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FSC certification explained: gain insight and auditor competence

Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon have developed a training course focusing on FSC™ auditing and offering comprehensive insight into the inner workings of the FSC system whilst also providing formal lead auditor training. The training has been developed to benefit a wide range of stakeholders as well as prospective auditors.

A unique training course for those who seek to understand how Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC) certification works in practice or to gain formal competence within FSC auditing is now on offer from the Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon. The next event held in the English language is scheduled for 25-29 June in Latvia.

The five day training course covers FSC Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification including Controlled Wood requirements. It has been tailored to benefit anyone that needs to reach a higher level of understanding of the FSC certification and how the system works in practice, such as staff of certified companies, research institutions, NGOs, and public agencies.

More than 200 participants from over 20 countries, representing many different organisations, have already acquired substantial new knowledge and skills within a relatively short space of time by attending FSC Lead Auditor training provided by NEPCon and the Rainforest Alliance.

The course was recently endorsed as fulfilling the formal requirements for training of FSC auditors. The training incorporates ISO requirements and can replace the otherwise required ISO training.

In the engine room of FSC

Based on intensive, high-speed training provided by some of the world's most experienced FSC Lead Auditors, participants gain a complete overview of the main elements of the FSC systems well as comprehensive insight into the 'engine room' of the FSC - how the system operates in practice. Participants will get to know the answers to questions such as: How should the technical requirements be interpreted? How do auditors verify certificate holders' compliance? When is a certificate granted, suspended or terminated?

"Through hands-on exercises based on realistic scenarios, the participants experience what it is like to be in the shoes of an FSC auditor. This has proven to be a very effective way of learning the specific skills and competences required for high-quality FSC auditing", says Jon Jickling, Deputy Director of RA-Cert, the Rainforest Alliance's certification arm.

Mr. Jickling adds: "Aside from prospective FSC auditors, other stakeholders engaging in certification, such as certified companies, public agencies, and non-governmental organisations, can all benefit greatly from a deeper level of understanding of the system. Those responsible for internal FSC auditing within their own organisation can even apply the auditing techniques directly".

Each course is limited to a maximum of 12 participants, providing room for high-quality learning with individual feedback provided throughout the event.

Focus on field performance

"We developed this training concept because we believe that there is a need for FSC auditors and other stakeholders to truly understand the subject matter that they are dealing with. Whilst ISO training provides a good framework for system auditing, FSC is a performance-based organisation; to meet stakeholder expectations, it is necessary to educate future auditors on how to check and verify ground performance", says CEO of NEPCon Feilberg.

"This is best done through training focusing directly on FSC auditing – in the forest, where the actual forestry performance needs to be verified, and in the industry supply chain where the main purpose of certification is to ensure traceability. Is the forest really managed to conserve high conservation values? Does the staff of the certified enterprise really understand and follow the company's written Chain of Custody procedure in practice? These are questions that FSC auditors need to check carefully. ISO is mainly about checking systems, while FSC is also very much about checking that the systems are actually working to fulfil their purpose".

In addition to passing endorsed formal training, prospective FSC auditors also need to possess relevant experience and credentials as well as participate on actual FSC audits in the field before they can be approved as FSC auditors.

Book or join a training event

NEPCon organises regular training courses in Europe, conducted either in English or Russian language. The next open FSC auditor training events held in the English language are scheduled for 25-29 June, 2012 and 8-12 October, 2012. Both events take place in Jurmala, Latvia, an attractive touristic town located close to the Riga airport.

Reduced rates are available for NGOs, FSC National Offices and forestry college or university students, and a 10% discount is provided to participants registering minimum two months in advance. Generic training on FSC auditing for individual organisations is available on request.

Learn more about the training concept, view our training calendar and prices, and sign up for training at www.nepcon.net/training.

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Notes

About NEPCon

NEPCon is a non-profit, international organisation focused on the sustainable use of natural resources. Working primarily through independent verification services and innovative projects, we help business enterprises and other organisations to be part of the solution to major global challenges, such as deforestation and climate change. Our FSC®, legality verification and carbon verification services are delivered in collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance. FSC-SECR-0047. ~~PEFC services are delivered on behalf of BMG Trada Certifiering AB. PEFC/09-44-02.~~ Learn more at www.nepcon.net.

About the Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance works with people whose livelihoods depend on the land, helping them to transform the way they grow food, harvest wood and host travellers. From large multinational corporations to small community based cooperatives, businesses and consumers worldwide are involved in the Rainforest Alliance's efforts to bring responsibly produced goods and services to a global marketplace where the demand for sustainability is growing steadily. For more information, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org.