

## **Summary points of CPET Reference Board Meeting 06/03/2006**

### **Attendees:**

**Bob Andrew, Defra  
Katharine Thoday, Defra  
Claire Treliving, Defra  
Neil Judd, ProForest (CPET)  
Kate Bottriell, ProForest (CPET)  
Saskia Ozinga, FERN  
Andy Roby, TTF  
Martin Gale, Confor**

### **Re-assessment on PEFC's Probationary Status**

The meeting was convened for the sole purpose of discussing the draft findings and comments on the probationary assessment of PEFC national schemes. The fundamental issue was the robustness and consistency of a scheme that has a single universal label but covers many different national standards and where certification is operated locally. CPET found that not all the PEFC endorsed national schemes had made the system changes approved by the PEFC Council in October 2004 and April 2005. Copies of CPET's provisional findings were provided to Reference Board members.

Out of the fourteen PEFC national schemes checked, the draft findings indicated two had not fully adopted PEFC's new system requirements for the decision-making process adopted by the standard-setting body (relating to CPET assessment criterion 1.3.3) and one of those also had not fully adopted PEFC systems for stakeholder consultation and publicly available information (relating to CPET assessment criteria 2.4 and 2.5). These two PEFC national schemes were discussed at length.

The first national scheme was found to have a decision-making procedure which means that a standard-setting decision could be made in the absence of agreement from the majority of the environmental interest category.

The following points of view were expressed:

- The chamber system used for decision-making includes social, environmental and economic interests throughout, and often groups or individuals have multiple interests.
- The scheme's requirements do not meet PEFC's own requirement for consensus. Other PEFC national schemes were using systems that do address decision-making by consensus.
- Though the scheme's requirements allow majority voting if consensus is not achieved, all decisions to date had been made by consensus. Nevertheless, the original assessment and this probationary check looked only at official scheme documentation; what happened in practice could not be taken into consideration as matters stood.

In conclusion, the outstanding issue was that PEFC Council Annex 2 requirements for consensus during standard setting had not been fully incorporated in the standard revision process that was being followed.

For the second national scheme, three points were discussed:

1. CPET found that the voting system prescribes that no major interest can maintain a negative vote but it was not clear how that rule works in practice.
2. The scheme documentation studied by CPET initially did not make clear how environmental interests are represented but the scheme subsequently provided additional documentation indicating that a provision had been made to include ENGOs on the standard-setting body. It was suggested that the ENGOs might not be aware of this.

3. It appeared to the Board that this scheme had missed PEFC's deadline for adopting the changes to PEFC Council Technical Document Annex 6. However, the scheme had implemented a policy that meant new PEFC logos would be issued in accordance with the revised standards. The Board viewed this short delay as a minor infringement given that no logo licences had been issued under the old requirements since the deadline.

The Board concluded that the outstanding issue was that the scheme's requirement for consensus on standard setting did not appear fully consistent with the new PEFC Council Annex 2 requirement

A more general discussion followed, and the following points of view were expressed:

- Defra should adhere to the stated methodology in order to maintain credibility; otherwise Defra's ability to engage in meaningful discussions with stakeholders would be compromised. The published methodology states that failure by any one national scheme to adequately make the system changes should result in the Government accepting PEFC certificates as assurance of legality only.
- If PEFC were downgraded to assuring legal timber only but was able to demonstrate sustainability by the time the annual reviews were undertaken (in several months time), that could create significant confusion in the market place and loss of credibility.
- Forest certification should be encouraged to develop and expand. Without certification schemes the Government's purchasing policy would be very difficult to implement. Forest certification schemes are valuable tools. Keeping schemes engaged in the process enables dialogue and the potential for change to be effected.

The following recommendations were made to Defra:

- The status of the PEFC scheme would be better determined as part of the forthcoming annual reviews since these would include evidence relating to system implementation.
- The probationary assessment process should be continued as part of the forthcoming scheme reviews.
- PEFC should continue to have 'probationary' status until further notice.

The Board discussed what information should be made publicly available. Some Board members suggested that the findings on national schemes and the identity of those schemes should be made public in the interests of transparency. Other members suggested that the PEFC Scheme's system requirements were being checked, not the relative merits of national bodies' requirements, and that it would be inappropriate to name the two national schemes that had been the subject of discussion.

Defra thanked the Board members for their views and commented that the discussion had been valuable in helping Defra to reach a decision on this important matter.

### **Next meeting**

Scheduled for 11 May 2006