



RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

CERTIFICATION RULES FOR FARMS

Document A-15-SRCL-B-FA
Version 1.1





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ABOUT THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

Translation Disclaimer

For any questions related to the precise meaning of the information contained in the translation, please refer to the official English version for clarification.

Any discrepancies or differences in meaning due to translation are not binding and have no effect for auditing or certification purposes.

More information?

For more information about the Rainforest Alliance, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org or contact info@ra.org. Also, reach the Rainforest Alliance Amsterdam Office at De Ruijterkade 6, 1013AA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

For help in obtaining a Rainforest Alliance certificate reach out to our Customer Success team at customersuccess@ra.org

The Standard Requirements are binding and must be complied with for certification.

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A-02-S-B-SC-V1.4 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard, Farm Requirements. All other annexes, guidance documents, and policies listed in this document.

Replaces:

SA-R-GA-4-VI Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules

Applicable to:

Farm Certificate Holders, Certification Bodies,
Rainforest Alliance

Country/Region:

All

Crops:

All crops in the scope of the Rainforest Alliance certification program; please see Rainforest Alliance Crop List.

Type of certification:

Farm

KEY CHANGES TO THE CERTIFICATION RULES

Topic	Requirement	This version	Reasoning
Removal of supply chain rules	throughout	Removed references to supply chain CHs	Supply chain rules have been moved to the Certification and Auditing Rules for Supply Chain
Licenses	throughout	Removal of references to licenses	Volumes will now be directly linked to the certificate
Smart meters and self-selected requirements	throughout	Removed, with the exception of some references to smart meter requirements	Removed to reflect changes in v1.4 of the standard
Multiple standards	throughout	Amended language to refer to multiple Rainforest Alliance standards	New Rainforest Alliance solutions
Certification process	2.1.1.	The steps in the certification process do not need to occur in this precise order. CBs shall refer to the applicable procedures.	Procedures that are likely to be changed are to be moved to a procedure document that will reflect the most updated processes.
Certification process	2.1.24- 2.1.26	Updated the steps in the certification process to reflect that the auditor shall give the CH a draft list of nonconformities at the closing meeting. The auditor then has 2 weeks to send the draft report to the CB. After the CB does their review, the final audit report shall be shared with the up to 4 weeks after the last day of the audit.	Based on CB feedback.

Topic	Requirement	This version	Reasoning
Certification process	2.1.34	Removal of license review process. The CB now issues the certificate directly. Instead of a license requests, the volumes are issued directly when the certificate is released in RACP	Simplification
Multiple standards	2.2.1.	Any farm shall not hold multiple certificates for the same scope of the same Rainforest Alliance standard. The same farm may hold certificates for multiple, differing Rainforest Alliance standards.	Adapted to reflect the release of additional standards
Geodata risk assessment	2.2.13 and 2.2.14	Changed wording to reflect new designations of “significant” and “insignificant risk” to add clarity to risk assessments. Evidence must be collected to prove whether or not deforestation or encroachment has occurred. Rules adapted based on this to determine when group members shall be excluded from certification.	Increased clarity and specificity for management of deforestation and encroachment risks.
Estimated harvest volumes	2.3.11	Added a table on how to determine harvest volumes for crops with distinct harvest periods.	Clarity
Sell-off extension	3.1.7	Added clarification that sell-off extensions are only possible in the case of a CH leaving the certification program.	Clarity

Topic	Requirement	This version	Reasoning
Closure of NCs	3.2.12.	Some NCs may not require a full root cause analysis.	Indicator requirements may not require a root cause analysis as long as the data is corrected.
Leaving the certification program	3.2.24	If a CH chooses to leave the certification program, the CH shall wait at least 6 months before its next certification audit and must comply at the certification year they were in upon leaving the certification program.	To ensure that CHs maintain a high level of compliance and improvement, even with gaps in their certification.
Closure of NCs	3.2.7.	Some NCs may be eligible to be closed with a corrective action plan	More NCs may be able to be closed with a corrective action plan. The exact requirements that can be closed with a corrective action plan will be shared in future procedural documents.
Closure of NCs	3.2.8	If an NC is found for any part of the CH's certification scope, the entire CH shall not be certified for the relevant standard before the NC is closed. A CH may be certified for one standard while there are still open NCs for another standard for which the CH is undergoing certification.	The NCs for each Rainforest Alliance standard can be evaluated separately. A non-certification decision or NC for one Rainforest Alliance standard does not impact the certification decision or NC for another Rainforest Alliance standard.
Non-certification	3.2.17	Clarified language around when human rights cases are grounds for non-certification.	Clarity

Topic	Requirement	This version	Reasoning
Notification	3.2.34, 3.2.35	Added “notification’ to clauses mentioning what needs to happen when a CH is non-certified or suspended. These requirements only come into effect with the notification of the CH of this change	Increased clarity in interpretation.
Incentives	3.4	Added additional incentives for CHs for good performance, great performance, and outstanding performance. These include reducing the sample size and the potential to skip the second surveillance audit.	To reward and incentivize CHs with outstanding performance
Certification email	Throughout	Email address cbcert@ra.org changed for certification@ra.org	Correction
Certification process	2.1.11	Addition of previously omitted points a, b, c, and d.	Correction
Extensions	3.1.2 – 3.1.10	Renumbering of requirements in section	Correction
Rights reserved by the Rainforest Alliance	4.1.12	Deletion of requirements 2.1.38 and 4.1.11-e and merged with previously omitted requirement.	Correction

INTRODUCTION

The Rainforest Alliance is an ISEAL code-compliant member, committed to ISEAL's Code of Ethics and supports the ten ISEAL Credibility Principles, which represent the core values on which effective sustainability standards are built. The Rainforest Alliance also applies the principles of ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems.

Overview of Assurance Rules & System

The Assurance Rules establish the rules for the various elements that provide assurance for the Rainforest Alliance Advanced Standards. The rules are composed of four main documents:

- 1. Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules for Farms**
- 2. Rainforest Alliance Auditing Rules for Farms**
- 3. Rainforest Alliance Certification and Auditing Rules for Supply Chain**
- 4. Rainforest Alliance Rules for Certification Bodies**

The Assurance System takes the contents of these four documents and translates them into the Rainforest Alliance technology systems that are designed to measure, ensure and improve compliance with the Sustainable Agriculture Standard's requirements. It aims to create a more robust and credible system by focusing attention on accuracy of data for informed decision processes, risk assessments and audit quality.

USING THIS DOCUMENT

Key verbal forms:

In this and other assurance documents, the following verbal forms apply:

- "shall" indicates a requirement which is mandatory
- "should" indicates a recommendation
- "may" indicates a permission
- "can" indicates a possibility or a capability

Further details can be found in the **ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2**.

Terms, definitions and abbreviations

A glossary governing all underlined terms in all Rainforest Alliance documentation can be found [here](#).

Frequently used abbreviations in this document:

CB: Certification Body

CBA: Collective Bargaining Agreement

CH: Certificate Holder

CL/FL/D/WVH: Child labor/forced labor/
discrimination/workplace violence and harassment

DI2: Duration of Individual Interviews

DGI: Duration of Group Interviews

DS2: Default Farm Sample Size

FoA: Freedom of Association

GPF: Group Proximity Factor

GPS: Global Positioning System

IDE: Interview Duration Estimate

MAD: Minimum Audit Duration

MS: Management System

NC: Nonconformity

NGI: Number of Group Interviews

NGO: Nongovernmental Organization

NII: Number of Individual Interviews

PA: Protected Area

QMS: Quality Management System

RA: Rainforest Alliance

RACP: Rainforest Alliance Certification Platform

RCA: Root Cause Analysis

RF: Risk Factor

Implementation

In this document, the term “CB” is used to refer to authorized CBs, unless otherwise noted. An authorized CB or a CH may exceptionally deviate from the requirements of this document under the condition that the CB has received approval from the Rainforest Alliance prior to such deviation and the CB or CH provides documented justifications. For CBs, such justifications shall demonstrate the ability of the QMS of the CB to continuously deliver the expected results of the audit activities and certification processes. For CHs, such justifications shall demonstrate the ability of the

management system of the CH to continuously demonstrate conformity of the CH with the assurance and standard rules that apply to their scope.

Such exception requests shall be submitted to certification@ra.org. the event that a CH does not have a valid contract with a CB, the request shall be submitted to customersuccess@ra.org. The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right, at its sole discretion, not to accept a deviation from any of the requirements.

If there is any conflict between the requirements in this document and those in other documents, including legal and statutory requirements, the CB and/or CH shall consult the Rainforest Alliance in a timely manner for further guidance on interpretation. The Rainforest Alliance will start carrying out evaluation and monitoring activities based on the Assurance System documents from their effective date.

Reference documents

In all cases, the current and valid version of the standards, normative documents or guidance documents shall be the reference documents in this document. The latest version of Rainforest Alliance documents, including the Assurance documents, can be found at www.rainforest-alliance.org.

Key Rainforest Alliance Documents:

- Sustainable Agriculture Standard Requirements

for Farm

- Sustainable Agriculture Standard Requirements for Supply Chain
- Rainforest Alliance Rules for Certification Bodies
- Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules for Farm
- Rainforest Alliance Auditing Rules for Farm
- Rainforest Alliance Certification and Auditing Rules for Supply Chain

Certificate Holder support: CHs of the Rainforest Alliance program can contact the Customer Success team at customersuccess@ra.org for questions about the Rainforest Alliance standards and Certification Rules.

Technical support: CHs can contact customersuccess@ra.org for assistance in accessing or using the Rainforest Alliance systems, seal use and trademarks.

Certification Body support: Certification Bodies can contact the Rainforest Alliance Assurance department by using the following email addresses:

- certification@ra.org for questions about the Rainforest Alliance standards and Certification Rules, communication about partners (e.g. suspensions and withdrawals of certificates and activations)

- cbmanagement@ra.org for CB accounts and approvals
- cbmonitoring@ra.org for Assurance Provider Oversight
- cbtraining@ra.org for CB training
- wacocoa@ra.org for CB support in West-Africa and interpretation of the Cocoa Policy

Grievances

Kindly use the webform to submit your grievances against Rainforest Alliance: <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/sustainable-farming/farm-certification/questions-and-complaints>

Compliance with applicable laws

Rainforest Alliance strives for its CHs and CBs to be exemplary figures for improving social, economic and

environmental conditions in their areas of operation. In this regard, CHs and CBs shall obey national laws, regulations and sector agreements or collective bargaining agreements. In the event that a national law, regulation, sector agreement or collective bargaining agreement (CBA) is stricter than the requirements of the Rainforest Alliance standards or vice versa, the strictest rule always prevails. For more information, refer to the Rainforest Alliance Standards.

When the interpretation of the applicable law poses a challenge in terms of complying with a requirement from the Rainforest Alliance Assurance Documents or Standard, the Rainforest Alliance will analyze each specific situation and communicate the corresponding decision.

CHAPTER 1: CERTIFICATION SCOPE

Objectives

- To establish requirements for prospective Certificate Holders (referring to all organizations that want to be part of the Rainforest Alliance standards), and Certificate Holders (referring to all organizations that are part of the Rainforest Alliance Standards) to become or remain part of the Rainforest Alliance Standards.
- To establish requirements on which CHs need to receive an external audit
- To establish a process for CHs to become or remain part of the Rainforest Alliance Standards

Applicability

This document applies to:

1. Certificate Holders (CHs) farms that want to get certified for one or more of the Rainforest Alliance Standards
2. Authorized Certification Bodies (CBs) that want to certify their clients under the Rainforest Alliance Standards
3. The Rainforest Alliance

Process requirements for certification of farm and supply chain Certificate Holders

In order to promote sustainable agriculture, the Rainforest Alliance has developed standards, including the Sustainable Agriculture Standard. Certificate Holders that want to sell and/or buy their product as Rainforest Alliance Certified under one of these standards shall meet all applicable requirements in the relevant standard and comply with the requirements of this document.

1.1. CERTIFICATION SCOPE

This section explains what may be covered by the Rainforest Alliance certification scope the scope of the crops, activities, entities, etc. a CH wishes to certify) and what defines the applicable standard requirements of a CH (all requirements that are mandatory to a CH).

1.1.1 The RACP shall define which standard requirements are applicable to a CH, based on the certification scope provided by the CH in the RACP. The certification scope is defined by but is not limited to:

- a. Crops
- b. Activities
- c. Certification option
- d. Level in the standard based on the year of certification
- e. Traceability level (if applicable)
- f. Risk

1.1.2 A CH may define its own certification scope by choosing what it wishes to certify. However, the CH shall take full responsibility for compliance with the Rainforest Alliance certification program requirements, of its entire certification scope.

1.1.3 A CH may include one or more crops included in the crop categories from the list below in the certification scope:

- a. Banana
- b. Cocoa
- c. Coconut

- d. Coffee
- e. Flowers
- f. Fruits
- g. Herbs, spices, other herbal tea ingredients and rooibos¹ may be included in the certification scope under the following conditions:
 - i. When cultivated with any other crop in this list
 - ii. In case of chili and pepper, producers may choose either Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard certification or UEBT/Rainforest Alliance certification irrespective of points i) and ii)
- h. Nuts
- i. Tea
- j. Vegetables may be included in the certification scope under the following conditions:
 - i. All Farm CHs that produce, trade or handle vegetables shall hold a valid food safety certificate such as Global Gap, HACCP or comparable at any time during the validity of the Rainforest Alliance certificate, covering the entire scope of the Rainforest Alliance certificate.

¹ For the certification of Herbs and Spices, the Rainforest Alliance and the Union for Ethical BioTrade have developed a joint program. The Rainforest Alliance/UEBT Herbs and Spices Program is a partnership based on the recognition by the Rainforest Alliance of the Ethical BioTrade Standard and the UEBT Certification Protocol. The UEBT Standard includes a supplement with requirements from the Rainforest Alliance Standard that complement the UEBT Standard, or requirements that are unique to the Rainforest Alliance. After issuance of the UEBT Standard Certificate by UEBT, the Rainforest Alliance requirements linked to the scope of supply chain actors apply, as well as all Rainforest Alliance assurance documents for the remaining part of the supply chain until the manufacturing of consumer-end products. Contact the UEBT certification@uebt.org for more information.

- ii. In case of change in the status of the food safety certification, the CH shall immediately inform the Rainforest Alliance and the CB.

1.1.4 Byproducts of the certified crops may be certified on a case-by-case basis.

1.1.5 A CH shall include one or more activities in the certification scope from the list below:

- a. Farming
- b. Trading
- c. Warehousing
- d. Processing and/or manufacturing
- e. Packing

1.1.6 A CH may include one or more entities in the certification scope. Types of entities are:

- a. Farms
- b. Intermediaries²
- c. Sites
- d. Subcontractors³

² Intermediary: any actor that trades (buys and sells) or handles Rainforest Alliance certified products in farm CH supply chains (typically from farm to farm CH facilities). Common examples of intermediaries in Rainforest Alliance certified supply chains are small traders such as "pisteurs" in Cote d'Ivoire or "manavs" in Turkey, who source from producers to supply farm CHs. As they handle low volumes, we do not expect intermediaries to be certified or registered independently in the Rainforest Alliance platforms, but they shall comply with applicable requirements from the Rainforest Alliance Standard and the CH management shall take responsibility for their compliance.

³ Subcontractor: an organization or individual contracted to carry out one or more specific operations on the certified products, for example, processing, storing, packaging and/or labelling products.

e. Service providers

1.1.7 An entity is in scope of farm certification if any of the following apply:

a. It is involved in farming activities.

1.1.8 Entities that are out of scope of certification do not need to register in RACP or get certified. An organization is out of scope of certification if any of the following apply:

a. It only stores or transports certified products without making any modification to the product or the packaging.

b. It distributes a final consumer-facing product and does not make any modifications to the product.

1.1.9 The combination of entities included in the certification scope shall determine the certification option and applicability of the standard. For more information, refer to the certification options described in this document.

1.1.10 CHs that cover different entities in their certification scope shall take full responsibility for all those actors to comply with the standard and process requirements that apply to them.

1.1.11 The certification scope corresponds to the definition of scope in the applicable standard requirements. For farm, this is the entire farm, though a farm CH may choose to leave geographically separate farm units out of the certification scope if these are only used to produce non-certified crop at all times and are not in the vicinity of farm units with certified crop. Buildings in a farm unit that only deal with non-certified crops may be excluded from the certification scope.

1.1.12 Based on the certification cycle of the CH, continuous improvement requirements may) apply. For more information, refer to the applicable requirements of the relevant standard.

1.1.13 The CH shall demonstrate conformity with 100% of requirements that apply and are mandatory to its certification scope to become or remain certified under the applicable Rainforest Alliance standard.

1.1.14 Some requirements may be added to the scope of the CH voluntarily, those are called self-selected requirements.

Verification scope

- 1.1.15** All requirements of the Rainforest Alliance standard(s) that are applicable to the certification of a CH shall be verified for the CH to demonstrate conformity. Verification takes place through various forms of audits as described in the *Verification of Conformity* sections.
- 1.1.16** The CH shall demonstrate conformity of all entities in its certification scope with all applicable requirements as of the following dates:
- a. For CHs that require an audit: on the day of the signature of their certification agreement with an authorized CB or the date of first purchase of certified product up to **3 months** prior to the issue date ⁴, whichever is earlier.
- 1.1.17** Verification of conformity with all applicable and self-selected requirements including indicators shall be done through verification of the entire area and activities covered by the CH's certification scope. This includes but is not limited to (depending on the certification scope):
- a. All areas destined for growing, handling and processing certified products, of all entities included in the certification scope, with focus on products intended to be sold with Rainforest Alliance Certified claims
 - b. Areas involving human activity and other infrastructure within its limits that include but are not restricted to administrative infrastructure, collection points, intermediaries, processing and packing units, storage facilities, workers housing, etc.
 - c. HCV areas, natural forests and other natural ecosystems as well as fallow land
 - d. Leased areas inside the CH's facilities
 - e. Workers, worker representatives, CH management, and owner representatives
 - f. Workers and their families who live temporarily or permanently at the CH's facilities

⁴ The date of purchase is the date of change of legal ownership.

- g. Farms that produce crops intended to be sold with a Rainforest Alliance certified claim⁵
- h. Service providers, subcontractors and intermediaries included in the certification scope
- i. All documentation considered relevant to determining conformity with the Rainforest Alliance standards
- j. Residents of surrounding communities who are or may be directly affected by the CH's activities
- k. Documentation related to trading of the certified and non-certified product handled by the CH
- l. Use of the Rainforest Alliance certification and traceability platforms and (if any) other systems used related to the implementation of requirements in the certification scope
- m. Data collected according to the targets set by the CH for smart meter requirements

Subcontractors, service providers and intermediaries

CHs may make use of subcontractors and/or service providers and/or intermediaries for certified activities. This section explains the options and the conditions that apply.

1.1.18 Subcontractors, service providers, and intermediaries may be included in the Rainforest Alliance certification program under the following options:

- a. As part of the certification scope of one CH
- b. As part of the certification scope of several CHs

1.1.19 Subcontractors may also be certified independently

⁵ The Farm CH may choose to leave geographically separate farm units out of the certification scope if these are only used to produce non-certified crop at all times AND are not in the vicinity of farm units with certified crop.

- 1.1.20** Subcontractors and/or service providers and/or intermediaries shall comply with all requirements applicable to their scope, depending on the activities carried out, for example traceability, working conditions, application of inputs, use of seal, etc.
- 1.1.21** The Rainforest Alliance may recognize service providers as certified through their participation in other certification schemes.

Option	Conditions that apply
1.1.22 Subcontractors/service providers/intermediaries included under the scope of one or more CHs	a. The CH making use of the services of the subcontractor/service providers/intermediary shall take full responsibility of the conformity of the subcontractor/service providers/intermediary before they can be included into their scope. b. In case a subcontractor/service providers/intermediary is included in the certification scope of several CHs, the subcontractor/service providers/intermediary shall be included in the verification scope and certification process of all CHs that use their services. c. The subcontractor/service providers/intermediary that is included under the scope of a CH that is (to be) part of the Rainforest Alliance certification program shall have a legal or contractual link with the CH receiving the services. d. The subcontractor shall not offer services as certified under the Rainforest Alliance program to other CHs independently from the CH certifying them under their scope.
1.1.23 Subcontractors certified independently (this does not count for service providers)	a. Subcontractors may only be independently certified as a supply chain CH if the services provided are related to the certified product. Refer to the Certification and Auditing Rules for Supply Chain for more information.

Option	Conditions that apply
	b. The subcontractor that is (to be) certified under the applicable Rainforest Alliance standard(s) is responsible for its own conformity with all applicable requirements.

Table CR 1: Certification Conditions for Subcontractors

- 1.1.24** Responsibility of conformity of all actors that fall under the certification scope of the CH lies with central management of the CH.
- 1.1.25** All entities that fall under the certification scope of the CH shall be registered in the RACP under the certification account of the CH.
- 1.1.26** An NC at any actor covered in the certification scope of a CH affects the certification status of the entire CH.
- 1.1.27** Once a CH has demonstrated conformity with all applicable standard and process requirements, the CH shall receive a certificate to prove compliance with the scope mentioned on the certificate. The certificate allows the CH to offer Rainforest Alliance Certified products and/or services included in the certification scope.

1.2 CERTIFICATION OPTIONS AND TYPES OF AUDITS

This section explains the possible structures in which CHs can join or remain part of the Rainforest Alliance certification program, called certification options. There are five certification options, of which the three apply to organizations that include farming in their certification scope. Two apply to supply chain actors excluding farming⁶. For information about the supply chain scopes, please refer to the Certification and Auditing Rules for Supply Chain.

⁶ In case CHs that have farming in scope also include supply chain activities, their certification option stays the same, however applicable standard requirements may be added depending on the activities.

Applicable Requirements	Types of Certification Options
Farm Requirements	Group of farms • A group of organized farms (group members) that implements a common management system • The group may be organized as an association or cooperative or be managed by a farm or other supply chain actor such as an exporter or another entity. • <u>Large farms</u> (or <u>Multi-Farms</u>) with <u>outgrowers</u> are covered under this certification option. In this case the <u>large farm</u> or <u>Multi-Farm</u> counts as a large group member and the <u>IMS</u>.
	Single farm (large or small) • One farm owned or rented by one legal entity or person whereby management activities take place at a single physical location • This type of certification is targeted towards single farms that want to get certified independently.
	Multi-farm • Two or more farms owned or rented by one legal entity or person, whose operations and farming practices are managed centrally, regardless of certification. Some management activities may take place at the different farms however, the same practices shall be implemented at all the farms and processes and procedures shall be managed centrally. • If any of these conditions does not apply, the farms may not get certified as a multi-farm and shall get certified under the certification option group of farms or split up in several single farms. • Farms that are part of a multi-farm may get certified separately from the multi farm as single farms, in which case they will have a separate certification account and process.

Table CR 2 : Certification Options

CHAPTER 2 : CERTIFICATION PROCESS

2.1 CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR FARM CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

2.1.1 The steps below may not need to occur in this precise order. CBs and CHs shall refer to the applicable procedures for more specific instructions on how to complete the below steps. The CB and CH shall respect the most updated version of the procedure(s). All time frames in the certification process are counted in weeks (seven days starting any day of the week).

Certification Process	
Rules per step	Responsible Actor
The CH creates an account to receive access to the Rainforest Alliance Certification Platform (RACP). 2.1.2 All CHs that wish to join the Rainforest Alliance certification program shall create an account in the Rainforest Alliance platform.	The CH
The CH defines/updates certification scope⁷ 2.1.3 All CHs shall fill and complete their scope. This information shall be updated at least annually.	The CH

⁷ In case of scope extension, the CH goes through the process from step 2 onwards.

Certification Process	
The Rainforest Alliance provides/updates list of applicable requirements from the applicable standard(s). 2.1.4 Once the CH has defined its certification scope, the Rainforest Alliance shall provide the list of applicable requirements. The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to update the applicable requirements with a notification period defined on a case-by-case basis.	The Rainforest Alliance
The CH collects data and verifies its own conformity 2.1.5 All CHs shall verify their own conformity and that of all entities falling under their responsibility (see Certification options) with all applicable requirements and address any self-identified NCs. a. Group farm CHs shall carry out internal inspections in line with the applicable standard requirements. b. For Single and Multi-farm CHs, management shall conduct a yearly self-assessment to evaluate its own compliance.	The CH
The CH completes the certification application form 2.1.6 All CHs shall complete or revise their certification application data. a. Application information includes details of sites, processing units, intermediaries, subcontractors and service providers	The CH

Certification Process	
The CH chooses a Rainforest Alliance authorized CB 2.1.7 All CHs who require a CB audit shall choose a CB authorized by the Rainforest Alliance for their certification scope.⁸ 2.1.8 The CH may choose the CB of its preference. The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to assign the CB to the CH.	The CH
The CB signs agreement with the CH and confirms the scope 2.1.9 All CHs who require a CB certification audit shall sign a certification agreement⁹ with the selected CB and confirm the agreement has been signed¹⁰ in the RACP. This will give the CB access to the certification information of the CH. 2.1.10 The CB shall verify the information provided by the CH in the RACP and confirm to the best of its knowledge the scope of the CH. If the scope is incorrect, this shall be adjusted in the RACP by the CH. Changes in scope may result in changes to the applicability of standard requirements and audit costs.	The CB
The CH updates/provides audit preparation data 2.1.11 All CHs shall complete or revise their audit preparation data and provide the applicable documents/data to the CB before the audit. The CB shall not share the audit plan until all below documents have been submitted.	The CH

⁸ In some contexts, The Rainforest Alliance has implemented an audit allocation system whereby a CH is assigned to a CB.

⁹ For more information on the content of the certification agreement refer to the **Rules for Certification Bodies**.

¹⁰ Both the CB and the CH confirm in the RACP that they have signed a certification agreement including a confidentiality clause that will allow the Rainforest Alliance to share the information provided by the CH in the RACP with the CB.

Certification Process

- a. Certification scope information including details of sites, processing units, intermediaries, subcontractors and service providers.
- b. Certification Application Form (CAF).
- c. Management plan.
- d. Self-assessment.
- e. Group Member Registry (GMR).
- f. Geodata risk assessment as obtained from the RACP after upload of data (combination of points and polygons as required in the standard). For more information on preparation of geodata and implementation of risk mitigation, see **Guidance D: Geolocation Data Requirements and Risk Maps and Environment Annex**.
- g. Indicator data.

2.1.12 The CH shall upload the Group Member Registry (GMR) to the RACP **at least 2 weeks** before the audit.

2.1.13 If the CH has not shared all the above information in time for the audit plan to be prepared, the audit shall be postponed.

The Rainforest Alliance provides audit preparation data to the CB

2.1.14 For all CB audits, in addition to the information provided by the CH, the Rainforest Alliance shall provide the CB with the applicable audit checklist.

Rainforest
Alliance

Certification Process	
The CB and CH agree on audit dates 2.1.15 The CB shall indicate the scheduled start date of the audit to the Rainforest Alliance 4 weeks¹¹ before the first day of the audit. If the date changes, the new date shall be shared with the Rainforest Alliance no less than 4 weeks before the first day of the new audit dates. 2.1.16 In the event that the audit is planned to take place or takes place longer than 2 months after the confirmation of the application of the CH, the CH shall update its application and implement any new requirements that may be applicable before the audit.	CB and CH
The CH ensures that it has the correct documents and staff available during the audit 2.1.17 CH shall have the following staff or persons available and present during the audit, including but not limited to: a. Management representative b. HR/payroll staff c. Management of processing facilities d. Occupational Health and Safety Committee representative, if applicable e. Workers' representatives, if applicable f. Assess-and-address committee representative g. Gender committee representative h. Grievance committee representative	The CH

¹¹ A week is 7 days, starting on any day of the week regardless of national holidays.

Certification Process	
i. Any other committees 2.1.18 CH shall make available the documents related to compliance with standard and audit requirements during the audit process. 2.1.19 If the CH contracts a service provider or intermediary, the CH shall ensure that documents from the provider or intermediary are available for/during the audit.	
The CB plans and prepares audit (certification or surveillance) 2.1.20 Before each certification or surveillance audit, the CB shall plan and prepare the audit incorporating the information provided by the CH in the audit preparation data and the geodata risk assessment results provided by the Rainforest Alliance. 2.1.21 The CB shall provide the audit plan at least 2 weeks before the start date of the audit. For more information on the rules that apply for the audit, refer to the section on external verification of conformity below. For more information on the process of the audit, refer to the Auditing Rules for Farms.	The CB
The CB conducts on site audit (certification or surveillance) 2.1.22 If, during the audit, the CB finds that any information in the certification scope of the CH is incorrect, this shall be adjusted by the CH and any additional requirements resulting from this adjustment shall be met before certification. 2.1.23 During the closing meeting of the audit, the CB shall provide the list of NCs identified by the audit team. This list may change after the quality review of the CB, in which case the CB shall notify the CH of any changes.	The CB

Certification Process	
The CB provides a draft audit report to the CH and performs quality review 2.1.24 For all audits, the CB shall provide the CH with a list of NCs at the closing meeting. 2.1.25 The auditor shall provide the draft audit report to the CB no later than 2 weeks after the last day of the audit. 2.1.26 After the draft audit report is complete, the report shall be reviewed by the CB through its internal quality management system. The CB make the final report available to the CH within 4 weeks after the last day of the audit.	The CB
The CH resolves nonconformities 2.1.27 All CHs that have received one or more NCs shall close at least all NCs with mandatory requirements following the process described under the section Nonconformities and possible consequences of this document. 2.1.28 The timeline for closure of the NCs shall be defined by the CH and the CB considering the maximum of 10 weeks after the last day of the audit that is defined for the CH to provide evidence of closure to the CB.	The CH
The CB verifies that nonconformities have been resolved and takes certification decision 2.1.29 The CB shall verify that all the evidence submitted by the CH is sufficient to close the NCs. The CB may conduct an on-site follow up audit if required (for more information see section <i>Follow up audit</i> in this document). 2.1.30 Once the evidence of closure has been verified, the CB shall make a certification decision. 2.1.31 The CB shall take the certification decision within the following timelines:	The CB

Certification Process	
a. If any NCs were identified: within 2 weeks of closure of NCs, no later than 12 weeks after the last day of the audit. b. If no NCs were identified: within 4 weeks after the last day of audit.	
The CB provides certification decision and final audit report information to The Rainforest Alliance 2.1.32 The CB shall submit the certification decision and the final audit report within 1 week after the certification decision has been taken. 2.1.33 For all certification and surveillance audits the CB shall provide the final audit report in the RACP including: a. The certification decision taken b. The executed audit plan including dates and audit team c. The CAF d. The final audit findings checklist e. The GMR and/or indicator data in case there is an updated version after the CH upload f. Validation/non-validation of certification scope and data provided by the CH g. The certificate and annex (only in case of a positive certification decision) 2.1.34 Upon a positive certification decision, the CB shall upload the certificate corresponding to the applicable standard(s) to the CH and Rainforest Alliance in the RACP.	The CB

Certification Process	
a. Until the certificate is issued, the CH shall not sell or ship any product with a Rainforest Alliance certification product claim. b. Any seal approval (see Rainforest Alliance Labeling and Trademark Policy) is not valid without a valid certificate. 2.1.35 Once a CH has demonstrated conformity and this has been verified by the Rainforest Alliance, the CH shall receive a certificate to prove compliance with the scope mentioned on the certificate. The certificate allows the CH to offer Rainforest Alliance Certified products and/or services included in the certification scope. 2.1.36 The scope mentioned on the certificate shall be according to the template provided by the Rainforest Alliance. 2.1.37 The name mentioned on the certificate shall be the name of the CH responsible for implementation of the Rainforest Alliance certification program (see section Certification Options in this document).	

Table CR 3: Certification Process Overview

2.2 CERTIFICATION RULES

- 2.2.1** Any farm shall not hold multiple certificates for the same Rainforest Alliance scope and standard. The same farm may hold a certificate for multiple, differing Rainforest Alliance standards.
- 2.2.2** Parallel production (certified plots and non-certified plots of the same certified crop(s) within one farm) is not allowed¹².
- 2.2.3** If the CH uses intermediaries, those shall be included in the Rainforest Alliance certification under the certification scope of the CH.
- 2.2.4** The entire certification scope including management of a CH shall be located within the same country.
- 2.2.5** Certified sales of farms in scope of certification shall be managed centrally by the group or multi-farm management.
- 2.2.6** For all CHs the person responsible for coordination and ensuring compliance with the Rainforest Alliance certification program shall be at least one of the users of the RACP.
- 2.2.7** All entities included in the certification scope shall be compliant with the highest certification level within the group or multi-farm (see levels in the Farm Requirements).
- 2.2.8** Groups may subdivide group members into different sections/regions/internal inspection regions/sub-groups/etc. In such case, the following applies:
 - a. There shall be an overarching group management that is responsible for conformity of all actors that fall under the scope of the certification of the entire group.

¹² In case a CH is composed of several farms, it is possible some farms are included in certification and produce certified product, and some are not included in certification and produce conventional product. This is allowed, and potential processing sites may handle certified and non-certified product if segregation can be assured.

- b. Each section/region/internal inspection region/sub-group/etc. may implement an internal inspections system provided the overarching group management verifies the functioning of each section's/region's/internal inspection region's/sub-group's/etc. internal inspection system during the self-assessment.

2.2.9 If large farms are part of a group:

- a. All large farms and processing units covered in the certification scope of the group shall be registered in the RACP under the certification account of the group.
- b. Management requirements applicable to group members with large farms shall be implemented by the group members with large farms, however group management is responsible for conformity.

2.2.10 All sites and/or farms shall have a legal or contractual link with the central management of the CH and shall be subject to a single management system for the management of at least all activities related to the certification scope.

2.2.11 Two or more sites and/or farms are considered to operate a joint management system if:

- a. There is an identified central location where the activities of sites and/or farms are managed.
- b. Implementation of the Standard Requirements is managed centrally.
- c. Documents and records needed for certification are stored by the managing site and/or farm.
- d. There is evidence that proves that the central management is owned by the same company as the sites and/or farms or is contracted by the sites and/or farm(s) to manage the production and processing areas.

Geodata risk assessment: quality of geodata, deforestation and encroachment into protected areas

2.2.12 The geodata provided by the CH in the GMR shall be internally verified by the management of the CH as set out in the table below.

Internal verification geodata by CH management

Topic from the standard	Rules
Conversion of natural forest and natural ecosystems (6.1.1)	2.2.13 Farm groups and multi-farms: a. Group members with farms at significant risk of deforestation must be visited by management to verify any conversion of natural ecosystems. Evidence must be collected and made available during audits. If conversion is confirmed, a corrective action plan must be implemented, and a decision made on possible remediation or exclusion from the group. If no conversion occurred, the member can remain in the group, with evidence presented during audits. Evidence shall be maintained by farm management and kept available after the audit. More details on this can be found in the Environment Annex b. If there is evidence that conversion has already occurred, the CH must not be certified, or the CH shall exclude the non-compliant group member, farm, or farms from the certification program per the Environment Annex. If there is evidence that conversion did not occur, the group member can remain in the group and group management must show evidence during the audit. In cases of minor conversion, CHs shall refer to the procedure as outlined in the Environment Annex.

Topic from the standard	Rules
	2.2.14 Individual farms: a. Individual CHs identified as having significant risk shall not proceed with certification unless evidence can be provided that no conversion has happened within the farm boundaries. If the converted area is less than 1% of the farm area or 10 ha (whichever is smaller) and the CH wants to apply minor conversion, the member shall refer to the procedure as outlined in Environment Annex.
Production and processing in protected areas and designated buffer zones (6.1.2)	2.2.15 Farm groups and multi-farms: a. Group members with farms with production inside ‘No-go’ PA, based on the encroachment risk assessment, shall be excluded from the group following the procedure in the Environment Annex. If there is evidence that encroachment did not occur, the group members can remain in the group and group management must show evidence during the audit. b. Group members with farms with production inside ‘Go’ PA who don’t comply with <i>applicable law</i> should be excluded from the group. If production is allowed group management must show evidence during the audit. 2.2.16 Individual farms c. Individual farms where encroachment is carried out in a place and manner that violates requirement on protected areas and designated buffer zones of the standard or applicable law shall not be certified.

Table CR 4. Use of Geodata in Internal Verification by Organization Management

2.3 VERIFICATION OF CONFORMITY FOR FARM CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

This section describes different types of verification processes for conformity for Farm CHs, when those audits apply and the rules and conditions that are applicable per type of audits (additional requirements applicable are described in the Auditing Rules).

Type of audit	Description
Certification audit	Farm CHs shall receive a certification audit to become part of the Rainforest Alliance certification program. To remain part of the Rainforest Alliance certification program, this audit is repeated each three years.
Surveillance audit	In between the three-year certification audits, to verify the maintenance of their conformity with the standard, a CH shall receive a yearly surveillance audit.
Follow-up audit	Where NCs are identified during the certification or surveillance audit, the CB may perform a remote or onsite follow-up audit to verify closure of the NCs, if deemed necessary.
Surprise audit	In addition to the certification and surveillance audits, the CB shall carry out yearly surprise audits on at least 10% of the Farm CHs in their portfolio of the previous calendar year.
Investigation audit	An investigation audit is conducted to confirm compliance with the standard requirements in response to a specific grievance, reported incident, or substantial information regarding the conformity of the CH and may be performed by the CB or by the Rainforest Alliance.
Extension audit	In case of changes in the scope of a CH that is already certified, an extension audit may be required depending on the scope of the extension (usually additions to the scope).

Table CR 5: Types of Audits

Obligations of the CH

2.3.1 In all types of audits, the CH shall:

- a. Accommodate all audit activities as communicated by the audit team prior to, during, and after the audit.
- b. Fully cooperate with the audit team.
- c. Provide the audit team full access to all facilities, areas and resources required to evaluate the certification scope of the CH throughout the course of the audit activities.
- d. Provide ground transportation to the audit team for any required traveling between locations within the certification/audit scope (for example between farms, between sites, from/to subcontractors/intermediaries/service providers).
- e. Provide access to workers for interviews without coercing or coaching/training the workers with prepared answers.
- f. Provide access to required documentation.
- g. The CH and its representatives shall be out of eyesight during workers interviews, not to intimidate workers and audit team.
- h. Pay workers for their time spent during the auditing process at a fair and equitable rate.
- i. Provide private facility for the audit team to perform interviews when required and shall not take notes on the interviewee names or sectors or any other information that can allow the CH to track the interviewed workers.
- j. Not record interviews in any way.
- k. Ensure that its personnel do not intervene with any auditing activities, including interviews, in bad faith or otherwise with the intent to disrupt the audit.

- I. Accept the CB's decisions and submit any disagreement with the audit process, results, or certification decision in accordance with the Grievance Procedure as set forth in the section Grievance Procedure.

2.3.2 The CH shall pay the CB at least 70% of the audit fees **3 weeks** prior to the first date of the audit.

2.3.3 The final audit plan, as confirmed by the CH and the CB, shall be displayed by the CH at a central place in its main facilities, at least **1 week** prior to the first audit date, in a way that all personnel involved in certification is informed of the audit.

2.3.4 If the certification process is terminated by the CB or the CH receives a suspension, non-certification or cancelation, the CH shall still cover all costs involved, including the cost of any subsequent audit that may be required.

2.3.5 CH shall make accessible to workers and group members the contact details of the CB or lead auditor, as per preference of the CB.

2.3.6 CH shall make accessible to workers and group members the contact details of the CB grievance procedure.

Certification audit

2.3.7 The (re)certification audit may take place at any point in the year, regardless of the harvest.

2.3.8 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to require certification audits to take place during the harvest season for a set group of CHs (defined per country, region, sector, crop etc.).

2.3.9 A certification audit that results in a positive certification decision shall provide the single farm, multi-farm, or farm group with:

- a. A CB certificate valid for **3 years**, issued by the CB.
- b. An estimated volume per crop in the certification scope. The estimated volume shall cover the volume estimated to be harvested during **1 year**, starting on the first day of the certificate.

2.3.10 The start date of the certificate and estimated volume shall be the start date of the audit.

2.3.11 The volumes shall cover the harvest(s) during the period during and following the audit.

- a. For continuous harvest crops, this means that the volume for the year shall be calculated from the start date of the certificate.
- b. For crops with distinct harvest periods, the following table applies.

Audit Timing	Estimated Harvest Volumes
Before the harvest	For the upcoming harvest and the harvest(s) taking place up to 1 year after the audit date
During the main harvest	For that harvest and the harvest(s) taking place up to 1 year after the audit date
After the main harvest	For the harvest directly preceding the audit and for the harvest(s) taking place up to one year after the audit date

Table CR 6: Harvest Volumes

2.3.12 The start date of the first certificate shall be the first day of the audit that led to a positive certification decision. The certificate and its annex shall be updated with each audit, according to the Rainforest Alliance template and procedure

2.3.13 A CH undergoing certification for more than one Rainforest Alliance standard may have different certificate start dates for each standard.

2.3.14 If there is more than one crop to be certified, the crop with the highest estimated volume shall count as reference for the determination of the audit dates and the start date of the certificate and estimated volume.

2.3.15 All crops of the same CH for the same standard shall have the same certification cycle.

2.3.16 A CH holding certificates for more than one Rainforest Alliance standard may be in different stages of the certification cycle for each standard. I

2.3.17 Only product harvested within the validity period of a certificate shall be eligible to be sold or shipped as certified.

Surveillance audit

2.3.18 If a first surveillance audit is required, the audit shall always take place **9 to 15 months after** the date of certification.

2.3.19 If a second surveillance audit is required, the second surveillance audit shall always take place **21 to 27 months after** the date of certification.

2.3.20 If the surveillance audit does not take place during the given timeframes, the valid certificate shall be canceled, and a new certification audit shall take place for the CH to become certified again.

2.3.21 The surveillance audit should be performed preferably when the greatest number of higher-risk activities are performed and/or when the CB estimates that the greatest number of workers will be present.

2.3.22 A surveillance audit that results in maintenance of certification, shall provide the CH with volumes in the Rainforest Alliance traceability platform, issued by the Rainforest Alliance.

2.3.23 One of the two surveillance audits in a 3-year cycle shall take place during the harvest of the main certified crop.

2.3.24 One of the two surveillance audits in a 3-year cycle shall take place when application of agrochemicals for the main certified crop is planned to take place. This may be during the harvest.

2.3.25 Both surveillance audits shall take place during the harvest of the main crop to be certified if:

- a. The number of workers working outside of the harvest season is substantially less than the number of workers working during the harvest.
- b. There is high risk of nonconformity with social topics¹³ identified and flagged either by the CB or by the Rainforest Alliance.

2.3.26 A surveillance audit that results in maintenance of certification, shall provide the CH with:

¹³ When referring to social topics, it refers to all topics and requirements included in Chapter 5 Social of the farm and supply chain standards.

- a. An estimated volume per crop in the certification scope. The estimated volume shall cover the volume estimated to be harvested during **one year**, starting subsequently to the previous estimated volume.
- b. An update of the previous estimated volume per crop in the certification scope based on the harvested volume and the sales performed.

Follow-up audit

2.3.27 The CB shall only perform an on-site or remote follow-up audit when evidence of closure of non-conformities cannot be verified with a remote review of evidence provided by the CH. The reason for the follow up audit shall be justified in the audit report.

2.3.28 The CH shall make full payment to the CB for all costs involved in reviewing the closure of NCs.

2.3.29 Where the CB finds new NC(s) during a follow-up audit or NC review, the CB shall:

- a. Allow the CH to close the newly found NC(s) within a period of a **maximum of 3 weeks** from the date that the NC(s) have been communicated to the CH or
- b. Take a non-certification or de-certification decision.

2.3.30 The CH shall pay the CB for all additional costs involved.

Surprise audit

2.3.31 The 10% surprise audits of Farm CHs (performed additionally to the certification and surveillance audits) shall be calculated based on the portfolio of Farm CHs of the CB in the previous calendar year, rounded up to the whole next number with a minimum of one.

2.3.32 The CBs shall bear the costs of the surprise audits that are additional to the certification and surveillance audits.

2.3.33 The CHs to receive a surprise audit shall be selected by the CB based on risk and consider at least:

- a. Requests received from the Rainforest Alliance (if any)

- b. The CB's risk analysis of the CH (taking into account the number and severity of NCs identified during the previous audit), the implementation of corrections and corrective actions, and other relevant justifiable reasons the CB may have, including possibilities of national law violations, violation to human rights and appearance in official databases that represent risk of credibility to the Rainforest Alliance and the CB
- c. Complaints received about the CH (e.g. from the government, NGOs, or the Rainforest Alliance)
- d. The time period that the annual audit was conducted (during the harvest or not)
- e. New CHs that are in their first year of certification
- f. CHs that did not receive a surprise audit yet

2.3.34 All surprise audits shall be onsite.

2.3.35 The CB shall not give notice of the surprise audit to the CH.

2.3.36 The standard requirements and the sample to be verified during the surprise audit shall be defined by the CB based on risk and include at least social topics (when applicable).

2.3.37 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to:

- a. Require a specific CH to be included in the sample of surprise audits.
- b. Require any type of audit to be unannounced, either for a specific CH or for a set group of CHs (defined per country, region, sector, crop etc.)

Investigation audits

2.3.38 The CB shall not give a notice of more than 24 hours of the investigation audit to the CH.

2.3.39 Whether an investigation audit is required shall be determined based on risks and substantial information received by the CB and/or the Rainforest Alliance.

2.3.40 An investigation may have a pre-defined limited scope to respond to the matters under investigation.

2.3.41 The duration of an investigation audit shall be pre-defined prior to the audit and announced to the CH on the first day of the visit.

2.3.42 If necessary, the audit team has the right to adjust the audit duration whilst onsite.

2.3.43 An investigation audit may be carried out at any time during a certification cycle.

2.3.44 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to require the CB to suspend the certificate before the investigation audit has taken place.

2.3.45 Where the investigation audit leads to confirmed findings directly related to the matters under investigation:

- a. The CB and/or the Rainforest Alliance may decide to suspend or cancel the certificate of the CH for an (in)definite period and may decide not to allow the CH to get certified again for an indefinite period.
- b. The CH shall cover all costs involved for performing such an audit.
- c. When allowed to maintain its certification, the CH shall implement all required corrective actions to respond to the findings of an investigation audit.

2.3.46 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to carry out investigation audits by itself when deemed necessary. The CH shall implement any corrective action or follow-up actions resulting from these audits, where deemed necessary. The CB shall implement the follow-up actions resulting from these audits.

Extension audit

2.3.47 An extension audit shall be performed by the CB that the CH has a valid contract with. If the CB that the CH has a contract with is suspended or does not operate anymore, the CH shall contract a new CB.

2.3.48 Whether an extension audit is required, is determined based on the risk and defined in the outcome of the scope change performed by the CH in the RACP.

2.3.49 The scope of the extension audit shall be limited to the scope of the extension.

2.3.50 An extension audit shall take place while a CH has a valid certificate.

Rainforest Alliance Volumes

2.3.51 CHs shall not ship, process, or sell products with a Rainforest Alliance product claim without having active volumes in the Rainforest Alliance traceability platform.

2.3.52 New volumes shall be issued yearly after the applicable verification as described in the process above in order to include yearly changes in the scope. For farm CHs, this is mainly the volume estimated to be harvested in the harvest cycle year.

CHAPTER 3 CERTIFICATES AND CERTIFICATION DECISIONS

3.1 EXTENSIONS

- 3.1.1** In the event of changes in the certification scope or CH organization that may affect the conformity of the CH, the CH shall inform the CB in writing immediately. Such changes may include changes in key responsible persons, changes in ownership, etc. Changes in the scope that occur during the validity of a certificate and that imply an increase (i.e., more volume, group members, area, activities, sites, or performance level in the standard) shall be included through the scope extension audit process. For more information on the rules per type of extension, refer to the table below. Any increase (i.e., more volume, group members, area, activities, sites, crop or traceability level) shall not be considered as certified until the extension process has been finalized successfully. To start the process for a scope extension, the CH shall request an update to their certification scope in the RACP and inform the CB. Based on the data provided, the Rainforest Alliance shall:
- b. Indicate the verification needed on the new requirements, if any.
 - c. Set in motion the applicable assurance processes. This process is the same as the certification process, starting at step 2, with as scope the applicable requirements that have been added after the update of the profile.
- 3.1.2** An approved extension gives the CH the right to sell product as Rainforest Alliance certified during that time frame.. For sell-off extensions, the CHs may only sell leftover existing product as certified.
- 3.1.3** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to deny any extension requests.

Possible extensions and conditions

Possible extensions	Conditions	Verification needed
3.1.4 Selloff	In the case a CH chooses not to continue with certification, the CH can request a time-extension of their certificate up to 3 months after the expiry date of their certificate, to the CB, to sell a product as Rainforest Alliance certified.	No extension audit is required; however, the Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to require an extension audit or deny such a request.
3.1.5 Time	CHs can request from their CB a once off time extension of up to 3 months from the expiry date of their certificate per year.	No extension audit is required; however, the Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to require an extension audit or deny such a request.

Possible extensions	Conditions	Verification needed
3.1.6 Volume and/or area and/or group members	• If a CH harvests more than the estimated volume, adds farms, sites, or area to its scope, the CH may request an extension of maximum 30% of the already certified volume and/or area and/or group members/intermediaries per year. • New group members shall have the same level of conformity as the existing group members. • New group members and or intermediaries shall go through the internal inspection process and found compliant with all applicable requirements.	• A CB extension audit is always mandatory for extensions that exceed 10% per year. For extensions below 10% per year, this is determined based on a Risk Assessment performed by the Rainforest Alliance. • The extension audit shall include an evaluation of the IMS and its verification of conformity of the added group members, intermediaries, volumes and area, and at least the square root of the number of new group members and/or members with new area and/or volume and/or intermediaries is required during that year before the extension may be added to the existing certificate.

Possible extensions	Conditions	Verification needed
3.1.7 Traceability level	The CH shall implement all requirements applicable to the traceability to add and verify its own conformity through a self-assessment.	- The verification of conformity needed before the new traceability level is added to the certificate of the CH will be determined based on the update of the certification scope and the updated verification level, if applicable. - For CHs that have identity preserved and/or segregation traceability levels and want to add mass balance or have mass balance and want to add identity preserved and/or segregation, an extension audit is required.
3.1.8 Sites and processing units	The sites and processing units shall implement all requirements applicable, and the CH shall verify their conformity through a self-assessment.	The type of verification needed before the new site(s) are added to the certificate of the CH will be determined by the RACP.

Possible extensions	Conditions	Verification needed
3.1.9 Crop	The CH shall implement all requirements applicable and verify its own conformity through a self-assessment.	- The type of verification of conformity needed before the new crop is added to the certificate of the CH will be determined based on the update of scope. - For CHs that want to include another crop with farming in scope, an extension audit is mandatory before the extension can be granted.
3.1.10 Processing activities	The CH shall implement all requirements applicable and verify its own conformity through a self-assessment.	The type of verification of conformity needed before the new processing activities are added to the certificate of the CH will be determined based on the update of scope and verification level, if applicable.

Table CR 7: Rules Per Type of Extension

3.2 NONCONFORMITIES AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

Identification of nonconformities during an audit

- 3.2.1** Failure to fulfil any of the responsibilities set out in these rules may result in:
- a. suspension, non-certification or cancelation of the CH.
 - b. The Rainforest Alliance may decide not to allow the CH to be (re)certified for a specific period or indefinitely. This may be requested by the CB or at the Rainforest Alliance's own discretion.
 - c. Termination of the certification process by the CB. The CB may decide to terminate the certification process with a CH and issue a non-certification and cancel the active certificate, if applicable.
- 3.2.2** Any NC identified during the external audit shall always be reported to the Rainforest Alliance and communicated to the CH.
- 3.2.3** The audit team is responsible for identifying and describing the NCs identified during the audit.
- 3.2.4** The CB certifier/reviewer is responsible for verifying any given NC and shall make adjustments if needed. This may be done within a maximum of 4 weeks after the last day of the audit.
- 3.2.5** If a certifier/reviewer makes any adjustments to or raises new NCs, this shall be reported to the CH and the Rainforest Alliance.

Nonconformities and the performance system

- 3.2.6** All NCs found against applicable mandatory requirements during a certification audit shall be closed before the CH may be certified.
- 3.2.7** Some NCs may be eligible to be closed with a corrective action plan.

- 3.2.8** If an NC is found for any part of the CH's certification scope, the entire CH shall not be certified for the relevant standard before the NC is closed. A CH may be certified for one standard while there are still open NCs for another standard for which the CH is undergoing certification.
- 3.2.9** If one or more NCs are found during any audit performed while the certificate is still active, the CH shall not have its active certificate or volume canceled unless the CB decides to do so in case of non-certification. However, all NCs with applicable requirements shall be closed within the time frame mentioned in the certification process for the CH to maintain its certification for the relevant standard.
- 3.2.10** The CH shall close non-conformities on self-selected requirements in order to make additional claims on the requirement and/or to receive verification against EUDR measures. Self-selected requirements do not have an impact on the certification decision.
- 3.2.11** Where an NC is raised to a CH, the CH shall determine and implement the appropriate correction and corrective action to prevent recurrence of the NC.
- 3.2.12** The CH shall submit a proposed corrective action plan to the CB that includes:
- a. **Root cause:** In order to identify the root cause of the NC, the CH shall perform a root cause analysis (RCA). Some NCs may not require a full root cause analysis.
 - b. **Correction:** To correct the NC, the CH shall correct all current instances of the NC.
 - c. **Corrective action:** To eliminate the root cause of the NC and prevent it from recurring; corrective actions shall focus on long-term, sustainable solutions, which eliminate the root cause of the NC.
 - d. **A time frame** in which corrections and corrective actions shall be undertaken and evidence submitted to the CB, with a maximum of **10 weeks** from the last day of the audit.
 - e. In the event that the long-term solution to the root cause requires more than the maximum time frame allowed for closure of the NC, the NC may be closed with a corrective action plan, as long as the full implementation of the correction (of the short-term solution) has been completed within 10 weeks. The actions in the corrective action

plan shall be concrete, time-bound, have begun implementation within 10 weeks from the last day of the audit; and shall be finalized before the deadlines stipulated in the relevant procedural material. For the below topics, corrective action plans shall be finalized, no later than the below timeframes:

- i. For 5.1.4 Assess-and-Address, the full remediation of a case, in accordance with the Remediation Protocol (see Auditing Rules), shall be completed before the next audit and with a **maximum of 50 weeks from the last day of the previous audit**. Evidence of implementation shall be sent to the CB at least **2 weeks** prior to the next audit. The CB shall verify that the corrective action plan has been fully implemented during the next audit.

Note: It can be possible that the next audit is organized earlier than 50 weeks from the last day of the previous audit. In this case, the CH still needs to complete the full implementation prior to the audit and send in the evidence at least 2 weeks prior to the first day of the audit.

- ii. For 5.7 Housing, the construction of additional houses or adjustment of existing structures to house workers on-site. At least 50% of the implementation of the corrective action plan shall be completed before the next certification or surveillance audit and the full implementation of the plan shall be completed by the second audit after the nonconformity was raised.

- 3.2.13** The CB shall agree or disagree with the proposed corrective action plan. If the CB disagrees, the CB shall justify the reasons, and the CH shall submit a new corrective action plan. The CH may submit a new corrective action plan one time, after that the action plan may be evaluated with an NC review or follow-up audit.
- 3.2.14** The CB shall verify that the corrections and corrective actions have been taken and have been effective in eliminating the NC and its root cause through an NC review or follow-up audit.
- 3.2.15** In the case of recurring NCs, to ensure the NC will not re-occur:
 - a. The root cause analysis shall be performed again including the reason of recurrence and
 - b. The corrective action plan shall take the root cause of recurrence of the NC into account.

3.2.16 Indicator data that is incomplete and/or not credible and/or not consistent is enough basis to raise a nonconformity.

Non-certification or cancelation decision

3.2.17 The CB or the Rainforest Alliance shall immediately cancel the current certificate of the CH and/or decide not to certify the CH for any of the reasons set forth below or may decide to do so for any other reason if necessary to protect the credibility of the Rainforest Alliance certification program.

- a. recurrent severe human rights case(s)¹⁴, which was either
 - i. Not remediated¹⁵ OR
 - ii. Not identified by the CH
- b. Evidence of fraud, inaction or cover-up. This can be for example:
 - i. When there is evidence that conventional volume is intentionally being claimed as Rainforest Alliance certified.
 - ii. When there is evidence that the sustainability differential is not used for its intended purpose.
- c. Bribery, intimidation, harassment of the (lead) auditor or any other audit team member or certifier. If an audit team member or certifier receives any form of intimidation or harassment or is offered any type of bribe or pressure from the CH, the auditor shall immediately suspend the audit and recommend the certifier to deny certification.
- d. Systemic issues with irreversible¹⁶ nonconformities that cannot be corrected, for example (but not limited to):
 - i. Use of a product from the Rainforest Alliance list of banned pesticides for the production of certified crop.

¹⁴ A 'severe human rights case' is a human rights issue which the Rainforest Alliance Severity Test (see table CR13) determines as severe.

¹⁵ "Not remediated" means that the remediation is either not taking place, not meeting the time milestones in the Remediation Protocol, and/or is not being implemented in a manner consistent with the Protocol.

¹⁶ A NC is irreversible if correction is not possible.

- ii. Loss of traceability of product that is (to be) certified.
 - iii. Conversion of forests or other natural ecosystems to agricultural production or other land uses that occurred after January 1st, 2014, or purchasing from farms that have caused conversion of ecosystems. For more information see *Geodata and risk maps* in this document.
 - iv. For groups: if an irreversible non-compliant practice occurred on more than 5% of the audited farms, this is considered to be a systemic issue, not an isolated case and therefore shall result in non-certification and/or cancelation.
 - v. Any farm where an irreversible NC has been identified, shall not be certified (single farm certification) or shall be removed from the certification scope of a CH (multi-farm or group certification) before the positive certification decision can be granted.
- e. Systemic failure of the Internal Management System of the CH. This is where management of a CH is not capable of safeguarding conformity of its group members, or any other actors falling under the CHs responsibility, with the requirements of the Rainforest Alliance standard(s). A NC is regarded as a systemic failure in the event that they are not identified by the IMS of the CH and/or not addressed by the CH.
 - f. Violations of applicable national, regional, local or sectoral law or collective bargaining agreements related to the requirements in the Standard that apply to the CH¹⁷. If there is any conflict between the requirements in this document and those in other documents, including legal and statutory requirements, the CB and/or CH shall consult the Rainforest Alliance in a timely manner for further guidance on interpretation.
 - g. Systematic lack of evidence or data on a large scale or misrepresentation or falsifications of data and evidence.

¹⁷ See "Overarching Rules on Applicability of the Standard" for more information on applicability of law.

Consequences and required steps in the event of non-certification or cancelation.

- 3.2.18** The CB may request that the Rainforest Alliance prohibit certification for the CH for a specific or an indefinite period, based on the severity of the audit findings.
- 3.2.19** Once a non-certification or cancelation decision has been made by the Rainforest Alliance, the CB shall immediately inform the CH.
- 3.2.20** If a CH receives a non-certification during a re-certification audit and still has an active certificate, the CB shall cancel the active certificate of the CH.
- 3.2.21** If a farm CH receives a non-certification and/or cancelation decision or was removed from the certification scope of a multi-farm or group, the first possible next start date of the certificate shall be at least **6 months** after the date of non-certification or cancelation.
- 3.2.22** CHs that have received more than one cancelation and/or non-certification in a row shall wait at least **12 months** before a new certification may take place.
- 3.2.23** A CH whose certificate was canceled or non-certified shall restart the certification process with a certification audit.
- 3.2.24** If a CH chooses to leave the certification program, the CH shall wait at least **6 months** before its next certification audit and must comply at the certification year they were in upon leaving the certification program.
- 3.2.25** A CH who received a non-certification or cancelation decision may re-enter the certification process, but shall comply with the certification year they were in when they received the non-certification decision.
- 3.2.26** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to extend the cancelation for an indefinite period.
- 3.2.27** The results of a cancelation/non-certification will be shared publicly on the Rainforest Alliance website for the period of the cancelation.

Human rights violations and severity test

3.2.28 During the audit, when the audit team identifies a potential case or a case of labor violations on CL/FL/D and/ or WVH, the Rainforest Alliance **Severity Test** is used to determine whether the case is to be considered severe or not.

#	Question	Yes/No	Details/clarification
1	Is the situation of the worker/child life-threatening ¹⁸ ?		If yes, issue is severe
2	Does the issue have the potential to cause lasting impact on the physical and/or psychological wellbeing of the worker/child? ¹⁹		“Yes” to this question on its own does not make the issue severe, but in combination with “yes” on question 3, it is severe.
3	Is this a systemic incident, meaning there are multiple cases of this issue at this CH and the issue is rooted in a management practice?		“Yes” to this question on its own does not make the issue severe, but in combination with one other “yes,” it is severe.
4	Is there evidence that management knew that the violation was taking place, and that it violated the Rainforest Alliance standard and/or applicable law, but approved/continued the practice?		If yes, issue is severe.

Table CR 8: Rainforest Alliance Severity Test

¹⁸ A life-threatening situation means there is a strong possibility that the situation will lead to loss of life.

¹⁹ The CB shall consult an expert in case of doubt of the answer to question 2 of the Severity Test. This could be e.g. labor inspector, social service department, child protection expert with NGOs or government, etc.

Suspension

3.2.29 Throughout the validity period of the certificate, a CB or the Rainforest Alliance may decide to suspend a CHs' certificate for a period of up to **3 months**, for the following reasons:

- a. If there are deviations from the Rainforest Alliance program that require further investigation to be confirmed²⁰.
- b. Corrective actions have not been implemented satisfactorily within the timeframe described in the certification process above.
- c. Recurrent systemic or severe NCs. A "Recurrent" NC means either the CB already identified a similar NC during the previous audit or during the audit before, demonstrating a systemic failure of the management system.
- d. For human rights cases, if the cases are not remediated²¹ in accordance with the Rainforest Alliance' Remediation Protocol or if the cases are severe. Severity shall be assessed using the Rainforest Alliance Severity Test.

3.2.30 Once the CB has verified that the underlying reasons for the suspension have been satisfactorily addressed, the CB lifts the suspension of the certificate, and on behalf of the Rainforest Alliance lifts the suspension in the Rainforest Alliance traceability platform. In the event that upon verification by the CB the underlying reasons for the suspension have not been satisfactorily addressed, the CB shall immediately issue a cancelation following the conditions described above.

3.2.31 While the CH's certificate is suspended, the CH may not sell or ship its products with a Rainforest Alliance Certified claim for the applicable standard, starting immediately upon communication of the suspension decision to the CH. Once the certificate is reinstated, you will be allowed to sell as certified all the product in stock that was harvested and

²⁰ Examples include:

- Nonconformities found during a certification audit, a surveillance audit or surprise audit that might potentially cause a credibility issue for the Rainforest Alliance and/or the CB and requires further investigation to identify whether the CH shall receive cancelation and/or non-certification.
- Failure of the organization to meet financial obligations to the CB or Rainforest Alliance or other administrative issues.

²¹ "Not remediated" means that the remediation is either not taking place, not meeting the time milestones in the Remediation Protocol and/or is not being implemented in a manner consistent with the Protocol.

produced during the suspension period. If the certificate is not reinstated, no further sales of certified product will be permitted.

- 3.2.32** If a CH fails to resolve any NC satisfactorily within the agreed timeframe, the CB shall cancel the CH's certificate, rather than issuing a suspension.

Cease of sales (selloff period rules) in case of cancelation, non-certification, or suspension

- 3.2.33** Upon notification of cancelation or non-certification, CHs shall immediately:

- a. Cease to sell or ship product with a Rainforest Alliance certified claim for the applicable standard(s)
- b. Remove all uses of names, initials, logos, certification marks or other trademarks of the Rainforest Alliance from its products (or, where removal is not possible, recall any such products), documents, advertising and/or marketing materials, physical or electronic promotion material or media, in brochures or on webpages, signs or other documentation and business-to business communications.

- 3.2.34** Upon notification of suspension, CHs shall immediately cease to sell or ship product with a Rainforest Alliance certified claim until the suspension is lifted.

- 3.2.35** In case of farm CHs dealing with perishable products²², the CB or the Rainforest Alliance may allow the suspension to become effective up to 7 days after the suspension decision. Suspensions of farms dealing with fresh products (mostly fruits & flowers) to become effective seven calendar days after the certification decision is taken. Rainforest Alliance has the right to deny this option in case of violations that, in its sole opinion, may jeopardize the reputation of the certification program.

- 3.2.36** Upon notification of cancelation, non-certification or suspension CH may be authorized to make transactions in the Rainforest Alliance traceability platform for product that was verifiably sold and shipped prior to the date the

²² Those can be fruits and flowers and in some cases vegetables. We consider a crop perishable if it shall be shipped within a few days after harvesting.

cancellation, non-certification or suspension was communicated to the CH, if the CH complies with the following requirements:

- a. The cancellation, non-certification or suspension is not a consequence of a NC related to loss of traceability of the product, use of banned inputs that cannot be traced back to the source, deforestation and encroachment into protected areas.
- b. The CH shall request permission from their CB to make the transaction of the product that was sold and shipped before the suspension or cancellation date.
- c. The CH shall provide their CB with documentation (i.e. bill of lading and invoice, transaction records) that proves the purchase and shipment took place before the suspension or cancellation date. Because contracts are often for long terms or multiple years, transactions will not be authorized based solely upon purchase contracts. Proof of shipment is required.
- d. In case of perishable products, the CH may be authorized by the Rainforest Alliance to sell and ship products as certified during a suspension (not cancellation or non-certification) for up to 4 weeks, under the condition that the CH complies with points a, b and c above. The CB must inform the Rainforest Alliance when this additional time is granted to a CH. Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to deny the CH this additional time or to shorten it.

3.2.37 In case the CH appeals the cancellation, non-certification or suspension decision, the CH shall not sell or ship product with a Rainforest Alliance certified claim during the entire appeals duration.

3.2.38 Upon cancellation, non-certification or suspension, the CB shall proactively check the CH's website within 3 weeks from the effective date of the decision to ensure that the CH stopped making RA-certified claim.

- a. In case the CB finds out that the CH is still making incorrect claims of its certification status, the CB shall inform the Rainforest Alliance immediately so that the Rainforest Alliance can take further actions if necessary.

3.2.39 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to deny such requests, if the Rainforest Alliance, in its sole discretion, determines that denial is necessary or helpful to safeguard the credibility of the program.

3.3 CERTIFICATE TRANSFERS

General Requirements for Certificate Holder Transfers

- 3.3.1.** Certificate Holders (CH) may only be transferred from one Certification Body (CB) to another in between certification cycles. CHs shall only be transferred once every 3 years.
- 3.3.2.** The Rainforest Alliance has the right to intervene in any CH transfer process if it concludes that the transfer(s) may jeopardize the integrity of certification and/or assurance process(es).
- 3.3.3.** CHs shall only be transferred to CBs approved for the scope (i.e. Farm and/or Supply Chain, crop category, and country) of the CH. CHs cannot be transferred to CBs with suspended or canceled scopes, or CBs that applied for scopes that have not been approved.
- 3.3.4.** If a CB has its authorization or scope canceled, the CH will be allowed to transfer to another CB authorized for the respective scope. If there are no authorized CBs for the respective scope, the Rainforest Alliance will assign a CB until the next certification audit, for which the CH will be allowed to choose any other CB.
- 3.3.5.** In the event of disagreement between two CBs involved in a CH transfer, the Rainforest Alliance will analyze the case and make a final decision.

3.4 INCENTIVES FOR CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

- 3.4.1** The Rainforest Alliance has defined incentives for Surveillance Audits for those CHs that demonstrate good performance.
- 3.4.2** CBs must grant these incentives to eligible CHs. If a CB believes that the CH is still high risk and should not be eligible for one of the above incentives, the CB may request an exception.
- 3.4.3** Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to deny the incentives for any reason, including potential for reputation risk.
- 3.4.4** Incentives may not be available for CHs in all scopes and regions.

Good performance: reduced sample size and scope of surveillance audits

- 3.4.5** Farms CHs that are able to meet the following requirements are eligible to have a reduced sample size and scope in their surveillance audits
- a. No history of non-certification or cancelation in the previous 3 years.
- 3.4.6** Group CHs meeting the above criteria are eligible to have a sample size of 75% of the square root of small farms. Group CHs with large farms are eligible for 75% of the 25% sample of large farms.
- 3.4.7** During these incentivized surveillance audits, CBs shall focus on a reduced audit scope as outlined in 5.5.3 of the Auditing Rules.

Great performance: further reduced sample size or a remote audit

- 3.4.8** Group farm CHs meeting the criteria below that receive a positive certification decision in their first surveillance audit, are eligible to receive a reduced sample size of 50% of the square root of small farms in their second surveillance audit.
- a. No history of non-certification or cancelation in the previous 3 years.
 - b. No NCs issued during the previous audit in the certification cycle on any of below mentioned topics:
 - i. Loss of physical traceability
 - ii. Application of prohibited pesticides, excluding an exception
 - iii. Assess-and-address remediation
 - iv. Deforestation and encroachment on protected areas
- 3.4.9** Individual farm CHs meeting the conditions in section above may receive their second surveillance audit as a remote audit, as long as they can meet the requirements for a remote surveillance audit as in the Auditing Rules.

Outstanding performance: skip second surveillance audit

3.4.10 Farm CHs that meet the following requirements are eligible for additional incentives for Surveillance Audits indicated in the Auditing Rules.

- a. No history of non-certification or cancelation in the previous 3 years.
- b. No NCs issued during the previous surveillance audit on any of below mentioned topics:
 - v. Loss of physical traceability
 - vi. Application of prohibited pesticides, excluding an exception
 - vii. Deforestation and encroachment on protected areas
 - viii. Any Base requirements in the Social Chapter of the Farm Requirements
- c. Are not opted-in to receive an audit in line with EUDR requirements

CHAPTER 4: GENERAL PROVISIONS

4.1 RIGHTS RESERVED BY THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

- 4.1.1** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to issue and amend the content and requirements stated in these Rainforest Alliance assurance documents or any other certification related policies or rules.
- 4.1.2** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to have the final say regarding the interpretation of the content and requirements stated in the Rainforest Alliance assurance documents.
- 4.1.3** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to visit and/or verify compliance with any of the requirements in the Rainforest Alliance certification program, for any reason deemed necessary by the Rainforest Alliance.
- 4.1.4** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to prohibit any CH from entering/continuing in the Rainforest Alliance program if they have misused the Rainforest Alliance name or marks or in any way participated in fraudulent or unethical behavior in relation to the Rainforest Alliance program
- 4.1.5** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to conduct additional quality control assessments of audits conducted by CBs by:
 - a. Requesting further documentation from the CB or CH
 - b. Requiring the CB to share the results of the CB's internal quality review
 - c. Requesting clarification or correction of the reported information by requesting a visit to the CH or conducting a review audit, shadow audit, desk audit, or CB office audit
 - d. Cross-checking the information reported by the CB with external sources, particularly enabling mutual cross-check with other sustainability standard owners

4.1.6 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to

- a. inform the CB about misbehavior or NCs by a CH that is their client under the Rainforest Alliance certification program.
- b. request that a CB conduct a surprise audit of a CH and/or to provide advice on sample selection and/or scope of unannounced audits.
- c. The Rainforest Alliance reserves the rights to require the CB to perform an on-site follow-up audit, regardless of the CB's decision, at any time during the certification cycle.
- d. Allocate audits to particular CBs

4.1.7 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to use the reported audit information for performance monitoring, statistical analysis and research, and aggregated reporting.

4.1.8 The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to make the following information publicly available:

- a. Name or the CH
- b. Country
- c. Crop
- d. Type of CH
- e. Geolocation of the CHs central location
- f. Area, including certified area and total area
- g. Rainforest Alliance ID
- h. Certification status
- i. Traceability level
- j. Next audit date if available
- k. Aggregated data
- l. Any other data point set forth in the applicable Rainforest Alliance License Agreement with the CH

- 4.1.9** Regardless of the certification decision, a public summary of the audit is automatically linked to the Rainforest Alliance website, and the CB shall therefore respect data privacy rules such as GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). Once a certificate expires, the public summary will be available up to 3 months past their expiration date.
- 4.1.10** The list of certified farms, groups and Chain of Custody CHs along with newly issued and canceled certificates are published in the Rainforest Alliance website monthly.
- 4.1.11** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to take final decisions related to/ impacting the certification decision such as:
- a. reducing the estimated volumes and/or certified area if they differ from averages known for the country or region where a valid justification for such variance is not provided.
 - b. making final decisions in grievances received by the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure.
 - c. making the final decision on whether or not something is considered a product claim.
 - d. granting exceptions to the requirements in the certification rules or requirements in the standards to CHs and/or CBs adversely affected by humanitarian crises, natural disasters or other exceptional circumstances.
 - e. to prohibit certification for the CH for a specific or an indefinite period.
- 4.1.12** The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to disallow certification if it determines that the CH does not meet relevant standards, assurance rules, and/or process requirements including the following:
- a. If the audit was not conducted according to certification and auditing rules.
 - b. If significant risks are identified.
 - c. Any other issues that may impact the integrity of the certification and/or the reputation of the Rainforest Alliance.

4.2 FORCE MAJEURE

- 4.2.1** It can occur that due to exceptional circumstances that are not in the power of the CH or the CB, the CH and/or the CB is not capable of complying with the requirements in this document. Those exceptional circumstances can be humanitarian crises, natural disasters or other exceptional circumstances.
- 4.2.2** If such circumstances occur and they hinder the conformity of the CB or a CH with the requirements in this document, the CB shall request an exception with certification@ra.org.

4.3 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- 4.3.1** Any grievance concerning the Rainforest Alliance shall be handled according to the **Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure**, available on the [Rainforest Alliance website](#).
- 4.3.2** CHs, CBs, or other stakeholders in the certification process, can submit any grievance about the services provided by the CB towards the certification process to the CH, to the CBs grievance mechanism.
- 4.3.3** CHs have the right to appeal a decision taken by the Rainforest Alliance or the CB.
- 4.3.4** In the event that the grievance a decision taken by the CB, the CH shall first submit a grievance through the grievance procedure of the CB. If that does not resolve the grievance, the CH may submit a grievance through the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure. The CH agrees that it shall only resort to legal remedies such as a lawsuit, injunction, request for declaratory relief or other claim or legal action against the Rainforest Alliance after it has fully exhausted its administrative remedies in accordance with the CB grievance or appeal process and the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure.
- 4.3.5** CHs acknowledge and agree that its participation in the certification program is on a voluntary basis. For that reason, each CH agrees that it will utilize the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure to challenge any decision regarding its certificate or address any disagreements the CH may have with a CB or with Rainforest Alliance. In the event that a CH attempts to undermine the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure through litigation, the CH agrees that the CB's or Rainforest Alliance's decision regarding the certificate shall (i) remain in force until the final resolution of the Grievance

Procedure or (ii) be taken at Rainforest Alliance's discretion at any time during the Grievance Procedure or during such litigation at Rainforest Alliance's discretion. The CB or Rainforest Alliance's certification decision shall remain in place until the final resolution of any challenge and/or exhaustion of all available appeals.