



Minutes of the Meeting: Seeking Input on SFM Standards Revision from SDG members held on 5th April 2024 via Zoom from 11:00am to 01:00pm

NCCF is currently in the process of aligning with the European Union Deforestation-free Regulation (EUDR) in accordance with the PEFC plan.

Background

SFM: The Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Standard received endorsement from PEFC on Sep 2017 and launched in Jan 2018. It underwent review from September 9, 2022, to September 2023 and is currently in the revision process from September 9, 2023, to September 9, 2024. Mr. A.K. Varma, nominated as a member of the PEFC SFM EUDR Task Force, has generously contributed his time to attend meetings and provide guidance to the Technical Working Group at NCCF. Consequently, we are adhering to a strict timeline to ensure compliance with EUDR for the SFM standard submission to PEFC by September 9, 2024.

Agenda for SDG Meeting:

Agenda 1: Setting the context by Ms Ritka Bhardwaj, Coordinator, NCCF

Mr. Ritika Bhardwaj greeted all the SDG members and elucidated the agenda of the meeting. Following this, she requested permission from the SDG members to record the proceedings of the meeting.

Agenda 2: Meeting background by Mr. A. M. Singh, DG, NCCF

Mr. A. M. Singh greeted all the SDG members and provided an overview of the meeting's background. He proceeded to explain the on-going efforts to integrate the EUDR into SFM standards in alignment with the PEFC plan. Additionally, he highlighted that the timeline for PEFC endorsement has been submitted to PEFC.

Agenda 3: Opening remarks by Mr. A.K.Varma, Chairman

Mr. A.K. Varma, greeted all the SDG members and invited them to introduce themselves, encouraging them to share any remarks they may have regarding the EUDR-related aspects that PEFC and NCCF should take into consideration.

Agenda 4: Incorporation of comments from SDG members

- **Mr. A. K. Varma** highlighted the main points:
 - Tree-based products: PEFC still discussing the implementation of the definition.
 - The modifications made to the SFM standard concerning the EUDR will exclusively pertain to core subjects and will not affect the modular aspects.



- The revised draft of the SFM standard, aligned with the EUDR, will be distributed to the SDG members following additional TWG meetings.
- **Ms. Ritika Bhardwaj** explained the EUDR-SFM alignment timeline action plan to the SDG members.

Major Takeaways during the discussion:

1. Mr. A.K. Shrivastava suggested that the correspondence for pilot testing site should be considered in advance either in Meghalaya Forest Corporation or Uttar Pradesh Forest Corporation.
2. Dr. Manish Pande suggested that Pilot testing related to the EUDR can be integrated into surveillance audits to manage costs.
3. Deforestation: NCCF will accept the split definition (*into two*) to be endorsed by PEFC in accordance with the EUDR. Furthermore, Mr. A.K. Bansal incorporated that NCCF will provide clarification on the adoption of this definition within the national framework, aligning it with interpretations set forth by the Supreme Court.
Mr. A.K. Varma stated that the definition will undergo modifications to align it with Indian perspectives during the Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings and will be presented to SDG group during next meeting.
4. Tree-based products: The forest-based product definition should be considered instated of tree-based products. As using the term "tree-based products" narrows the scope to only products directly derived from trees, such as lumber and paper. In contrast, employing the broader term "forest-based products" expands the definition to include not just tree-derived items but also those derived from other forest resources like plants, herbs, non-timber forest products and ecosystem services, thereby opening up more possibilities for applications and innovations in various industries.
5. Forest-degradation: According to the EUDR/PEFC definition in the NCCF standard, Mr. Arun Kumar Bansal and Dr. Manish Pande have criticized that forest degradation, as defined by PEFC in the gap-analysis document, is exclusively linked to human-induced activities. However, discussions have ensued to consider the potential for degradation caused by natural factors as well. Reflecting the concerns of SDG members, Mr. A.K. Varma has proposed that similar discussions are underway within PEFC, suggesting improvements to the definition of forest degradation to encompass degradation due to natural causes.



6. Plantation and Planted Forests: Dr. Manish Pande stated that the definitions as per EUDR/PEFC glossary are to be included, along with explanations tailored to the Indian context. However, if there are any revisions or updates made to these definitions in the glossaries, those newer definitions will take precedence over the initially adopted ones.
7. Geolocation: Mr. A.K. Varma stated that during pilot testing, the geolocation aspect will be checked and Dr. Manish Pande added that through various applications such as mobile application this should not be an issue.

The final decision will be incorporated into the standard.

8. Mr. A.K. Varma submitted that the implications of EUDR, will be applicable to the core standard and therefore standard will also be applicable to non-EUDR exporters as well.

Agenda 5: Closing remarks by Mr. A. K. Varma, Chairman

At the end of the meeting, **Mr. A. K. Varma**, provided his concluding comments and thanked all the SDG members for attending the meeting.

Agenda 6: Thanking remarks by Mr. A. M. Singh, DG NCCF

Mr. A. M. Singh thanked all the members for joining the meeting. He expressed his gratitude to Chairman, SDG members, and all team members of NCCF for their consistent support and effective contribution in ongoing SFM standard revision.

Meeting Attendees:

Mr. Avani Kumar Varma, IFS (retd),	Chairman, NCCF
Mr. Arun Kumar Bansal, IFS (retd)	Chairperson-NWFR
Mr. Ashish Kumar Shrivastava, IFS (retd)	Director General Emeritus
Mr. A. M. Singh, IFS (retd)	Director General, NCCF
Dr. Manish Pande	Director and Head, PAD Division at Quality Council of India(QCI)
Mr. Deepesh Kumar Sharma	Regional Coordinator at EPCH
Dr. J.C. Kuniyal	SCIENTIST-G, Centre Head: Centre for Environmental Assessment and Climate Change (CEA&CC), GBPNIHESD
Mr. Anuj Ojha	Development Commissioner, DC Handicrafts
Ms. Ritika Bhardwaj	Project Associate, NCCF