

PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System – development report

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. Knowing that in Slovenia there is fully operational PEFC system after resolving the issue of accreditation, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina hopes to build up on Slovenian accreditation. That will also minimize the future operational costs in the countries.

For this process, there are three NGBs that decided to enter in this process:

- The Council for Sustainable Forest Management in the Republic of Macedonia
- Institute for forest certification in Slovenia
- Association of private forest owners "Naša Šuma"

The option for other countries from the Balkan region to join to Balkan system remains open.

Scope of the standard

The Balkan regional system will be applicable at the territory of participating countries: Slovenia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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

The process

To develop suitable system documentation, the NGB's from participating countries have agreed to commonly develop system documentation. The process has started within regular revision of the PEFC system in Slovenia, revision of the PEFC system in North Macedonia and establishment of new PEFC system in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Once the full PEFC Balkan system documentation was developed and all of the processes were finalized, the next step was to finalize the process at the standardizing bodies (SB) in the NGB's for approval.

The three NGB's from participating countries accepted the whole PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System:

- The Council for Sustainable Forest Management in the Republic of Macedonia voted on 01.06.2021
- Institute for forest certification in Slovenia voted on 10.06.2021
- Association of private forest owners "Naša Šuma" voted on 01.06.2021

Proposal for standard development

At beginning of the process, the first document that was developed was Proposal for standard development. The text of the document was shared among participating countries and once the content was accepted then it was translated and brought to SB for approval.

In North Macedonia the proposal was approved by The Council for SFM on 24.04.2020.

In Slovenia was approved on 10.12.2019.

In B&H the proposal was approved on 22.05.2020.

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 announced on the web pages of the NGB prior to beginning of the process and it was defining all formal steps and procedure for the process, not only for CBs, but for all interested stakeholders as well.

In North Macedonia this document was approved by The Council for SFM on 24.04.2020.

In Slovenia this document was approved on 09.03.2020.

In B&H this document was approved on 22.05.2020.

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 North Macedonia has identified at total 28 stakeholders. The mapping process has included division of stakeholders in the major groups: forest owners, business and industry, NGOs, scientific community, workers and labour union, institutions and managers of protected areas and other.

The stakeholders mapping in Slovenia has identified 5 chambers and associations, state forest company, 4 biggest NGO organizations, university and syndicate of forest workers.

The stakeholders mapping in Bosnia and Herzegovina has included division of stakeholders in the major groups: forest owners, business and industry, NGOs, scientific community, workers and labor union, institutions and managers of protected areas and other.

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 North Macedonia all identified stakeholders were invited to join the process by direct email communication on 28.04.2020 and phone calls. In addition to that, on the same day there was announcement in public (web page of the NGB, NGB's FB profile). After this, 16 stakeholders have nominated their representatives in the process. The Standardizing Body has accepted all proposed nominations for participation in the WG on 10.06.2020.

Forest owners

Ministry for agriculture, forestry and water economy
Association of private forest owners
Forest police

Business and industry

The Hunting association
PE National Forests

NGOs

Macedonian ecological society
 WWF Adria
 Macedonian association of forest engineers
 Federation of mountain sports
 Dren

Scientific community

Faculty of forestry

Workers and labour union

Labour union of forest workers

Institutions and managers of protected areas

Ministry for environment and physical planning
 National Park Mavrovo
 Municipality of Vevchani

Other

Association of municipalities ZELS

In Slovenia the invitation to participate in working group was sent on 15.01.2019. Key stakeholders were contacted also by phone. Invitation was accepted by 8 stakeholders. The process remained open for stakeholders from less represented groups and 2 stakeholders joined later.

Forest owners:

Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry
State forests company SIDG
Association of Forest Owners

Wood based industry:

Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Cooperative union of Slovenia

NGO

CIPRA
Pro Silva

Scientific community

University of Ljubljana

Public interest representatives

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MKGP)
State forest Service (ZGS)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process began with the first announcement of the process on 14.11.2018 and 06.02.2019 (website of AFPO "Nasa Suma"). All identified stakeholders were invited to join the process by direct communication on email from 06-12 February 2019 and by phone calls. Subsequently, 22 stakeholders nominated their representatives in the process. The WB accepted all proposed nominations for participation in the Council and the WG on March 19, 2019. At the meeting organized by the Council for SFM on 22.05.2020 the whole process and all the appointments that have been in the process so far have been confirmed. On 26.05.2020, the Development of the regional PEFC standard for the Republic of Srpska / Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Northern Makedonia was announced (website of AFPO "Naša Šuma"), on the same day a notice was sent to all interested participants by e-mail or phone call, to eventual new members to join to this process.

ECONOMIC SECTOR: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska, PE "Forests of the Republic of Srpska", "Wood Cluster" Banja Luka, Cluster "DrvoPD", Association of Wood Processors Mrkonjic Grad, Cluster "Drina Drvo" Milici, Association of Forestry and Wood Processing, Chambers of Commerce Srpske, Municipality of Čelinac, Šuma Plan d.o.o.

ECOLOGICAL SECTOR: NP Kozara, NP Sutjeska, Institute for the Protection of Monuments of the Republic of Srpska, NGO "Green Trails".

SOCIAL SECTOR AND YOUTH: Association of Engineers and Forestry Technicians, UPS "Naša šuma", Hunting Association of Republika Srpska, NGO Association of Forestry Engineers, "INTERFOB" - Association of Forestry and Wood Processing.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE, STATE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS: Faculty of Forestry in Banja Luka, Independent University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Agriculture East Sarajevo - Faculty of Forestry in Vlasenica, Faculty of Forestry Sarajevo.

MARGINALIZED STAKEHOLDERS: Collectors of forest non-wood products of mushrooms and berries, seasonal workers in forestry.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Municipalities and cities that have private forests in their areas.

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

In North Macedonia the process of drafting the standard has officially started on 18.06.2020 when the first work session organized on the ZOOM platform was held. In total, within the process there were organized 5 interactive sessions and from 20.07.2020 - 29.07.2020 the process of consensus building was lasting, until the last member of the workgroup has voted positive for acceptance of the draft National SFM standard.

In Slovenia first meeting of working group was held on 10.12.2019 at Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia. The working group had 3 meetings with last 15.01.2021 being organized online.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process of drafting the standard began on 14.11.2018 with the first publication on the site www.nasasum.com. The first meeting of the WG was held on 01.06.2019. From then until 07.11.2019 in total 5 (five) meetings of the WG were held until 22.05.2020. At the session of the council for SFM on 22.05.2020 the whole process that has been executed so far has been confirmed. After the start of the process of development of the PEFC Balkan Forest Certification System, in the period from July 27 to November 17, 2020, 3 (three) sessions of the work group were held, where all thematic areas from SFM standard that were adopted in 2019 were re-analyzed. All decisions in the WG were brought by consensus.

Public consultation

The process of public consultation on the content of the draft National SFM standard was launched on 31.07.2020. The Council for SFM has sent email invitations to all identified stakeholders in the stakeholders mapping. The invitation was also announced on the web page of the NGB and its FB profile. For the process, the NGB has provided contact on 2 emails and one mobile phone to interested stakeholders. The public consultation was lasting until 09.10.2020 and no objections or any other comments or complaints were received.

In Slovenia public consultation lasted was from 19.01.2021 to 20.03.2021. No comments or objections were received.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process of public debate on the content of the draft national standard for SFM was initiated on 25.12.2020. The SFM Council e-mailed invitations to all identified stakeholders in stakeholder mapping. The invitation was also published on the website: http://nasasuma.com/sertifikacija/JAVNA_RASPRAVA_III_RS-25-12-2020.pdf. For this procedure, the SFM Council provided two e-mail addresses and two telephone numbers to interested stakeholders. The public consultation lasted until 25.02.2020 and no objections or any other comments were received.

Second public consultation

The second public consultation was executed only for Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the systems in Slovenia and North Macedonia were already existing and being endorsed by the PEFC Council.

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The second public consultation was announced on 02/25/2021 on the website of the Association http://nasasuma.com/sertifikacija/JAVNA_RASPRAVA_IV_RS-25-02-2021.pdf and information sent to all participants via Email the same day.

Field testing

The field testing exercise was conducted only for for Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the systems in Slovenia and North Macedonia were already existing and once endorsed by the PEFC Council. The field testing was arranged on 24.02.2021 through the ZOOM platform.

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 North Macedonia, the SB has proposed acceptance of the standard to the NGB. The acceptance was officially confirmed by decision of the NGB on 28.10.2020.

In Slovenia SFM standard did not receive any comments or objections. SFM standard for Slovenia was unanimously adopted by Council of Institute for Forest Certification on 10.06.2021.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina there were no objections, comments or complaints on the draft national SFM standard either after the first public hearing from 25.12.2020 or after the second public hearing on 25.02.2021. The Working Group for the development of the PEFC standard proposed to the SFM Council in B&H the adoption of the standard. Acceptance was officially confirmed by the decision of the Council on 01.06.2021.