



# Basic principles of certification



*April 2021*



FLEGT-REDD+ project  
FONDS FRANÇAIS POUR  
L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL





- **Certification**: mechanism for **attesting**, after independent and impartial verification, that a product or service meets a given norm or quality standard.
- **Forest certification**: voluntary process whereby an independent third party (the “**certifier**”) assesses the **quality of forest management** and timber production against a **set of requirements** (“**standards**”) predetermined by a public or private certification organization.



## Third party audit

An independent certification body (accredited) **assesses** an organisation or a company according to a **specified protocol**

## Qualified auditors

The assessment or audit is performed by competent, independent and impartial auditors

## Standard

The conformance evaluation is proceed as per the requirements specified in a standard or a referential

## Voluntary

The organisation or the company requests to be certified.  
  
Certification initially designed for business relationships



## Standards

- Describing the requirements that an applicant company must comply with



## Additional documents

- Specifying the requirements, special cases, interpretations



## Description of the certification process

- Defining the certification stages, the different audits and their method



## Labelling and communication mechanism

- Describing the use of labels and logos, information made public, certificate references, etc.



## Accreditation mechanism (*usually*)

- Ensuring the independence and the technical and organizational competence of a certification body and auditors

## Standards



- Set of requirements that a company must comply with in order to be certified
- Applying to specific situations / entities :
  - the activity (forest management vs timber processing)
  - the national context (legal / biological)
  - the nature of the entity (smallholder, group of entities...)

## Additional documents



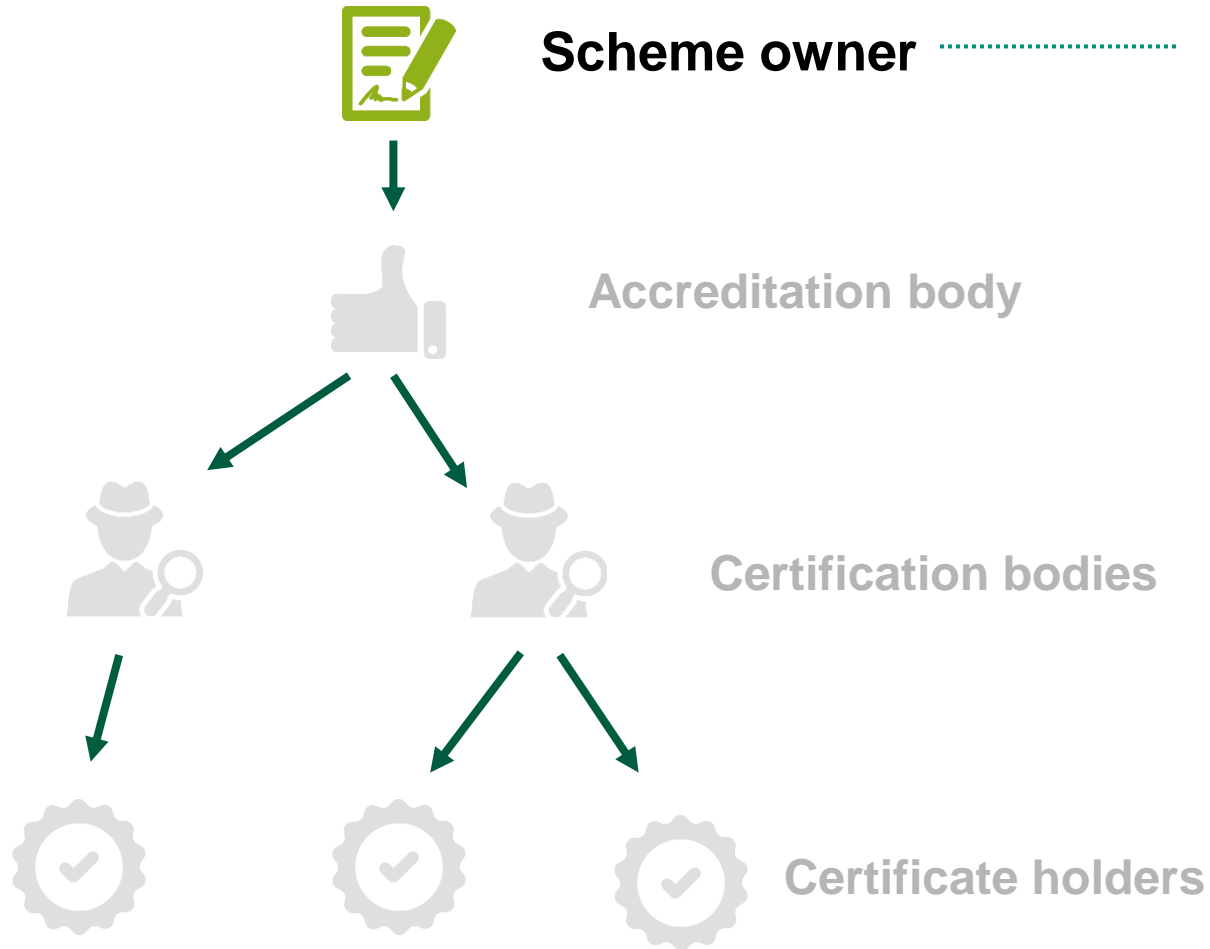
- A scheme often contains a group of Standards and **additional documents** (policy, guidelines, advise notes, etc)

*Document, established by consensus and approved by a recognised body, that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context.*

Standard (ISO guide  
17021)



## Certification actors

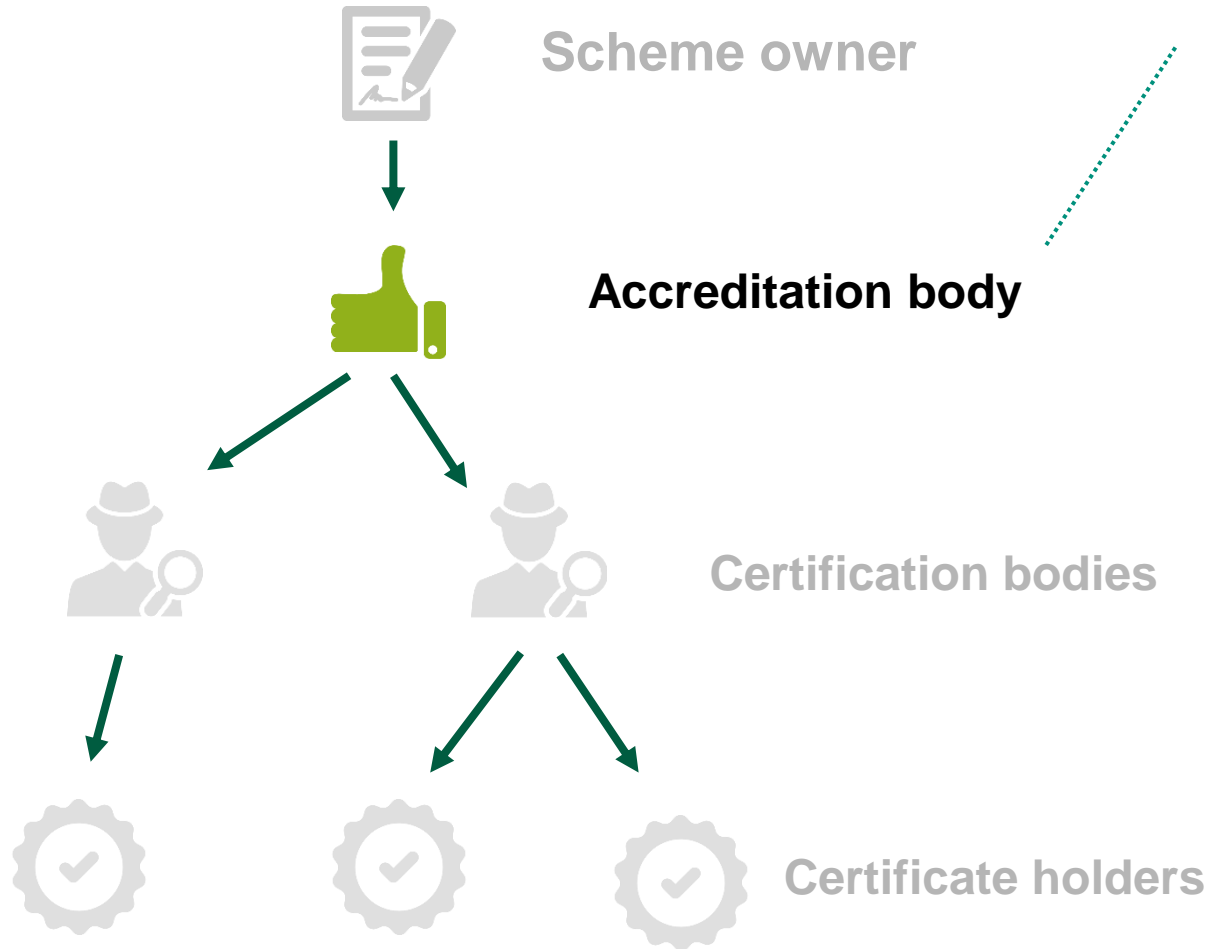


Also named “normative body”, this is the entity that:

- owns the certification scheme
- is developing the set of rules (Standards and other documents) and the system



## Certification actors

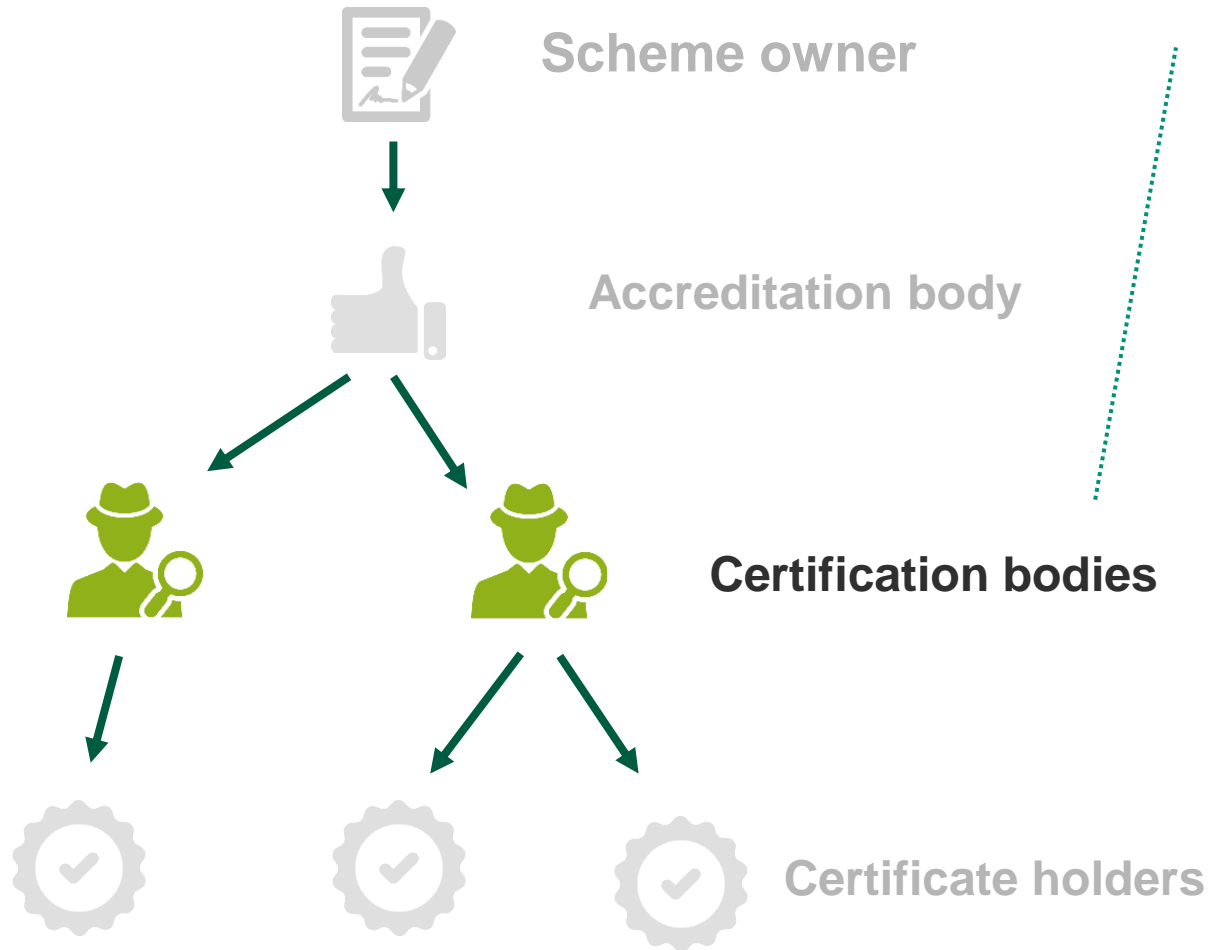


The organisation that can **accredit** other organisations as qualified to be **certification bodies (CB)**. It means it:

- **develops accreditation programs** based on certification schemes requirements
- **audits the CB** (desk audit and on field) every years to ensure that their certification practices are conformed



## Certification actors



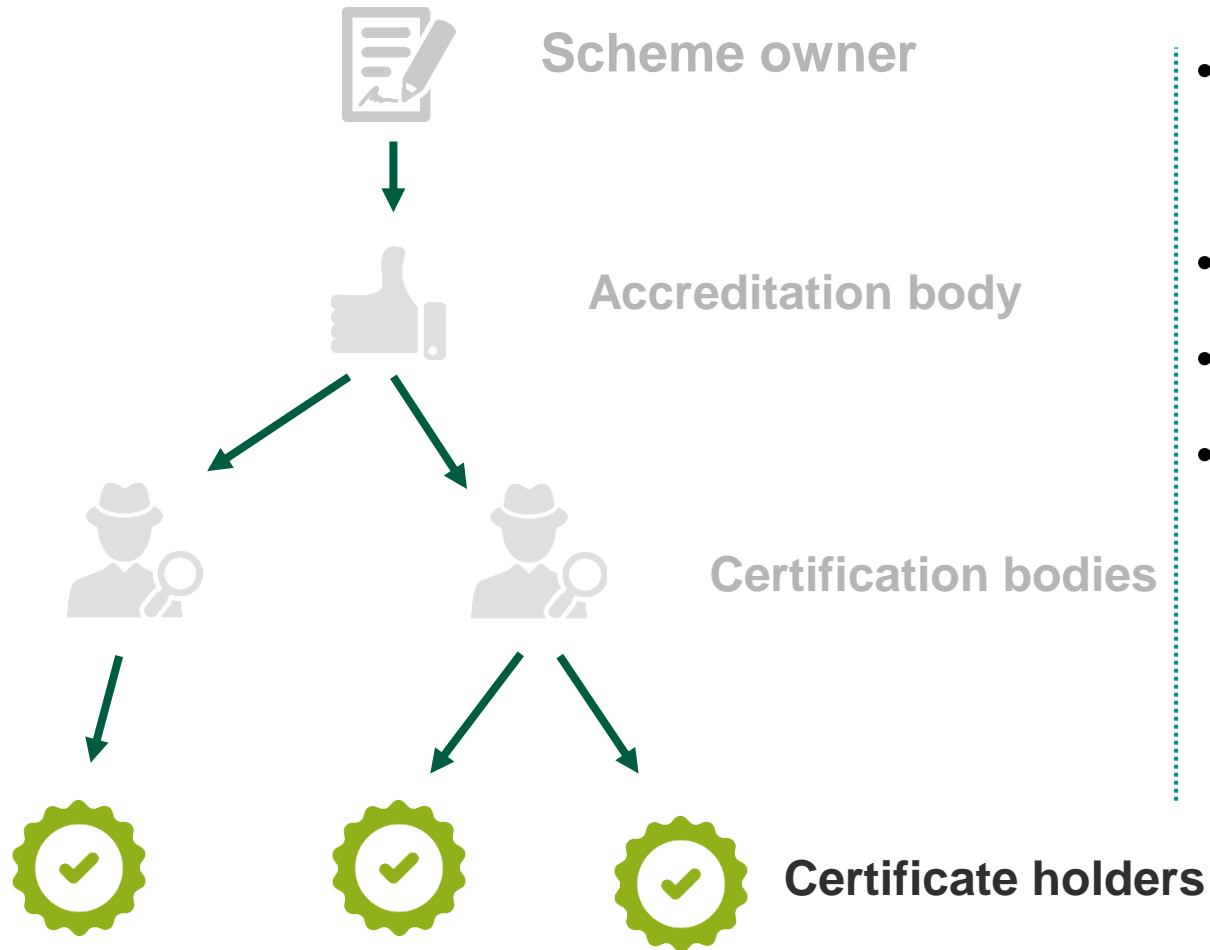
Organism that **will evaluate** the compliance against the set of rules (once accredited):

- **defines organization and procedures** to comply with schemes requirements
- **Audits and certifies** company
- **Trains, manages and monitors** auditors





## Certification actors

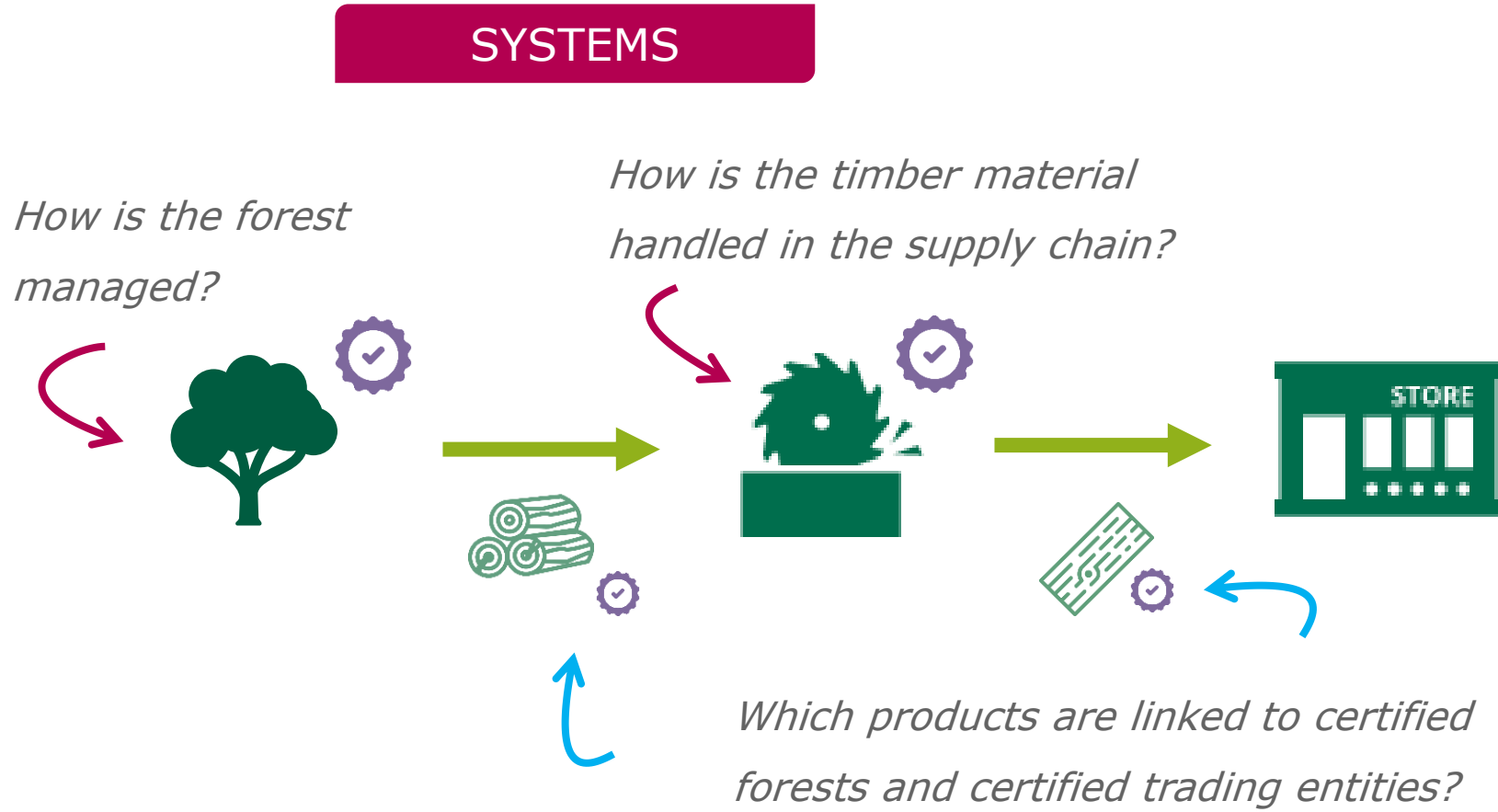


Organizations that request to be certified and:

- define procedures to **comply with certification standards**
- are undertaking the compliance evaluation
- **receive a certificate**
- use labels on products



## What is certified?



**PRODUCTS**

## Labelling in forestry schemes...



- **Label** to identify product coming from certified forests
- **Claims** to show products status as certified or as an eligible input

## ...and communication/transparency

- **Public audit reports**
- Certificate data and scope (**database**)
- **Certification logo** to promote certification process

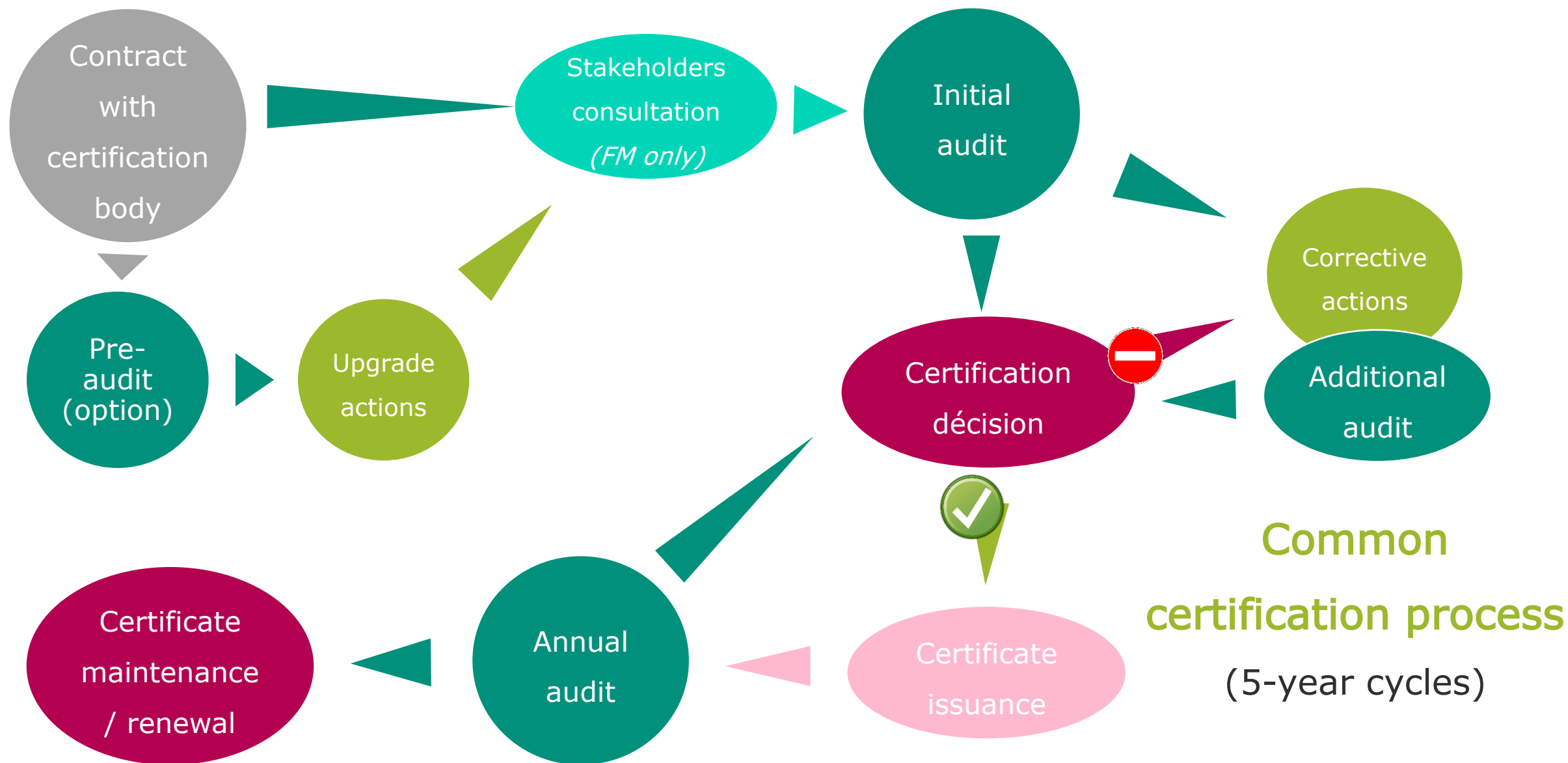
## Set up of the system:

- Specific standards with rules applying to Certification bodies
  - Who can be an auditor / a certification body & how they will be checked
  - Different audit types
  - What happens during an audit
  - Consequences of non-conformances to standards (grading, delay to apply corrective measures, etc.)
  - Decision-making to grant certificates



## Set up of the system:

- Other institutional arrangements
  - Overall level of transparency (standards, procedures, scheme ownership, certificate holders, etc.)
  - Stakeholders' engagement (who can participate, when, how)
  - Appeals and complaints mechanisms
  - Procedures to avoid impartiality / conflicts of interest



Summary of differences that can be found across various certification systems:

- different set of requirements
- different scopes within regards to coverage of legal, social and environmental criteria
- different quality assurance systems
- different approaches to ensuring conformance among organisations (certificate-holders) which subscribe to the scheme
- different governance structures and oversight mechanisms
- different level of transparency and involvement of stakeholders and other interested parties
- different ability to control false claims, risk of mixing and improper implementation of requirements



A photograph of a dense forest with tall trees and green foliage, partially obscured by a white curved shape that frames the text.

# Thank you!

