



FSC™ Chain of Custody Certification Guide

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FSC certification system

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a global independent, not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization established to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

The FSC certification system verifies sustainable sourcing of forest products and ecosystem services at every step of the value chain, from forest to consumer. The most visible symbol of certification is the FSC label, which can be found on millions of products and is recognised by 46% of consumers worldwide.

Every FSC label is backed by a diverse ecosystem of forest managers, businesses, non-profit organisations, and others committed to upholding a common set of responsible forestry standards that support:

- > Zero deforestation
- > Safeguarding of ancient and endangered forests
- > Fair wage and work environment
- > Biodiversity preservation
- > Community rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples

To summarise:

- > FSC members set standards for responsible forestry
- > Forest owners manage forests according to FSC standards
- > Businesses that make or sell products made from the forest follow chain-of-custody protocols that ensure compliance throughout the supply chain
- > Citizens support responsible forestry by buying FSC-certified products

There is a range of FSC standards to which certification can be achieved (see Section 2 below).

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Scope

Cotecna Inspection SA is licenced by FSC to offer Chain of Custody certification services with a worldwide scope excluding Russia, Belarus and Myanmar, against the following standards

- > FSC-STD-40-004 Chain of custody certification
- > FSC-STD-40-003 Chain of custody certification of multiple sites
- > FSC-STD-40-007 Sourcing reclaimed material for use in FSC product groups or FSC certified projects
- > FSC-STD-40-006 FSC Standard for Project Certification



Standards for FSC certification

FSC-STD-40-004
Chain of Custody
Certification (CoC)

This is the core standard for FSC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification that specifies the requirements which apply to all CoC-certified and applicant organizations with respect to sourcing, processing, labelling, and sale of forest-based products as FSC certified.

FSC-STD-40-003
CoC Certification of
Multiple Sites

This standard provides the conditions and requirements for the establishment and management of FSC CoC certification with multiple sites (Group or Multisite certification).

FSC-STD-40-007
Sourcing reclaimed
material for use in FSC
Product Groups or FSC
Certified Projects

This standard stipulates the requirements that shall be followed by organizations certified according to FSC-STD-40-004 for purchasing, verifying and classifying reclaimed forest-based inputs (including materials such as bamboo and cork) for use in FSC Product Groups.

FSC-STD-40-006
FSC Standard for
Project Certification

This standard specifies the requirements for FSC CoC certification of projects. For the purposes of this standard, a project is defined as the production or renovation of a construction or civil engineering project (e.g. an office building, a condominium of houses, event infrastructure such as concert stages, stand in a trade fair, timber bridge), individual art or decorative object (e.g. sculpture), or transport vehicle (e.g. maritime vessels) that is made of or contains forest-based materials.

FSC-STD-50-001
Requirements for use
of the FSC trademarks
by certificate holders

This standard is mandatory for all FSC certificate holders who are entitled to use the FSC trademarks and sets out how to use the FSC trademarks correctly.

The latest up-to-date versions of the standards are available on the FSC website <https://connect.fsc.org/document-centre>.

All interpretations of FSC requirements are at the sole discretion of the FSC International Centre.

Cotecna conducts its certification activities in accordance with:

- > FSC-STD-20-001 General Requirements for FSC Accredited Certification Bodies
- > FSC-STD-20-011 Chain of Custody Evaluations
- > the requirements of all applicable FSC regulations published on the FSC website (<https://connect.fsc.org/document-centre>);
- > requirements of its certification system which includes policies, procedures and instructions.

Steps to obtain an FSC Chain of Custody certificate



Contact us

1. Identify the appropriate FSC standards for your business which you require certification to.
2. Request an application form by contacting us at fsc@cotecna.com.



Submit your application

1. Check that you comply with the FSC requirements in all of the standards that you require certification to. Copies of the standards are available on the FSC website via this link: <https://connect.fsc.org/document-centre>. An internal audit is a good way of doing this.
2. Submit your completed application form and all required documents to the email address that sent you the application form.
3. If you want to be sure about your compliance with the requirements of the relevant FSC standards before your certification audit, please indicate in the Application Form that you would like us to conduct a Pre-assessment audit. During the Pre-assessment audit, our auditor may explain the relevant requirements of the relevant FSC standards, but will not offer specific solutions.



Establish a contractual relationship with us

1. Receive the following documents and information from us:
 - a. Certification Contract
 - b. Cotecna General Terms & Conditions of Business
 - c. FSC Chain of Custody Certification – Specific Terms and Conditions
 - d. FSC Chain of Custody Annual Administration Fees
2. Review these documents which contain our quotation for the services to be provided, which has been prepared using the information provided in your application form.
3. Sign the Certification Contract and return all applicable documents to the person that sent you the Certification Contract for signing.



Prepare for audit

1. Agree the audit date(s) with us.
2. Prepare for your audit by making sure that:
 - a. all processes operate in accordance with the FSC requirements,
 - b. you can demonstrate your compliance with the requirements of the relevant FSC standards,
 - c. your staff has all the necessary knowledge.
3. Use the link sent to you by FSC for the FSC Trademark Licence Agreement.
 - a. to set up your direct agreement with FSC.



Participate in audit

1. Attend an opening meeting with our audit team.
2. Answer our audit team's questions and demonstrate your compliance with the FSC requirements.
3. Take part in a closing meeting where you will be notified verbally of any findings that may have been identified during the audit. Audit findings can be summarised as 3 types:
 - a. Major non-conformity: The absence or total breakdown of the system in respect of a requirement, or a number of minor non-conformities against the same requirement which can represent a breakdown and therefore be considered as a major non-conformity.
 - b. Minor non-conformity: Failure in some parts of the system, or a single observed lapse in following a part of the system. If the minor non-conformity is not corrected in the requested timelines, it will be upgraded to a Major non-conformity.
 - c. Observation: An early indication of a potential problem identified by the auditor that does not yet constitute a non-conformity, but which, in the auditor's opinion, may lead to a non-conformity in the future if you do not correct it.
4. Acknowledge receipt of the audit findings in the closing meeting.
5. Receive copies of any Non-conformity Reports (where applicable).
6. Investigate and determine the root cause analysis for all non-conformities and make any corrections that are needed.
7. Complete the Non-conformity Reports with details of your root cause analysis and proposed corrective actions and return to us.
8. Implement the relevant corrective actions and provide evidence of implementation in line with the following timeframes:
 - a. Major non-conformities shall be corrected within three (3) months.
 - b. Minor non-conformities shall be corrected within the maximum period of one (1) year.The effectiveness of the corrective actions will be assessed during the next audit.



Obtain FSC CoC certification decision and receive certificate

1. Wait for us to consider the audit findings and conclusion, the Non-conformity Reports, your proposed root cause analyses and corrective actions, and assess their implementation, if applicable, before we make our certification decision.
2. Receive a copy of our detailed audit report.
3. Obtain our certification decision.
 - a. if there are any major non-conformities, a decision cannot be made until you provide us with evidence of the implementation of the corrective action.
 - b. if there are only minor non-conformities, a decision can be made once we receive details of your root cause analysis and your proposed corrective actions.
4. Receive an FSC CoC certificate valid for up to 5 years.

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FSC Trademarks

Once you receive your FSC CoC certificate, you are entitled to use the FSC trademarks on your certified products after approval has been given by your certification body.

This can be done in two ways:

- > You submit all requests to use the FSC trademark to Cotecna for review and approval prior to use.
- > You implement a trademark management system with an internal control system and have this approved by Cotecna.
- > This will require you to submit at least ten (10) correct approval requests for each type of intended use. For example, if you chose both "on-product labelling" and "promotional use", you must submit at least ten (10) correct approval requests for each category.

Full details of all the requirements regarding the use of the FSC trademarks can be found in the latest version of FSC-STD-50-001 Requirements for use of the FSC trademarks by certificate holders found on the FSC website.

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Maintaining FSC Chain of Custody certification – annual surveillance audits

To maintain your FSC CoC certification, you will be subject to annual surveillance audits. The objective of a surveillance audit is to check that you are continuing to comply with all applicable certification requirements and conditions.

For an FSC CoC certificate that has a five-year validity, at least four (4) surveillance audits will take place before the certificate expires.

Shortly before your annual surveillance audit needs to be arranged, we will contact you and ask for updated information. This will allow us to check if there are any changes, including to your certification scope (please refer to Section 7 below), and to check if there are any changes to the FSC Annual Administration Fees that you are liable to pay.

The scope of your certification will be confirmed, and the audit date(s) will be agreed with you.

If during a surveillance audit, there are five (5) or more major nonconformities identified, this will be considered as a breakdown of your internal system and certification will be suspended (please refer to Section 10 below for details of how the certificate can be reinstated).

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Changing the scope of a certificate

If you would like to include a new product in your FSC product group list, the related product description shall be provided to Cotecna with a formal request for this to be included into the certification scope.

An increase or decrease in the number of participating sites of a group certification is not considered a change of scope unless, in our opinion, the change requires significant changes to the certificate holder's management systems.

A change of scope may be necessary as a result of changes in ownership, structure of the organization, or management systems.

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Re-assessment of your certification

To reduce the risk of a gap between two (2) certification periods, we will contact you approximately ninety (90) days before your certificate expires. We will ask for updated information to allow us to check if there are any changes including to your certification scope (please refer to Section 7 above), or to the FSC Annual Administration Fees that you are liable to pay.

The scope of your certification will be confirmed, and the audit date(s) will be agreed with you. The re-assessment audit will consist of a full evaluation comparable to your initial certification (main) audit.

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Suspension and Withdrawal of a certificate

As stated in Section 6, a certificate will be suspended if there are five (5) or more major non-conformities identified in a surveillance audit.

Certification can also be suspended three (3) months after the closing meeting of a surveillance audit, if a decision to maintain the certification cannot be taken due to circumstances beyond our control.

The maximum period that certification should remain suspended is twelve (12) months. However, in exceptional circumstances and at our discretion the timeline for resolving non-conformities may be extended to eighteen (18) months to allow you to correct them. After this period, the certification shall be withdrawn, unless all major non-conformities have been successfully corrected and a surveillance audit was conducted in case the timeline of suspension exceeded twelve (12) months.

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Reinstating Certification

Cotecna will reinstate certification after suspension when all major non-conformities have been corrected; and in cases where certification has been suspended for more than twelve (12) months, a surveillance audit has been conducted.

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Transfer your certificate from another certification body

An FSC CoC certificate holder may request the transfer of their FSC CoC certificate from one certification body to another. Should you wish to transfer your certification to us, please contact us by email at fsc@cotecna.com and request the Transfer Application form.

Complete this form and return it with the required documents including:

- > Current FSC CoC certificate issued by the existing certification body, and
- > Copy of your last audit report and details of any pending non-conformities.

Please note: a certificate can only be transferred once during its five (5) year validity, and it cannot be transferred if it is suspended, or terminated, or if there are any pending major non-conformities in the last audit.

A Certification Contract will have to be established with us, covering the remaining years of the certificate, and Cotecna's first audit of the transferred certificate will have to be performed within three (3) months of the FSC CoC certificate transfer.

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The cost of the certification process

The Certification Contract will include the list of costs and fees which you will incur. With respect to the FSC Annual Administration Fees (AAF), these are calculated in accordance with the FSC specific requirements, and as explained in the document RESP-FORM-PCERT-FSC-003 FSC Chain of Custody Annual Administration Fees.

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Complaints and Appeals

If you have a complaint about how we have performed our FSC Chain of Custody certification services, or if you wish to appeal against a certification decision we have made, please refer to the [FSC Chain of Custody Certification Complaints and Appeals procedure](#).

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Confidentiality and Data Protection

Cotecna respects the confidentiality and privacy of client's information and ensures processes are in place to adequately protect such information. We treat all information received in the course of the provision of our services as business confidential to the extent that such information is not already published, generally available to third parties or otherwise in the public domain.

If you still have questions related to the certification process, please contact us by email at fsc@cotecna.com.