

1. Information about the authority under which GFA operates

GFA Certification GmbH (GFA) is a certification body and specialized in the examination, evaluation and appraisal of management systems and product certification.

GFA is supervised by Assurance Services International (ASI) regarding compliance to the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) standards (FSC® A000511).

GFA is accredited by the German accreditation agency (DAkkS) on the basis of DIN/EN ISO 17065 and 17021 in accordance with the standards of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Roundtable of Sustainable Palmoil (RSPO). GFA is listed with DAkkS as D-ZE-18979-01-00 and D-ZM-18979-01-00.

GFA is accredited by the BoA (Vietnam) for the Vietnamese Forest Certification System (VFCS) on the basis of DIN EN ISO 17021 and VFCS/PEFC ST 1006:2019 under the accreditation number VICAS 070 - VFCS.

GFA is controlled by the German competent authority Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE) for certification activities within the SURE system and the REDcert system, which are conducted within the scope of the Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz in Germany. GFA is registered with BLE under DE-B-BLE-BM-ZSt-154.

GFA is part of the GFA Group and a daughter company of GFA Consulting Group GmbH. Further information can be found at www.gfa-cert.com.

2. Financial information

GFA is a self-financed company that receives no grants or royalties. Its income originates from fees for services which are charged at nationally and internationally customary levels. GFAs' services are exclusively furnished according to individual contracts with the clients. Servicing more with different certification schemes and services GFA is financially not dependent on specific or a set of specific clients. The mix of services and the quantity of clients ensures GFAs' impartiality.

Fees for certification services include auditing fees, travel cost, administrative cost and scheme specific license fees. Please use the online application on our website to request an individual certification proposal.

3. Certification activities

GFA offers:

- FSC forest management and chain of custody certification
- PEFC forest management and chain of custody certification
- VFCS forest management certification
- RSPO SCC certification
- Blauer Engel
- SURE/REDcert

Further information can be obtained through the GFA website and the scheme specific websites.

4. Evaluation procedures

All certification activities are based on annual auditing against the applicable scheme standards. During auditing a sampling of e.g. procedures, processes, products, trademark use, delivery documentation, and in case of forest management certification of forest management units, blocks, stands etc. is carried out and assessed for compliance with the applicable scheme requirements.

Please find the specific certification procedures in the respective sections of our website. The VFCS certification procedures are similar to the procedures for forest certification described under the topic forest certification on our website.

5. Granting certification

Subject to the following preconditions, GFA grants certification. The client:

- in the case of an FSC certification, entered into and holds a valid 'License Agreement (TLA) for the FSC Certification Scheme', which is not suspended and has submitted this to GFA
- in case of RSPO and SURE/REDcert, being a registered member (RSPO) or an economic operator (SURE/REDcert) of the respective certification system
- complies with the requirements of all applicable standards and normative documents, as confirmed by a positive certification decision of GFA
- has signed a certification contract with GFA
- has paid the invoiced certification and scheme license fees to GFA or the respective certification system

6. Maintaining certification

The conditions necessary for a client to maintain certification includes:

- to comply and continue to comply with all GFA's conditions for maintaining and re-issuing of the certificate
- to comply with all certification system's and GFA's requirements regarding claims, logos, certification marks or trademarks
- to correct any non-conformances with the applicable standard(s) within the maximum period specified by GFA
- to continue to pay all of the certification fees within the payment period indicated on the GFA invoice
- to undergo surveillance as determined by GFA
- to have, in the event of an FSC certification, a valid 'License Agreement (TLA) for the FSC Certification Scheme', which is not suspended

7. Extending / reducing certification scope

The certification process embraces the products, *areas and sites, as well as the audited standards as specified in this contract as well as the products published in the respective system database. After certification is granted only these products and *areas may be claimed and sold as certified. The client undertakes to inform GFA in writing about each and every intended change in the scope of certification, e.g. *changes in the area, changes in the manufacturing process or if relevant changes in the client's management system could negatively affect conformity with the standards. GFA has the right to audit the client before an adaptation of the scope of certification, provided the changes in the scope of certification are deemed significant, at GFA's own reasonable discretion.

8. Suspending and withdrawing certification

GFA has the right to suspend or withdraw the certificate with immediate effect if, in the sole opinion of GFA, the client is not in conformance with the conditions specified for the maintenance of the certification described in chapter 6 above.

9. Rights and Duties

The following is a description of the rights and duties of clients (applicants and suppliers of certified products), including requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of FSC and PEFC/VFCS trademarks and on the ways of referring to the certification granted;

- The client undertakes to implement and to comply with the contents of the certification contract and the current audit criteria / standards.
- The client shall inform GFA immediately about all changes in the operational circumstances that could have an effect on the client's certified system. Any violations of this obligation to inform can result in withdrawal of the certificate. Such instances are, for example, changes with respect to:

- the legal form or the form of organization, the commercial or ownership relationships,
 - organization and management (e.g. key personnel in senior positions, decision-making personnel or qualified personnel),
 - contact address and locations,
 - the field of activities covered by the certified management system and
 - significant changes in the management system and in the processes.
- The client undertakes to take corrective actions according to the corrective action requests (CARs) defined in every final audit reports within the given time-frame in order to satisfy the preconditions for certification.
 - The client undertakes to make no claim of conformity (or near conformity) with certification requirements in the area included in the scope of the evaluation until and unless a certificate is awarded.
 - The client undertakes to use the certification only to indicate that products are certified as being in conformity with specified standards.
 - The client undertakes to ensure that no certificate or report nor any part thereof is used in a misleading manner.
 - The client undertakes, to the best of its knowledge and belief, not to use its certification in such a manner as to bring GFA into disrepute and does not make any statement regarding its certification which may be considered as misleading or unauthorized.
 - The absence of a valid 'License Agreement for the FSC Certification Scheme' is treated as a formal major nonconformity which has to be corrected in a period of maximum four (4) weeks. Failure in closing this major nonconformity will lead to the suspension of the certificate.
 - The client shall keep a record of all complaints made known to the Client relating to a product's compliance with requirements of the relevant standard and to make these records available to GFA when requested. The client shall take appropriate action with respect to such complaints and any deficiencies found in products or services that affect compliance with the requirements for certification. The client shall document the actions taken.
 - After having being granted certification the client may use the respective trademarks. The Client agrees to submit all FSC trademark use to GFA for formal approval prior to printing, publishing, and distributing.

10. Complaints, Appeals and Disputes

GFA certified clients have the right to appeal against each of the certification decisions concluded by GFA. GFAs' appeals procedures applies that can be found on GFAs' website.

Complaints must be sent immediately and in writing to GFA. GFAs' complaints procedures applies that can be found on GFAs' website.

11. Directory of certified products & their suppliers

All GFA certified companies including their scope of certification are published on databases of the specific scheme websites. Please see the specific links in the down load section of GFAs' website.

12. GFA Trademark

- If the client has assigned GFA to deliver services the client may use of the GFA Certification Logo (also referred to as GFA Logo).
- If the client has assigned GFA to deliver certification services the client may in addition use the GFA Certified Logo (also referred to as GFA Logo).

- If the client has assigned GFA to deliver verification services the client may in addition use the GFA Verified Logo (also referred to as GFA Logo).
- GFA Logos must be applied for in writing. The right to use GFA Logos expires once this contract is terminated.
- The client undertakes neither to alter nor to modify GFA Logos.

A suspension or termination of the certification has the following consequences:

- The client shall immediately cease to make any use of any GFA Logos and trademarks, or to sell any products that the client has previously labeled or marked using the logos and trademarks, or to make any claims that imply that they comply with the requirements for certification.