior to a surveillance audit. The internal audit must be done by a trained individual in your company. If you do not have anybody within your company who is sufficiently trained to do an internal audit, it is important to seek professional help.

What is the difference between “Certification” and “Accreditation”?

The words “certification” and “accreditation” are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Your company becomes “certified” when you pass your main

assessment audit. It means that you have successfully met the requirements of the standard of your chosen certification scheme, and this entitles you to buy and sell/and or transform certified products from other certified companies.

The individual or company that audits your company is “accredited” by the certification scheme you are certified under. This means that the managing council or body of the certification scheme has assessed the individual or the company, and is satisfied that they have the qualification and professional integrity to do audits on its behalf. So remember, your company is a “certified” company and your auditor or auditing company is an “accredited auditor” or an accredited “auditing company”.

FSC and PEFC Certification Schemes

FSC or the Forest Stewardship Council is an independent, non-governmental, not for profit organization established to promote the responsible management of the world’s forest. The FSC has the endorsement of the major global environmental NGOs, and is therefore considered by some opinion leaders to have more market credibility.

It provides standard setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services for companies and individuals interested in responsible forestry.

As at July 2009, the FSC had more than 115.52 million hectares of forest certified globally, representing about 5% of the world’s productive forests. For the same period it had issued 14,474 Chain of Custody certificates in over 82 countries including Australia.

There are now over 182 CoC certified companies in Australia, comprising wood products, printing and paper supply companies.

PEFC or the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes is a membership-based global umbrella organization that provides mutual recognition framework for national forest certification systems developed through a multi-stakeholder process.

The PEFC was founded in Europe in 1999 for the purpose of promoting national forest certification schemes, particularly in Europe. It has now expanded to recognize certification schemes throughout the world.

The different national certification schemes are mutually recognized as guaranteeing a level of sustainable forest management and certification procedures meeting the PEFC requirements.

Currently, the PEFC Council has endorsed 22 national certification systems, including Australia’s Forestry Standard (AFS). As at July 2009, the PEFC had issued 1,121 forest management certificates; 3,123 CoC certificates and certified 200 million hectares of forests or approximately 10% of the global productive forests.

For the same period, there were 155 PEFC certified and logo using companies and organizations in Australia.

The PEFC is generally considered to be endorsed by governments and industry.

The main differences between the two schemes are minor. The PEFC scheme provides more flexibility to companies and organizations in how they demonstrate compliance with the PEFC requirements. On the other hand, the FSC is more “prescriptive” in how companies and organizations should meet the requirements of its standards.

Generally, any company or organization which is certified under the FSC scheme can easily meet the requirements of the PEFC scheme.

Similarly, any company or organization which has implemented either the ISO 900 Quality or ISO 1400 Environmental Management System, can easily meet the requirements of both certification schemes.

Increasingly, companies and organizations are opting to be certified under both schemes.

For example, in Australia, there is more PEFC/AFS certified wood available than FSC certified wood. Indeed, apart from plantation forests none of Australia’s native forests has been certified under FSC.

The bulk of the FSC certified wood products sold in Australia are imported due to the limited availability of FSC certified wood products from Australian forests.

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We can help with your CoC certification by:

- Preparing for you internal procedures based on the standard of your preferred certification scheme (FSC, PEFC or both).
- Training your staff in the procedures, and preparing them so they know what to do and say during the audit.
- Engaging an auditor (FSC or PEFC accredited) for you.
- Completing on your behalf all the necessary paperwork, including obtaining quotations from auditors to give you the most competitive price.
- Attending the audit to ensure everything goes well with the auditing process.

We also specialize in sourcing FSC and PEFC certified plywood and sawn timber for the Australian market.