

## THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFIED™ DIFFERENCE

### Sustainable Agriculture Certification

Rainforest Alliance certification is built on the three pillars of sustainability — environmental protection, social equity and economic viability. No single pillar can support long-term success on its own, so we help farmers succeed in all three areas. Since 1992, when it began in Costa Rica, the certification program has spread to 25 tropical countries around the world where the well-being of millions of farmers and workers and countless wildlife species is at stake. More than two million farmers, farm workers and their families directly benefit from Rainforest Alliance certification. They tell us that meeting the criteria is a challenge but doing so helps them farm intelligently, get ahead, gain confidence and plan their futures. While we support many initiatives dedicated to conservation and social justice, our experience, mission and grassroots strength combine to distinguish Rainforest Alliance certification from other agricultural certifications.

#### Origins and Philosophy

**A Focus on Forests.** This is where it all began for us — in the forest. The conservation of trees, wildlife and ecosystems is the foundation of everything that we do. Rainforest Alliance certification is based on the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) standard, a comprehensive set of criteria developed by a coalition of locally based NGOs that is coordinated by the Rainforest Alliance. The SAN standard addresses environmental, social and economic conditions. Among these, Rainforest Alliance certification requires reforestation with native tree species, the conservation of forestland and a diversity of tree species on farms. It mandates strong protections for rainforests and other ecosystems. Plantation crops driving most of the deforestation these days — oil palm, sugar and soy — must mitigate any significant ecosystem alteration after 1999, and a farm that has been deforested after 2005 may not be certified at all. Considering that approximately 20 percent of greenhouse gas emissions are the result of deforestation — more than all vehicle emissions combined — and nearly 70 percent of forest conversion is due to agriculture, it has never been more urgent to keep trees standing.

**Made in the Tropics.** Rainforest Alliance certification and the SAN standard upon which it is based were developed in the tropics —



*The conservation of forests, wildlife and the ecosystem services on which we all depend is the foundation of everything the Rainforest Alliance does.*

where wildlife and habitats face the greatest risks. The program is the direct result of environmentalists, scientists and farmers sitting down together to resolve problems and devise a practical and mutually beneficial way to move forward.



#### OUR MISSION

*The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.*

[www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org)

**The Strength of the Network.** Just as integrated agricultural systems are healthier than monocultures, one organization can never be as effective as a web of like-minded but independent partners working together toward a common goal. The Rainforest Alliance Certified™ program is rooted in the Sustainable Agriculture Network, an alliance of locally based NGOs dedicated to conservation and social justice. The members of the SAN jointly own, manage and update the SAN standard.

**Certification is the Means to an End.** Though each NGO in this unique network has its own diverse portfolio of programs, our missions are the same: to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable livelihoods. Rainforest Alliance certification is a tool for achieving this shared mission; our program is not a profit-making endeavor.

**For the SAN, it's Personal.** In addition to their Rainforest Alliance certification work, SAN members and other NGO partners have a variety of programs designed to help the communities in which they live and work — from environmental education and park protection to micro-lending, farmer field schools and rural development initiatives. Auditors and support staff are usually based in the same region as the farms that they audit, which allows them to bring to the process their own firsthand understanding of the local culture, language, legal and political landscapes, ecology and economy. Their proximity to the farms means that they can accompany farmers on every step of the journey. For the members of the SAN network, certification is personal — it's a way of making a difference right in their own backyard.

**Beyond the Checklist.** Rainforest Alliance certification auditors are not just consultants who run through a checklist; they are expert agronomists, social scientists, biologists, foresters and specialists in a host of areas, with lifetimes of pertinent experience to share. They spend significant time on the farms they audit, visiting with workers and their children, poring over records, poking into every corner and taking samples and notes. The resulting assessment report is not simply a scorecard but instead a valuable farm improvement plan.

**Teach a Family to Farm.** So goes the time-honored adage: Give a man a fish and he eats for one day, but teach him to fish and

*We help farmers learn to manage their land efficiently, responsibly and sustainably.*



*The Sustainable Agriculture Network's comprehensive standards for sustainability stop further deforestation and require reforestation, which benefits farmers, farm workers, wildlife, local communities and the global climate.*

he eats forever. We are teaching families to farm efficiently and responsibly, growing their bottom line today and conserving the fertile soils and natural resources on which they and their children will depend in the future.

**Protecting Workers.** Rainforest Alliance certification places a strong emphasis on ensuring good conditions for workers — requiring the payment of benefits, good housing, safe conditions, proper training and so on. Not surprisingly, Rainforest Alliance Certified farms often attract the best workers, which in turn helps to increase yields and improve quality.

**Well-Managed Farms Prosper.** We offer extensive guidance to farmers but do not interfere in trading relationships — no set prices, no subsidies and no trade barriers. Successful farmers are those who learn to control costs, increase production, improve crop quality, demand higher prices and negotiate good terms when selling their crops, build up their workforce, foster community cohesion, manage their valuable natural resources and protect the environment. A well-managed farm that can produce high-quality crops and conserve its resources will prosper economically for a long time to come.

**Farmers Gain Independence and Control.** Rainforest Alliance certification gives farmers leverage at the time of sale, and most producers are able to sell much of their crop at premium prices. Certification helps farmers learn how to negotiate for themselves and compete in an increasingly complex and globalized marketplace. As they gain business skills and confidence, they are better able to shape their own futures. The program gives farmers a hand up, not a hand out.

**Always Learning and Growing.** Though the SAN standard is thorough and comprehensive, it is not static. We are always looking for ways to make Rainforest Alliance certification better and more effective, through research projects, stakeholder consultations and collaboration with local and international experts.

## Experience, Knowledge and Results

**Setting the Gold Standard for Certification.** In addition to our work in agriculture, the Rainforest Alliance has a long history as a pioneer in certification:

- We developed the world's first global forestry certification program.
- We helped found the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).
- We are the largest FSC certifier of forest management operations, having certified 45 percent of the FSC's global portfolio.
- We are a founding member of ISEAL.
- We created the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas.
- We have been leading the development of criteria and an accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification.

**A Cornucopia of Crops.** Rainforest Alliance certification evaluates the production of internationally traded tropical commodities such as coffee, cocoa, tea, flowers, bananas and other fruits, focusing specifically on those crops that have the greatest impact on environments, workers, communities and wildlife. After years of study and field trials, we've begun implementing standards for sugar, oil palm and soy and are developing criteria for responsible ranching, with the aim of combating the leading causes of tropical deforestation.

**Tangible Economic Benefits.** A 2008 study demonstrated that among Salvadorean coffee farmers preparing for Rainforest Alliance certification, harvests increased by an average of 76 percent over the previous year. In Côte d'Ivoire, a group of Rainforest Alliance Certified cocoa farmers saw their yields increase by an average of 49 percent per hectare. Over a period of ten years in the program, a multinational banana company increased its productivity by 27 percent and decreased its costs by 12 percent. Our reforestation requirement can also have tangible economic benefits — an independent study found that cocoa farms with 27 to 45 percent shade increased their yield. The SAN standard currently recommends 40 percent shade cover.

*Global brands have committed to Rainforest Alliance Certified sustainable agriculture, bringing the concept to mainstream consumers and benefiting millions of farmers, farm workers and their children.*



*Elsa Matilde Escobar, executive director of Fundación Natura, a member of the Sustainable Agriculture Network, visits a school on a Rainforest Alliance Certified farm.*

**Quality and Adaptability.** By implementing better management practices, most Rainforest Alliance Certified farms increase crop yields, improve crop quality and obtain higher prices for their products. Just as importantly, farmers improve their stewardship of natural resources, which helps them better adapt to new challenges such as climate change and gives them greater control over their own futures.

**Size Doesn't Matter.** From tiny individual farms and cooperatives to large plantations owned by multinational corporations, we work with anyone who is interested in implementing Sustainable Agriculture Network standards on their land.

**Good Things in Small Packages.** Millions of the smallholders who depend on their tea, coffee or cocoa crops for survival are at the mercy of global markets; Rainforest Alliance certification gives them leverage, recognition and the tools to better manage their lands and businesses.

**Big Can Be Beautiful, Too.** On the flip side, large plantations affect great swaths of land and large numbers of workers, many of whom are poor, migratory and disenfranchised; Rainforest Alliance certification ensures that these workers maintain the rights and benefits due them. And as any successful manager knows, a satisfied, healthy workforce equals a productive, efficient one. Large farms also often have large forested areas, which provide vital refuge for wildlife.

**Follow the Leaders.** Industry giants are converting their supply chains to Rainforest Alliance Certified goods. All of Chiquita's owned banana farms are Rainforest Alliance Certified and the company is well on its way to getting all of its suppliers certified as well. Kraft Coffee is incorporating Rainforest Alliance Certified beans into its major brands in many countries. By 2015, Unilever aims to source all of the tea in its Lipton tea bags sold globally from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms. Mars, Inc. has committed to transforming its cocoa supply to sustainably produced cocoa, starting with its involvement with Rainforest Alliance certification.

## Marketing, Communications and Service

**A Seal With a Clear Message.** The pairing of our little green frog and the words “Rainforest Alliance Certified” quickly and effectively communicates to consumers the message of a company’s legitimate commitment to sustainability.

**Our Frog Gets Around.** Not just a trustmark for agricultural goods, the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal is recognized across industries, appearing on paper stock, beauty products, wood flooring, furniture and packaging, to name just a few items. Rainforest Alliance Certified products are sold by giants such as Walmart, IKEA, McDonald’s, Costco, Tchibo, Home Depot, Staples and Whole Foods. Fifteen percent of all the bananas in international trade come from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms. Our green frog has appeared on TV and the Web, in print and on the jumbo screen in New York’s Times Square. The little amphibian even tweets and has a growing list of friends on Facebook.

**And the Frog is Getting Recognized.** In the UK, prompted awareness of our frog went from 12 percent to 44 percent in under a year, reaching parity with longstanding seals such as the Soil Association. In Australia, recognition of the seal doubled in one year, going from 21 percent in 2008 to 42 percent in 2009, according to research by Lipton/Unilever.

**A Seal With Wide Appeal.** Hundreds of small businesses use the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal to market their specialty products to eco-savvy customers who are passionate about sustainability,

*Auditors are usually based in the same region as the farms that they audit and incorporate their firsthand understanding of the local culture, language, ecology, and legal and political landscapes into the certification process.*



*Photos: C. Wille, J. H. Fair, R. Goodier, C. Irby, J. Aerts, courtesy McDonald’s UK, C. Trewick*

*For more information about the Rainforest Alliance’s sustainable agriculture program, please visit [www.rainforest-alliance.org/agriculture](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/agriculture)*



*By displaying the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal on products, companies can quickly and effectively communicate their commitment to sustainability.*

forests, wildlife and cooling the planet. At the same time, some of the world’s largest, most influential companies — such as Chiquita, Unilever, Kraft, Mars, Nestlé Nespresso and Tchibo — use the green frog as an independent, third-party endorsement of their commitment to sustainable agriculture.

**A Portfolio of Services.** We help companies with a wide range of issues and services, including sourcing, packaging, carbon offsets, supply chain and risk management, sustainability strategies and strengthening relationships with their buyers.

**Tell Us Who Your Friends Are.** Together, the Rainforest Alliance and the other members of the SAN have a vast network of contacts among NGOs, activists, researchers, government representatives and other opinion leaders and experts around the world. We have a multitude of allies and are known and respected by journalists who cover sustainability issues.

**We’re With You Every Step of the Way.** We work hard because we care deeply about the long-term success of sustainable agriculture and we know that our success depends on helping farmers and companies obtain the fullest possible benefits of certification. We do this through training and workshops, by accompanying representatives to conferences, setting up meetings and events, and hosting company staff on certified farms. We also communicate the successes of certified farms to our many interested audiences — from Rainforest Alliance members, donors and students, to media, conference attendees and Fortune 500 companies who are interested in sourcing sustainable products.

