

GUYANA NATIONAL FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

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SYSTEM DESCRIPTION REPORT



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1. Scope of the document

This document describes how the Guyana National Forest Certification System (GNFCS) operates, in particular:

- the structure of the GNFCS;
- schematic representation of the GNFCS including how it operates;
- how the standards comprising the GNFCS are developed; and
- description of how the scheme is administered.

2. Structure of the GNFCS

The GNFCS comprises of the following:

- The Guyana Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (GSSFM) (GY-ST-2023-01);
- The Group Certification Standard- Requirements (GY-ST-2023-01);
- Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements (PEFC ST 2002:2020) adopted by the National Standards Setting Working Group (NSSWG);
- PEFC Logo Usage Rules – Requirements (PEFC ST 2001:2008, Second Edition) adopted by the Standardising Body;
- Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the GSSFM (GY-ST-2023-01);
- Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard (PEFC ST 2003:2020) adopted by the Standardising Body; and
- PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements (PEFC ST 2001:2020) adopted by the Standardising Body.

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) as the National Governing Body and the Standardising Body provides oversight for the development, implementation and administration of the GNFCS. Its main functions include:

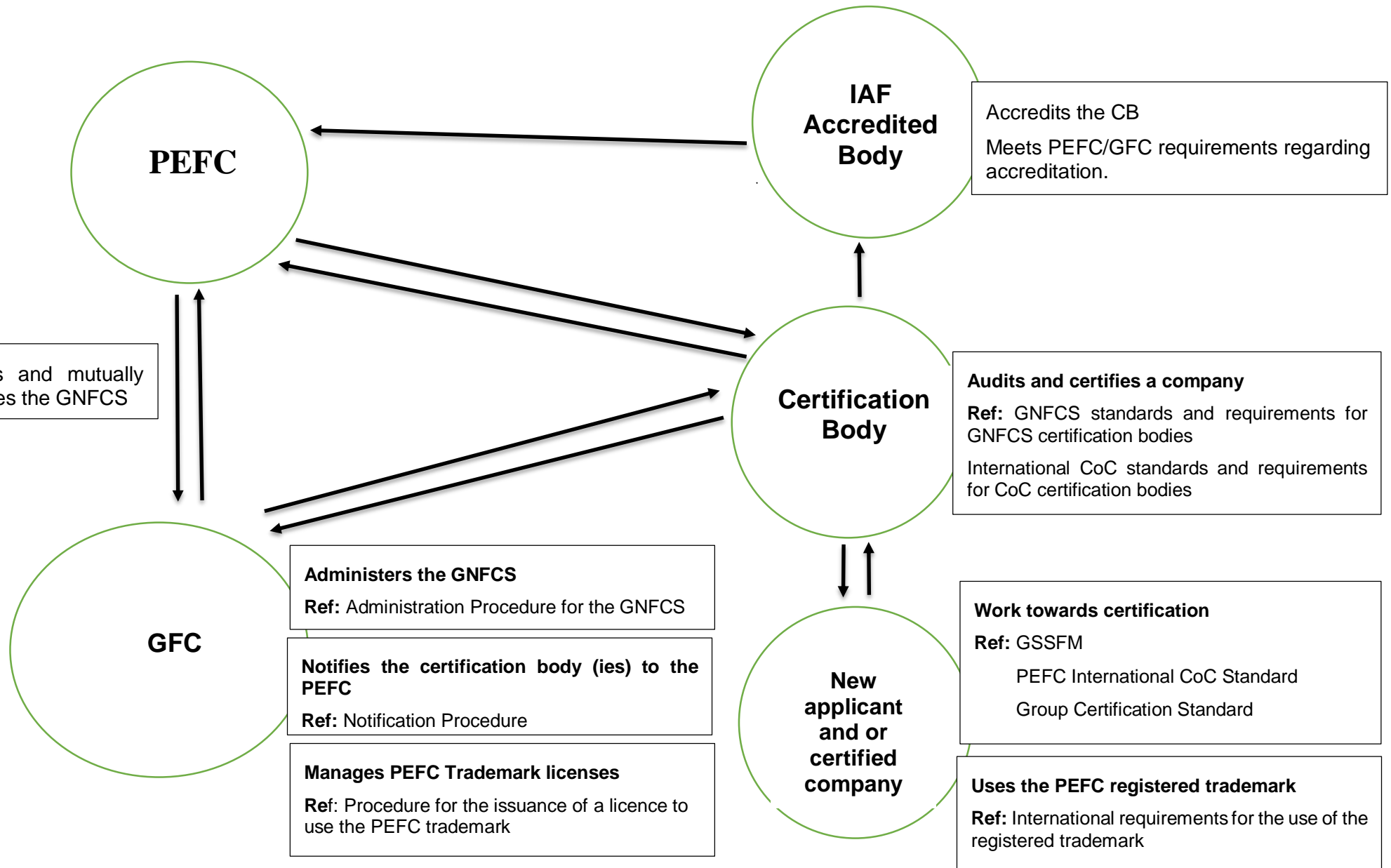
- representing Guyana on the PEFC Council;
- managing and administrating the GNFCS;
- receiving and reviewing client applications for certification under the GNFCS;

- revising and updating the standards comprised within the GNFCs;
- liaising with the PEFC International Secretariat and certification bodies;
- handling of complaints and appeals;
- notification of certification bodies; and
- licensing of client organisations under the PEFC trademarks.

3. Reference Documents for the GNFCs

The Guyana Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (GSSFM) (GY-ST-2023-01);
The Group Certification Standard (GY-ST-2021-01)
Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements (PEFC ST 2002-2020)
Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard (PEFC ST 2003:2020)
PEFC Logo Usage Rules – Requirements (PEFC ST 2001:2008, Second Edition)
Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the GSSFM (GY-ST-2023-01)
PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements PEFC ST 2001:2020
Standard Setting Procedures (GY-PROC-2023-01)
Administration of the System by the GFC (GY-PROC-2023-01)
Complaints and Appeals Handling Procedures (GY-PROC-2022-01)
Notification of certification bodies for chain of custody and forest management certifications in Guyana against the requirements of the Guyana National Forest Certification System (GY-PROC-2023-01)

Figure 1: showing schematic description of the functioning of the GNFCFS



4. Process for the development of the GSSFM

4.1 The Standardising Body

The GFC is responsible for advising the subject Minister on issues relating to forest policy, forestry laws and regulations. The Commission is also responsible for the administration and management of all State Forests. The work of the Commission is guided by the National Forest Policy Statement and Plan (2018) that have been developed to address issues relating to Guyana's forestry sector.

The Commission develops and monitors standards for forest sector operations, develops and implements forest protection and conservation strategies, oversees forest research and provides support and guidance to forest education and training. The GFC is governed by a board of directors appointed by the President. The board is responsible for the performance of the functions conferred on the Commission by the Forests Act 2009.

Two key departments support the GFC in its forest management functions as follows:

- the Forest Monitoring Division, which is responsible for the enforcement of the forest laws and regulations, monitoring and control of environmental and social impact of operations within the state forest and collection of revenue. This Division is also responsible for processing export documents, quality control and promoting timber and timber products, reviewing and assisting with enquires relating to timber and timber products; and
- the Forest Resource Management Division, which is responsible for collecting data on forest resources, conducting surveys and inventories, researching and making recommendations on forest dynamics and silviculture, planning and recommending the allocation of concession areas, preparing operational guidelines for forest management planning, evaluating management and operational plans, prescribing standards for forest management and providing support for forestry extensions.

4.2 The National Standard Setting Working Group (NSSWG)

The NSSWG is the technical working group responsible for developing and updating the Standards within the GNFCFS, under the guidance of the GFC.

The membership of the NSSWG was drawn from a broad range of affected and interested stakeholders within Guyana's forestry sector as follows:

- Forest owners and forest managers at all scales;
- Supply chain from harvest to end-user;

- Local environmental organisations;
- International environmental organisations;
- Government agencies whose statutory responsibilities influence the forests and forest products sector in Guyana;
- Research and academia;
- Workers' Union; and
- Community interests, including youth and women.

The members of the NSSWG were selected following a stakeholder mapping exercise which identified the stakeholder groups to be invited to nominate representatives. The final composition of the NSSWG was guided by the following considerations:

- balanced representation of all sectoral groups, while ensuring that no single category of stakeholder or interest group dominated the process;
- inclusion of stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the Standard, (including those who are materially affected by the Standard and those who can influence the implementation of the Standard);
- ensuring that the materially affected stakeholders represented a meaningful segment of the participants; and
- Community interests, including youth and women.

4.3 The Standard Setting Process

Since the International Tropical Timber Organisation's Diagnostic Mission to Guyana in 2002, in close consultation with stakeholders within the country's forestry sector, Guyana has been progressively improving its the sustainable management and use of its forest resources by developing and or updating its legislative, monitoring and regulatory framework. This framework consists of but not limited to the following:

- Guyana's Forest Regulations of 2018 (No. 6 of 2009) made under the Forest Act of 2009;
- The Forests Act (No. 6 of 2009); the GFC Act of 2007;
- Guyana's Code of Practice (No. 1 of 2018) for forest operations for state forest authorizations: timber sales agreements, wood cutting license holders, state forest

exploratory permits, state forest permissions, community forestry management agreements;

- Guidelines for Forest Operations (Small Concession);
- Guidelines for Forest Operations (Large Concession);
- Guyana’s National Wood Tracking System, November 2015;
- GFC’s Manual of Procedures:
 - Forest Resources Management Division’s (FRMD) Manual of Procedures, 2012;
 - Forest Monitoring Division’s (FMD) Manual of Procedures, 2012; and
 - Finance Division’s Manual of Procedures.

The NSSWG drew on the framework described above to develop the GNFCs to meet the requirements of the PEFC’s benchmark standards.

4.4 The GNFC Standards

The GNFCs are based on three standards: sustainable forest management, group certification and chain of custody, and are described in the following sections.

4.4.1 Sustainable forest management standard

The sustainable forest management standard was developed by taking into account international sustainable forest management benchmark requirements: Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements - PEFC ST 1003:2018, as well as national forest management laws, regulations, guidelines and policies. The standard applies to forest management activities in long-term state forest concessions where the forest management objective aims to:

- maintain and/or expand forests and their ecosystem services, as well as maintain or enhance the economic, ecological, cultural and social value of forest resources;
- maintain and/or improve the health and vitality of forest ecosystems as well as restore damaged forest ecosystems wherever possible, by taking into account economic capacities and by making the best use of both structures and processes and employing biological prevention measures;

- maintain and/or improve the forests' capacity to produce a range of timber and non-timber forest products and services on a sustainable basis;
- maintain, preserve or enhance biodiversity at the landscape, ecosystem and species levels;
- maintain or enhance the ecosystem services of forests that can benefit society, such as their potential role in terms of erosion control, flood prevention, water purification, climate regulation or carbon storage;
- respect all of the forests' socio-economic functions, in particular the taking into account of affected indigenous peoples and local communities' formal and customary land rights and the guarding of their livelihoods.

There are eleven key Principles and associated 50 criteria and 139 indicators. The key principles are as follows:

- Principle 1 – Compliance with legal requirements and organisational commitments.
- Principle 2 – Legal, customary and traditional rights.
- Principle 3 – Workers Rights.
- Principle 4 – Management systems and planning.
- Principle 5 – Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement.
- Principle 6 – Maintenance or Appropriate Enhancement of Forest Resources and Their Contribution to the Global Carbon Cycle.
- Principle 7 – Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality.
- Principle 8 – Maintenance and Encouragement of the Productive Functions of Forests (Wood and Non-Wood).
- Principle 9 – Maintenance, Conservation or Appropriate Enhancement of Biological Diversity in Forest Ecosystems.
- Principle 10–Maintenance or Appropriate Enhancement of the Protective Functions in Forest Management (Notably Soil and Water).
- Principle 11–Maintenance or Appropriate Enhancement of Socio-Economic Functions and Conditions.

Verifiers for the indicators have been included to assist auditors and certified entities. They provide guidance to auditors on the types of information and evidence applicants for certification can provide to demonstrate conformance with the prescriptions and requirements of the indicators.

Note: The PEFC Council standard includes details on the Trees Outside Forest requirements. The GNFCFS has not been adapted for these cases as no commercial timber harvesting in Trees Outside Forests occurs in Guyana.

4.4.2 Chain of Custody Standard

The NSSWG has adopted the PEFC ST 2002:2020 – Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products -Requirements without modification.

4.4.3 Group Certification Standard

The Group Certification Standard was developed based on PEFC ST 1002:2018 – Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements.

5. Requirements for certification and accreditation bodies

Forest management and chain of custody certificates are issued by accredited certification bodies. They are issued to forest sector operators whose activities comply with the GNFCFS standards, namely the GSSFM (forest management standard), Group Certification Standard and/or the PEFC ST 2002:2020 – Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements, adopted by NSSWG.

In order to be accredited and be able to issue accredited certificates, certification bodies must meet the GNFCFS's requirements for bodies carrying out forest management audits and certification (GY-PROC-2023-01) and/or the international requirements for bodies conducting PEFC chain of custody audits and certification (PEFC ST 2003:2020) which GFC has adopted. These requirements specify, in particular, the requirements for accreditation, audit processes, the auditor's skills, etc.

Compliance with these requirements is verified by accreditation bodies, which must themselves meet the GNFCFS's requirements. These requirements specify, in particular, that the accreditation bodies must be members of the IAF (International Accreditation Forum).

6. Requirements for the use of the PEFC registered trademarks

The GFC which will be responsible for administering the GNFCFS with the PEFC Council, will be in charge of issuing licenses for the use of PEFC registered trademarks to users.

These users will then have to comply with the international PEFC trademark standard (PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements-PEFC ST 2001:2020) and the PEFC logo use rules (PEFC Logo Usage Rules – Requirements: PEFC ST 2001:2008, Second Edition).

7. Administration of the GNFCs

The GFC is the body authorised to administer the GNFCs. The GFC will sign an administration delegation contract with the PEFC Council as it is the PEFC National Governing Body for Guyana.

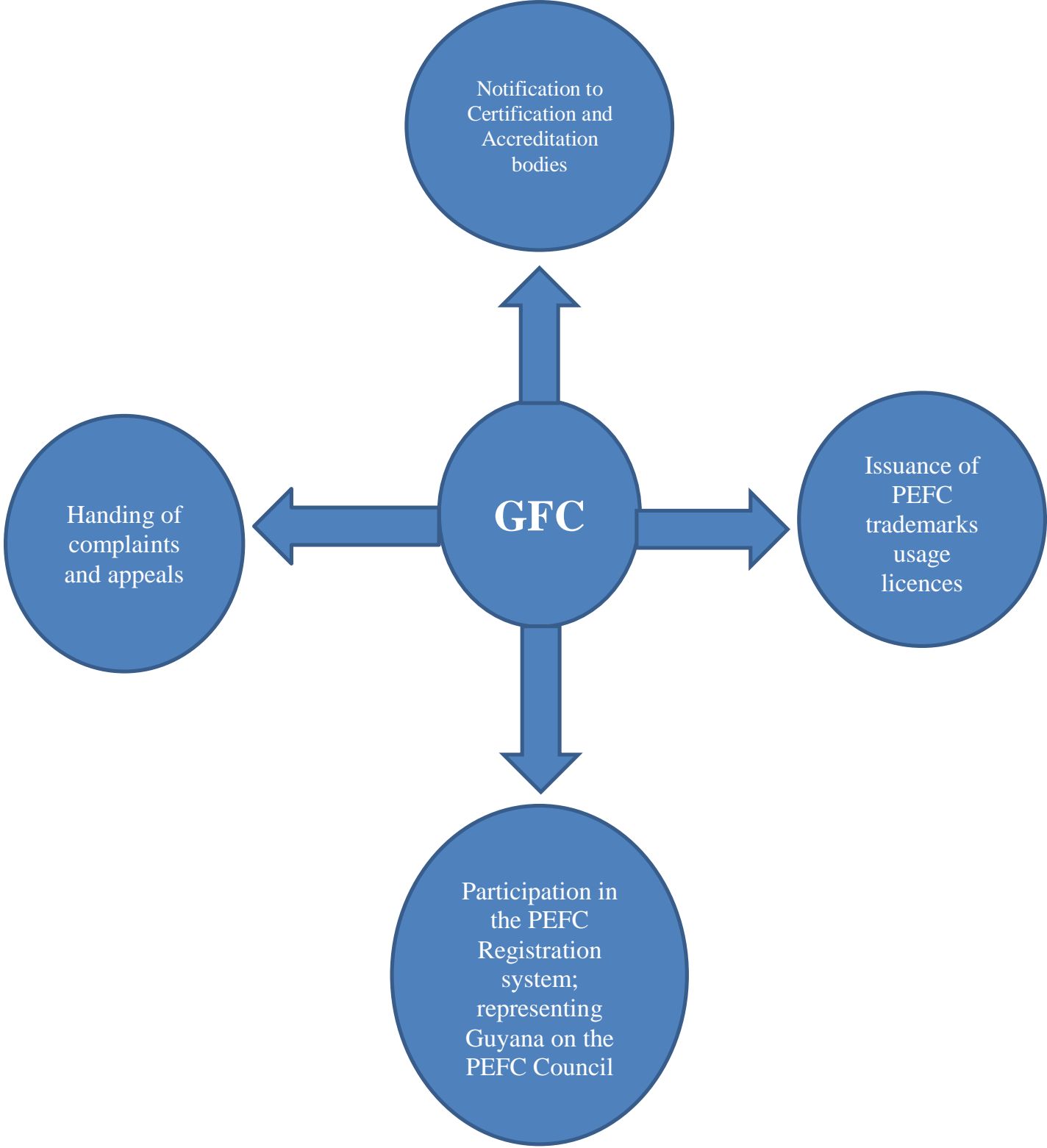
In addition to the GFC's activities related to the governance of the GNFCs undertake several activities related to the administration of the GNFCs including the following:

- Notification of certification bodies;
- Issuance of licenses to users for the use of PEFC trademarks;
- Handling of complaints and appeals related to these activities;
- Participation in the PEFC Registration System;
- Liaising with certification and accreditation bodies;
- The Standardising Body and the National Governing Body; and
- Representing Guyana at PEFC Council meetings.

The GFC is also responsible for promoting the GNFCs internationally, including regionally in the South American and Caribbean regions.

Note: Termination of the administration contract between the GFC and PEFC International Council has the immediate effect of rendering any activity or decision taken (even previously) by the GFC null and void, for example, the GFC's notifications and PEFC trademark usage licences become null and void.

Figure 2: The GFC's main tasks in terms of its administration of the GNFCs



8. PEFC notification of certification bodies

Notification by the GFC to the PEFC Council establishes the necessary link between the accredited CBs and the GFC. This notification allows the certification bodies to issue certificates recognised under the GNFCFS.

The GFC uses two procedures to issue notification to certification bodies: one for CBs that provide sustainable forest management system certification and one for CBs that provide chain of custody certification.

The notification request from the GFC to the PEFC Council is mandatory in order for a CB to issue a certificate, and it must be made prior to the issuance of any certificate.

The notification is formalised in the form of a contract between the GFC and the CB.

9. Licensing of the PEFC trademark

The GFC, through the CB, will issue licences to forest sector operators, which gives them the right to the PEFC registered trademarks in accordance with the relevant procedures and the requirements of the GNFCFS.

This procedure to use the PEFC trademark, describes, in particular, the types of users that may apply for licences, the conditions necessary to obtain a licence, the fees and the licence validity periods.

Usage of licences are subject to the applicant entity's commitment to comply with the rules for the use of the PEFC registered trademarks in effect at the time of application.

10. Handling of complaints and appeals

All operations carried out by the GFC, or its decisions within the framework of the administration of the GNFCFS, may be subject to complaints and, if necessary, appeals by third parties.

All complaints or appeals are considered to be an opportunity for improvement. Corrective and preventive measures are continuously implemented to improve services, especially following the handling of complaints and appeals.

The GFC, therefore has a procedure for the filing and processing of complaints and appeals which details the conditions for their admissibility, the way in which they are examined by the GFC and the notification of the decision to the complainant.

Note: Complaints and appeals relating to:

- an activity or a decision by a certified entity are handled accordingly to the complaints and appeals resolution procedure of the certified entity's certification body;
- an activity or a decision by the certification access entity (in the case of group certification) are handled by the entity's certification body;
- an activity or a decision by a certification body are handled according to the complaints and appeals resolution procedure of the certification body's accreditation body;
- an activity or a decision by an accreditation body are handled according to the International Accreditation Forum's (IAF) complaints and appeals resolution procedure.

11. Participation in the PEFC Registration system

The GFC participates in the PEFC Registration System, in which it has to submit information, including the following:

- holders of forest management certificates and chain of custody certificates, including information on the PEFC-certified products;
- users of PEFC registered trademarks that hold a licence issued by the GFC; and
- certification bodies notified by the GFC.

The GFC shall record and or submit all PEFC-related information in a manner that complies with the PEFC Council's rules and instructions.

The GFC shall ensure that the information recorded in the PEFC Registration System can be made public, including by the PEFC Council. The GFC shall include clauses and provisions to this effect in the notification contracts, in the PEFC trademark usage licences and in the certification body requirements.