



**Public Briefing Paper for
FSC® Chain of Custody/Controlled Wood Forest Management Audit of
John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma) in Sefwi Wiawso, GHANA**

30th October 2019

Introduction - NEPCon is conducting controlled wood forest management and chain of custody certification Audit at John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma) located in SEFWI WIAWSO, GHANA. The Audit will be implemented from 17th to 19th August 2020.

Scope of the Certification Evaluation – The controlled wood forest management certification audit will assess the environmental, silvicultural and socioeconomic aspects of the John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma)'s operations, using the Forest Stewardship Council standard for Controlled Wood (FSC-STD-30-010 v2-0) available at <https://ic.fsc.org/en/certification/requirements-guidance/normative-framework/standards> http. To obtain a copy of the applicable standards and guidelines, please contact NEPCon by telephone, email or website listed below. You may also access the FSC standards at www.fsc.org. NEPCon is accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) and this evaluation process must follow procedures which have been approved by the FSC.

Evaluation Team Composition – The evaluation team will be led by JOSEPH WILLIAM OSEI who is a Forester. The other team member will be: ERIC OFORI AGYEKUM.

Evaluation Steps and Schedule – Following is a short description of the certification process and a tentative agenda:

- ◆ **Evaluation commencement** – The NEPCon team will assemble at SEFWI WIAWSO on 16th August 2020.
- ◆ **Field assessments** – The team will visit some of the sites managed by John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma) from 17th to 19th August 2020 at;
 - a. Suhuma Forest Reserve
 - b. Fure Headwaters Forest Reserve
- ◆ **Stakeholder consultation** – Throughout the fieldwork, the team will contact local stakeholders regarding John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma)'s operations. This may include private interviews and discussions, and public stakeholder meetings.
- ◆ **Final evaluation briefing** – Prior to departure, the team will meet with John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma)'s managers and other parties to finalize their data collection and present preliminary findings.
- ◆ **Draft report production** – The evaluation team will produce a confidential draft report that will be circulated for comment to John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma). This should occur after 21 days of completion of the audit.
- ◆ **Certification decision** – Upon receipt of comments on the draft report from John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma)'s certification managers and other general stakeholder comments, NEPCon will reach a certification decision. Barring unforeseen obstacles, this should occur within 60 days after completion of the evaluation.

Your Input Sought – As a part of the controlled wood forest management assessment process we invite stakeholders to offer comment and feedback on John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma)'s sourcing practices in relation to conformance with the requirements of the relevant FSC Controlled Wood standards referenced above. We welcome input, either public or confidential, in whatever form is easiest and most secure for you. Your input will be valuable at any stage of the evaluation process, but we would prefer to receive your comments either prior to the evaluation, during the evaluation, or prior to 25th September 2020 so that we can take them into consideration in reaching a certification decision within 60 days after the evaluation. Your options for communicating your observations to us are as follows;

1. Meet with a NEPCon evaluation team member during or shortly after the fieldwork.
2. Call and give comments to Eric Ofori Agyekum, the NEPCon staff person responsible for coordinating this certification evaluation or Sandra Razanamandranto.
3. Submit written comments by email to Eric Ofori Agyekum. Unless you request otherwise, these comments will be kept confidential and are solely for the purposes of assessing the controlled sourcing practices of John Bitar Company Limited (Suhuma).

The source of any information provided will be kept confidential and available to only the FSC and NEPCon staff.

Stakeholders who may wish to dispute any aspect of the forest certification process or decision can access NEPCon's Complaints, Appeals and Dispute resolution procedures at <https://www.nepcon.org/dispute-resolution-policy>.

Contacting NEPCon

- ◆ Eric Ofori Agyekum, egyekum@nepcon.org
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