

Soil Association
Certification Ltd

Forestry Sector
Technical Update



FM Group Certificates
Internal Auditing

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Subject(s):	Internal Audits by Forest Management Group Certificate Holders		
Circulation:	SA Staff, Agents with FM in scope, all FM Auditors, All FM Group Certificate holders		
Reason for update:	<p>FSC® and PEFC have issued guidance on internal audits carried out by Group Certificate holders due to Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Group Certificate Holders: please follow the advice below and stay safe and well, working remotely where possible. Soil Association Auditors will also be working remotely in our own audits and will be contacting you to make arrangements for this in efforts to keep your certificates valid where possible.</p>		
Reference or Background Documents:	<p>PEFC Guidance for Sustainable Forest Management Audits Covid 19 https://pefc.org/covid-19 FSC: INT-STD-30-005_13 Monitoring requirements https://fsc.org/en/news?category=271 Relevant information is contained in the advice below.</p>		
Actions:	<p>All Group FM Certificate Holders shall follow this guidance Update May 2021: extended to end 2021</p>		
Details:	<p><u>FSC:</u></p> <p>The Group standard requires internal auditing by Certificate Holders.</p> <p>1. During the coronavirus pandemic, placing travel restrictions in many areas of the world, these internal audits may be replaced by remote desk audits, where:</p>		

- a. the Group Member is in an area with security risk
or
 - b. the Group Entity is prevented from conducting an on-site monitoring visits due to travel restrictions imposed by organizational (certificate holder/Group entity) health and safety policies or public authorities.
- 2. Where the initial onsite audit of a new Group applicant is required, that audit shall not be replaced by a remote audit and should be rescheduled.**
- 3. In addition to the option of conducting the monitoring visits as a remote audits, the Group Entity may also consider postponing the monitoring visits, but not beyond the end of 2021.**
- 4. The Group Entity shall retain documented evidence for each case where this interpretation has been applied.**

NOTE: As soon as travel restrictions have been lifted, monitoring visits shall be conducted as per regular procedures.

PEFC:

- A. Where a Group Organisation is affected by the COVID restrictions, annual internal monitoring programmes may be postponed a maximum of 6 months re-scheduled or hybrid or remote internal monitoring programme carried out.
- B. Any Group Organisation which wishes to conduct hybrid or remote internal monitoring shall submit a risk assessment and methodology to the certification body for approval.