



**“VRIKSH” Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Scheme - India**

**SCOPE AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE**

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## **SCOPE AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **0. FOREWORD**

0.1 World over concern has been raised about the use of illegally harvested timber, which poses threat to the forest, thereby endangering environment. Many countries and group of countries have initiated steps to prevent the use of such illegal timber and timber products by bringing out laws, rules or restrictions in any other form to permit use of only legally harvested timber and products made out of such timber, where chain of custody can be established and due diligence is used . Among others, some measures for such global timber legality verification programs include the following:

FLEGT: International Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade

EUTR: European Union Timber Regulation - 995/2010/EC

USA: US Lacey act

Australia: Australian illegal logging Prohibition act 2012

0.2 In line with the above, in India, the Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) has been entrusted the work of evolving a scheme, which will help the exporters to enter the European market without any difficulty and at the same time meeting their legal requirements and ensuring the conservation of forests. “Vriksh” secretariat has been set up for this purpose.

0.3 “Vriksh” secretariat has come up with the “VRIKSH” Scheme in which standards and regulations are designed to allow organizations to demonstrate that they are implementing best efforts (due diligence) to avoid the trade in illegally harvested timber.

0.4 This document describes the scope and governing pattern of the “Vriksh” scheme.

0.5 The aims of the “Vriksh” scheme include the following:

a) To evolve standard for “legality assessment and evaluation of Timber and Timber products” for India.

b) To operate accreditation scheme for accrediting Certification Bodies for certification of organizations for legality of timber and timber products.

(c) To help facilitate concept and encourage use of legally harvested timber. This may be done through seminars, preparation and distribution of pamphlets, meetings and general

type of awareness and training programmes for Certification Bodies and organizations that process timber and timber products.

## **1. SCOPE**

1.1 The scheme for legality of Timber and Timber Products shall, among others, include the following:

- (a) Policies, regulations and procedures for development of the scheme.
- (b) Standards for legality of Timber and Timber products
- (c) Accreditation of certification of Certification Bodies, who will certify the organizations processing and exporting Timber and timber products, with due diligence about legality of such products.

## **2. STRUCTURE**

### **2.1 Operational Structure:**

The operational structure of “VRIKSH” Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Scheme - India is given at Annex 1.

**2.2 The composition and terms of reference of the Governing Council, Technical Committee and Accreditation Board referred to in the structure are as follows:**

### **2.3 GOVERNING COUNCIL:**

#### **2.3.1 Terms of References:**

This is the apex body of the scheme for developing and overall monitoring, control and supervision of the scheme, which *inter alia*, would include, but not restricted to the following:

1. To formulate overall policy for the scheme.
2. To provide a roadmap, guidelines, inputs to its related sub committees
3. To review and approve revision of “Vriksh” standard for legality of timber and timber products on the recommendations of the Technical Committee
4. To provide coordination between “Vriksh” secretariat and Government of India.
5. To oversee and review the safeguarding of impartiality and confidentiality aspects of operation of the scheme.
6. To review and monitor the performance of operation of the scheme

7. To advise “Vriksh” secretariat on financial matters pertaining to the scheme.
8. To monitor feedback from customers from abroad to whom timber and timber products are exported under the scheme
9. To set up appeals committee when any appeal is referred by a Certification Body
10. To work out details of any other similar related scheme or any matter referred by Government of India
11. Cooperation / liaison / promotion /mutual agreement with other government and non government bodies working at international or national level, involved directly or indirectly, on similar schemes.
12. To delegate its power to anyone of its members in the matters connected with the scheme.
13. To interpret any of the rules of the scheme or powers to deal with any dispute. Governing Council Verdict on the interpretation shall be final and binding.
14. To act through the following arms of the scheme.
  1. Vriksh Secretariat
  2. Technical Committee
  3. Accreditation Board
15. To create committee or subcommittee for smooth functioning or enlargement of the scheme.
16. To set targets for TC/ AB / VS. They will timely submit their target reports to the governing council.
17. To issue directions to the respective arms or to any issue related to the scheme, such directions shall override / terminate / supersede any action taken by the respective arm.

### **2.3.2 Composition**

The composition of the council shall be as follows:

- 1) Executive Director, EPCH
- 2) Representative of Ministry of Textile for Chair the Council:
- 3) Representative of Ministry of Environment and Forest
- 4) Addl. Director General Foreign Trade

5) Representatives of Associations of Handicraft Manufacturers / Exporters (4)

6) Representative from Environmental NGO

7) Representative of IIFM Bhopal

8) Representative from Social Responsibility:  
Executive Director, Fair Trade Forum

9) Any other experienced person from the similar background

10) Nominee of Scheme Operator.

11) Nominee of Standards Operator

The Governing council will elect / appoint its own chairman out of the members present.

### **2.3.3 Meetings**

The meeting of the Governing Council shall be conducted once in a year. Additional meetings may be arranged, if situation demands.

Decision shall be recorded in the form of minutes and all other matters connected with the scheme

## **2.4 TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

### **2.4.1 Terms of Reference:**

1. To review periodically “VRIKSH” Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Standard - India taking into accounts the comments / views of different stakeholders and recommend to Governing Council for its revision / adoption.

2. To prepare and review any other standard / document under the scheme, as may be referred by the Governing Council

In case of urgency (such as need for taking corrective action on non-conformities or correcting obvious errors), Head of Operations of “Vriksh” secretariat may approve the changes in the document, with the approval of the chairman of the Governing Council, but these changes will be submitted to the Technical Committee for consideration at its next meeting, at the earliest. The committee may endorse the changes made or make further modifications as deemed fit.

### **2.4.2 Composition**

The composition of the technical committee shall be as follows:  
(to be completed )

- 1) .....
- 2).....
- 3).....

6) Representative of “Vriksh” Secretariat

The Technical Committee will elect / appoint its own chairman out of the members present.

### **2.4.3 Meetings**

The meeting of the Technical committee shall be held at least once in a year or during the revision of standards or any technical clarification and additional meetings may also be arranged, if situation demands.

## **2.5 ACCREDITATION BOARD**

### **2.5.1 Terms of Reference:**

1. To review periodically and approve standard for “General Requirements for Certification bodies operating “VRIKSH” Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Scheme – India, Forming the accreditation criteria
2. To review and approve accreditation regulations
3. To decide on the competence criteria of assessors for accreditation
4. To approve individual assessors for forming a panel of assessors
5. To accredit the certification bodies for certifying the organizations (processors / exporters of timber and timber products) in accordance with accreditation regulations under this scheme.
6. To review and decide about the cases pertaining to re-accreditation, suspension, withdrawal etc.

### **2.5.2 Composition**

The composition of the accreditation board shall be as follows:

- 1) Executive Director, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts
- 2) Representative of Quality Council of India

- 3) Representative of Ministry of Environment and Forests
- 4) Representative of Bureau of Indian Standards
- 5) Representative of Director General Foreign Trade
- 6) Representative of “Vriksh” Secretariat

The Accreditation Board will elect / appoint its own chairman out of the members present

### **2.5.3 Meetings**

Meeting of the board shall be held normally once in a year, or as and when situation demands.

## **3. GENERAL CONDITIONS**

3.1 Governing Council / Technical Committee / Accreditation Board shall have the authority to co-opt other members, if considered useful or to invite other persons to attend a particular meeting.

3.2 Normally a notice of one week shall be given for holding the meetings. However chairman can take a call to hold an urgent meeting at a shorter notice. The quorum of 1/5 th of the total member subject to minimum of 3 member should be present.

3.3 Specific agenda for the meetings shall be prepared by the “Vriksh” Secretariat for consideration during the meetings.

3.4 The decisions of the Governing Council / Technical Committee / Accreditation Board shall be recorded in the form of minutes of the meeting.

3.5 If there is urgency or any other reason for not holding the formal meeting, the proposals may be got reviewed / approved through circulation to the members of committee / board.

## **4. ACCREDITED CERTIFICATION BODIES**

Based on the recommendations of “Vriksh” Secretariat, eligible certification bodies shall be accredited by the accreditation board. These accredited certification bodies shall certify the organizations in processing, trade, export of timber and timber products for their legality as per “VRIKSH” Timber Legality Assessment and Verification Scheme - India and other relevant documents.

## **5. ASSESSORS**

5.1 The assessors appointed under this scheme (full time or on panel) shall be assigned the task of assessment of certification bodies in accordance with relevant accreditation regulations, standards and procedures and submit their report to “Vriksh” secretariat. The secretariat shall review the findings and as appropriate, make recommendations to accreditation board for approval.

## **6. “VRIKSH” SECRETARIAT**

6.1 It will consist of one or more officers and other functionaries working with EPCH, as indicated below:

- a) Head of Operations Vriksh Secretariat: A senior officer will be nominated to hold this job. He /she will be the overall in charge of the “Vriksh” secretariat.
- b) Dealing Officer: There may be more than one Dealing Officers depending on the volume of work. Dealing Officer shall look after the day-to-day work of operation of the scheme and will also assist the director in his work.
- c) Supporting Staff: as required for support in the operation of the scheme.

### **6.2 Functions**

Functions of “Vriksh” secretariat shall include, amongst others:

- a) To maintain the documentation pertaining to this scheme
- b) To attend to queries and provide requisite information pertaining to the scheme
- c) To receive application from certification bodies and conduct day to day processing of the cases for accreditation
- d) To process the cases for appointment of assessors and place the proposal before Accreditation Board for approval.
- e) To review the assessment reports and make recommendations to the Accreditation Board regarding accreditation issues such as the grant, renewal, extension of scope, suspension and withdrawal of accreditation certificates.
- f) To act as a secretariat to the Governing Council / Technical Committee / Accreditation Board set up under this scheme.
- g) To maintain a register of certification bodies accredited, suspended and the accreditations withdrawn.
- h) To maintain all records pertaining to the operation of this scheme, including the accreditation records of the certification bodies



i) To work out financial schemes including any subsidies to the organizations under this scheme

j) To maintain web-site, which among other may have required publicly available information

k) It may conduct itself or through other nominated bodies, seminars, meetings, training programmes of general nature for disseminating the concept and information pertaining to and for the “Vriksh” scheme for legality of timber and timber products

l) Any other related activities as may be decided by the Governing Council from time to time.

## **7. Confidentiality and impartiality**

7.1 All functionaries associated with operation of “Vriksh” scheme shall sign an undertaking of confidentiality and impartiality as proposed by “Vriksh” secretariat

Annex 1

## EPCH “VRIKSH” CERTIFICATION SCHEME OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

