

**VIETNAM FOREST CERTIFICATION SCHEME -
DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME AND OPERATION**



VFCS SD 1001:2019

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Normative references	4
III. Description of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme	5
3.1 Chart of the Scheme	5
3.2. Discription of the relationship among organisations in the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme	6
IV. Operation of VFCS.....	7
4.1. National Governing Body	7
4.2. Forest Management Standard (FM) and Chain of Custody Standard (CoC)	8
4.3 Forest certification	9
4.4. Accreditation and notification of certification Organization	10
4.5. VFCS Logo and Logo usage rules	10
4.6. Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedures.....	11

I. Introduction

Sustainable Forest management has been implemented in Vietnam since the 1990s and the second phase (from 2006 to 2020) of the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy has been approved by the Vietnamese Government.

In 2018, the Prime Minister approved the Project on Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification through the Decision No. 1288/QĐ-TTg dated October 1, 2018, in which the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS) was established and operated under the Vietnam Administration of Forestry - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme is built on the principles of operation and independent decision-making among the parties that ensures compliance with the requirements of International Forest Certification Systems.

A set of forest management standards (consisting of Sustainable Forest Management Standard; Group Sustainable Forest Management Standard and a Chain of Custody Management Standard) has been developed and issued by the Vietnam Forest Certification Office. These standards are crucial documents that will be used by certification bodies for evaluating and giving forest certifications for forest owners and related organisations.

The Sustainable Forest Management Standard is developed based on the current regulations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Vietnam Administration of Forestry and the requirements of PEFC (document title ST 1001:2010).

II. Normative references

- Pursuant to the Decision No. 1288/QD-TTg dated October 1, 2018 of the Prime Minister approving the Project on Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Certification and approving the establishment and operation of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme;

- Pursuant to the Decision No. 190/QD-BNN-TCLN dated November 1, 2019 of the Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on assigning the task of sustainable forest management and forest certification;

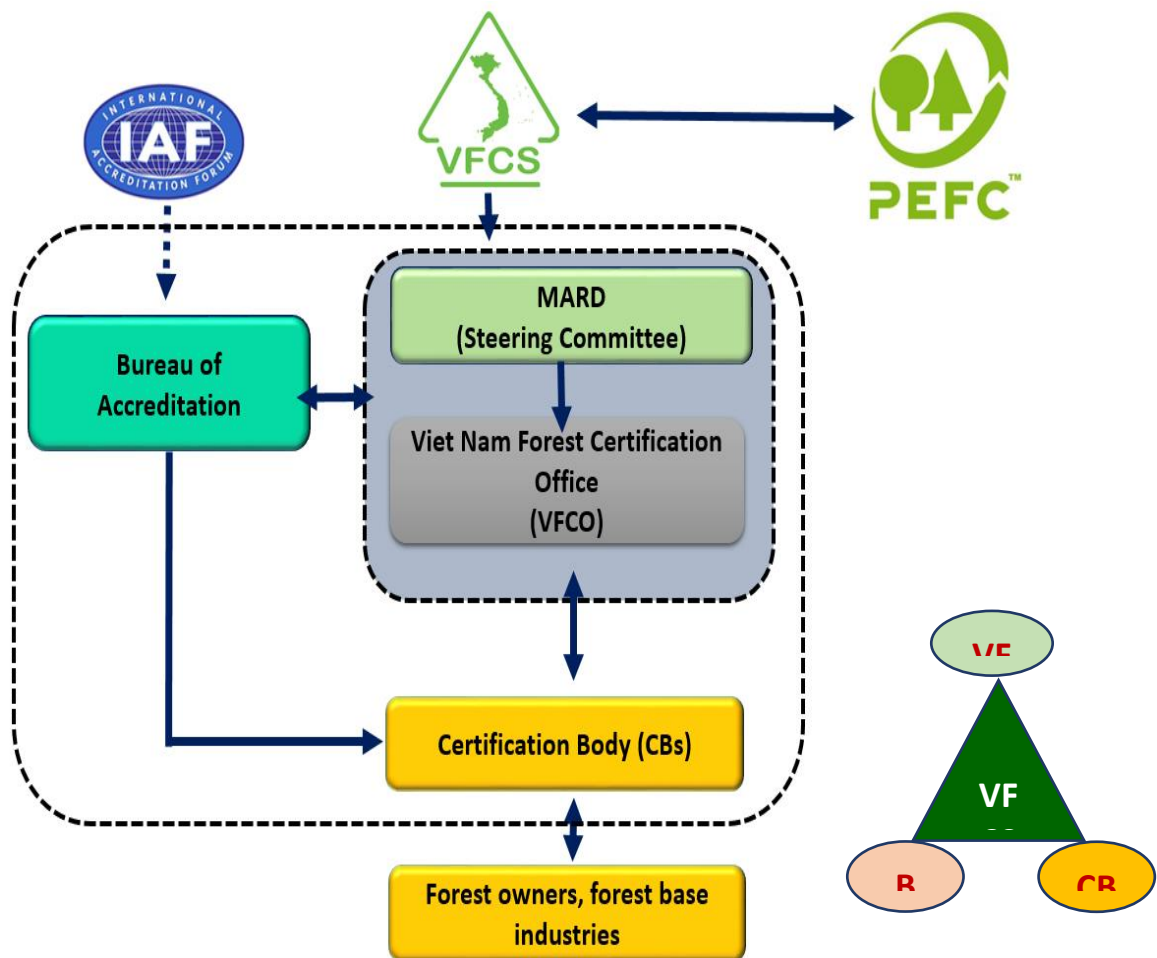
- Pursuant to the Decision No. 191/QD-BNN-TCLN dated November 1, 2019 of the Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on the establishment of the Vietnam Forest Certification Office;

- Pursuant to the Decision No. 71/QD-TCLN-VP dated March 22, 2019 of the General Director of Vietnam Administration of Forestry on the functions, tasks, powers and organizational structure of the Vietnam Forest Certification Office;

- Based on the document title PEFC ST 1001:2010, Standard-setting – Requirements.

III. Description of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme

3.1 Chart of the Scheme



In this Figure, organizational structure as follows:

3.1.1. IAF- International Accreditation Forum

IAF has two main functions:

Firstly, to ensure that its accreditation body members only accredit bodies that are competent to do the work they undertake and are not subject to conflicts of interest.

The second purpose of the IAF is to establish mutual recognition arrangements, known as Multilateral Recognition Arrangements (MLA), between its accreditation body members which reduces risk to business and its customers by ensuring that an accredited certificate may be relied upon anywhere in the world.

3.1.2. PEFC- Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification

The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization which promotes

sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.

PEFC certificates including:

- PEFC sustainable forest management certification (PEFC-FM) for forest owners;
- PEFC Chain of Custody certification (PEFC-CoC) is open to all companies that manufacture, process, trade or sell forest-based products.

3.1.3 Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS)

The Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme is a system that includes agencies, organizations and related documents to ensure the implementation of sustainable forest management and forest certification to meet the requirements of sustainable forest management and compliance with international rules.

VFCS consists of three independent agencies:

a) Vietnam Forest Certification Office (VFCO)

A national governing body (NGB) operating under the order of the Steering Committee for sustainable forest management and forest certification by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Vietnam Administration of Forestry. VFCO is the focal point to connect stakeholders acting in VFCS and is responsible for coordinating activities on sustainable forest management and forest certification, including the preparation and issuance of standards and guidelines.

b) Bureau of Accreditation (BoA)

The Bureau of Accreditation is a member of IAF, a cooperative organization and supports VFCO in accreditation and monitoring the activities of certification bodies in accordance with VFCS.

c) Certification Body (CB)

The Certification Body is an organization that evaluates and grants certificates of sustainable forest management and the chain of custody management for forest owners and organizations and individuals producing and processing timbers and forest products if they have sustainable forest management plans; plans for producing and processing of timbers and forest products in order to comply with the forest management standards of VFCS.

3.2. Description of the relationship among organisations in the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme

3.2.1. The International Accreditation Forum (IAF) is organization that ensures the accreditation capacity of the Bureau of Accreditation (BoA).

3.2.2. The relationship between VFCO and BoA

BoA will help VFCO in accreditation and monitoring the activities of the Certification Bodies operating in VFCS. BoA and VFCO will cooperate through signing a Memorandum of Understanding.

3.2.3. The relationship between VFCO and CBs

CB is an organization that provides forest certification services of sustainable forest management for forest owners and chain of custody (CoC) for organizations and individuals producing and processing wood and forest products under VFCS. In order to be acted in the VFCS, the CB shall be accredited by BoA as qualified under the requirements of VFCO. The VFCO will notify a CB operating in VFCS through a notified contract.

3.2.4. The relationship between BoA and CBs

BoA will accreditate CBs when they meet the requirements of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

3.2.5. The relationship between CBs and forest owners, organizations and individuals producing and processing timbers and forest products

CBs will provide certification services when requested by forest owners, organizations and individuals producing and processing timber and forest products.

3.2.6. The relationship between VFCO/VFCS and PEFC

VFCO shall develop a set of documents according to the requirements of PEFC to operate the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

When VFCS meets the requirements of PEFC, then the PEFC will confirm VFCS as a member of PEFC. After VFCS becomes a member and is endorsed by PEFC, VFCS is entitled to use the PEFC Logo and operates the Scheme to provide certificates of sustainable forest management and chain of custody.

IV. Operation of VFCS

Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme will develop documents including standards, guidelines, and requirements, regulations, and procedures to operate and monitor the relationships among organizations and stakeholders acting in VFCS. It is necessary to clearly define the functions, tasks, responsibilities and conditions of operation for these organizations against VFCS.

4.1. National Governing Body

VFCO is national governing body, it acts under the Vietnam Administration of Forestry and gives suggestions and recommendations for this organization to

develop and operate VFCS.

A National Governing Body operates and acts under the Steering Committee for sustainable forest management and forest certification (referred to as Steering Committee) in terms of the professional guidances. The Steering Committee consists of representatives of relevant agencies and units who are internal and external experts of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

VFCO is the focal point, it will coordinate the activities of sustainable forest management and forest certification following the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme.

VFCO has main tasks as follows:

- a) To coordinate the activities of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme;
- b) To consult and submit relevant documents in terms of the implementation of forest certification following VFCS for the VNForest to issue them;
- c) To cooperate with national and international agencies and organizations on the operation following VFCS;
- d) To give suggestions and recommendations in terms of complaints and dispute resolution procedures for the leaders of VNForest and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development during the operation of VFCS;

4.2. Forest Management Standard (FM) and Chain of Custody Standard (CoC)

4.2.1. Sustainable forest management standard

In order to implement the process of sustainable forest management, since 1999, Vietnam has built and developed national sustainable forest management standards in line with international forest management standards.

By 2013, the national standard for sustainable forest management was officially approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and represented in the Circular No. 38/2014/TT-BNNPTNT dated on 3rd November 2014 on guide to Sustainable Forest Management Plan.

In 2018, in order to implement the Forestry Law, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development issued a national set of sustainable forest management criteria with 7 principles, 34 criteria and 122 indicators. The standard has been developed based on the references of sustainable international forest management standards, widely consulted by state agencies and units, local authorities, and social organizations, ... and legalized in the Circular No. 28/2018/TT-BNN dated on 16 November 2018 by the Ministry of Agriculture and

Rural Development.

The sustainable forest management standard of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme uses the Sustainable Forest Management Criteria legalized in the Circular No. 28/2018/TT-BNN dated on 16 November 2018 and issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The process of developing the standard is in line with the requirements and guidelines of PEFC, for example: consulting relevant agencies and stakeholders, ensuring harmonization of three targets of economic, social and environmental factors in implementing sustainable forest management.

In addition, to carry out sustainable group forest management, the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme will issue a standard for sustainable group forest management. This standard requires to follow the forest management standard (VFCS 1002:2019) and it also guides the establishment of group organizations in compliance with the current regulations of Vietnam and the requirements and guidelines of PEFC.

4.2.2. Chain of custody standard

Chain of custody of developed the Vietnam Forest Certification Office operated by the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme, which is Forest Certification --- Chain of Custody, fully adopts the new PEFC Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products - Requirements (PEFC ST 2002:2013).

4.3 Forest certification

a) Certification bodies

The certification bodies operating in VFCS shall be a domestic, international or joint venture with the sufficient capacity and independent operation, independence of financial and human resources with any state or professional agencies acting on sustainable forest management and forest certification. In addition, the certification bodies cannot be participated in deciding on sustainable forest management standards.

The certification bodies shall meet the requirements represented in the Decree No. 107/2016/ND-CP dated July 1, 2016 of the Vietnamese Government on prescribing conditions for provision of conformity assessment services.

VFCO will have a notified contract signed with Certification Bodies acting in the forest certification against VFCS (detailed in document name Notification of Certification Bodies for Forest Management Certification and Chain of Custody in Vietnam against the requirements of VFCS, VFCS GD 1007: 2019).

b) Auditors

The auditor shall be a staff working for certification body. The certification body is responsible for their qualifications.

The auditor shall meet the requirements of competence and experiences as required by VFCS.

Detailed regulations for certification bodies and auditors are shown in the document title VFCS GD 1006: 2019.

c) Applying for forest certification

Forest owners would like to apply for certification of sustainable forest management or group forest management shall develop a sustainable forest management plan and submit their applications to the certification body.

Forest owners and enterprises wishing to register for a chain of custody management certificate voluntarily submit dossiers to the certification organization for consideration and certification.

d) The process of issuing forest certifications

The process and procedures for issuing forest certification will be carried out based on the instructions of certification organization.

e) The validity of forest certification

Certifications of sustainable forest management, group forest management and chain of custody are valid for 05 years from the date of issue. Annually, the certification body is responsible for evaluating to maintain the certificate.

4.4. Accreditation and notification of certification Organization

The accreditation of a Certification Body is done by Bureau of Accreditation or an international accreditation body which is a member of the International Accreditation Forum.

VFCS will notify certification bodies acting in VFCS. Based on the certificate issued by Bureau of Accreditation, the VFCS will notify certification bodies that are eligible to operate in VFCS.

The process of notification of certification bodies to act against the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme is presented in the document title VFCS GD 1007: 2019.

4.5. VFCS Logo and Logo usage rules

4.5.1. VFCS Logo



4.5.2. Logo usage rules

Forest owners, enterprises, certification bodies and relevant agencies and stakeholders would like to use the VFCS Logo of VFCS, they will register the right to use the Logo under document title VFCS GD 1009: 2019, and shall comply with the principles of using the Logo represented in the document title VFCS ST 1008: 2019.

4.6. Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedures

Forest owners, enterprises, certification bodies and relevant agencies and stakeholders in the course of implementation, if they have any difficulties, problems or detect acts or activities which are improperly according to regulations, they can inform or send recommendations to VFCO. Procedures for complaints and dispute resolution are carried out according to the VFCS GD 1010: 2019.