



Program for Recognition and Accreditation of Sustainable Management Practices for
Agroforestry and Natural Forestry Resources

Accreditation and Certification Standard for Certification Bodies

IFWCS-ACC-CERT-2024

Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme “PRAMAAN”
Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal
(Scheme Operating Agency)

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To make a clear distinction between requirements, recommendations, permissions, possibilities, capabilities, and external constraints when using the verbal forms (shall, should, may, can, and must) the Table 1 shall be used to express each type of provision. [Adapted from ISO/IEC Directives Part 2: Principles and rules for the structure and drafting of ISO and IEC documents].

Table 1: Recommendations for the use of verbal forms to express each type of provision

Provision	Verbal form	Equivalent phrases or expressions for use in certain cases
Requirement	shall	is to, is required to, it is required that has to only ... is permitted it is necessary needs to
	shall not	is not allowed, is required to be not is required that ... be not is not to be need not do not
Recommendation	should	it is recommended that ought to
	should not	it is not recommended that ought not to
Permission	may	is permitted, is allowed is permissible
	need not	it is not required that no... is required
Possibility and capability	can	be able to there is a possibility of it is possible to
	cannot	be unable to there is no possibility of it is not possible to
External constraint	must*	a legal requirement

Abbreviations

ACC	Accreditation
C3F	Certificate Course on Chartered Foresters
CB	Certification Body
CoC	Chain of Custody
FM	Forest Management
FMU	Forest Management Unit
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
IFMS	Indian Forest Management Standard
IFWCC	Indian Forest & Wood Certification Council
IFWCS	Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme
IIFM	Indian Institute of Forest Management
ISO	International Organisation for Standardization
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committee
NABCB	National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies
NEFT	National Electronic Funds Transfer
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Produce
NWPC	National Working Plan Code
PRAMAAN	Program for Recognition and Accreditation of Sustainable Management Practices for
RTGS	Agroforestry and Natural Forestry Resources
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SOA	Scheme Operating Agency
STD	Standard
TOF	Trees Outside Forests
VFC	Village Forest Committee

A. Background

India has adopted the principles of sustainable forest management and developed the National Set of 8 Criteria and 37 Indicators on Sustainable Management of Forests from the Bhopal – India Process. The Bhopal-India Process is one of the 9 internationally accepted frameworks¹ for the Criteria and Indicators (C&I) approach to sustainable forest management. These C&I were incorporated into the NWPC 2023 and thus, the IFMS was developed. This subsequently resulted in the formation of the IFWCS, which was launched by the MoEFCC, Government of India on 11 December 2023. Therefore, the certification of forest areas using this standard as adopted by the IFWCS is at par with the internationally recognized certification system while being relevant in the Indian context.

B. Introduction

The Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS), branded as “PRAMAAN” (Program for Recognition and Accreditation of Sustainable Management Practices for Agroforestry and Natural Forestry Resources), is a national initiative aimed at promoting sustainable forest management and the responsible production and harvesting of trees outside forests (TOF) through a voluntary third-party assessment process. The IFWCS envisages to provide market incentives to various entities adhering to Sustainable Management of Forests, Trees Outside Forests (TOFs), and agroforestry practices in their operations. These include state forest departments, individual farmers, or farmer producer organizations engaged in agroforestry and on-farm forestry, and wood-based industries in the value chain.

The scheme encompasses three different types of certifications: Forest Management (FM) certification, Tree Outside Forest (TOF) Management certification, and Chain of Custody (CoC) certification. The FM certification is the certification of recorded forest areas the forest management practices of which comply with the requirements of the Indian Forest Management Standard (IFMS), which comprises of 8 criteria, 69 indicators, and 253 verifiers. The IFMS is an integral part of the National Working Plan Code 2023 (NWPC 2023).

The TOF Management certification is applicable to owners of trees or plantations raised on lands outside forests such as individual farmers, farmer producer organizations (FPOs), farmer groups, institutions, industries, and other entities engaged in agroforestry and farm forestry, whose management practices comply with the requirements of the Trees Outside Forest (Management) standard under the IFWCS.

The CoC certification is the certification of the uninterrupted or unbroken path of products (such as wood or non-wood forest products) from the forests, and/or TOF areas to the point where the product is sold with an IFWCS claim and/or transformed into a finished product (e.g. paper,

¹ Castañeda, F. (2000). Criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management: international processes, current status and the way ahead. In *Unasylva* (Vol. 51, pp. 3434–3434).

furniture, handicrafts, wooden panels, herbal products) that is PRAMAAN-labelled in accordance with the relevant standard under the IFWCS.

a. The institutional framework of the IFWCS is delineated below:

i. Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council

The Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council (IFWCC) was established by the Government of India to guide and monitor the implementation of the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) as notified in the Gazette of India Notification No. 3-19/2022-SU dated 12 December 2023. It acts as a multi-stakeholder advisory body with representatives from various stakeholder groups. The IFWCC acts as a multi-stakeholder consultative body to approve the standards, processes, and procedures under IFWCS certification including the accredited certification bodies to conduct audits.

ii. Scheme Operating Agency

The Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), designated as the Scheme Operating Agency (SOA), is responsible for the implementation of the IFWCS under the guidance of the IFWCC. The Centre for Sustainable Forest Management & Forest Certification at IIFM acts as the Secretariat of the IFWCS.

iii. Accreditation

The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), acts as the accreditation body for Certification Bodies (CB) for IFWCS certification.

b. Mission

The promotion of sustainable management of forests and TOF and the provision of market incentives for the forest managers and forest-based industries that comply effectively with the requirements under IFWCS standards.

c. Objective

This standard describes the requirements for accreditation of Certification Bodies (CBs), for conducting the Forest Management (FM)/Trees Outside Forests (TOF) Management/Chain of Custody (CoC) certification under the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) in India. It also delineates the process requirements to be followed by the CB while conducting certifications under the IFWCS scheme.

The purpose of this standard is to guarantee that IFWCS programs are conducted in a proficient, uniform, unbiased, clear, thorough, reliable and credible manner, and consequently promoting sustainable practices in management of forests/trees outside forests, and in the wood-based industries.



C. Scope

This standard covers the requirements for accreditation of CB for providing the following certifications under the IFWCS:

- FM Certification
- TOF Management Certification
- CoC Certification

All aspects of this standard are considered normative, including the scope, effective date, references, terms and definitions, notes, tables, and annexes, unless otherwise stated.

1. General Requirements

1.1. Conditions for Accreditation

The general requirements for the accreditation of Certification Bodies (CB) shall be in accordance with ISO/IEC 17065 (Conformity assessment requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services). However, CBs shall also comply with the requirements and procedures set out in this standard. The CB shall establish comprehensive and clear policies and procedures in its quality and operating policies.

The CB shall have a complete understanding of the certification requirements of the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) as well as requirements of the IFWCS certification within the scope of accreditation of the CB.

1.1.1. For Forest Management (FM) certification, the CB shall fulfil the following requirements:

- IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17021-1 (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems); and/or IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17065 – (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services).
- other requirements for CBs defined by NABC, including technical competence in forest management, its economic, social and environmental impacts, and a good understanding of the IFMS for FM certification employed in IFWCS.

1.1.2. For Trees Outside Forests (TOF) Management certification, the CB shall fulfil the following requirements:

- IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17021-1 (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems); and/or IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17065 (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services).
- other requirements for CBs defined by NABC, including technical competence in the management of TOF, its economic, social and environmental impacts, and a good understanding of the standards for TOF Management certification employed in IFWCS.

1.1.3. For Chain of Custody (CoC) certification, the CB shall fulfil the following requirements:

- IFWCS and ISO/IEC 17065 – (Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services)
- other requirements for CBs defined by NABC including technical expertise in the acquisition and processing of forest-based products, material flows in various levels of processing and trading, and a thorough knowledge of the chain of custody certification standard employed by IFWCS.

1.2. Legal & Contractual Matters

1.2.1. Legal Responsibility

The CB (National and International) seeking accreditation under the IFWCS shall have an established office in India for carrying out all certifications under the IFWCS, (i.e. FM certification, TOF certification, CoC certification).

The CB accredited to provide IFWCS certification shall be a legally defined entity (e.g. registered company, registered society, trust, cooperative or State Government organisation) with financial stability and resources required for conducting the certification programme.

1.3. Certification Agreement

The CB shall have a legally enforceable contract/ certification agreement with its clients setting out the responsibilities of the CB and its client for the provision of certification. The certification agreement shall be made as such that it requires the client to comply with the following minimum conditions:

- 1.3.1. Client always fulfils the certification requirements and changes communicated by the Certification body.
 - 1.3.1.1. The client always fulfils the requirements of the applicable IFWCS standards.
 - 1.3.1.2. Makes all necessary arrangements for the conduct of the audit, including provision for examining documentation and records and access to the relevant location, area, and personnel and for investigation of complaints.
 - 1.3.1.3. Makes claims regarding certification only in respect of the scope for which certification has been granted.
 - 1.3.1.4. Does not use its certification in such a manner as to bring Certification body into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its certification which may be considered misleading or unauthorised.
 - 1.3.1.5. Upon suspension or cancellation/withdrawal of certification, discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference thereto and returns as required by the certification scheme, any certification documents and takes any other measure.
 - 1.3.1.6. Endeavours to ensure that no certificate or report nor any part thereof is used in a misleading manner.
 - 1.3.1.7. If the client provides copies of the certification documents to others, the documents shall be reproduced in their entirety.
 - 1.3.1.8. In referring to its certification in communication media such as documents, brochures or advertising, it complies with the requirements of the Certification body if applicable.
 - 1.3.1.9. Uses the certification mark only on produce it has found to comply with the requirement if applicable.
 - 1.3.1.10. Applies a mark to each certified product or to produce packaging or on information accompanying each product if applicable.
 - 1.3.1.11. Keeps a record of all complaints/ non-compliances made known to the client relating to the compliance with certification requirement and to make these records available to the Certification Body when requested.

1.3.1.12. Takes appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in certification processes or services that affect compliance with the requirements for certification.

1.3.2. Use of License, Certificates and Marks for Certification

The CBs shall exercise proper control over the use of its licences, certificates and certification marks. The accredited CBs shall establish the following:

1.3.2.1. Develop guidelines concerning the use of certification mark, accreditation number, Proper PRAMAAN Logo or other reference to the certification.

1.3.2.2. Use of PRAMAAN logo shall be permitted subject to the conditions and rules of the IFWCS Scheme

1.3.2.3. Incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of licences, certificates or marks shall be dealt with by suitable disciplinary actions by the accredited CB. This shall also be applicable to use of certification marks, licence or certificates by any non-certified client(s). The accredited CBs shall have documented procedures for withdrawal and cancellation of contracts, certificates and certification marks.

1.3.2.4. PRAMAAN Certificate shall be issued every five years by an accredited CB as per the prescribed format available on IFWCS website.

1.4. Management of impartiality:

1.4.1. The top management of CB shall have a commitment to impartiality.

1.4.2. Management of impartiality policy includes the risks that arise from the activities of the CB or from the relationships of its personnel. These risks shall be identified, and the certification process should be safeguarded against it by the Appeal Committee of CBs at all levels of the certification process. Conflict & impartiality shall be avoided in the entire process of certification.

1.4.3. CB shall make a publicly available statement that it understands the importance of impartiality in carrying out its certification activities, manages conflict of interests and ensures the objectivity of its certification activities.

1.4.4. If a risk to impartiality is identified, the appeal committee shall deal with the case to eliminate or minimise such risk.

1.4.5. CB shall document and maintain records of impartiality cases along with actions taken against the identified risk.

1.4.6. CB or personnel employed or contracted in the organisation shall not offer or provide training on the aspects of FM/TOF/CoC Certifications under IFWCS.

1.4.7. CB shall only explain its findings and/or clarify the requirements of the normative documents and shall not give prescriptive advice or consultancy as part of an evaluation.

1.4.8. Personnel employed or contracted in CB shall not offer or provide internal management system evaluations to the client or other legal entities involved in the certification process.

1.4.9.CB shall not certify Forest on which a client has received consultancy or internal evaluations, where the relationship between the consultancy organisation and CB possesses an unacceptable threat to the impartiality of the certification process. CB shall accept such type of application from the applicant, if the consultation period has elapsed minimum 3 years with the consultancy organisation so that the threat to impartiality is reduced.

1.4.10.CBs shall not state or imply anywhere that the said certification would be simpler, easier, faster or less expensive if a specified consultancy organisation were used.

1.4.11.CBs shall take action to respond to any threats to its impartiality arising from the actions of other persons, bodies or organisations.

1.4.12.All CB personnel, either internal or external, or committees, who could influence the certification activities, shall act impartially and shall not allow commercial, financial or other pressures to compromise impartiality.

1.4.13.The Certification Body (CB) and any affiliated entities shall not act as the designer, manufacturer, installer, distributor, or maintainer of the certified product, certified process, certified service

1.4.14.The CB shall not offer consultancy services to its clients or provide management system consultancy or internal auditing to its clients.

1.5. Liability & Financing

1.5.1.The Certification Body (CB) shall establish and maintain robust mechanisms to adequately address and cover any liabilities that may arise from its operational activities and related functions.

1.5.2.The CB shall be able to demonstrate that it has evaluated the risks arising from its certification/audit activities and that it has adequate arrangements (e.g. insurance or reserves) to cover liabilities arising from its operations in each of its fields of activities and the geographic areas in which it operates.

1.5.3.The CB shall demonstrate financial stability and possess the requisite resources necessary for the effective formulation, execution, and ongoing management of its certification program.

1.5.4.The CB shall ensure the availability of sufficient resources—both financial and non-financial—for competent and optimum development and implementation of its certification program.

1.6. Non-discrimination

1.6.1.The CB shall ensure that its policies and procedures are formulated and implemented on a non-discriminatory basis, without distinction as to race, nationality, religion, gender (sex) etc.

1.6.2.The policies and procedures governing the operations of the Certification Body (CB) must be non-discriminatory and shall not obstruct or limit access for applicants, except as stipulated in this certification standard.

1.6.3.The CB is required to ensure that its services are available to all applicants whose activities align with its operational scope.

1.6.4.Access to the certification process shall not depend on the client's size, affiliation with any association or group, or the number of certifications already granted. There shall be no unreasonable financial or other prerequisites.

1.6.5.The CB shall restrict its requirements, evaluations, reviews, decisions, and any surveillance activities to matters that are directly relevant to the certification scope.

1.7. Confidentiality

1.7.1.The CB shall be responsible, through legally enforceable commitments, for the management of all information obtained during the performance of certification activities.

1.7.2.The CB shall have adequate arrangements consistent with applicable laws to safeguard confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification programme at all levels of its organisation, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf.

1.7.3.Certification bodies shall keep important information of the clients obtained during the certification process confidential. Certification body shall not disclose any information of the client unless permitted by him or her.

1.7.4.Certification bodies shall have procedures for maintaining confidentiality throughout the system. All the personnel of the Certification body shall sign an annual confidentiality declaration.

1.7.5.All the persons involved in the audit and certification, directly or indirectly shall maintain the required secrecy. Members of the Certification Committee, Appeal Committee, Technical Committee, and other employees including shall maintain strict confidentiality about the information of the clients of the Certification body and sign an annual confidentiality declaration.

1.8. Publicly Available Information

1.8.1.The CBs shall actively inform the public of the scope of its certification and the contents of the standards.

1.8.2.CBs shall provide adequate information to the public (through publications, electronic media or other means), and make available upon request, related to the certification standards, its Quality procedures, organogram, training arrangements, fees and forms etc. by brochures, leaflets, newsletters, web page in the official website and seminars etc. CBs shall also display the list of certified clients on its website. CBs shall make its service accessible to all types of the clients whose activities fall within the scope of its certification.

2. Structural Requirements

2.1. Organisational Structure and Top Management

2.1.1. The Certification Body (CB) shall establish and maintain a defined organisational structure with adequate infrastructure support in compliance with ISO/IEC 17065 standards. This structure shall be designed to foster confidence in the effective implementation of its certification programme. In particular, the CB shall:

- have clearly defined procedures and bear full responsibility for decisions related to the grant, maintenance, extension, suspension, and withdrawal of certifications.
- maintain a structured management framework, as elaborated further in this document, ensuring the efficient operation of certification activities.
- possess documented evidence of its legal status, demonstrating compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- establish structures that allow for the participation of relevant groups and individuals in the development and formulation of policies concerning the certification programme.
- ensure that certification decisions are made by personnel who are independent of the audit and evaluation process, maintaining objectivity and impartiality.
- employ sufficient personnel with the necessary qualifications, technical expertise, and experience to effectively formulate, implement, and manage the certification programme.
- implement and maintain an internal quality management system to ensure consistent and reliable operation of the certification programme.
- develop and enforce policies and procedures that clearly differentiate product certification activities from other services or business operations conducted by the CB.
- safeguard the certification process from commercial, financial, or other external pressures that could compromise the integrity and objectivity of certification decisions.
- establish formal rules and procedures governing the appointment, roles, and functioning of committees and groups involved in the certification programme
- ensure that activities conducted by related bodies or individuals do not affect the confidentiality, objectivity, or impartiality of the certification programme. The CB shall not engage in the supply or design of products that it certifies
- develop and implement policies and procedures for addressing grievances and resolving disputes arising from the certification process in a fair and transparent manner

2.1.2. Certification activities shall be structured and managed so as to safeguard impartiality.

2.1.3. The CB shall document its organisational structure, showing duties, responsibilities and authorities of management and other certification personnel and any committees. When the CB is a defined part of a legal entity, the structure shall include the line of authority and the relationship to other parts within the same legal entity.

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

- Development of policies relating to the operation of the CB
- Supervision of the implementation of the policies and procedures
- Supervision of the finances of the CB
- Development of certification activities
- Development of certification requirements
- Evaluation
- Review
- Decisions on certification
- Delegation of authority to committees or personnel, as required, to undertake defined activities on its behalf
- Contractual arrangements
- Provision of adequate resources for certification activities
- Responsiveness to complaints and appeals
- Personnel competence requirements
- Management system of the CB

2.2. Mechanism for safeguarding impartiality:

2.2.1. The CB shall have clearly laid down policy and procedures in its manual to enable it to be free to operate without undue influence from vested interest or otherwise.

2.2.2. The CB 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 risk to impartiality. If a risk to impartiality is identified, CB shall eliminate or minimize such risk as per the policy. After detection of risks if any personnel level involved in the Certification process, 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.

2.2.3. To ensure the impartiality of its activities, the Certification Body (CB) shall implement an appeal committee mechanism. This committee will include significantly interested parties from wood-based industry such as producers, suppliers, users, consumers, and conformity audit experts. Appeal Committee shall:

- facilitate open channels for input from diverse stakeholders on policies and principles related to impartiality in certification
- monitor and evaluate the CB's practices to prevent any commercial or other interests from compromising impartial certification
- identify and discuss matters affecting the perception of impartiality and public confidence in certification processes
- ensure that no single interest group dominates the committee, fostering a fair and equitable environment for all stakeholders

2.2.4. The CB shall have a robust policy to avoid conflict of interest within the certification system, such that:

- the CB's personnel involved in the formulation and implementation of its certification programme shall declare in writing to the CB that they have no relation whatsoever, whether personal or professional, with the organisation
- all personnel with a potential conflict of interest shall be excluded from participating in the certification program in all manner

3. Resource Requirements

3.1. Certification Body Personnel

3.1.1. General

3.1.1.1. The CB shall ensure it has the competence and capability for all the certification activities it is required to undertake.

3.1.1.2. The CB's personnel shall be competent and technically qualified to perform their roles and functions in the certification programme. In particular, the CB shall specify in its Quality Policy the names, positions, descriptions, qualifications, including experience, training and education of all personnel involved in the certification programme.

3.1.1.3. The CB shall also provide a description of any training that the CB has provided or intends to provide to its personnel in respect of its certification programme.

3.1.1.4. The CB shall maintain the following records on the personnel involved in the certification process:

- name and address
- educational qualification and professional status
- experience and training
- the audit of competence
- performance monitoring
- authorizations held within the CB
- date of most recent updating of each record.

3.1.1.5. The documentation of trainings and qualification of CB personnel involved in the process of certification shall be open to audit by the Evaluation Committee.

3.1.2. Management of competence for personnel involved in the certification process:

The CB shall ensure that auditors are competent to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- principles, requirements, criteria or indicators of the forest management standard, as applicable
- knowledge of the socio-demographics and cultural issues in the region of application of the forest management standard
- application of auditing principles, procedures and techniques appropriate to different audits and ensure that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner
- organisation situations including organisational 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

- 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 organisation which is the subject of the audit
- 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
- 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
- technical aspects of forestry operations associated with exploitations, technology and derived uses to allow the auditor to grasp the activities of the client organisation audited and their effects on the management itself and the territory.

3.1.3. Contract with Personnel

The CB shall require individuals involved in the certification process to enter into a contract or similar document, committing to the following obligations:

- to adhere to the regulations established by the CB, including those concerning confidentiality and independence from commercial and other interests.
- to disclose any prior or current affiliations, whether personal or related to their employer, with:
 - i.a supplier or designer of products,
 - ii.a provider or developer of services, or
 - iii.a provider or developer of processes relevant to the evaluation or certification to which they are assigned.
- to disclose any known circumstances that could potentially create a conflict of interest for themselves or the CB.

3.2. Resources for Evaluation

3.2.1. Internal Resources

3.2.1.1. The CB shall conduct evaluation activities using qualified internal resources to ensure consistency, reliability, and adherence to established protocols. This includes trained personnel with relevant expertise in the certification process.

3.2.1.2. The CB shall ensure the outsourcing evaluation activities, ensure that outsourced resources are managed in accordance with the evaluation plan. This includes:

- clearly defining the scope and expectations for the outsourced services.
- selecting reputable and qualified external evaluators or organisations that meet the necessary standards and competencies.

3.2.1.3. The CB shall ensure that all products are evaluated against:

- the specific requirements outlined in the scope of certification.
- any additional requirements specified in the Indian Forest-Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS).

3.2.1.4. The CB shall develop and maintain a comprehensive evaluation plan that outline:

- objectives of the evaluation.
- methods and criteria for audit.
- timelines and responsibilities for both internal and outsourced activities.

3.2.1.5. The CB shall maintain detailed records of all evaluation activities, including methods used, results obtained, and any actions taken as a result of the evaluations. This documentation should support transparency and accountability.

3.2.1.6. The CB shall regularly monitor and review both internal and outsourced evaluation activities to ensure compliance with the evaluation plan and to identify areas for improvement.

3.2.2. External Resources (Outsourcing)

3.2.2.1. The CB shall outsource evaluation activities only to the bodies that meet the applicable requirements of the standard.

3.2.2.2. If the CB decides to subcontract work related to the audit of applicants to a third party, it shall establish a legally enforceable contract with the entity providing the outsourced service, which must include clauses addressing confidentiality and conflict of interest.

3.2.2.3. The Certification Body (CB) shall establish a documented system for overseeing the role and functions of the subcontracted party which shall address issues of confidentiality and conflict of interest.

3.2.2.4. The CB shall:

- take full responsibility for subcontracted work which shall extend only to audit
- ensure that the subcontracted party complies with the requirements laid down in this document
- ensure that the subcontracted party remains impartial in its functioning

4. Certification Process

4.1. General

4.1.1. The certification procedure shall, inter alia, include:

- all procedural steps in the processing of application, until final certification.
- the procedures for extension and updating certification, including certification of individual management units.

4.1.2. The Applicant is required to inform the Certification Bodies of any changes in production such as modification in the products list, the manufacturing process, extension of acreage etc. The Certification Bodies shall determine whether the announced changes require further investigations. In that case, the applicant shall not be allowed to release certified products resulting from such changes until the Certification Bodies have notified the applicant accordingly.

4.1.3. The certification procedure shall fulfil the following mandatory requirements:

- The certification status of all applicants and their production/management shall be evaluated throughout the certification process.
- The certification decisions shall be recorded and clearly communicated to the applicant.
- Where certification is denied to a client, the reasons shall be clearly stated.
- The CB shall be able to impose conditions and restrictions.
- The mechanisms for monitoring compliance with conditions and restrictions stated in PRAMAAN normative documents shall be in place and the same shall be documented.
- The criteria for the certification acceptance of applicants, formerly certified by other Certification Bodies shall be documented.
- The processing and review of audit reports, and certification decisions shall be done in a timely manner within the stipulated time.
- The processing of any issue related to violations shall be undertaken with highest priority.

4.2. Submission of Application

4.2.1. For application, the CB shall obtain accurate information necessary to complete the certification process in accordance with the relevant certification scheme. involve similar products, different locations, etc.

4.2.2. The entity like forest division, forest department or forest corporation, Individual, farmer organisation or a business organisation at any stage of the wood/ NTFP value chain/ company desirous of seeking FM/TOF/CoC certification shall request directly or through e-mail/ postal letter to the NABCB accredited CB for application to IFWCS certification.

4.2.3. The CB shall respond to all enquiries received from the prospective applicants for the purpose of certification proactively within 7 days of the receipt of the query.

4.2.4. The CB shall provide an application packet with all supporting documents to the applicant as per the requirements of certification. The following minimum information is required from each applicant wishing to be registered under a CB for PRAMAAN certification:

- applicants' legal entity, contact details, location
- number & competence of manpower
- annual area under production/collection
- first harvest or further harvest details
- other information relevant to the management activities, if any

4.2.5. Client shall declare any judicial proceedings relating to their operations/ product, any proceedings by any regulatory body or suspension/cancellation/withdrawal of any certification / approvals under any regulations or otherwise.

4.2.6. The application shall be submitted by the client in the application format specified by the CB. Application form must be accompanied by the management plan of the areas for which the client intends to seek certification along with supporting documents.

4.2.7. Client will have to submit their application form within 3 months of its issuance.

4.3. Application review

4.3.1. The CB shall review the filled application form and supporting details received from the client. If the application is incomplete, the applicant shall be asked to provide the missing documents necessary for the registration process. After receiving a complete application package from the client, the CB shall assign a unique registration number to the application, which would be used as its reference in future.

4.3.2. The CB shall communicate the registration number along with the following minimum information and instruction within 15 days of the completion of registration:

- copy of PRAMAAN standards
- details of applicable certification fee
- contract form for signing of contract with the Certification to make all necessary agreement for the conduct of the on-site audits, including provision for examining documentation and the access to all processes and areas, records and personnel for the purposes of initial certification, surveillance, re-certification and resolution of complaints; and to make provisions, where applicable
- documents describing the rights and duties of the applicant, including necessary requirements, when referring to its certification in communication of any kind
- information on procedures for handling complaints and appeals

4.3.3. It shall be ensured that the certification body has the competence, capability and resources to perform the certification activities.

4.3.4. Preparation of quotation

4.3.4.1. Based on the information obtained, the certification body shall prepare a quotation on the total cost of the certification. The quotation provides an estimation of the total cost for certification which includes the professional fees for stage 1 (Pre-audit) and stage 2 (Main audit), report writing and other related incidental costs. The overall cost of certification shall be calculated based on the number of man days required for the audit and certification decision.

4.3.4.2. The quotation shall be sent to the client for their approval and submission of certification fee.

4.3.5.Certification Fee

4.3.5.1.Prior to submission of the fee for certification, an agreement shall be formed between the client and the CBs. The client shall also sign an agreement with the Scheme Operating Agency for the off-site usage of the PRAMAAN logo.

4.3.5.2.Antecedents of the applicant entity shall be verified including judicial proceedings, any proceedings by any regulatory body, or suspension/cancellation/withdrawal of any certification/approvals under any regulations or otherwise, if any. If punished/penalized under the law, or the earlier product certification had been cancelled, the application from the same organisation will not be entertained by the CB until the previous punishment has not been lifted.

4.3.5.3.Applicants will have to deposit approved certification fees either in RTGS, NEFT, online transfer or other acceptable mode of payment in favour of the CB after the date of registration. The applicant shall send the signed contract to the CB in which they agree to comply with the PRAMAAN standards, allow audit and provide updated information.

4.3.5.4.The payment of the certification fee by the applicant and signing of agreement between applicant and CB is not a guarantee that the applicant will be granted certification.

4.3.6.Fee for Additional Audit Visits

In case of provision of incomplete information by the applicant at the time announced audit or due to conditional certification or otherwise, if an additional audit visit is necessary, the applicant will have to pay the fee for the additional audit in advance as mentioned in fee structure for the specific purpose/item.

4.3.7.Unannounced Audit Visit Fee

There is no fee levied to the applicant for unannounced audit visits to crosscheck compliance of the client with PRAMMAN Standards. However, the client will have to arrange boarding and lodging for Auditors during an unannounced audit.

4.3.8.Refund of fee

The client shall be charged an application fee approved by the IFWCC and a certification fee based on the scope of certification. The deposit fee will not be refunded. The IFWCC or the SOA shall intervene in matters where complaints or information is received regarding abnormally low or abnormally high certification fees charged.

4.4. Evaluation/Audit

4.4.1.Pre-audit

4.4.1.1.Pre-audit is carried out on site with the following objectives:

- to determine the adequacy of the client’s documentations
- to check whether an internal audit and management review has been conducted or not
- to check the readiness of the client to proceed to the main evaluation

4.4.1.2.The client shall provide at least the following information during pre-audit:

- details of the scope of the management system (i.e. including FM, TOF, CoC, inter alia)
- an overview of the forest/trees outside forests/chain of custody management system, its policies, management and organisational structure (including the location of offices, production and harvesting activities, depots etc.)
- an overview of planning processes, significant aspects and impacts, environmental goals and the legislative environment
- in case of FM & TOF certification, processes for protecting forest/TOF values, forest/TOF health, and systems for maintaining long-term benefits to stakeholders
- an outline of how the concept of continual improvement is realized
- procedures and records of internal audit and review programs, document control, and corrective/preventive action
- a list of relevant stakeholders who may need to be consulted during stage 2
- an overview of staff training processes
- an overview of risk management and work health and safety practices

4.4.2.Preparation of Main Audit

4.4.2.1.The CB shall prepare an annual audit plan for the client and notify the client with the details of the main audit. The notice shall include the following:

- name of the audit team
- scope of the audit
- the audit period
- the auditors' right to enter the property
- the right of the client to comment on the audit report

4.4.2.2.The timings and date of Initial/Main Evaluation shall be fixed with the consent of the applicant ensuring that processes such as maximum harvesting/ key silviculture operations time.

4.4.2.3.After this notice, the CB/lead auditor shall contact the client to establish communication and to begin planning and scheduling of audit. All proposed actions /findings of pre-audit shall be intimated to the team leader at least 15 days before the conduct of main audit.

4.4.2.4.The audit process shall consist of three phases, i.e. Preparation, Audit and Reporting.

4.4.2.5.The client may be requested by the CB to provide information about the management activities of the operation, which will be followed by the audit team during the audit process. The lead auditor shall be provided with basic information about the audit site, the name and geographic location (Latitude and longitude) of the FMU, name of forest division/range, size type, composition and site condition of the FMUs which is to be covered under the scope of certification.

4.4.2.6.During the main audit period a sample of management activities shall be selected. The lead auditor shall complete the audit forms entering activities listed in the completed client application form, adjoining documents and/or the annual declaration for the property. Audit samples shall be then selected.

4.4.2.7.The Lead auditor shall prepare an audit plan including:

- objectives & scope of the audit
- name & responsibilities of the auditors
- audit activities schedule and criteria
- time and date of opening and closing meeting
- logistics and scheduling arrangements, prepared in discussion with the audited

4.4.2.8.Prior to the audit, the Lead auditor shall distribute the copies of the audit plan to the audit team and client and shall confirm auditor assignments and responsibilities for audit. If required, the Lead auditor shall prepare any additional questions to add to the checklist and obtain an adequate supply of checklist, forms and field activities related cards. The client shall make accommodation reservations and arrange transportation and bookings. Lead auditor shall prepare the opening meeting agenda. Prior to audit the auditor shall familiarize themselves with the audit objective and audit plan, review document safeguarding, retention, confidentiality requirements etc.

4.4.3.Audit Team

4.4.3.1.Auditors shall be assigned by the certification body for audit purposes based on the scope of certification (FM/TOF/CoC).

4.4.3.2.The audit team consists of a minimum of 3 members (1 Team leader & 2 members). Prior to assigning an audit Certification body shall insure adequate competence and no conflict of interest of the auditors.

4.4.3.3.The same auditors shall not visit the same client for more than 2 years in a row. Where a client is audited by the same auditor on more than 2 consecutive audits, the certification body shall provide a justification with reason.

4.4.3.4.The Certification body shall demonstrate how an impartiality and objective based audit is ensured.

4.4.3.5.Certification body shall provide all auditors with an updated certification document (checklist, normative documents, detecting, analysing, grading and addressing non-conformities list etc.).

4.4.3.6.The audit team may be supplemented by technical experts meeting the competency requirements where the processes have been identified as highly technical.

4.4.3.7.The CB shall communicate the name of the auditors and duration of initial/Main audit to the applicant for verifying any conflict of interest and any objections to the auditors by the applicant should be examined.

4.4.3.8.An auditor shall not be assigned, if he has been involved in, or in relation with any client, which could conflict with impartiality of the Certification system.

4.4.3.9.Applicants cannot choose the assigned auditor. If the applicant wishes to change, then he/she may give a written submission with reasons to the CB. The CB shall take a final decision on the assignment of a different auditor. Applicants are not supposed to refuse the auditor one after another.

4.4.4.Audit Timings

4.4.4.1.The CB shall establish and maintain documented procedures to systematically determine the audit time required for each client organisation, ensuring that these procedures incorporate provisions to take input from auditors and/or technical experts.

4.4.4.2.The CB shall accurately record the determined audit time for each client organisation, along with a comprehensive justification for the audit time allocation, ensuring transparency and accountability in the audit process.

4.4.4.3.When determining the audit time for certification, the Certification Body shall consider, among other factors, the following aspects to ensure a thorough and accurate evaluation:

- compliance with relevant forest management standards
- the size, complexity, and geographic/natural conditions of the client organisation's operations
- any outsourced activities falling within the scope of the forest management standard
- results from previous audits, including those related to the client's management systems
- the number of sites, and considerations in the case of multi-site operations
- the quality and reliability of the client's internal monitoring system

Table 2: Determination of audit time

Forest Area (Ha)	MD (Field)		MD (Desk)	
	FM	TOF	FM	TOF
1 - 100	1	1	1	1
101-500	2	1	1	1
501 - 1000	4	1	2	2
1,001-5000	6	3	2	2
5001-10,000	8	4	2	2
10,001- 25000	8 to 12	4 to 6	2	2
25,001-75000	12 to 16	6 to 8	2	2
75,001-150,000	16 to 18	8 to 10	3	3
1,50,001-3,00,000	18 to 22	10 to 12	3	3
3,00,001-6,00,000	22 to 26	12 to 16	3	3
6,00,001-10,00,000	26 to 32	16 to 18	5	5
More than 10,00,000	32 to 40	18 to 22	5	5

4.4.4.4.The above table provides an indicative range of on-site audit days for calculating field audit time. While it is expected that the on-site audit days determined by individual Certification Bodies will generally fall within this range, adjustments may be made when justified by specific circumstances.

4.4.4.5.Reductions in audit days may only occur under the following conditions:

- The site size is significantly small relative to the number of personnel (e.g., a small forest

complex).

- The client has a mature management system with no significant outstanding non-conformities (major or minor) from the previous year's audit.
- A pre-audit or pre-preparedness audit has been conducted.

4.4.4.6. The audit process shall commence after the registration of the application and the signing of contracts between the client and the Certification Body, as well as the client and the Scope of Audit (SOA). The specific activities to be evaluated must be clearly identified within the contract. Whenever possible, the audit should occur close to harvest or silviculture activities to ensure the maximum number of control points can be verified.

4.4.4.7. Alternative timing for audit may be adopted in cases where evaluation during harvest periods is not feasible. In such cases, the first audit can take place before or after the harvest.

4.4.5. Sampling

4.4.5.1. The auditors shall visit a sufficient variety and number of sites within each Forest Management Unit (FMU) selected for evaluation to ensure direct, factual observations in line with the requirements of the PRAMAAN standard and the quality objectives.

4.4.5.2. Prior to sampling, the audit team must gather and review all relevant data and predetermine the features to be evaluated. The auditor shall prioritize sampling activities based on a risk audit, ensuring all activities within the scope of evaluation are properly audited.

4.4.5.3. The criteria for selecting sampling units at each level shall consider the following factors:

- results of the client's internal audits, reviews, and any previous audits by the Certification Body (CB), or any pre-existing knowledge of the client's performance.
- records of complaints, corrective actions, and communications related to non-conformities or preventive measures.
- variability in site size, number of employees, and complexity of operations.
- diversity in work procedures, including factors like shift work and the involvement of contractors.
- modifications or updates to processes since the last CB audit.
- geographic distribution and dispersion of sites under audit.
- maturity of the management system and the extent to which it manages significant aspects and impacts.
- potential interactions with environmentally sensitive areas.

4.4.5.4. When applying sampling methods, the Certification Body shall ensure that at least 20-25% of the sampling units are selected randomly, with proper documentation to support the random selection process.

4.4.5.5. The CB shall select Forest Management Units (FMUs) for evaluations as follows:

- FMUs within the scope of evaluation shall be categorized into 'like' groups based on criteria such as forest type, management type, and other relevant factors (e.g., natural forests vs. plantations).

- For each ‘like’ group of FMUs, the CB shall select a minimum number of units “S” for evaluation, following the formula specified in the table below:

Table 3: 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 (Farmers/Individuals/Community)	100-1,000	S = 0.8*√X	S=0.6*√X	S=0.6*√X
	Less than 100	S = 0.6*√X	S=0.3*√X	S=0.4*√X

Note: The formulas in this table indicate the relationship between the size of the forest area and the sample size or number of management units to be evaluated for each audit type.

“S” represents the number of management units to be evaluated, rounded to the next whole number, and “X” is the total number of units in the set of categories.

4.4.5.6. The CB shall ensure that at least one inactive block is sampled for each FMU selected for evaluation.

4.4.5.7. If special circumstances arise such as recent substantiated complaints or increased vulnerability of species the CB shall increase the sample size to ensure a more rigorous evaluation.

4.4.6. Corrective Action for Non-conformities

4.4.6.1. Certification body shall prepare a grading policy for the categorization of non-conformities for determination of major and minor non-conformity categories.

4.4.6.2. Major non-conformities shall be corrected within the maximum period of 90 days and Minor non-conformities shall be corrected within the maximum period of one year.

4.4.6.3. If the Major non-conformities are raised and not rectified within the stipulated time, it shall lead to immediate suspension for further certification.

4.4.7. Main Audit

4.4.7.1. The CB shall provide the auditor with sufficient information prior to the audit. This shall include:

- management activity (operation) details.
- audit guidelines & Audit checklist
- the previous audit report of the client concerned, if any.
- previous Certification decision/sanction if any.

4.4.7.2. The auditors shall carry all the requisite information along with materials and the accessories required for sampling.

4.4.7.3. Each applicant shall be contacted before the audit to conduct the audit visit in a timely manner.

The duration of audit visits can vary depending on the size and complexity of the operation. The frequency of scheduled audits can be increased or decreased on the basis of a client's performance or degree of compliance with the applicable standards. The frequency and type of audits are based on the anticipated risk with respect to each client (size and type of operation), intensity of production, outcome of previous audit and client's record of accomplices and complaints received by CB.

4.4.7.4. The audit shall be carried out only in the presence of the registered clients or in the presence of the person responsible who can accompany the assigned auditor.

4.4.7.5. An audit shall commence with an opening meeting. The opening meeting shall be attended by the audit team, client representatives, and observers. The scope and objectives of the audit, timeline and logistics, audit procedure, facilities and resources available to the audit team, relevant safety, communication and emergency procedures shall be mutually discussed in the opening meeting.

4.4.7.6. The audit shall cover the entire chain of custody of the production system managed by the client. During the surveillance evaluation, the auditors shall as a minimum check and report on the following:

- status of compliance to the requirements of the Certification criteria,
- internal self-audit reports,
- handling and disposal of non-conforming products,
- actions taken on non-conformities observed during the previous evaluation,
- redressal of complaints, if any,
- information on production of produce and the names of consignees to whom certified produce has been supplied.

4.4.7.7. The auditors shall visit a sufficient variety and number of sites within each FMU selected for evaluation to make direct, factual observations conforming with the PRAMAAN standard's requirements.

4.4.7.8. During the field audit auditors shall collect the evidence through interviews, observations and measurements. The audit team shall collect sufficient evidence to fulfil the audit criteria. Interviews and observations shall be noted in an audit sample record. The auditor shall take sufficient measures to provide objective evidence in support of any finding of noncompliance or to verify conformance. In audit areas like soil erosion or sedimentation, successfully regenerated areas observations shall be supported with photographs and documented evidence to reduce the potential need to revisit the site in the event of any unresolved questions from the client.

4.4.7.9. During the field audit phase, additional technical input may be required to provide specific knowledge or expertise before a conclusion on compliance can be formed. In such circumstances the lead auditor shall audit the need for a technical specialist and obtain approval from the person responsible.

4.4.7.10. Upon completion of the field audit and before the audit team leaves the site, a closing meeting between the client and auditors shall be held.

4.4.7.11. After completing the audit and filing the audit checklist, CB auditor shall give a copy of the audit report to the client. The audit report shall be signed and dated by both the auditor and the client.

4.4.8. Review of Collected Evidence

4.4.8.1. The auditor shall review all evidence to ensure that there is sufficient evidence to support all findings and that there has been adequate sampling of the client's activities to support the findings. In some cases, additional sampling may be needed before an auditor can conclude on a question of non-compliance.

4.4.8.2. The lead auditor shall review the evidence package for each sample, particularly evidence relating to a finding, to ensure that evidence is accurate, clearly presented and complete.

4.4.8.3. After reviewing the evidence collected, potential non-compliance identified during the audit shall be documented in the checklist and report. This will be discussed with the client.

4.4.9. Audit Report

4.4.9.1. After the audit summaries are compiled, the findings shall be evaluated and conclusions made, the audit report is drafted. The Lead auditor shall prepare the audit report within 30 days from the last date of the main audit. The audit report shall be finalized after considering any comments on the draft audit report before it is finalized.

4.4.9.2. The audit report shall be drafted in compliance with the following regulations:

- audit report shall be prepared by the Auditors after audit in a standard format to facilitate a non-discriminatory, objective and comprehensive audit of the production system.
- auditor shall make his / her observations regarding non-conformities in compliance with PRAMAAN standards. He / she shall not make an overall judgment on whether the client should be certified or not.

4.4.9.3. The Audit report shall include, inter-alia, following information:

- date and duration of the audit
- fields and facilitates visited
- type of documents reviewed (input/output, yield/sales, trace back etc.)
- client's knowledge and commitment for management/ production.
- persons interviewed.
- comprehensive information of client's production system/management process in compliance with the applicable PRAMAAN standards.
- auditors' overall observation regarding the management system's compliance with the PRAMAAN standards.

4.4.9.4. The Auditor shall submit his detailed report along with a checklist to the CB for further evaluation and analysis.

4.4.10. Review of Audit Report

4.4.10.1. The CB shall designate at least one qualified individual (Evaluator) to conduct the evaluation of the audit report. The evaluator must be independent from the decision-making team to ensure objectivity and impartiality.

4.4.10.2. The CB shall ensure that the assigned evaluator(s) have the necessary qualifications, expertise, and experience in forest management and relevant certification standards to effectively audit the evaluation results. Recommendations for certification decision based on the review process must be documented.

4.4.11. Notification of audit result to the client

4.4.11.1. Certification body shall provide a summary report to client which includes:

- the name and business address of the client.
- the name of the CB and the auditor.
- the date of the audit.
- the scope of the client's certificate.
- the purpose and scope of the audit.
- summary of the main findings.
- brief description of the FMUs.

4.4.11.2. The Certification body shall notify the clients within 7 working days of any changes to the client's scope of certification.

4.5. Certification Decision

4.5.1. Certification decisions shall be taken up by the Certification decision committee of CB in compliance with the PRAMAAN standards on the basis of the auditors' report and evaluation report.

4.5.2. All the Certification decisions shall be taken in an objective, impartial and transparent way by the Certification committee and shall be properly recorded in the concerned file of the client.

4.5.3. The Certification decision shall be communicated to the client along with non-conformities, if any, that have to be rectified in order to comply with the Certification requirements and the extent of further evaluation or testing required.

4.5.4. The CB shall have the right to impose conditions. Where conditions require corrective actions subsequent to Certification, a time limit shall be imposed for the same.

4.5.5. There shall be no conditional grant of Certification.

4.5.6. It will be ensured that the requirement of the scheme is met at any point in time.

4.5.7. If the applicant intimates that remedial action has been taken to rectify the non-compliances within a specified time limit, CB shall repeat only the necessary portion of the previous audit procedure for auditors and Certification.

4.5.8. Clients shall have the right to have copies of auditors' findings and other documentation related to the Certification of their operation, unless the documents are confidential e.g. filed complaints and confidential section of auditors reports etc.

4.5.9. When Certification is denied, withdrawn or suspended, the reasons shall be clearly stated.

4.5.10. Certification decisions are not only limited to initial approval of applicants, but also approval of the system, changes in management, disciplinary measures etc.

4.5.11. The certification decision shall be carried out by a person or group of persons that has not been involved in the process for evaluation & audit.

4.6. Grant of Certificates

4.6.1. A Certificate shall be issued upon payment of all fees due and signing of the certification agreement. The certificate shall be valid for five years from the date of certification approval.

4.6.2. CB shall grant Certification after ensuring:

- complete compliance to the criteria of IFWCS certification standards based on evaluation reports
- compliance to the certification scheme requirements of IFWCS
- satisfactory corrective action and compliance to non-conformities raised.

4.6.3. There shall be no conditional grant of Certification

4.6.4. An applicant must submit a duly signed application with the requisite details to CB for the granting of Certificate. On receipt of application, CB shall review the application and determine by the evidence, whether:

- the entire operation has been subjected to required audit, evaluation and testing, (if required).
- the applicant has rectified all the non-compliances raised and issued by CB.
- any supplementary information or evidence if required by the CB has been provided by the client.
- the applicant's operation is in compliance with Certification Criteria, Certification scheme requirements, conformance to product requirements and satisfactory resolution of non-conformity raised.
- the declaration/ proof of legal entity of the places certified and the ownership of requisite brand name has been submitted by the client.

4.6.5. After assurance, the CB shall issue a Certificate to the client. The effective date on a Certification document shall not be before the date of the Certification / recertification decision. The formal Certification documentation shall include the authorized signature.

4.6.6. Once the client is certified for production or handling operations for a year, the Certificate shall remain in effect during its validity period until suspended or revoked by the CB or surrendered by the client.

4.6.7. Validity Period of Certification:

The certification shall be valid for five (5) years after it has been awarded, but a yearly surveillance will be carried out to make sure that all certification standards are being met and to check for any new problems that may have arisen during this time, including during the annual surveillance.

4.7. Certification Documentation

4.7.1. The Certification Body (CB) must provide the client with formal certification documentation that distinctly indicates or allows for the identification of the following elements:

- the name and address of the CB
- the date on which certification is granted (this date must not precede the completion date of the certification decision)
- the name and address of the client
- the scope of certification
- the duration or expiration date of the certification, if applicable
- any other information mandated by the certification scheme

4.7.2. The formal certification documentation shall bear the signature or another defined form of authorization from the individual(s) at the CB responsible for this task.

4.7.3. The CB is obligated to inform the client of any decision to deny certification and to specify the reasons for such a decision.

4.8. Directory of Certified Products

The Certification Body shall maintain comprehensive information on certified products, which shall include at least the following details:

- a clear and unique identification system of each certified product.
- descriptions of the products, including specifications and relevant characteristics.
- the names and contact information of the clients (organisations or individuals) associated with each certified product.
- client identifiers (e.g., client number) for internal tracking purposes.
- certification status (active, suspended, revoked) and the duration of the certification.
- any conditions or limitations associated with the certification.
- records of audit dates, findings, and any corrective actions taken by the client in response to nonconformities.
- information on the supply chain, including suppliers and manufacturers, to support traceability of the certified products.
- procedures to ensure that sensitive client and product information is kept confidential, and access is restricted to authorized personnel.

4.9. Approval of Label

4.9.1. The client must take prior permission for approval of label design, size and quantity of all the labels on the product for the printing.

4.9.2. The applicant shall submit the Brand Name declaration indicating the Brand names the producer/collector intends to use on produce covered under the Certification Scheme.

4.9.3. The applicant shall have to provide proof of ownership of the Brand name, and to facilitate any product recall if such a situation were ever to arise during the operation of the Certification of scheme.

4.9.4. CB shall check the status of the product by verification from the client's record to ensure that the product is fully compliant with the IFWCS requirements. On conformity of product compliance with the requirements under IFWCS with client's record, the CB shall grant the approval for label printing.

4.9.5. The client shall follow the specific requirements about size and colours of print and images.

4.9.6. The client shall inform the CB about the disposal of certified products from the lot along with the invoice details.

4.9.7. The CB shall inspect labelling during annual audit.

4.9.8. Once the client meets PRAMAAN standards, he/ she is allowed to use the Certification logo on the product.

4.9.9. The CB shall inform NABC about all the sanctions imposed on the clients.

4.10. Surveillance

4.10.1. Surveillance audits of the certified operations shall be carried out at least once a year, ensuring that the gap between two surveillance evaluations does not exceed one year. A grace period of 90 days/ 3 months may be allowed based on valid grounds beyond which delays shall lead to suspension of the Certificate.

4.10.2. The full checklist and verification process shall be completed by the auditors annually. CB shall ensure coverage of all the criteria mentioned in the checklist and QMS.

4.10.3. CB shall ensure that basic operations and their controls are witnessed during the surveillance evaluation. Surveillance planning must keep in view the key silviculture timings to coincide visit with harvest time as far as possible.

4.10.4. In cases where the client (Producer Group/farmer/collector) is certified to a number of produces of different types under the same Certificate, CB shall plan for surveillance evaluation with a view to covering as much of the entire range of materials/products covered under the scope of certification during the Certification period.

4.10.5. During the surveillance evaluation, the evaluators shall as a minimum, check and report on the following:

- status of compliance to the requirements of the Certification criteria,
- internal audit/audit,
- handling and disposal of non-conforming products,
- drawing samples for testing in independent laboratory
- actions taken on non-conformities observed during the previous evaluation,
- redressal of complaints if any,
- information on production of produce and the names of consignees to whom certified produce have been supplied.

4.10.6. If any non-conformity is observed, the same shall be categorized as either Critical, Major or Minor. The non-conformity report shall be provided to the client in writing, generally during the closing meeting, for correction and corrective action. Details of the same shall be reported in the Surveillance evaluation report.

4.10.7. The frequency of surveillance evaluation may increase or decrease based on the performance of the client. (Producer Group/Producer / collector).

4.10.8. If the surveillance audit results in an infructuous visit due to any reason, then another surveillance evaluation will be conducted. Such additional evaluations may be charged as prescribed in the CB Fee Structure.

4.10.9. The client has to agree with the next scheduled audit. The next additional audit shall be scheduled in consultation with the clients. The client shall be informed at least 15 days in advance of the due date of the surveillance.

4.11. Renewal of Certification

4.11.1. The CB shall send the renewal notice to the certified units at least 6 months prior to expiry of Certificate validity period.

4.11.2. The certified organisation shall apply for recertification in the prescribed format along with a fee, if any prescribed by the CB at least 3 months before expiry of the Certification.

4.11.3. If a renewal application is not submitted before 3 months of the expiry /validity date of Certificates issued by CB, a notice of non-compliance shall be issued to the client. The client shall be given a defined time period for submitting his/her application. If the client does not submit his/her application within the stipulated time, the CB will cancel the contract with the concerned client. The certified client must surrender the Certificate issued by CB and remove all product claims from the product meant for its publicity/advertisement within a defined time.

4.11.4. The CB shall review the performance of the certified unit who has sought re-certification of the Certificate, with respect to compliance to Certification criteria during the Certification cycle the period of validity of the Certificate, prior to a decision on the re-certification of the Certificate.

4.11.5.The review shall be based on:

- the surveillance evaluation reports,
- handling and disposition of non-conforming products,
- any suspension of Certificate during the previous validity period,
- corrective actions taken,
- complaints, if any received, and
- adverse information, if any.
- re-certification of Certificate shall be based on the satisfactory performance of the Certified units.

4.11.6.CB shall not recertify clients with conditions for compliance left to be verified subsequently. There shall be no conditional renewal of certification.

4.11.7.When the performance of the certified units is not satisfactory, CB shall withhold the renewal of the Certificate of the certified client, clearly stating the reasons, and give time for effecting corrective actions. The verification and decision on renewal of certification shall be taken within 3 months of the expiry date.

4.11.8.The corrective actions shall be verified generally on site unless the CB can verify the same off-site, prior to the consideration of recertification.

4.11.9.The renewal of certification shall be affected from the date of the expiry of the previous Certificate and in the interim period the certification shall be treated as suspended and the same shall be clearly stated on the Certificate. The certified unit shall not claim Certification or use the Certification during this period.

4.11.10.In case the certified unit does not complete satisfactorily actions within three months, the certificate shall stand expired from the date of expiry of previous validity.

4.11.11.The certification renewal review shall be based on:

- the surveillance evaluation reports;
- handling and disposition of non-conforming products;
- any suspension of Certificate during the previous validity period;
- corrective actions taken;
- complaints, if any received; and
- adverse information, if any.

4.12. Changes affecting certification

4.12.1.When the certification scheme introduces new or revised requirements that impact clients, the Certification Body shall follow these steps to ensure effective communication and verification:

- The CB shall communicate changes to all clients.
- The CB shall notify clients promptly about the new or revised requirements, providing clear explanations of the changes, their implications, and any necessary actions clients must take to

comply.

4.12.2. The CB shall provide supporting materials, such as FAQs, guidance documents, and training resources, to help clients understand and implement the changes effectively.

4.12.3. The CB shall outline a timeline for when the changes will take effect and specify any transitional provisions or deadlines that clients need to be aware of.

4.12.4. The CB shall establish a verification process to audit client compliance with the new requirements.

4.12.5. The CB shall take appropriate actions based on the verification results, which may include:

- providing additional support or resources to clients struggling with implementation.
- scheduling follow-up audits or reviews to ensure compliance.
- taking corrective actions if nonconformities are identified.

4.12.6. The CB shall maintain records of all communications regarding the changes, client responses, and verification actions taken to ensure transparency and accountability.

4.12.7. The CB shall encourage clients to provide feedback on the communication and implementation process, using this information to improve future updates and support.

4.13. Termination, reduction or suspension of certification

4.13.1. The applicant shall not have multiple certifications under IFWCS scheme for the same activity through different certification bodies.

4.13.2. The accredited CB shall have a clear policy for sanctions in the event of non-compliances by the applicant. The accredited Certification Bodies shall have a documented range of disciplinary measures (sanctions category) including measures to deal with minor and major infringements of the standards.

4.13.3. In instances where an infringement that compromises the integrity of the certification scheme is identified, the accredited Certification Body (CB) shall take necessary corrective actions.

4.13.4. Where an offence committed by the client is of such a nature as to affect the integrity of certification, the CB may provide for sanctions higher than those prescribed from time to time.

4.13.5. The CB shall reduce the scope of certification to exclude nonconforming product variants, ensuring that only compliant products remain certified.

4.13.6. The CB shall suspend certification pending remedial actions by the client. This suspension will remain in effect until the client has adequately addressed the identified nonconformities.

4.13.7. Withdrawal of certification

4.13.7.1. The accredited CB shall ensure that the non-compliant lot of production is effectively removed from the entire production cycle affected by the identified infringement and this removal process must be documented and executed in a manner that prevents any further distribution or use of the non-compliant products.

4.13.7.2. In the event of any violation by the applicant, the accredited CB shall initiate the withdrawal of certification from the applicant for a specified duration, as determined by the severity of the infringement.
The duration of certification withdrawal shall be clearly communicated to the applicant and shall be based on established guidelines within the certification scheme.

4.13.7.3. The accredited CB shall promptly inform the Scheme Operating Agency regarding their decision to withdraw certification from the applicant with detailed reasoning for the withdrawal and any relevant documentation supporting the decision.

4.13.7.4. The accredited CB shall publish information regarding the certification withdrawal on their official website including the applicant, the nature of the violation, and the duration of the certification withdrawal to ensure transparency and uphold public trust in the certification process.

4.13.7.5. The accredited CB shall implement a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with this policy and audit any further implications on scheme integrity.

4.13.7.6. Regular reviews shall be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures and make necessary adjustments to enhance compliance and integrity within the certification scheme.

4.14. Records

4.14.1. The CB shall maintain a record system to comply with the requirements of this standard. The records shall be systematic and sufficient to demonstrate that the certification process has been properly implemented. The records shall be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information.

4.14.2. The CB shall implement strict confidentiality protocols to protect sensitive information contained within the records. This may include access controls, secure storage (physical and electronic), and data encryption. Confidentiality shall be maintained during the transportation, transmission and transfer of records.

4.14.3. The CB shall maintain comprehensive documentation for all stages of the certification process, while ensuring that:

- records pertaining to clients must be maintained for a minimum duration of five years, organized in client-specific files.
- subject-specific files shall be preserved indefinitely.
- records shall be held in the custody of designated personnel in accordance with their assigned responsibilities.
- client files, including those for contracted parties, must be kept current and contain all pertinent information, such as applications, maps, historical data, annual plans, audit checklists, audit reports, evaluation reports, and certification decisions. Individual files shall be

maintained for each client.

- documentation related to sanctions imposed and subsequent measures taken by the relevant client must be preserved within the CB file, with a copy retained in the respective client's file.
- separate register/file shall be maintained for violations, precedents, exceptions, appeals, and complaints to facilitate efficient data retrieval.
- all documents shall be clearly identified by title and assigned a specific code number.
- the CB shall establish procedures for the safe and environmentally responsible disposal of records once their retention period has elapsed, ensuring that sensitive information is securely destroyed.

4.15. Complaints & Appeals

4.15.1. The Certification Body shall establish a documented process to effectively receive, evaluate, and make decisions on complaints and appeals.

4.15.2. In establishing a documented procedure for dealing with complaints and appeals, the CB shall:

- develop clear procedures for stakeholders to submit complaints and appeals. This may include online forms, email, or designated contact points.
- ensure that the process is accessible and user-friendly to encourage timely submissions.
- develop criteria for auditing the validity and significance of complaints and appeals.
- assign a designated team or personnel responsible for evaluating each submission impartially and promptly.
- establish a framework for making decisions on complaints and appeals, ensuring that responses are consistent, fair, and based on evidence.
- communicate decisions clearly to the complainant or appellant, including rationale and any further actions.
- maintain comprehensive records of all complaints and appeals, including details of the submission, evaluation, decisions made, and actions taken.
- use a tracking system to monitor the status of each complaint and appeal throughout the resolution process.
- document actions taken to resolve complaints and appeals, including corrective measures implemented and follow-up activities.
- ensure that resolutions are timely and address the concerns raised.
- regularly review complaints and appeals data to identify trends or recurring issues, using this information to improve processes and prevent future occurrences.
- conduct periodic evaluations of the complaints and appeals process itself to enhance its effectiveness.
- keep stakeholders informed about the outcomes of their complaints or appeals and any changes made as a result of feedback received.

5. Management System Requirements

5.1. General

The CB shall establish and maintain a management system that is capable of achieving the consistent fulfilment of the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, and that shall include:

- General management system documentation (e.g. Manual, policies, definition of responsibilities)
- Control of documents
- Control of records
- Management review
- Internal audit
- Corrective actions
- Preventive actions

5.2. General Management System Documentation

5.2.1. The top management of the Certification Body (CB) shall demonstrate its commitment to the development, implementation, and effectiveness of the management system in consistently meeting the requirements of this standard.

5.2.2. The top management of the CB shall designate a member of its management who, irrespective of other responsibilities, will have the responsibility and authority to:

- ensure that necessary processes and procedures for the management system are established, implemented, and maintained.
- report on the management system's performance and identify areas needing improvement.

5.2.3. All documentation, processes, systems, records, and related materials necessary for compliance with this standard must be incorporated into or linked to the management system documentation.

5.2.4. All personnel engaged in certification activities shall have access to relevant sections of the management system documentation and associated information pertinent to their responsibilities.

5.2.5. The CB shall at least maintain the following documents:

- information about the authority under which the CB is conducting its activities.
- a documented statement of its certification program including the policies and procedures for the grant, maintenance, extension, suspension and withdrawal of certification.
- information about the audit and evaluation procedures and certification process relating to each category of certification.
- a description of the means through which the CB obtains financial support and general information on the fees charged to applicants desirous of being certified.
- information about the procedures for handling complaints, appeals and disputes.
- a directory of the certified products/areas.
- any other information deemed relevant.

5.3. Control of documents

5.3.1. The CB shall establish and maintain policies and procedures for the creation, approval, review, update and control of all documents and data that relate to its certification programme.

5.3.2. The CBs shall maintain a system for the control of all documentation relating to the certification system and shall ensure that:

- the latest and other relevant versions of the applicable documents are available.
- all corrections in documents are made by the authorized persons.
- all changes are processed in a manner, which will ensure direct and speedy action.
- obsolete documents are removed from use.
- all certified applicants are notified of the changes.
- documents shall be reissued when substantial amendments are made.
- a register of all appropriate documents with the respective date of issues shall be maintained.

5.4. Control of Records

5.4.1. The Certification Body shall implement robust procedures to identify, retain, protect and retrieve records that demonstrate effective fulfilment of all certification process requirements.

5.4.2. The CB shall develop a clear policy outlining the types of records to be maintained, retention periods, and storage methods to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

5.4.3. The CB shall implement strict confidentiality protocols to protect sensitive information contained within the records. This may include access controls, secure storage (physical and electronic), and data encryption.

5.4.4. The CB shall restrict access to records to authorized personnel only, ensuring that any sharing of information is conducted in compliance with confidentiality agreements and regulations.

5.4.5. The CB shall establish procedures to ensure the integrity and accuracy of records, including regular audits and checks to confirm that all required documentation is complete and correctly filed.

5.4.6. The CB shall make secure processes for the disposal of records that have reached the end of their retention period, ensuring that confidential information is destroyed in a manner that protects privacy.

5.4.7. The CB shall conduct periodic reviews of the record retention and confidentiality processes to ensure ongoing compliance and effectiveness, making adjustments as necessary based on feedback and changes in regulations.

5.5. Management Review

5.5.1. General

5.5.1.1. CB's top management shall conduct an internal review of their management system on the basis of ISO/IEC 17065 requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services. The internal review shall be carried out once in a year to ensure that the management policies and procedures specified in the Quality Manual are being effectively and adequately implemented throughout the system.

5.5.1.2. Internal review covers documentation review, implementation of quality policy and procedures, compliance against standards and proper line management using an Internal Audit checklist. The person audited shall be informed of the outcome and shall be provided with an opportunity for correction and improvement within a specified timeframe.

5.5.1.3. Appropriate corrective action shall be taken to deal with any shortcomings in the operation of the system that comes into the notice during day-to-day functioning.

5.5.1.4. When the audit is complete, the responsible person shall submit the findings of the audit to the head of the organisation.

5.5.1.5. The head of the organisations shall review the internal audit report and determine the corrective actions to be taken against non-compliances.

5.5.1.6. The decision of the internal management review / report shall be recorded properly for further compliance.

5.5.1.7. The CB shall establish procedure for identification and management of non-conformities in operation and take action to eliminate the causes of non-conformity to prevent its recurrence.

5.5.1.8. In cases, where a need for fundamental changes in the system or the way it becomes apparent, the head of the CB shall implement the changes.

5.5.1.9. The CB shall ensure that personnel responsible for the competency(s) audited are informed of the outcome of such audit.

5.5.2. Review inputs

The input to the management review shall encompass information pertaining to the following areas:

- Results from internal and external audits.
- Feedback received from clients and interested parties regarding compliance with this International Standard.
- Feedback derived from the mechanisms established to safeguard impartiality.
- Status updates on preventive and corrective actions taken.
- Outcomes of follow-up actions from previous management reviews.
- Evaluation of the fulfilment of established objectives.
- Identification of any changes that may affect the management system.
- Documentation of appeals and complaints received, including their resolution status.

5.5.3. Review outputs

Based on the review outputs, the CB shall:

- Identify opportunities for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the management system and its processes from the output of the management review.
- develop action plans to ensure the compliance with relevant standards. This may include updates to policies, training initiatives, or enhancements in audit practices.
- audit any additional resources or support required to achieve the desired improvements, including staffing, training, or technology upgrades.
- plan for communicating changes and improvements to relevant stakeholders, ensuring transparency and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

5.6. Internal Audits

5.6.1. The CB shall conduct periodic internal audits in a planned and systematic manner to ensure effective implementation of the certification program.

5.6.2. Internal audits shall be performed at least once every 12 months or completed within a 12-month time frame for segmented (or rolling) internal audits.

5.6.3. An audit programme shall be developed by the CB, taking into consideration the importance of the processes and areas to be audited, as well as the results of previous audits.

5.6.4. A documented decision-making process shall be followed to change (reduce or restore) the frequency of internal audits or the time frame in which internal audits shall be completed. Such changes shall be based on the relative stability and ongoing effectiveness of the management system. Records of decisions to change the frequency of internal audits, or the time frame in which they will be completed, including the rationale for the change, shall be maintained.

5.6.5. The CB shall ensure that:

- internal audits are conducted by personnel knowledgeable in certification, auditing and the requirements of this standard.
- auditors do not audit their own work.
- personnel responsible for area audited are informed of the outcome any actions resulting from internal audits are taken in a timely and appropriate manner.
- any opportunities for improvement are identified.

5.7. Corrective actions

5.7.1. The Certification Body shall establish comprehensive procedures for the identification and management of nonconformities in its operations.

5.7.2. Corrective actions must be appropriate to the impact of the non-conformities encountered.

5.7.3. In establishing the procedures for corrective actions, the CB shall:

- implement processes for detecting nonconformities, including routine audits, client feedback, and employee reports.
- maintain clear records of identified nonconformities, including details on the nature of the

nonconformity, the date of identification, and the personnel involved.

- audit the significance and impact of each nonconformity to prioritize actions based on severity and potential risks.
- develop and implement corrective action plans to address the root causes of nonconformities in a timely manner, ensuring that these actions are effective and timely.
- identify and implement preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of recurrence, fostering a proactive approach to nonconformities.
- regularly monitor the effectiveness of corrective and preventive actions and review them during management system evaluations.
- ensure that relevant stakeholders are informed about nonconformities and the actions taken to address them, promoting transparency and accountability.
- provide training to staff on the procedures for identifying and managing nonconformities, enhancing awareness and engagement in the process.

5.8. Preventive actions

5.8.1. The Certification Body shall establish procedures for taking preventive actions to eliminate the causes of potential nonconformities in the forest products certification process.

5.8.2. In establishing the procedures for preventive actions, the CB shall:

- conduct regular risk audits to identify potential areas of nonconformity within the certification process. This includes evaluating processes, methodologies, and stakeholder interactions.
- develop and implement specific action plans aimed at addressing identified risks. This may involve changes to procedures, additional training, or updates to documentation.
- establish monitoring mechanisms to track the effectiveness of preventive actions and ensure they are implemented as planned.
- provide training to the staff involved in the certification process to ensure they understand the importance of preventive actions and how to implement them effectively.
- involve relevant stakeholders, including clients and forest product producers, in discussions about potential risks and preventive measures, fostering a collaborative approach to quality assurance.
- maintain detailed records of preventive actions taken and regularly review these procedures to ensure they remain effective and relevant to evolving risks.
- encourage a culture of continuous improvement by regularly revisiting and updating preventive action procedures based on feedback and changes in the certification landscape.



Annex-1: Qualification required for the auditors conducting Forest Management, Trees Outside Forest Management, and Chain of Custody Certifications:

Scope of certification	Educational qualification	Experience	Training	Audit experience
FM	Degree in forestry or specialised training in the forestry or a related field	Experience in the field of forest management, and forestry operations/ practices such as inventory, nursery, silviculture, land management, and understanding forest ecosystems etc. Understanding of National Working Plan Code 2023	Successful completion of FM auditor training authorised by Scheme Operating Agency (SOA) Successful completion of “ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standard (QMS)” or “ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems” Understanding of “ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity audit – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services”	As an observer in two (2) FM main audits As an observer in two (2) FM surveillance audits As an auditor in one (1) FM main audit witnessed by approved auditor A minimum of two (2) on-site FM audits (main/surveillance) per year are required to maintain auditor qualification
TOF	Degree in Agriculture or allied subjects such as Agroforestry/ Horticulture, Urban Forestry, Farm Forestry, Social Forestry or a related field	Experience in managing or auditing trees in non-forest settings, such as urban areas, agricultural lands, or community woodlands. Understanding of different tree management practices and the socio-economic and environmental issues of trees outside forests. Familiar with the sustainability practices and the integration of trees into various agroforestry	Successful completion of TOF auditor training authorised by Scheme Operating Agency (SOA) Successful completion of “ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standard (QMS)” or “ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems” Understanding of “ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity audit - Requirements for bodies certifying	As an observer in two (2) FM/ TOF main audits As an observer in two (2) FM/ TOF surveillance audits As an auditor in one (1) FM/ TOF main audit witnessed by approved auditor A minimum of two (2) on-site FM/TOF audits (main/surveillance) per year are required to maintain auditor qualification



		land-use systems.	products, processes and services”	
CoC	Degree in Wood Science and Technology/ Supply Chain Management/ Agri Business Management/ Forest Resource Management/ Natural Resource Management/ Forestry, or related field.	Experience in wood and non-wood-based supply chain, including compliance management, processing, handling and trading of wood and paper products such as wooden logs, sawn timber, furniture, plywood, panel, printing and packaging, recycled (wood and non-wood based) and other products etc.	Successful completion of CoC auditor training authorised by Scheme Operating Agency (SOA) Successful completion of “ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standard (QMS)” or “ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for auditing management systems” Understanding of “ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity audit - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services”	As an observer in two (2) CoC main audits As an observer in two (2) CoC surveillance audits As an auditor in one (1) CoC main audit witnessed by approved auditor A minimum of two (2) on-site CoC audits (main/surveillance) per year are required to maintain auditor qualification

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