



Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree-based Products - Requirements



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- Association of Accredited Certification Bodies
- Australian Forest Products Association
- Australian Institute of Packaging
- Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union
- Independent Environmental Expert
- Tasmanian Forest Products Association
- University of Melbourne
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- Women in Forest and Timber Network

Additional Interests:

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Responsible Wood wishes to acknowledge the participation of the expert individuals that contributed to the development of this Standard through their representation on the Committee.

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Preface

Australian Standard AS 4707 sets requirements for the chain of custody of forest and tree-based products marketed with claims about certification under AS/NZS 4708, the Australian/New Zealand Standard® for Sustainable Forest Management. AS/NZS 4708 is referred to in AS 4707 as the Australian/New Zealand Forestry Standard. Products originating from forests certified to AS/NZS 4708 or a PEFC recognised Standard through third party verification audits are eligible for recognition under the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme (RWCS). Products with the Responsible Wood certification claim and/ or label deliver confidence to customers and consumers that the raw material originates in sustainably managed forests, recycled material, and controlled sources. Forest and Chain of Custody certifications include requirements for health, safety and labour. “Controlled Sources” addresses the risk of using products from controversial sources, including legality aspects. Purchasers and potential purchasers can use this information to choose the product based on sustainability and other considerations. The aim of communicating the raw material’s origin is to encourage demand for and supply of products originating in sustainably managed forests, thereby stimulating market-driven continuous improvement of management of Australia’s forests.

The RWCS is endorsed by the international Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Products eligible for RWCS claims are therefore also eligible for PEFC claims.

This standard has been developed in an open, transparent, consultative and consensus-based process covering a broad range of stakeholders. It replaces AS 4707:2014.

Certification bodies are accredited, independent third-party organisations that assess and verify the tracking system for the origin of wood or forest products in each link of the certification chain. The tasks of certification bodies include:

- verifying the whole chain of custody system and the proportion of certified forest product in each link of the certification chain.
- issuing, monitoring and withdrawing chain of custody certificates.
- providing advice on issuing and withdrawing chain of custody certificates to Responsible Wood; and
- monitoring and controlling the use or misuse of chain of custody certificates including the certificate holder’s statements and any market claims.

Accreditation bodies recognised by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) accredit certification bodies to audit and certify to particular standards to ensure the transparency and credibility of the certification process. Accreditation bodies also ensure third-party competence, impartiality and independence in relation to certification activities and facilitate mutual recognition. Certification bodies undertaking chain of custody certification to this standard must be accredited by JAS-ANZ or an IAF-recognised accreditation body.

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Foreword

The objective of this standard is to allow organisations to provide accurate and verifiable information that forest and tree-based products originate from forests managed in accordance with the Australia/New Zealand Forestry Standard (ANZFS) and other sustainably managed forests recognised through PEFC mutual recognition, recycled material and/or controlled sources.

Practical application and certification against this standard allow organisations to demonstrate their contribution in sustainable resource management and a strong commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The aim of communicating the origin of forest and tree-based products is to encourage demand for and supply of those products originating in sustainably managed forests and thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous improvement of the management of the world's forests.

Note: For further information on the UN SDGs see online at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

Section 1 Scope and general

1.1 Scope

This standard covers the requirements that need to be met by an organisation to successfully implement a chain of custody management system for forest and tree-based products, and to make claims to customers on the origin of forest and tree-based products from sustainably managed forests, recycled material and/or controlled sources.

These chain of custody requirements describe a process of how to classify forest and tree-based products according to specified material categories and to transfer information about the source of procured raw material to an organisation's output products. This standard specifies three approaches for chain of custody, namely the physical separation method, percentage method and credit method.

This standard also specifies management system requirements for the implementation and management of the chain of custody process, including requirements on health, safety and labour issues.

This Chain of Custody standard shall be used in connection with Responsible Wood and PEFC claims.

Appendix B of this standard specifies the implementation of this standard by organisations with multiple sites.

The usage of claims and relating labels, as a result of implementation of this Chain of Custody standard, is based on ISO 14020. Consideration of recycled material within the chain of custody is based on the requirements of ISO/IEC 14021.

The labelling of products is considered as an optional communication tool, which may be incorporated into an organisation's chain of custody process(es). Where the organisation applies the Responsible Wood and/or PEFC trademarks for on-product or off-product labelling, the requirements for trademark use become an integral part of the chain of custody requirements.

This standard shall be implemented for the purposes of third-party conformity assessment based on requirements defined by Responsible Wood, the PEFC Council or PEFC endorsed forest certification systems. The conformity assessment is considered as product certification and shall follow ISO/IEC 17065.

Note: The term "shall" is used throughout this standard to indicate those provisions that are mandatory. The term "should" is used to indicate those provisions that, although not mandatory, are expected to be adopted and implemented. The term "may" used throughout this standard indicates permission expressed by this standard whereas "can" refers to the ability of a user of this standard or to a possibility open to the user.

1.2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this standard. For both dated and undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendment) applies.

AS/NZS 4708, Sustainable Forest management requirements.

PEFC GD 2001, Chain of Custody of Forest-Based Products – Guidance for Use

PEFC ST 2001, PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements

ISO/IEC Guide 2, Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary

ISO 9000, Quality management systems – Fundamentals and vocabulary

ISO 14020, Environmental labels and declarations – General principles

ISO 14021, Environmental labels and declarations – Self-declared environmental claims (Type II environmental labelling)

ISO 19011, Guidelines for auditing management systems

ISO/IEC 17065, Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.

Responsible Wood Logo Use Rules

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Fundamental Conventions:

- (a) [Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No. 87\)](#)
- (b) [Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No. 98\)](#)
- (c) [Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No. 29\) \(and its 2014 Protocol\)](#)
- (d) [Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 \(No. 105\)](#)
- (e) [Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No. 138\)](#)
- (f) [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\)](#)
- (g) [Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 \(No. 100\)](#)
- (h) [Discrimination \(Employment and Occupation\) Convention, 1958 \(No. 111\)](#)

NOTE 1: See <https://www.ilo.org>.

NOTE 2: For conventions No 87 and 98 refer to jurisprudence of the Committee on Freedom of Association, to the extent allowed by law.

1.3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the relevant definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 and ISO 9000 apply, together with the following definitions:

1.3.1 Accredited certificate

A certificate issued by a certification body within the scope of its accreditation which bears the accreditation body's symbol.

1.3.2 Authorised body

An entity authorised by PEFC to perform the administration of a scheme on behalf of the PEFC Council.

Note: The authorised body is either the PEFC National Governing Body operating within its country or other entity that has been authorised by the PEFC Council to perform the administration of the PEFC scheme. In Australia, the PEFC authorised body is Responsible Wood.

1.3.3 Certified content

Percentage of certified material in a product or product group.

1.3.4 Certified material

Material category for:

a) Forest and tree-based material delivered by a supplier covered by a recognised certificate, with the claim “x% RW certified”, “x% PEFC certified”, “x% RW/PEFC certified”, “100% PEFC Origin” or delivered by a supplier covered by a recognised certificate against a forest management standard that is endorsed by PEFC with another endorsed system claim.

Note: PEFC endorsed system claims are published online on the PEFC website.

b) Recycled material

1.3.5 Certified product

Product sold/transferred by an organisation with the claim “x% RW certified”, “x% PEFC certified”, “x% RW/PEFC certified” or “100% PEFC Origin”.

1.3.6 Chain of custody

Processes of an organisation for handling forest and tree-based products and information related to their material category and making accurate and verifiable claims.

1.3.7 Claim

Organisation’s declaration on material/products, stated in sales and delivery documentation, namely the claims “x% RW certified” and “RW controlled sources”, “x% PEFC certified”, “PEFC controlled sources”, “x% RW/PEFC certified” and “RW/PEFC controlled sources”.

Note 1: The claim “100% PEFC origin” may be used where the physical separation method is applied, and the product is supplied:

- i. *by a forest owner/manager covered by a recognised sustainable forest management (SFM) certificate with a claim meeting AS/NZS 4708 e.g. “100% RW Certified or “100% PEFC certified” and/or,*
- ii. *from a chain of custody certified supplier with the claim 100% PEFC origin.*

Note 2: If organisations receive material with a claim “100% PEFC Origin” and implement the percentage or credit methods, then this material may be claimed as “100% PEFC certified”.

Note 3: A list of PEFC accepted abbreviations and translations of PEFC claims is available on the PEFC website.

1.3.8 Claim period

Time period for which the chain of custody claim applies.

Note: The claim period can also be specified as a single product, job order or production batch.

1.3.9 Complaint

Expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its conformity with the requirements of this standard, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

1.3.10 Conflict timber

“Timber that has been traded at some point in the chain of custody by armed groups, be they rebel factions or regular soldiers, or by a civilian administration involved in armed conflict or its representatives, either to perpetuate conflict or take advantage of conflict situations for personal gain. (...) Conflict timber is not necessarily illegal.” The exploitation of timber may itself be a direct cause of conflict.

Note: Definition in quotations as used by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

1.3.11 Controlled sources

Material category covering forest and tree-based material for which an organisation has determined through its Due Diligence System (See Appendix A) that there is “negligible risk” that the material is from controversial sources.

Note: “RW controlled sources” and/or “PEFC controlled sources” is also the claim that may be used for material from this material category.

1.3.12 Controversial sources

Forest and tree-based material sourced from:

- a) Activities not complying with applicable local, state and territory, national or international legislation on forest management, including but not limited to forest management practices; nature and environmental protection; protected and endangered species; property, tenure and land-use rights for indigenous peoples, local communities, or other affected stakeholders; health, labour and safety issues; anti-corruption and the payment of applicable royalties and taxes.
- b) Activities where the capability of forests to produce a range of wood and tree-based forest products and services on a sustainable basis is not maintained or harvesting levels exceed a rate that can be sustained in the long term.
- c) Activities where forest management does not contribute to the maintenance, conservation, or enhancement of biodiversity on landscape, ecosystem, species, or genetic levels.
- d) Activities where ecologically important forest areas are not identified, protected, conserved, or set aside.
- e) Activities where native forest conversions occur, except in the following justified circumstance where the conversion:
 - i. is in compliance with local, state and territory and national policy and legislation applicable for land use and forest management, and
 - ii. does not have negative impacts on ecologically important forest areas, culturally and socially significant areas, or other protected areas, and
 - iii. does not destroy areas of significantly high carbon stock, and
 - iv. makes a contribution to long-term conservation, economic, and/or social benefits.
- f) Activities where the spirit of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) is not met.
- g) Activities where the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) is not met.

- h) Conflict timber.
- i) Genetically modified trees.

Note 1 (on 1.3.12 b, d and e): Not considered “controversial sources” are such activities in short rotation forest plantations with harvesting cycles under 35 years, that are on agricultural land.

Note 2 (on 1.3.12 i): The restriction on the usage of genetically modified trees has been adopted by the PEFC General Assembly based on the Precautionary Principle. Until enough scientific data on genetically modified trees indicates that impacts on human and animal health and the environment are equivalent to, or more positive than, those presented by trees genetically improved by traditional methods, no genetically modified trees will be used.

1.3.13 Customer

Entity receiving from an organisation a claim for products, of which it obtains legal ownership and/or physical possession.

Note 1: Where material/products are physically delivered to an entity other than the entity that has obtained legal ownership of the material, the organisation shall appoint a single customer for the purpose of this definition, i.e. either the entity that obtains legal ownership or the entity that obtains physical possession of the material.

Note 2: The term customer can also refer to an internal customer within an organisation, if subsequent product groups have been established.

1.3.14 Credit method

A chain of custody method where credits gained from certified material are transferred to controlled sources material within the same product group.

1.3.15 Due Diligence System (DDS)

A framework of procedures and measures, namely information gathering, risk assessment and risk mitigation, implemented by an organisation to reduce the risk that forest and tree-based material originates from controversial sources.

Note: Organisations can cooperate with each other and use external services for implementing a DDS, but the responsibility to conform with the DDS requirements of this standard lies with the individual organisation.

1.3.16 Ecologically important forest areas

Forest areas:

- a) containing protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems
- b) containing significant concentrations of endemic species and habitats of threatened species, as defined in recognised reference lists
- c) containing endangered or protected genetic in situ resources
- d) contributing to globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscapes with natural distribution and abundance of naturally occurring species

Note: The equivalent term for ecologically important forest areas in the Australia/ New Zealand Standard for sustainable forest management AS/NZS 4708 is “areas of significant biodiversity values”.

1.3.17 Equivalent input material

Forest and tree-based material that can be substituted with each other without significantly changing the appearance, function, grade, type or value of the output product.

1.3.18 Forest

An area of land, incorporating all living and non-living components, that is dominated by trees having usually a single stem and a mature or potentially mature stand height exceeding 2 m and crown cover or potential crown cover of overstorey strata about equal to or greater than 20%

Note 1: This definition includes Australia's diverse native forests and plantations, regardless of age. It is also sufficiently broad to encompass areas of trees that are sometimes described as woodlands.

Note 2: Source-The Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/abares/forestsaustralia/australias-forests#:~:text=Forest%20definition&text=An%20area%2C%20incorporating%20all%20living,greater%20than%2020%20per%20cent>

1.3.19 Forest and tree-based material

Material originating in forests or from other sources recognised by PEFC as eligible for certification, such as trees outside forests, including recycled material originally coming from those areas/sources as well as wood-based materials, and non-wood-based forest materials, such as mushrooms, berries, honey, oils etc.

1.3.20 Forest and tree-based products

Products from forest and tree-based material, including measurable but non-tangible products, such as energy generated from forest and tree-based material.

1.3.21 Forest conversion

Direct human-induced change of forest to non-forest land or forest plantation.

Note: Regeneration by planting or direct seeding and/or the human-induced promotion of natural seed sources, to the same dominant species as was harvested or other species that were present in the historical species mix is not considered a conversion.

1.3.22 Forest plantation

Forest or other wooded land of introduced species, and in some cases native species, established through planting or seeding, mainly for production of wood or non-wood goods and services.

Note 1: Includes all stands of introduced species established for production of wood or non-wood goods and services.

Note 2: May include areas of native species characterised by few species, intensive land preparation (e.g. cultivation), straight tree lines and/or even-aged stands.

Note 3: Application of the definition requires consideration of national forestry terminology and legal requirements.

1.3.23 Genetically modified trees

Trees in which the genetic material has been altered in a way that does not occur naturally by mating and/or natural recombination, taking into account applicable legislation providing a specific definition of genetically modified organisms.

Note 1: The following techniques are considered as genetic modification resulting in genetically modified trees (EU Directive 2001/18/EC):

1) *Recombinant nucleic acid techniques involving the formation of new combinations of genetic material by the insertion of nucleic acid molecules produced by whatever means outside an organism, into any virus, bacterial plasmid or other vector system and their incorporation into a host organism in which they do not naturally occur, but in which they are capable of continued propagation.*

2) *Techniques involving the direct introduction into an organism of heritable material prepared outside the organism including micro-injection, macro-injection, and micro-encapsulation.*

3) *Cell fusion (including protoplast fusion) or hybridisation techniques where live cells with new combinations of heritable genetic material are formed through the fusion of two or more cells by means of methods that do not occur naturally.*

Note 2: The following techniques are not considered as genetic modification resulting in genetically modified trees (EU Directive 2001/18/EC):

1) *in vitro fertilisation*

2) *natural processes such as: conjugation, transduction, transformation*

3) *polyploidy induction*

1.3.24 Material category

Material with certain characteristics, namely certified material, other material, neutral material and controlled sources.

1.3.25 Multi-site organisation

Organisation with an identified central function (normally, and hereafter referred to as a “central office”) at which chain of custody related activities are planned, controlled and managed, and with one or more sites at which such activities are fully or partially carried out.

1.3.26 Neutral material

Material category for material other than forest and tree-based material, such as metal or plastic, not taken into account in the calculation of certified content of a product group.

1.3.27 Organisation

Person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives.

Note: In the context of this standard, an organisation is implementing the requirements of this standard while being covered by a recognised certificate.