

PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System – development report for Croatia

Introduction

Based on existing good cooperation of the Balkan forest owner's associations and similar forest tradition in the region and having in mind traditional market connections, on the meeting of the forest owner's associations organized in Croatia in February 2018, the fundamentals for creation of the PEFC Balkan regional system were established.

Having in mind that the issues of accreditation process in the countries that already have endorsed PEFC national systems is complicated and creates difficulties to reach full operational PEFC system, the creation of PEFC regional system was the logical step to minimize difficulties and costs for the national governance bodies and with this to facilitate development of PEFC market on the Balkans. That will also minimize the future operational costs in the countries.

According to the Memorandum of understanding which was signed by the existing members of PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System from Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Bulgaria, as a regional platform for cooperation which is open to new members, Croatian Union of Private Forest Owners Associations (CUPFOA) expresses readiness to join PEFC BFCS.

Scope of the standard

Geographic scope of the PEFC BFCS are the countries that belong to the Balkan region or countries neighboring to it and for now participating countries are Slovenia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia is with this process pending for membership in PEFC BFCS.

All documentation of the system is the same for all participating countries. Only the National Standards for Sustainable Forest Management is unique for every country due to differences in the national context and provide applicability for the forest managers and owners in the country.

The process

To develop suitable system documentation, the standardizing bodies from Croatia (CUPFOA) accept the whole PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System on 22.04.2024.

Proposal for standard development

At beginning of the process, the first step was to achieve a consensus between the main stakeholders regarding the establishment of NGB. The process was led by the Croatian Forest Research Institute (CFRI) as part of the project "Supporting Stakeholders for Development of PEFC Certification Standards in Croatia" and consensus between Ministry of Agriculture, Croatian forest Ltd (state forest manager) and CUPFOA was achieved in 2022. This was the beginning of process for making changes of CUPFOA Statute for establishment Certification Council as a independent body with the aim of establishing a national governing body for the PEFC forest certification system.

Standard setting and revision procedures

For the purpose of developing PEFC Balkan system, the Standard setting and revision procedures was one of the basic documents to be developed. This document was adopted from PEFC BFCS and was approved on 02.03.2023.

Stakeholders mapping

One of the basic steps in drafting the national standard is stakeholders mapping. The purpose of that step is to provide opportunity for all interested stakeholders to participate in the standard development, including key, affected and disadvantaged stakeholders.

The mapping of the stakeholders was implemented according to requirements of the PEFC BS 02:2020, Standard setting and revision procedures.

The stakeholders mapping in Croatia which was done by (CFRI) has identified two ministries, 4 chambers and associations, state forest company, 2 biggest NGO organizations, university, research institute and 2 syndicate of forest workers.

Announcement of the process and invitation to stakeholders

After preparation of stakeholders mapping document and its approval at the SBs in participating countries, the announcement of the process and invitation to stakeholders was executed according to requirements of the PEFC BS 02:2020, Standard setting and revision procedures.

In Croatia the process began with the first announcement of the process on website of CFRI on 03.03.2023. and all identified stakeholders were invited to join the process by direct communication on email. Subsequently, 8 stakeholders nominated their representatives in the process:

Forest owners:	CUPFOA Ministry of agriculture
Business and industry:	Croatian forest Ltd Association of wood processing industry
NGO:	WWF Adria
Scientific communities:	Faculty of forestry and wood technology Croatian Forest Research Institute
Workers and trade unions:	Chamber of forestry and wood technology engineers

The process in the work group – drafting the content of the National SFM standard

The process of drafting the standard has officially started on 14.04.2023. when the first work session organized on the ZOOM platform was held. Updated versions of standard sent on emails of the WG participants. The second meeting was held on 25.4.2023., on which the process of consensus building was achieved between the present participants. Positive voting from missing participants was sent by email, until the last member of the workgroup has voted positive for acceptance of the draft National SFM standard.

Public consultation

The process of public consultation on the content of the draft National SFM standard was launched on 08.05.2023. on web page of CFRI. The CFRI has sent email invitations to all identified stakeholders in the stakeholders mapping. The invitation was also announced on the web page of the NGB. For the process, the CFRI has provided contact on email mobile phone to interested stakeholders. The public consultation was lasting until 08.07.2023. and no objections or any other comments or complaints were received.

Second public consultation

The second public consultation was executed on 01.08.2023. on web page of CFRI. The CFRI has sent email invitations to all identified stakeholders in the stakeholders mapping. The invitation was also announced on the web page of the NGB. For the process, the CFRI has provided contact on email mobile phone to interested stakeholders. The public consultation was lasting until 08.07.2023. and no objections or any other comments or complaints were received.

Pilot testing

The pilot testing exercise was conducted on 28.02.2024. with mr. Hrvoje Boras which is expert in forest certification and independent auditor. Some minor comments were received. Working group considered this comments and include it in final draft of SFM standard which was accepted on 18.03.2024.

Acceptance of the SFM standard by the NGB

Because there were no objections or any other comments or complaints received for the draft National SFM standard in Croatia, the SB has proposed acceptance of the standard to the NGB. The acceptance was officially confirmed by decision of the NGB on 22.04.2024.