

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR AUDITORS AND OBSERVERS

Pilot Testing for Draft Accreditation of Nurseries and Certification of Quality Planting Material (QPM) Standard

NCCF calls for the participation of the interested CBs for the Pilot testing of the NCCF's Draft Accreditation of Nurseries and Certification of Quality Planting Material (QPM) Standard in the capacity of:-

1. Lead Auditor
2. Observer

EOI Invitation

Interested CBs may submit their application along with the [application form](#) and provide a financial quotation, names, and technical expertise along with CV of the auditor to the suparna.das@nccf.in email address by **26th July 2023**.

NCCF after the careful review shall invite the CB for conducting the pilot testing. For any further information please feel free to contact suparna.das@nccf.in.

Eligibility

- **Observer**
- To observe the process of the Pilot Testing of the Standards; the observer would be a person of significant experience and stature from the field of forestry, agriculture, and horticulture. Desirable to have knowledge and work experience in the field of nursery management, quality planting material, clonal technology etc. In addition to this, a generalized knowledge about certification would be preferred.
- Members of QPM SDG or TWG; or NCCF
- **QPM Team members**
The candidates must be a qualified auditor and those fulfilling the following profile can send in their CVs to be the QPM team members for this pilot test:
 - a. Having auditing experience in Forest Management Certification, Agriculture Certification schemes, any other related certification scheme etc. along with knowledge about nurseries.
 - b. Expertise in reviewing the certification assessment reports. Preference shall be given to candidates with work experience in nursery management and QPM production.
 - c. Also the Professional/Forester with significant expertise and experience in the field of certification.

Tasks

The whole process will be conducted under the overall guidance and supervision of the Chairman, QPM, SDG who would be in charge of the process as well as outcomes and their interpretation.

A training on the QPM certification standard will be conducted for the teams at the administrative office of NCCF to familiarise them with the standard. The auditors/observers willing to participate in the pilot testing will be expected to undertake the following tasks:

- a. The team will contact the respective Pilot Testing Site/Area staff and coordinate with them regarding logistics and audit
- b. Conduct the field test according the Work Plan
- c. Prepare a draft Field Test Report in the official English language and submit the same to the NCCF
- d. Review of pilot testing reports and compilation of all issues, comments and results of certification decisions

Conditions for participation

- a. NCCF shall have the right to publish a report on the results of the pilot tests, which may include observations about the cost of implementation of the draft standard, as well as details about the ease or difficulty of implementation. This report shall be publicly available.
- b. NCCF will bear the travel, boarding and logistics expenses of the auditors.
- c. NCCF will pay a per diem honorarium to auditors for the pilot testing process.
- d. No payments for participation shall be made to the observers, who have to make arrangements for their travel and logistics.
- e. All local expenses will be borne by NCCF

Timelines

Expected start date – **2nd Fortnight of August 2023**

Background

Quality Planting Material (QPM) is an essential input in agriculture and forestry for maximizing revenues, improving adaptability to adverse environmental conditions, and meeting quality raw material requirements of markets. The quality of planting material is determined by origin, the authenticity of variety and stock, vegetation development, and health state.

NCCF as a national certification standard-setting body has initiated the process for the development of assessment standards for Certification of Quality Planting Material (QPM), through a multi-stakeholder Standard Development Group (SDG) under the Chairmanship of Mr. Abhijit Ghosh, IFS (retd), ex PCCF HoFF, Rajasthan.

The Standard Setting Process of the NCCF makes it mandatory to pilot test draft standards in the field conditions, before the standards are finalized and launched for use by the certification bodies.

Proposed Areas for pilot testing

The following states /divisions have been tentatively proposed by the TWG, SDG and NCCF for pilot testing, subject to availability of funds and concurrence of the respective sites/areas

S.No	Pilot Testing Site	Timeline
1.	Star Paper Mills Ltd. Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh	Last week of Aug 2023
2.	Tamil Nadu	September 2023
3.	Odisha	September 2023

Pilot Testing

The primary objective of the Pilot Testing is:

- a. Test the draft QPM Certification Standard **in the field** and gather the **outcomes** including:
 - i. Is it possible to apply the standards in practices
 - ii. Problems in implementation
 - iii. Reasons for problem in implementation
 - iv. Solutions to improve the situation

The secondary objectives of the Pilot Testing are:

- a. To check the suitability, relevance and adaptability of the standard in the multitude of conditions and identifying the lacunae.
- b. To assess the applicability and degree of implementability of the standard in the variant conditions and to identify the gaps in the above objectives
- c. To identify regional variants in the adaptability of the standard and to assign specific verifiers for region centric application and use.
- d. Contact / engagement of the disadvantaged stakeholders to solicit their comments and see the area of improvement
- e. Supply SDG with the comprehensive report providing area of conformance, non -conformance and non-applicability of standard in diverse forest conditions.
- f. Providing exposure to larger pool of potential auditors and standard implementers, to encourage familiarity with the standard.
- g. Identifying the major sections getting non-conformance during the field testing but for whom conformance can be achieved after a specific interval and changes in the practices.

About NCCF

Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests (NCCF), came into existence in January 2015 as a registered society, comprising experts, professionals, and stakeholders of natural resources, engaged in the development of India specific and globally benchmarked sustainability standards, as its core working area, apart from working for policy advocacy, training and capacity building through multi-stakeholder engagement.

NCCF has developed the first-ever Indian scheme of forest certification that is endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), giving it global recognition. NCCF's Trees outside Forest Certification Scheme is the first of its kind and is presently under the process of PEFC endorsement. We are also developing standards for Quality Planting materials, Safeboards, Protected Areas & Wetlands, Biomass & Biofuels, and Land Degradation Neutrality. The zero drafts Non-Wood Forest Resource is also ready for pilot testing. Carbon Registry India is a major endeavor to provide a carbon trading and tracking platform for verified net Green House Gases emissions reductions and removals enhancement with Sustainable Development Contribution.