

Sappi achieves first international PEFC Forest Certification in South Africa

Issued by [Sappi](#)

29 Jan 2021

After years of collaboration and dedicated commitment in setting new forest certification standards for South Africa, Sappi is proud to announce that it has achieved the first PEFC endorsed SAFAS (Sustainable African Forest Assurance Scheme) certification in South Africa. This despite the unforeseen obstacles created by the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown restrictions.



A forestry contractor being audited on the correct use of first aid kits infield

The SAFAS project has been a successful collaboration between Sappi and a number of South African forestry organisations who saw the need to develop a local certification standard with international recognition, which was achieved through the endorsement by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Starting in 2015 with the establishment of the Sustainable African Forest Assurance Scheme (SAFAS), the journey entailed the development of a Forest Management Standard, the development of certification requirements and, in 2018, the endorsement of the standard and certification procedures. A certification tool was developed by the team to assess plantations, based on several factors including environmental, social and economic conditions specific to South Africa.

The final step in the process was to get certification bodies accredited to undertake certification assessments against the standard; a hurdle which proved more difficult to overcome than expected, further delayed by the advent of the Coronavirus pandemic and the cessation of international travel.



Conservation impacts being audited at Mount Morgan Montrose

Sappi, with the support of SAFAS, the Soil Association and the SABS (South African Bureau of Standards) persevered and was able to undergo both a Stage 1 certification audit (conducted remotely by the Soil Association during lockdown in June 2020) and a Stage 2 audit during October 2020, conducted by local SABS auditors while being streamed live to the UK where the Soil Association observed proceedings and the United Kingdom Assurance Scheme (UKAS) witnessed the audit. This innovative process, though demanding, proved to be successful, leading to the Soil Association becoming the first certification body to be accredited to undertake SAFAS audits and Sappi Forests to be the first organisation to become SAFAS (PEFC Forest Management) certified in South Africa.

Although Sappi provides customers the assurance that its woodfibre originates from known and responsibly managed forests, including through its longstanding certification with the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™-N003159), the PEFC certification provides an additional important global certification standard in its assurance to consumers about the responsible origin of the wood we use. Importantly, it also allows for chain of custody (CoC) certification, which tracks forest-based products from sustainable sources to the final product. This is assured through independent auditing of the CoC procedures which closely monitor each step of the supply chain. Sappi Southern Africa has commenced the process to achieve PEFC CoC certification for its manufacturing sites, to bring it in line with Sappi's European and North American operations.



Audit procedures were filmed and live streamed abroad

"Sappi's purpose is to build a thriving world by unlocking the power of renewable resources to benefit people, communities and the planet", commented Alex Thiel, Sappi Southern Africa Chief Executive Officer. "Credible, internationally recognised, robust forest certification systems like PEFC and FSC are fundamental to Sappi's commitment to sustainability," he said.

Commenting on behalf of PEFC International, Ben Gunneberg, CEO & Secretary General said:

"What makes PEFC-endorsed national forest certification systems, such as the PEFC endorsed SAFAS, so relevant and valuable is that they are locally developed and owned, and that they respect the country's operational and cultural conditions. This is important because it ensures that the advantages of certification are accessible to all forest owners, with a particular emphasis on smallholders. This certification is a landmark in Africa, at a time when climate smart solutions are needed to enable achievable sustainable forest management certification for all forest owners."

Rob Shaw, Technical Manager of Soil Association Certification added: "We are proud to be the first certification body to achieve this PEFC Forest Management (FM) accreditation in South Africa. Working with Sappi, SABS, SAFAS and UKAS to achieve this was a truly collaborative effort, especially under the current circumstances, and is a milestone for sustainable forestry certification in the country."



Being part of the team developing the PEFC SAFAS value-based platform approach for sustainable forest management and certification, means that Sappi had already implemented this structured, yet flexible approach through its internal audits as far back as 2019.

Dr David Everard, Divisional Environmental Manager for Sappi Forests commented: "After all the intense work in collaborating on the development of the SAFAS system and now in implementing it, it's rewarding to have this achievement

for Sappi. But the potential of SAFAS in South Africa is that it incorporates cutting-edge, innovative and effective approaches to also make forest certification more accessible to South Africa's small landowners. This has great promise to ensure that certification not only delivers social and environmental values, but also supports socio-economic and development priorities."

" **Promising SA-first solution to convert paper sludge, food and textile waste into bioethanol** 29 Apr 2024

" **Sappi's Pelletin achieves feed safety assurance certification for its lignin-based animal feed additive** 22 Mar 2024

" **Sappi achieves PEFC Group Scheme certification for small growers** 19 Dec 2023

" **Saiccor Mill dissolving pulp facility completes the Higg FSLM verification** 6 Dec 2023

" **Sappi Khulisa programme wins Trialogue award for best practice CSI** 1 Dec 2023

Sappi



Sappi works closely with customer, both direct and indirect, in over 100 countries to provide them with the relevant and sustainable paper, paper-pulp and dissolving wood pulp products and related services and innovations.

[Profile](#) | [News](#) | [Contact](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [RSS Feed](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>