



MEDIA STATEMENT

Guyana National Forest Certification System attains international endorsement

Kingston, Georgetown, Guyana (May 27, 2024) Following the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification's (PEFC) recognition of the Guyana National Forest Certification System (GNFCS), the Ministry of Natural Resources is delighted to announce that Guyana's aspiration to achieve global standards of sustainable forest management has again been recognised internationally. All forest management and chain-of-custody certificates issued by the GNFCS are now considered equal to those from the PEFC International certification system. The PEFC is one of the two internationally recognised initiatives – the other being the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – promoting sustainable forest management through independent third-party certification.

The GNFCS is guided by three standards: Forest Management (the Guyana Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (GSSFMS)); Chain of Custody, and, Group Certification.

In 2020, the Ministry of Natural Resources initiated the development of the GNFCS and has been deeply involved in its progress ever since. In 2021, an independent, multi-stakeholder working group chaired by the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC), commenced the formal process of developing the GNFCS. The multi-stakeholder working group comprised representatives from the Forest Products Association (FPA), the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association (GMSA), indigenous non-governmental organisations (NGOs), environmental NGOs, academia and research, workers' organisations, and youth and women's organisations. Two editorial drafts were made available for public review and comment before the GNFCS was finalised and sent for its assessment under the auspices of PEFC.

Guyanese timber and timber products certified under the GNFCS will now bear PEFC International labels and trademarks. This provides clear evidence to local and international buyers that the certified forest operator's management practices meet global environmental, social, and economic standards. It also demonstrates compliance with national and

international legal forest requirements, including fundamental ILO conventions that govern the rights of workers and the unauthorised use of child labour. This assurance extends to the environmental, social, economic and legal requirements and protection of rights throughout the forest supply chain under the EU Timber Regulation, the US Lacey Act, and the Australian Illegal Logging Prohibition Bill.

Notably, Guyana has maintained a national wood tracking system, which dates back to the early 2000s. It enables the tracking of timber and timber products from the market to the forest source. Further, Guyana has a dual wood-tracking system (electronic and manual) implemented nationally. Some forest stations have internet access and electronic tag scanners; however, stations in remote locations still operate on a purely manual basis with staff having to visually verify tag numbers with removal permits. Under the VPA, there is the intention to further build capacity, enabling the phased implementation of a fully electronic system which will greatly increase efficiency and offer greater credibility to the wood-tracking system. In the interim, however, the dual system will remain functional.

The GNFCFS drew on the national wood tracking system and other regulatory and monitoring systems developed and implemented by the GFC, including the national code of practice for forest management. The endorsement of the GNFCFS by PEFC not only recognises the credibility of our systems, but also assures buyers that Guyanese timber is legally sourced and sustainably managed.

Importantly too, the GNFCFS has been designed to make it cost-effective for large, medium, small and community forest sector operators (FSOs), aimed at attaining individual or group certification. Group certification allows FSOs to operate under one certificate and share costs, information, and experiences. The GFC is also working on training local auditors for certification bodies to use under the GNFCFS, reducing the need to bring auditors from overseas.

Additionally, the GNFCFS complements other national initiatives which the Government of Guyana has embarked on for several years, with an example as the European Union's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement. It is also one of the priority areas under Sustainable Forestry in the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) 2030.

For achieving yet another milestone, the ministry extends its deep appreciation to all forestry stakeholders, the local PEFC working group and the GFC team.

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