



Rainforest Alliance Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies

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Version 1

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

More information?

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INTRODUCTION

The Rainforest Alliance is a growing network of people who are inspired and committed to working together to achieve its mission of conserving biodiversity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. Through creative, pragmatic collaboration, Rainforest Alliance aims to rebalance the planet by building strong forests and healthy communities around the world. For more information about Rainforest Alliance, visit our website:

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org>.

To expand the reach of the Rainforest Alliance sustainable agriculture certification program and to safeguard the system's integrity, quality, competitiveness, and credibility, the Rainforest Alliance works with independent certification bodies around the world. Authorized certification bodies certify farms, farmer groups and operators under the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture and Chain of Custody standards.

The Rainforest Alliance is committed to ISEAL's Code of Ethics and supports the ten ISEAL Credibility Principles, which capture what is essential for a sustainability standards system to deliver positive impact. The Rainforest Alliance also applies the principles of ISEAL's codes of good practice: The Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (Standard-Setting Code); the Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards (Impacts Code); and the Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards (the Assurance Code).

ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The Rainforest Alliance manages and is responsible for a global Assurance System for Certification Bodies. As Rainforest Alliance certification expands further globally, the goal is to foster a highly credible and rigorous system. The audit and certification services rendered under the Assurance System maintain and ensure a general sense of purpose as well as a commitment to high quality, integrity, and transparency which is also reflected in the commitment to continual improvement of systems, documentation and processes. Access to the system by smallholders is important to the Rainforest Alliance, and smallholders should not be at a disadvantage or excluded from accessing certification services.

Rainforest Alliance has procedures and timelines for reviewing the assurance and standard system annually to implement changes to our certification program. In order to do this, documentation and systems will be updated accordingly to improve the

assurance program, which will be communicated to Certification Bodies (CBs) and operations, and made available on the Rainforest Alliance website.

The assurance system is comprised of a compendium of documents that describe the rules of the system and describe the requirements for Certification Bodies to be authorized. These documents include, but are not limited to:

- Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies;
- Rules for Auditor Competence;
- Rules for Planning and Conducting Audits;
- Chain of Custody Audit Protocols (pending);
- Certification Database Guidance;
- Spatial Data Requirements and Guidance.

This document describes the rules for CBs to maintain their authorization to carry out Rainforest Alliance certification processes. It includes:

- 1) Approval mechanisms and CB evaluation. These regulations, requirements and processes are obligatory for all CBs, their respective Inspection Bodies (IBs) that carry out farm, group or Chain of Custody certification, in addition to those requirements described in ISO 17065, ISO 19011, and ISO 17020 for inspection body compliance, unless otherwise noted;
- 2) Operational requirements that the CB must meet for the Rainforest Alliance certification program.

CBs that have questions about the content or the interpretation of these Rules should contact the Rainforest Alliance quality assurance staff for any clarification (sas@ra.org).

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

To simplify references and minimize redundancy, the system documents employ the following terminology and abbreviations; these terms will not be italicized in the document:

Term and Abbreviation	Description
1. Assurance System	Refers to all the regulations, requirements and processes described in the compendium of Rainforest Alliance Assurance documents.

2. Certification Body (CB)	Entity authorized by Rainforest Alliance to conduct audits and certification for the Rainforest Alliance sustainable agriculture certification program.
3. Certification Database	A Rainforest Alliance platform to monitor the certification program which is used by Certification Bodies to store and report detailed information on certification data for farms, groups and chain of custody operations.
4. Certificate holder	Refers to a farms or producer group that is Rainforest Alliance Certified™.
5. Chain of Custody (CoC)	Steps in the supply chain that track the farm/group certificate through the packaging of the final product, including import, export, processing, transformation, and manufacturing. All companies that are handling certified product and/or taking legal ownership.
6. Certification processes	Includes all processes referred to in the assurance system documents.
7. Decision Making Framework	An internal decision-making tool which determines which key actors recommend changes and which actors provide inputs, approve, perform and decide on decisions regarding Standards, Policies, Rules, the Assurance system, Appeals and others. These can consist of Rainforest Alliance staff, CBs, and other external experts.
8. Inspection Body (IBs)	Inspection Bodies subcontracted by a CB.
9. Operation	Refers to a farm or groups regardless of their certified status.
10. Participating Operator	Any company, association, factory, processing unit or other entity that applies for Rainforest Alliance Chain of Custody certification.
11. Rainforest Alliance certification or simply certification	Depending on the context, when referring to Rainforest Alliance Certification.
12. 2017 Standard	When referring to the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard for Farms and Producer Groups involved in crop and cattle production.

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies are:

- a) To communicate and explain the general Rules that CBs shall fulfill in order to be authorized by Rainforest Alliance to grant farm, group and Chain of Custody certification.
- b) To ensure adequate monitoring of the technical and administrative capabilities of the CBs and their audit teams.

2. SCOPE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Rainforest Alliance manages the authorization of CBs, monitors and evaluates the compliance of CBs with the established rules, and supports the continuous improvement of the certification program for CBs.

This document lays out the Rules for all CBs wishing to conduct audits based on the 2017 Standard or the Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard and grant certification to farms, group administrators or CoC participating operators wanting to claim their agricultural or livestock products as Rainforest Alliance Certified™.

Evaluation of conformity with these Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies is carried out by the Rainforest Alliance.

This version of the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies substitutes any previous version of Sustainable Agriculture Network and Rainforest Alliance Accreditation Rules for Certification Bodies, effective the date of its implementation.

Publication date of this document: April 1, 2018

Effective date of this document: June 1, 2018

After the publication date and before the effective date, CB's responsibilities and rights are to:

- Request clarifications or training from Rainforest Alliance;
- Communicate changes to staff and auditors and ensure proper training;
- Inform operations of relevant changes;
- Adjust internal processes in accordance with these rules;
- Review updates in the Certification Database.

All the audit processes from June 1st, 2018 onwards must comply with these rules. These rules do not apply to audits started prior to June 1, 2018. Compliance with verification, investigation and scope expansion audits is recommended as of April 1, 2018.

Rainforest Alliance will start carrying out evaluation and monitoring activities based on the Assurance System as of the effective date.

3. CB MANAGEMENT

3.1. General Conditions

- a) All authorized CBs shall comply with the Rules in this document and any other Rainforest Alliance rules, policies and protocols of the Assurance System.
- b) All decisions regarding the authorization, suspension, or cancellation of CBs, based on the results of CB Oversight activities, are made according to the Rainforest Alliance certification program Decision Making Framework.
- c) All CBs that are accredited prior to the effective date of these Rules will be considered authorized to carry out certification after that date, on the condition that an authorization agreement between Rainforest Alliance and the CB has been signed.
- d) All CBs shall be ISO 17065 or ISO 17021 accredited for process for a certification scheme accepted by Rainforest Alliance, or from an accreditation body that is a member of the International Accreditation Forum that has signed a multilateral agreement (MLA). All ISO 17065 accreditations must be for process and both ISO 17065 and 17021 accreditations shall be for certification schemes for which the standard scope is agricultural, social, fair trade, or food safety.
- e) CBs shall maintain ISO 17065 or 17021 accreditation as described above. Failure to maintain accreditation, or lapse of accreditation, will result in the immediate suspension and cancellation of authorization.
- f) The existence of a signed and valid Authorization Agreement with the scheme owner is required for a CB to maintain authorization.
- g) The CB is subject to Rainforest Alliance sanctions as indicated in this document or any other assurance system document.
- h) CB authorization, once granted, is evaluated on a continual basis over time using different evaluation mechanisms.
- i) All inquiries regarding this document or of topics not covered by this document shall be presented in writing to the Rainforest Alliance's designated contact via e-mail to sas@ra.org.

3.2. Requirements for CB Approval

- a) All CBs shall be legal entities and ISO 17065 accredited for processing a certification scheme accepted by Rainforest Alliance.
- b) The CBs shall make available to Rainforest Alliance information about its organizational structure, ownership, and the legal registration of the CB. If the CB is a legal entity that is wholly or partly owned by a larger organization, the CB clearly documents the activities, structure and governance of the larger organization.
- c) CBs shall maintain ISO 17065 accreditation as described above. The CB shall provide a copy of the valid accreditation certificate to Rainforest Alliance.
- d) The existence of a signed and valid Authorization Agreement with Rainforest Alliance is required for a CB to maintain authorization.
- e) The CB must submit to Rainforest Alliance all regional and local offices that it wishes to include as part of their scope, which will be included in the CB approval.
- f) The CB is authorized to subcontract inspection services through an inspection body, which will be under the responsibility of the approved CB. The CB must send Rainforest Alliance a written prior request of any IB that it wishes to add to its scope.
- g) Each CB may include one or more geographic scopes as part of its portfolio, as long as it complies with the Rainforest Alliance Policy for Geographical Scope Authorization.
- h) Each CB can request auditor authorization for farms, groups, chain of custody or cattle as it deems necessary. These scopes can also be specific depending on the country where they want to offer Rainforest Alliance certification services.
- i) The CB is responsible for ensuring impartiality in the audit and certification processes conducted.
- j) The CB shall have in place a policy of non-discrimination of service offer, indicating that all applicants, certified operations and other stakeholders are to be treated equally.
- k) The CB shall implement a mechanism for stakeholders to receive inputs for any specific area in the certification process, always considering the impartiality aspect.

3.3. CB Approval Procedure

Note: due to the recent merger with UTZ and the preparation of a new combined certification program, the Rainforest Alliance is currently not accepting applications from CBs who wish to become authorized.

The following is a description of the applicable process when new CBs are invited to apply.

- a) The applying CB sends the filled-out CB application form, which must be requested by sending an email to sas@ra.org. The applying CB must include the main contact person for this process, the scope for farms, groups, cattle or CoC audits, the geographical scope and all the information related to the team of auditors and staff responsible for the Rainforest Alliance certification program.
- b) The applying CB attaches the following documents and sends them along with the application form to sas@ra.org:
 - a. A copy of the valid accreditation certificate, including a description of the scope and results of the last accreditation audit received;
 - b. A copy of the legal registration in the countries where they conduct certifications;
 - c. A description of the organizational structure, including the regional and local offices the CB wishes to include in the approval of their scope;
 - d. A list of subcontracted inspection bodies;
 - e. A list of auditors that will apply for approval;
 - f. Financial Statements indicating that the organization is financially sustainable, and a projection of growth for the next 3 years.
- c) The CB shall demonstrate compliance with sections 7 and 8 of these Rules before submitting its application.
- d) Rainforest Alliance reviews that the documents are complete and confirms receipt within 10 calendar days.
- e) Rainforest Alliance initiates the evaluation process. If all the requirements are met, Rainforest Alliance will send an approval letter and the Authorization Agreement between Rainforest Alliance and the CB. The CB must sign and return the Authorization Agreement to Rainforest Alliance with a copy of the agreement that the CB will use with operations.

- f) Rainforest Alliance registers the new CB in the Certification Database, on the website and an official statement is made to all stakeholders and operations.
- g) Rainforest Alliance conducts the required training for the CB and its auditor team in the use of the Certification Database, as well as providing all the training tools for their technical team.
- h) Rainforest Alliance will conduct an on-site audit within 12 months from the date of authorization of the CB to continue with the respective monitoring and evaluation.

3.4. Publication of Authorized CBs and their scope

- a) Rainforest Alliance will publish all authorized CBs on the website <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/sas/>, including the following information:
 - a. CB name and contact;
 - b. Approved geographic scope for farms and producer groups involved in crop and cattle production, and for CoC;
 - c. Status when the CB is authorized, suspended or cancelled.
- b) A CB can choose the scope of authorization as follows: farms and group administrators; cattle production systems; CoC; and any combination of these. CBs can add scopes upon request.
- c) An authorized CB shall only conduct audit and certification activities in the countries for which it has approved geographic scopes. See Section 7 on Geographic Scope Expansion for details about the geographic scope application and approval process.

4. CB OVERSIGHT

The CB Assessment System is conducted by Rainforest Alliance in order to monitor and evaluate compliance with the rules, standards and policies established for CBs and auditors.

Rainforest Alliance monitors CB performance through different methodologies described below.

4.1. General Description

- a) Each CB must undergo at least one assessment of its compliance under the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies every three years as per section 4.4. This full assessment will take place in at least one of a CB's main centers of certification operations or IB office and will include at least one review audit.
- b) The Rainforest Alliance will determine the frequency, types, scopes and intensities of CB assessments and evaluations in interim years. These will depend on the level of CB compliance achieved during the full assessments, and how well compliance is maintained during the periods between evaluations and assessments. CBs will undergo some type of assessment on an annual basis unless they consistently maintain a high level of compliance, in which case they are eligible for less frequent or less intense assessments, or both.
- c) The Rainforest Alliance will also analyze other assurance risk factors when deciding on the next assessments and evaluations. Examples of these factors are the number and types of complaints and incidents related to specific CBs, reputational risk of the Rainforest Alliance in the geographical scope where the CB is active, the overall performance of CB auditors, and the number of geographic scopes and certificates managed by CBs.
- d) The Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to conduct additional CB assessments not described above at its own cost, with full collaboration from the CB.

4.2. CB Rights

- a) CBs have the right to be evaluated by an evaluator who has a minimum of 5 years' experience with Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture certification program, or by an UTZ approved CB evaluator with a minimum additional field experience of 80 hours in the Rainforest Alliance certification program.
- b) The CB has the right to have more restricted rules than those required by the Rainforest Alliance.
- c) The CB has the right to ample defense to decisions and sanctions of the Rainforest Alliance through appeals.
- d) The CB has the right to receive a report of each on-site, desk, shadow, review and verification evaluations within the agreed period and with a description of non-conformities, objective evidence and not applicable criteria.
- e) The CB has the right to request and receive auditors, staff and quality review manager training.

4.3. Scope of CB compliance evaluation

The scope of CB compliance evaluation consists of, but is not restricted to, three broad compliance areas and their related Rules:

Compliance areas	Indicators: Rainforest Alliance will evaluate compliance with these indicators:
<p>1. Reporting The objective of this indicator is to evaluate the correct use of the Certification Database and the Auditor Database. Requirements are described in the following documents and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification Database Guidance; • Data Guidelines Field Definitions, including crop unit guidelines; • Productivity yield tool; • Certification Database Video tutorials; • Checklist Template User Guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The accuracy and completeness of information about certification processes and certificate holders; correct data in the application, for example: audit scope, volume, hectares, productivity yield, list of member farms; b) Timely updating of the certification process (auditor and certification decision delay); c) Adherence to established information submission (engagements) time periods; d) Consistent use and upload of the Audit Checklist and Digital audit report/Public Summary; e) Uploading of additional required forms and documents, including audit application form, audit plan, group member list (if applicable), and location data; f) Compliance with security and confidentiality requirements established by the Rainforest Alliance; g) Correct assignment and reporting of sanctions to certificate holders, according to non-conformities with critical criteria, as established in the Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules.
<p>2. Interpretation of the standard, and compliance with policies The objective of this indicator is to evaluate the correct interpretation and implementation of the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard; • Certification Rules; • Chain of Custody Standard; • Chain of Custody Policy; and • Related policies by CBs and auditors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Auditors' competence in evaluating compliance with Standard criteria; b) Clear, detailed evidence for critical criteria and all non-compliances provided; c) Evidence assigned to the correct Standard criteria; d) Best auditing practices and techniques mandated by policies; e) Comprehensive and relevant audit planning and preparation; f) Correct interpretation of audit policies, such as when to conduct a verification audit, or a scope expansion audit; g) Correct audit sampling procedure for groups; h) Correct application of zero tolerance criteria; i) Accurate documentation of cancelled certificates.

3. Management system

Objective: Overall compliance with any of the requirements set forth in:

- **The Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies;**
- **Rules for Planning and Conducting Audits;**
- **Chain of Custody Protocols (pending); and**
- Rules for **Auditor Competence.**

- a) Verify the quality control of audit reports and the results of certification decision-making processes;
- b) Compliance with established timeframe requirements;
- c) Verify the existence and functioning of required management system components, as well as operational requirements, such as:
 - i. Internal annual reviews of its management system;
 - ii. The ability to identify deficiencies in complying with the implementation of requirements;
 - iii. The ability to implement effective corrective actions to address any deficiencies, establishment and maintenance of corrective actions;
 - iv. Sub-contracting of Inspection Bodies;
 - v. Certificate transfer process; and
 - vi. Complaint and appeals management processes.
- d) Evaluate auditor competency evaluation systems, CB staff compliance; results and training;
- e) Verify the existence and application of key certification system policies and documents related to:
 - i. Confidentiality and public information;
 - ii. Certification agreement with the operation;
 - iii. Geographic scope expansions, risk analyses, and applicable laws;
 - iv. Audit planning and execution;
 - v. Review group member sampling procedure;
 - vi. Traceability process;
 - vii. Compliance evaluation of CB Staff, auditors and others with conflicts of interest measures; and
 - viii. Any other requirement or policy in or related to the documents mentioned in these Rules.

4.4. Type of Evaluations

1.	General rules
	<p>The CB evaluation system is a continuous process, but will consist of discrete events over time. The Rainforest Alliance has the right to review any aspect of CB performance at any time, and assign non-conformities and sanctions if needed. Nevertheless, some evaluations are specific events as described in the following sections. Evaluations and assessments that occur during a specific time period (not part of a continuous assessment process) will be announced and assessment/evaluation plans and scopes will be provided to CBs before these processes begin.</p> <p>The Rainforest Alliance will send each CB an assessment and evaluation plan that describes the types, numbers and locations of assessments.</p> <p>The assessment and evaluation plan will be based on CBs' performance status at that time. Changes in CB performance status during the course of the upcoming year can lead to modifications to the evaluation and assessment plan. CBs will need to cover the costs of any additional assessments and evaluations due to changes in performance status, or the costs of any unannounced assessments and evaluations related to complaints or significant performance lapses discovered through continuous assessment processes.</p>
2.	On-site assessments
	<p>These are more complete and detailed evaluations of CB processes, procedures and documentation that occur in one or more of a CB's working sites or scopes.</p> <p>These assessments include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review of the certification management system and related documentation related to the requirements (described above in the Scope of CB Compliance Evaluation) b) A review of a representative sample of the certification files of the CB, considering the whole process c) An assessment of the interpretation of the Standards and Policies (see Section 4.3 – Scope of the CB Compliance Evaluation) d) Interviews with CB staff, certificate holders, and other stakeholders to evaluate different aspects of CB and auditor performance. <p>On-site assessments will occur at least once every three years, although the types and scopes of the assessments will vary depending on each CB's open non-conformities and other performance strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>Some on-site assessments can be unannounced or on short notice in order to investigate specific issues, incidents or complaints.</p>

	The Rainforest Alliance has the right to extend on-site assessments to other geographic scopes or sites as needed to assess and verify compliance with Rainforest Alliance requirements.
3.	Desk evaluations
	<p>These are reviews of information based on documents or other materials that can be transferred electronically or otherwise examined without actually visiting CB operations.</p> <p>Desk evaluations with specific scopes will be announced in advance, and the Rainforest Alliance will request documentation and other materials from CBs; however, desk evaluations are part of the continuous performance assessment process and can occur at any time.</p> <p>Desk evaluations can also be unannounced based on materials or documents already available to the Rainforest Alliance or that CBs are supposed to have available on their Certification Database sites, or that can be made available on short notice.</p> <p>Auditor performance evaluations based on reviews of draft audit reports are also a type of desk evaluation.</p>
4.	Shadow audits
	<p>The shadow audit is conducted as part of the CB on-site assessment, where the Rainforest Alliance Evaluator observes the performance of the CB auditor(s) and assesses to what extent the auditor is correctly addressing the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard or Chain of Custody Standard if applicable.</p> <p>The conditions of a shadow audit as well as the arrangements needed (if it is an audit combined with other schemes) shall be agreed upon in advance with the Certification Manager. If necessary, communications must be sent to any other involved party (e.g. other certification standards).</p>
5.	Review audits:
	<p>This audit is conducted by the Rainforest Alliance on a certificate holder, independently of the CB, to evaluate the interpretation of the standard by the CBs' auditors who audited that certificate holder and the CB's subsequent quality control and certification decision processes.</p> <p>The Rainforest Alliance can also independently evaluate certificate holders' compliance with the applicable standards at any time as part of any investigation or quality control process.</p> <p>The number of review audits to be completed every year is decided considering the performance of the CB and auditors, as well as the number of risk levels registered for this CB, according to different crops and countries audited, as well as:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of audits conducted, geographic scopes being audited; • Results of the previous monitoring period; • Results of previous monitoring activities (office audits, shadow audits, remote reviews); • Feedback from certificate holders and stakeholders: suspicions of misconduct / poor performance.
6.	Verification assessments
	<p>During these assessments, the Rainforest Alliance verifies CB implementation of corrective actions, other compliance or requested information. These assessments can be desk evaluations, or, if compliance cannot be demonstrated through documentation, verification at a CB's site. Verification assessments are generally known by CBs because of their nature as a follow-up to corrective actions; however, some verification assessments for specific information can be on short notice.</p>

4.5. Evaluation Reporting

- a) The Rainforest Alliance will provide CBs with a report within 30 calendar days of the closing meeting for each type of assessment or evaluation. When the Rainforest Alliance carries out performance reviews for several auditors for a particular CB, this would be after the round of reviews is completed.
- b) Reports will include the dates and scopes of the evaluation activities, the evaluation type and the site where applicable, the name of the evaluators, the findings, assigned corrective actions and implementation periods as necessary, and the name of the Rainforest Alliance staff that reviewed and approved the reports. CB's performance status, as described later in this document, will also be indicated based on the results of the assessment.

4.6. Non-Conformities

Rainforest Alliance will assign a non-conformity:

- a) When there is a very low level of compliance with assurance system requirements that indicates a systemic, and not isolated, compliance failure.
- b) When evidence indicates that a lapse of some part of a CB's management system results in a particular regulation, requirement, or protocol not being correctly and/or completely implemented. These failures indicate a major CB oversight lapse or problems with certification system design, planning and implementation.

- c) When there is only partial but not complete compliance with assurance system requirements that indicates incomplete or inconsistent functioning of some part of the CBs' management systems. As a result, a particular assurance system regulation, requirement, or protocol may be implemented only partially or in an inconsistent fashion over time, and may only worsen if corrective actions are not taken.
- d) CBs shall be assigned one of the statuses below based on the number of open non-conformities (NC) at any time. Each type of NC is assigned a point value, and CB status is determined based on the total compliance points at any time. Warnings have no point value.

Conformity Status	Conditions
1) Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A warning is assigned when there is evidence of isolated incidents of non-conformities with Rainforest Alliance regulations, requirements, and protocols. In these cases, there is usually compliance with Rainforest Alliance requirements, but there are a small number of unintentional lapses due to occasional errors, oversights, or unforeseen circumstances and not due to a CB's design, planning and implementation of their certification systems. Examples can include failure to use correct forms or a small number (less than 10%) of records being incomplete. b) Warnings require corrective actions, and CBs should be aware that issues related to warnings may be a sign of potential system weakness whose causes should be determined and corrected. The Rainforest Alliance will follow up monthly on warnings in subsequent assessments and evaluations.
2) Non-conformity (NC)	<p>A non-conformity will be assigned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) When there is a very low level of compliance with assurance system requirements that indicates a systemic, and not isolated, compliance failure. b) When evidence indicates that a lapse of some part of a CB's management system results in a particular regulation, requirement, or protocol not being correctly and/or completely implemented. In general terms, these failures indicate a major CB oversight lapse or problems with certification system design, planning and implementation.

	c) When there is only partial compliance with assurance system requirements that indicates incomplete or inconsistent functioning of some part of the CBs' management systems. As a result, a particular assurance system regulation, requirement, or protocol may be implemented only partially or in an inconsistent fashion over time, and may only worsen if corrective actions are not taken.
3) Not Applicable (N/A)	a) When the evaluated criterion is not within the certification scope of the CB.

4.7. Expected outcomes and corrective actions

- a) The expected outcomes shall be implemented for all non-conformities. Expected outcomes describe what compliance would look like once CBs have closed non-conformities by implementing corrective actions. The time periods for achieving expected outcomes will depend upon the extent of the compliance issues, the potential impacts, and the risks they pose to certification and the assurance system. The maximum time period for CBs to achieve expected outcomes is 90 calendar days, starting when the CBs receive written descriptions of the non-conformities from Rainforest Alliance.
- b) CBs shall carry out a root cause analysis of the assigned non-conformities and submit a written corrective action for each non-conformity to the Rainforest Alliance within no more than 10 business days of the receipt of the assessment or evaluation report. The corrective actions shall describe how they address the root causes and will lead to the expected outcomes indicated by the Rainforest Alliance.
- c) CBs shall provide corrective action implementation evidence to the Rainforest Alliance within the stipulated time periods for the expected outcomes. The Rainforest Alliance will carry out desk or on-site verification assessments, or a combination of the two, as needed to confirm implementation of corrective actions and achievement of expected outcomes.
- d) Rainforest Alliance will evaluate the implementation of corrective actions and request evidence of compliance.

4.8. Sanction Rules for CBs

CB status	Requirements	Consequence
1. Authorized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) CBs that have less than eight (8) total non-conformities will maintain their authorized status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Can apply for geographic scope expansions; b) Can accept new operations; c) May be eligible for reduced number and scopes of on-site assessments, as determined by the Rainforest Alliance.
2. Suspension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A suspension is assigned when a CB has at least 8 total non-conformities (NCs) but less than 12 NCs, and has not closed any NC within the stipulated implementation period, and has failed to comply with 3 subsequent requests to address a warning; b) The Rainforest Alliance determines that the nature, distribution and extent of the non-conformities indicate a breakdown in major elements of the CB's quality management systems that would compromise the integrity of certification with that CB if extended beyond current certificate holders or scopes; c) The Rainforest Alliance may suspend CBs' ability to carry out certification activities for certain certification scopes or geographic scopes if the issues that lead to non-conformities are confined to those areas; including if an IB is excluded from a CBs ISO17065 accreditation; d) The Rainforest Alliance may suspend CBs' ability to carry out certification activities if it fails to maintain ISO 17065 accreditation; e) The suspension will be lifted when the CB closes the non-conformities that the Rainforest Alliance indicates as priorities within the stipulated time frame, and Rainforest Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The next evaluation is a full on-site assessment with an expanded scope; b) Higher frequency/increased number of desk reviews and auditor evaluations during the suspension and in the six-month period after suspension; c) The CBs cannot accept new operations; CB may finish audits that already have field work underway; d) Geographic scopes may be suspended. e) Not eligible for geographic scope expansion; f) Suspension is a maximum of 12 months, or when the CB demonstrates compliance with the NCs during the on-site assessment; g) During the suspension, Rainforest Alliance will inform the CB's operations so that they can decide whether they wish to be transferred to another CB, or wait for the resolution of the suspension. Rainforest Alliance may consider extending the certificate validity of certificate holders it deems necessary.

	<p>verifies that the expected outcomes are achieved through on-site assessments.</p> <p>The Rainforest Alliance, through its Decision-Making Framework, will review all suspension recommendations and makes decisions based on these general guidelines.</p>	
<p>3. Cancellation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) If suspended CBs fail to close NCs to lift their suspended status within the time period assigned by the Rainforest Alliance, as evidenced through a Verification Audit; or b) Sale of the certification body to another legal entity not currently authorized to offer Rainforest Alliance certification; or c) Failure to pay Rainforest Alliance established fees; or d) Failure to obtain or the cancellation of the ISO 17065 accreditation required for authorization; or e) The Rainforest Alliance considers that CBs have been involved in the following grave actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Fraud or corruption involving certification processes or information; II. Illegal activities that jeopardize certification operations or processes, or the legal status of the CBs; III. Favoritism or other conflicts of interest that have affected the impartiality of certification decisions. IV. Disclosure of confidential information; V. Unauthorized or unsecure use of Rainforest Alliance information systems; VI. Unauthorized or misuse of Rainforest Alliance intellectual property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All certification activities suspended until a full on-site assessment is carried out, including witness and review audits; b) CBs cannot accept new operations, but the CB may finish audits that already have field work underway; c) Not eligible for geographic scope expansion; d) Cancellation is for a minimum of one year, after which CBs can apply for authorization; e) CBs must undergo a complete authorization assessment before being granted authorization to offer Rainforest Alliance certification; f) All of a cancelled CB's certificate holders will be transferred to another CB.

4.9. Appeals

- a) CBs have the right to appeal to the Rainforest Alliance about suspension or cancellation decisions.
- b) A CB shall maintain the status it held immediately before the results being appealed. If the appeal is accepted and upheld, then the CB shall maintain its pre-appeal performance status.
- c) All appeals shall be made within 15 works of the date of the report. The Rainforest Alliance, through its Decision-Making Framework for Rainforest Alliance representatives not associated with any CB, will review the appeal and make a decision within 30 calendar days. All appeal decisions made are final and binding.

5. CERTIFICATION BODY TRAINING

The objective of the CB training program is to ensure that the CB team guarantees the minimum levels and competencies required to evaluate the Rainforest Alliance certification program. Rainforest Alliance will identify the control risk points in which the CB and its team should improve, and will work on a training plan for continuous improvement. Rainforest Alliance has created a platform <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/sas/libraries/training-toolbox/> where CBs can find different documents and modules. Certification Managers, quality reviewers, auditors, and database administrators must successfully complete the mandatory training modules at least once every two years to update themselves on the different changes or new documents published by Rainforest Alliance.

The CB is responsible for ensuring that any new auditor complies with the training modules of the 2017 Sustainable Agriculture Standard and any other binding training. CBs must participate in the different webinars or training assigned by Rainforest Alliance.

6. OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

6.1. General Provisions

- a) The Rainforest Alliance has the right to observe and evaluate any certification-related process or activity implemented by a CB, or review and evaluate all certification-related documentation or information.
- b) CBs shall provide all certification-related information requested by Rainforest Alliance within the time period the Rainforest Alliance indicates. The minimum response period in all cases will be five business days.
- c) CBs shall cover the costs of all assessments, evaluations and reviews indicated in Assurance Costs Section in this document.
- d) The Rainforest Alliance has the right to evaluate the compliance of any certificate holder related to the respective standard under which that certificate holder is certified, including but not limited to accompanying the CB on audits, and non-accompanied visits to certificate holders.
- e) CBs shall record all certification process activities in the Certification Database as indicated in the Certification Rules and in the Chain of Custody Policy.
- f) CB Management System documents are accepted in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Chinese and German.

6.2. Governance of the Certification Body

- a) CBs shall provide Rainforest Alliance with the following information if there is a change in the registered information:
 - i. Description of and contact information for the legal entities, such as inspection bodies and legally registered subsidiaries of CBs that will be involved in providing certification services in the geographic scopes as well as providing oversight at a regional or global level.
 - ii. Name(s) and contact information of the person(s) in the certification body that will be the principal liaisons with the Rainforest Alliance for assurance activities.

6.3. Certification Agreement

All CBs shall sign a legal certification agreement with all operations that seek certification or that are current certificate holders. CBs shall comply with the following requirements regarding certification agreements:

- a) Certification agreements shall adhere to all requirements in the Certification Rules, the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies, the Rules for Planning and Conducting Audits and the Chain of Custody Policy for CoC certification, and shall refer to or cite specific requirements as necessary.
- b) CBs shall not include technical or compliance requirements that are stricter than those stipulated in the effective Rainforest Alliance certification program documents. CBs shall seek Rainforest Alliance approval for any possible requirements that are stricter than those stated in these documents.
- c) CBs are responsible for updating certification agreement content to reflect changes in any of the documents mentioned in this document.
- d) CBs shall provide a copy of the certification agreement and a copy of the audit plan to certificate holders before any certification audit, including certification audits required after cancelations. The agreement must be approved and signed by applicants before any audit can take place or certification is granted.
- e) CBs shall request information from the operation on current certifications with other sustainable agriculture certification systems.
- f) CBs shall provide a copy of their certification agreement template to Rainforest Alliance, and provide updated copies after any required changes. The Rainforest Alliance has the right to request and review certification agreement templates or certification agreements for specific operations at any time.
- g) CBs shall include a description of the services it will provide to the operation and a clause explaining all the costs to the operation, including an explanation of the concept of unannounced surveillance audits and the operation's responsibility to pay for these.
- h) CBs shall include a provision allowing it to terminate the certification agreement in the event its authorization is suspended or terminated.

- i) A clause outlining the rules for certificate suspension and cancellation according to the Certification Rules and Chain of Custody Policy.
- j) The certified operation agrees to adhere to the timelines established by Rainforest Alliance for the certification process, as communicated by the CB.
- k) The operation has the right to appeal any certification decision according to the Certification Rules.
- l) A clause informing operations and personnel about their right to access records and about any applicable costs or restrictions.
- m) CBs shall include the following clauses in their certification agreements (in English, Spanish or local language). The clauses may be revised to account for different defined terms in a CB's agreement. If inclusion of any of the following clauses is prohibited by local law, the CB shall inform Rainforest Alliance of such prohibition and Rainforest Alliance shall advise the CB on whether a functionally similar clause may be used. The certification agreement shall state that each of clauses 1 through 12 is subject to applicable law:
 - 1) For group operations, the operation agrees to cause each group member to conform to the applicable standards and comply with all obligations thereof, including without limitation all prohibitions relating to the operation under the certification agreement.
 - 2) As a certificate holder, the operation agrees to accurately and fairly represent its certificate type and status, its certificate scope and the products, enterprises or operations included in the certificate scope. The operation will restrict its representations of certification to relate only to conformance with the applicable standards and will not represent certification in relation to any other characteristics or qualities not addressed by the standards. The operation shall not make certification claims in the sale, marketing, advertising, promotion or distribution of a certified product, or misrepresent the certification status of products, enterprises or operations that are not included in the certificate scope.
 - 3) The operation shall not use its certification in such a manner as to harm the reputation of Rainforest Alliance and shall not make any statement regarding its certification that may be considered misleading or unauthorized.

- 4) The operation may not use the name, certification marks, logos or other trademarks of Rainforest Alliance except as permitted in the certification agreement or in a licensing agreement with Rainforest Alliance. The operation shall fully cooperate with Rainforest Alliance and the CB with respect to any unauthorized use, infringement, or dilution of the trademarks or other intellectual property rights of Rainforest Alliance.
- 5) The success of the Rainforest Alliance certification programs requires the transparency and good faith of participating organizations. The operation hereby agrees to notify the CB in writing within 48 hours of any fundamental departure from its systems and procedures, or of any changes to its management, structure or ownership, or of any other information that would affect the operation's conformance with the applicable standards or compliance with applicable law.
- 6) In the event of an inconsistency between the certification agreement and the standards, rules, policies or procedures required by Rainforest Alliance, the operation agrees and acknowledges that the provisions of the Rainforest Alliance standards, rules, policies and procedures shall govern.
- 7) Upon cancellation of the certificate, the operation shall agree to immediately:
 - i. cease to make any use of any trademark of Rainforest Alliance to sell any previously labeled product unless such trademark is removed, and/or to make any claims that imply that such product, or operation's enterprise or operation, conforms to the applicable standards;
 - ii. at the operation's own expense, remove all uses of names, initials, logos, certification marks or other trademarks of 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, once required by the Certification Rules;
 - iii. cooperate with the CB and Rainforest Alliance to confirm that these obligations have been met;

- iv. identify all relevant existing customers and notify such customers of the termination in writing within 3 business days of the termination, and maintain records of such notification;
- v. Notwithstanding the foregoing, for a period beginning on the effective date of suspension or cancellation of the certificate (the "Suspension or Cancellation Date") and ending on the date that is 6 months from the Suspension or Cancellation Date (the "Sell-Off Period"), operation may sell certified product in accordance with the Rainforest Alliance Chain of Custody Policy and applicable Certification Rules and policies, which may be amended from time to time. A Sell-Off Period will not be authorized or will be revoked in instances where:
 - 1. The operation had non-compliances with critical criteria 1.2 and 1.3 of the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard;
 - 2. In the sole opinion of the CB or Rainforest Alliance, the operation has participated in fraudulent or unethical activities or activities that the operation is involved in may tarnish the reputation of Rainforest Alliance or the certification program.

8) Confidentiality

- i. Neither the CB nor the operation shall disclose or publish any information identified as confidential by the party furnishing it without the furnishing party's express written consent, unless (i) the disclosure is to the receiving party's attorneys or authorized agents, (ii) disclosure is required by law or by a judicial, governmental or regulatory body, (iii) such information was publicly available prior to its disclosure by the furnishing party or thereafter becomes publicly available without any violation of this Agreement by the receiving party, (iv) the information was available to the receiving party on a non-confidential basis prior to its disclosure by the furnishing party, or (v) the information becomes available to the receiving party from a person other than the furnishing party or its representatives and such person is not, to the best knowledge of the receiving party, subject to any legally binding obligation to keep such information confidential.
- ii. Notwithstanding the foregoing, (i) the CB may provide Rainforest Alliance with access to confidential information of the operation or independently discovered by the CB, (ii) the CB or Rainforest Alliance may use such information to prepare and publish analyses

or reports, provided that such use shall not specifically identify the operation by name, (iii) the CB shall produce a public summary of the operation's audit report and either the CB or Rainforest Alliance may disclose or publish such summary information in whole or in part, (iv) the CB and Rainforest Alliance have the right to list the certified operations on their websites, (v) in the event that, during the course of any audit hereunder, the CB or its subcontractor discovers evidence of potential criminal activity or any other information required to be disclosed to a judicial, governmental or regulatory body, the CB reserves the right to disclose such information to a judicial, governmental or regulatory body, and (vi) Rainforest Alliance may disclose confidential information if there is a challenge to any certification claim made by the CB or Rainforest Alliance or the integrity or reputation of the system.

- 9) The Rainforest Alliance is entitled to visit, at its own discretion and cost, any operation, with or without notification to the CB or to the operation. Rainforest Alliance may observe operations during the visit or conduct an audit with or without the CB. The CB and Rainforest Alliance have the right to access and review any of the operation's documentation, and the right to inspect any of the operation's sites and operations in the certification scope.
- 10) Rainforest Alliance has the right to require the CB to conduct an investigation audit of a certificate holder or participating operator.
- 11) Rainforest Alliance has the right to display the certificate holder name on transaction certificates for sales of certified products from that farm or group, throughout the supply chain to the final seller of the certified products as long as segregation is maintained.
- 12) Rainforest Alliance has the right to display the certificate holder or participating operator's on transaction certificates only issued by or to the certified operation or one of its sites.
- 13) The certificate holder or participating operator's acknowledges that it may not use the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal other than pursuant to the terms of a valid written license agreement executed between the operation and Rainforest Alliance, including prior written approval by Rainforest Alliance for any public use, and agrees to adhere to the

Requirements and Guidelines for Use of Rainforest Alliance Trademarks as published on the Rainforest Alliance website.

6.4. Certification Body Insurance and Finances.

- a) The CB shall provide evidence regarding the validity of extra-contractual civil insurance to cover damages and losses caused to third parties and contractual civil liability policy for damages and losses caused to third parties as a consequence of errors or omissions during the certification process, and a fidelity policy to protect the property and confidentiality of the production technology used. If this insurance is not available in the CB's home country, or does not cover one or more of the countries within the geographic scope of the CB, evidence of sufficient financial reserves, including a plan for their use, shall be provided for covering any potential liability or civil claims.
- b) The CB and/or its parent organization shall ensure financial stability.
- c) CBs shall provide to the Rainforest Alliance upon request any audited financial statements or annual reports.

6.5. Sub-Contracting of Inspection Bodies

This section refers to the assignment of work to an Inspection Body (IB) independent from the CB that conducts all or part of the CB's audit activities.

- a) CBs shall provide Rainforest Alliance with a list of all IBs that currently carry out or have provided certification processes within the last three years; the information shall include:
 - i. The legal name(s) of each IB and of any legal entity that the IBs form a part of;
 - ii. The geographic scopes where the IBs will carry out certification processes;
 - iii. The certification scopes for which the IBs will carry out certification processes;
 - iv. Status of the IBs providing services ("active" for those currently providing services and "inactive" for those that provided services within the past three years but are no longer active); and

- v. The contact information and names of the principle legal and technical representatives of the IBs for each geographic scope in which they provide services.
- b) CBs shall immediately inform the Rainforest Alliance when there are changes to the information or when adding new IBs before they begin to provide services. Certification engagements assigned to IBs not registered with the Rainforest Alliance, or audit plans and reports by these IBs, will be rejected. CBs shall bear the costs of any re-audits or related activities that must be repeated or rectified.
- c) CBs shall be legally and financially responsible for all of the certification activities carried out by their IBs.
- d) CBs shall have legally binding contracts with their active IBs, which clearly indicate that IBs and their personnel and consultants shall comply with relevant ISO 17065 requirements, ISO 17020 Type A IB requirements, and all the requirements of the Assurance System.
- e) The following documents constitute acceptable evidence of compliance by a sub-contracted IB with ISO 17020 and with the terms of the commercial agreement between the CB and the IB:
 - i. An accreditation certificate issued by an accreditation body with scope recognized by the Rainforest Alliance; or
 - ii. A record of an audit conducted by the CB within the last 12 months, showing that the IB complies with ISO 17020 and has no pending major non-conformity. In this case, this audit team under ISO 17020 shall include at least one member with knowledge and a minimum of five years of experience in managing inspection, certification or accreditation bodies.
- f) CBs shall be responsible for ensuring the compliance of IBs and their personnel and consultants with the requirements indicated in this document. By registering IBs, CBs guarantee that they have carried out the necessary due diligence to ensure that IBs comply with, or have the capacity to comply with, the respective competency and operational requirements set forth in this and related Rainforest Alliance Assurance System documents.
- g) CBs shall review and approve any certification process forms, templates and documents developed and used by IBs.
- h) IBs shall not make any decisions regarding certification or certification status and shall not manage any appeals or complaints about certification decisions or

services from operations or applicants that they have audited. A quality reviewer of the IB may provide inputs to the CBs Certification Decision Committee.

- i) CBs shall directly contract all IBs and similar service providers. IBs can directly contract independent auditors and consultants, but shall not subcontract work to other IBs and similar organizations. CBs shall approve the subcontracting by IBs of any consultants that will carry out specialized support during certification processes carried out by IBs.
- j) IB auditors shall be registered in the Rainforest Alliance Auditor Database and comply with all requirements in the Rules for Auditor Competence. Any audit plan, audit report or related certification process submitted to the Rainforest Alliance or uploaded in the Certification Database that includes unregistered or non-compliant auditors will be rejected. CBs shall bear the costs of any re-audits or related activities that must be repeated or rectified.
- k) The Rainforest Alliance has the right to directly contact, visit, evaluate and request information from any active or inactive IB and its personnel, and prohibit the participation of any IB in certification activities based on performance evaluation and continual assessment results.

6.6. Quality Management System

- a) CBs shall document and implement a quality management system that meets the requirements put forth in ISO 17065, particularly sections 8.5 through 8.8 and continually evaluate the quality and performance of their and their IBs' certification processes, and the performance and competency of the personnel and consultants involved, with respect to all Rainforest Alliance assurance system requirements.
- b) Personnel responsible for the management and operations of the quality management system shall include at least one person with demonstrable experience¹ in the management of ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and ISO 17065, ISO 17020 compliant or equivalent management systems. In addition, at least one person must be a registered qualified lead auditor for Rainforest Alliance.

¹ At least two years of direct management system full-time experience as a management system team member, supervisor or support staff. Recognized training in ISO equivalent management systems can be substituted for up to one year of experience.

- c) The objectives of the quality management system shall be to detect and correct weaknesses in audit practices, execution of certification processes, compliance with Rainforest Alliance assurance system requirements, audit report writing, the interpretation of applicable standards, and the evaluation of compliance risk as well as any variation from Assurance system practices and requirements. The system should include, at a minimum:
- i. An annual internal audit review of Rainforest Alliance certification management activities that includes the elements in this section;
 - ii. Mechanisms to provide immediate and effective feedback to auditors, consultants and other certification process personnel to correct detected weaknesses and foster performance and quality improvements;
 - iii. Tracking of auditor fulfillment of Rules for Auditor Competence;
 - iv. Evaluation of the competency and performance of all auditors through the periodic review of audit reports, audit team surveys and interviews, operation surveys and interviews, as well as witness audits and other performance evaluation mechanisms;
 - v. Periodic evaluation of auditors' performance;
 - vi. Review of audit reports and certification process documents;
 - vii. A survey of 5% of certified operations or a minimum of five operations, whichever is greater, to determine operation satisfaction with respect to quality and performance of services rendered; perceived competency and service orientation of personnel and auditors; timeliness of the delivery of information and reports; satisfaction with the field evaluation process(es) and results; timeliness of attention to and resolution of inquiries and complaints; and quality and usefulness of audit reports;
 - viii. An internal review of the compliance of all operations and activities with the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies and other applicable assurance system requirements at least every 12 months;
 - ix. Mechanisms to assign, document, track and assess corrective actions to improve performance and competency and rectify any weaknesses identified by the quality management system; and
 - x. Management review of the activities and results of the quality management system at least every 12 months, with the documentation of management input, recommendations, actions and approval.
- d) The CB shall implement a corrective action plan to manage any non-conformities identified during the internal review.
- e) The CB shall implement preventive actions to avoid or minimize any non-conformities.

- f) The Rainforest Alliance will review implementation and compliance with a corrective and preventive action plan.

6.7. System Documentation

- a) CBs shall maintain up to date all documents needed to comply with the Rules for the Authorization of Certification Bodies and related Assurance System requirements. CB shall have a procedure in place for documents and record control for all audit processes and certification. All documents shall be maintained for five years.
- b) Documents that become obsolete in less than three years shall be kept for a minimum total of three years (time while current + time obsolete = three years) before elimination.
- c) CBs shall maintain digital or physical copies of the documents and make them available to the Rainforest Alliance within five business days of their being requested.

7. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE EXPANSION

The certification system refers to countries in two ways. The first are those countries approved for using the 2017 Standard to certify farms and groups. The addition or removal of any country in this scope must be approved by the Rainforest Alliance. The list of these countries is found in the Authorized Countries Policy. For CoC, the approved scope is a worldwide scope.

The second scope, referred to in this section and in other assurance documents, is the Geographic Scope for CBs. Geographic Scope includes the country/countries for which a CB authorized for that scope has demonstrated it has the auditing experience and technical knowledge to carry out certification activities.

CBs must apply to the Rainforest Alliance for approval to offer certification in a geographic scope. The Rainforest Alliance will only grant geographic scope expansions to CBs under the following conditions:

- a) CBs complete a Geographic Scope Application Form and submit it and the additional information described in the following points to the Rainforest Alliance.

- b) CBs shall complete a risk assessment according to the section on risk analysis in this document and submit it to the designated Rainforest Alliance contact as part of the scope expansion application process for all scopes that have been previously approved for other CBs.
- c) CBs shall provide a list of auditors on staff or that demonstrate commitment to work with the CBs and are qualified to audit in the requested geographic scope. Qualifications to audit in a new geographic scope include:
 - i. Auditors shall meet all requirements of the Rules for Auditor Competence.
 - ii. Auditors shall comply with the minimum performance indicators set by the CB.
 - iii. The CB shall be able to demonstrate previous agriculture auditing experience in the requested scopes for certification or an accepted certification scheme with an agriculture or social scope, or for similar products and processes in the case of CoC certification. CBs should communicate with the Rainforest Alliance’s designated contact for the most recent information on accepted certification schemes for experience.
- d) In addition, the following conditions apply for all newly granted geographic scopes:
 - i. CBs shall provide copies of risk assessments and the list of applicable laws to all auditors that will carry out audits in the newly approved geographic scopes.
 - ii. If CBs fail to carry out and register in the Certification Database at least one audit within the first two years of being granted a new geographic scope, that scope will be suspended. The geographic scope can be reinstated through a new application process.

8. ASSESSMENTS BY CBs

8.1. Risk Assessment for Critical Criteria

- a) CBs shall perform a Risk Assessment in which they assess compliance risks for all 2017 Standard critical criteria for each of the geographic scopes in which they

audit and certify farms and groups and the crops they will certify within these scopes².

- b) CBs will describe these risks, their contexts, and the measures to audit and interpret related criteria.
- c) The Rainforest Alliance may request a copy of the Risk Assessment at any time.
- d) The Rainforest Alliance will use these risk assessments to evaluate how CBs will evaluate, detect and manage compliance risks during audits.
- e) CBs shall annually review the Risk Assessment and update it as needed.
- f) CBs shall discuss and compare - on at least an annual basis - the Risk Assessment for each geographical scope with other Rainforest Alliance approved CBs operating in the same geographical scope. CBs are encouraged to collaborate on Risk Assessments; however, each CB is responsible for maintaining their respective assessments up-to-date.
- g) CBs shall not outsource risk assessments, but can contract specialists to investigate risks in a new scope or to advise CBs on specific risks. Inspection bodies (IBs) shall participate in the Risk Assessment process under the leadership of CBs for geographic scopes where the IBs carry out audits. CBs assume full responsibility for any risk assessment or part of an assessment contributed by IBs or specialists.

8.2. Applicable Laws Assessment

- a) For each of their geographic scopes, CBs shall document and maintain current a registry of all applicable laws and regulations that apply to 2017 Standard and the Chain of Custody Standard criteria and related compliance requirements. The registries will include the following minimum information:
 - i. Full official name of the applicable laws and regulations;
 - ii. Dates of publication and when the legislation came into force;
 - iii. 2017 Standard criteria or other requirements for which the laws or regulations apply; and
 - iv. Point of access (URL) or other information that indicates where text of the laws or regulations can be readily found.

² Risk analyses are not necessary for geographic scopes where CBs will only be carrying out chain of custody audits using the Rainforest Alliance *Chain of Custody Standard*

- b) CBs shall have ready access to the applicable laws and regulations and be able to produce digital copies of the relevant text within five business days of any request by Rainforest Alliance for information. Access can include, but is not limited to, a viable URL or website link and electronic, physical or photographic copies of the relevant text of the laws or regulations. When laws and regulations are not available online, the CB and Rainforest Alliance shall agree on a feasible production date.
- c) The Rainforest Alliance has the right to request copies of the registries and copies of the relevant aspects of any of the laws or regulations in the registry, at any time.

9. PROCEDURE FOR DISSEMINATION OF OFFICIAL STANDARDS AND POLICIES

- a) CBs shall provide Rainforest Alliance with the names and contact information—names, email addresses, work address and telephone numbers--of at least one person in their organizations that are to receive all official communications about the assurance system from Rainforest Alliance. CBs shall immediately inform the Rainforest Alliance of any changes in these contacts through the Certification Database.
- b) The Rainforest Alliance will send all official communications to the above-mentioned contacts. These communications can include digital documents or hyperlinks to documents that are meant only for CBs, such as requirements, policies and procedures, forms and templates. These communications can also include information and digital documents or hyperlinks to documents whose target audience includes auditors and certificate holders.
- c) CBs shall have and implement procedures and processes to ensure that the information and digital documents or hyperlinks to the above-mentioned documents are disseminated to all of their certified operations, and to any staff and consultants responsible for activities or services related to the information or documents. CBs shall keep records of these communications to operations, staff and consultants.
- d) CBs shall provide physical documents to those operations that do not have access to the Internet or the technology to receive digital documents.

- e) CBs shall have mechanisms in place, including contact points for questions, to answer operation and staff questions and provide explanations about official communications.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

- a) CBs shall have a procedure to ensure confidential information from operations is protected. The CB shall have available a policy on provision of information within the audit, which indicates that auditors are not allowed to give advice, directions or instructions to close non-conformities. This policy shall be publicly available for certificate holders.
- b) CBs shall provide all information and data from operation's certification processes to the Rainforest Alliance through the Certification Database as part of normal assurance processes and as stipulated in these regulations and related assurance system requirements.
- c) CBs shall not publish, disclose, disseminate or otherwise make publicly available or use information or data obtained from certification processes except for uses stipulated in the Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules, Chain of Custody Policy, and certification agreements, which includes, but are not limited to, the following uses:
 - i. The publication of audit report public summaries that may include the description of nonconformities; and
 - ii. The use of data associated with the audit process by Rainforest Alliance for analyses and reporting about the certification program provided that this use does not disclose (A) the name of the certified operation or (B) the certified operation's intellectual property.
- d) The Rainforest Alliance retains the right to publish non-confidential contact and organizational information about CBs and certificate holders on its website due to its commitment to transparency. Certificate holders can request through CBs that Rainforest Alliance not publish certain information if its publication poses proven threats to the health and safety of certificate holder owners or employees. CBs shall agree with these certificate holders on alternative contact and organizational information that is directly linked to the certificate holders.
- e) All CB personnel, including persons involved in certification decisions, and contracted auditors and consultants shall complete and sign a non-disclosure declaration that indicates their agreement with the restrictions on information

and data use and disclosure set forth in these regulations. The declaration must be legally binding and prohibit the use and disclosure of certification information and data for at least three years after termination of employment or the ceasing of CB's certification operations.

- f) CBs shall have the necessary policies and procedures to deal with confidentiality violations by their personnel and contracted auditors and consultants. CBs shall also have the necessary policies and procedures to limit the access to certification data and information to those persons that have signed the non-disclosure agreement mentioned in the previous clause, and to prevent access by persons who have not signed the agreement.
- g) CBs shall immediately report to the Rainforest Alliance any violations of non-disclosure agreements and any intentional or unintentional disclosure or dissemination of confidential certification data and information. Unreported incidents can be subject to non-conformities or other sanctions assigned by the Rainforest Alliance.

11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The CB must have a written conflict of interest program that:

- a) Ensures that all CB staff, including personnel that make certification decisions, auditors and technical experts contracted for certification processes, shall complete a record stating any potential or existing conflicts of interest including property, financial and family ties with certificate holders or operations. This record shall be updated at least annually or when a potential conflict arises.
- b) Ensures that the CB shall implement a procedure to identify and analyze possible conflict of interests and conflict of interest risks and develop and implement policies and procedures to avoid or reduce those risks. When there is a conflict of interest risk involving personnel or contract auditors, the respective individuals shall not be involved in the related audit or certification decision processes.
- c) Ensures that the CB shall document and implement a code of conduct to be applied by each employee and contractor. The code of conduct shall prohibit employees and auditors from accepting any money, gift, gratuity, or item of value from the eligible entity to be audited or certified. The code of conduct needs to have measures to be taken in the case of bribery or coercion. When bribery or

coercion of a registered auditor or a member of an independent committee is suspected, the CB shall report this situation to the Rainforest Alliance.

- d) Ensures that the CB shall have a conflict of interest disclosure policy that requires auditors and personnel involved in auditing and certification activities to report any potential or real conflict of interest in any given auditing situation.
- e) Ensures that staff and contracted auditors shall not audit the same farms, group administrators or participating operators where they conducted technical assistance activities in the two previous years, including having worked in the last two years for an operation, one of its subsidiaries or a company of the same parent group.
- f) Ensures that CB personnel that make certification decisions shall not make decisions about the same farms, group administrators or participating operators in which they participated in the most recent audit (of any type) or where they conducted technical assistance activities in the two previous years, including having worked in the last two years for an operation, one of its subsidiaries or a company of the same parent group.
- g) Ensures that an auditor shall not audit the same certificate holder for more than three consecutive audits.
- h) Ensures that in Investigation Audits, the CB shall only use auditors that did not participate in the last audit of the certificate holder.

12. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

- a) All CBs shall have documented complaint submission and management procedures in compliance with section 7.13 of ISO 17065. These procedures shall be available to the public on CBs' websites and also accessible to workers and other stakeholders.
- b) CB websites shall include easily recognizable³ direct access to a description of the complaint and incident management process, as well as to any online or digital

³ Easily recognizable" must be a link that contains the word "complaint" in the languages used on the website and can be recognized by users as being associated with the complaint and incident management process.

- complaint or incident reporting process. The access can be to a general complaint management process if CBs offer certification services for more than one scheme.
- c) Complaint and inquiry submission mechanisms shall include at least an email address, a local or national telephone number that can be attended by CB staff during working hours, and a postal address. In addition, the CB shall state that any auditor can receive complaints at any time during the audit process.
 - d) The CB shall ensure that it has the capacity to receive and manage complaints in all the official languages of the countries in which it has active certificates.
 - e) The CB shall ensure the confidentiality of the complainant, unless the complainant authorizes the CB or Rainforest Alliance to share the information or the complainant publicly shares information. This must be stated in the publicly available description of the procedures.
 - f) Commercial or intellectual proprietary information about the investigated certificate holder shall not be divulged in any public documents about the complaint without the written consent of the operation, however, the Rainforest Alliance will publish public summaries of Investigation Audits.
 - g) CBs shall respond within five business days to the persons submitting complaints and inquiries to acknowledge their submissions, and to provide them with information about the next steps in the process and when they can expect an outcome. CBs shall keep these persons informed of major findings, and provide them with a summary of the outcome of the process when there is a final decision or result. If the submission did not include contact information for responding, then the CB should complete the process and record the information in the Certification Database. The CB will have 30 business days to resolve a complaint (including making a certification decision in the case an investigation audit is conducted).
 - h) CBs are under no obligation to respond to or address anonymously submitted complaints, even if accompanied by an email address. Complaints submitted on behalf of a group, such as a community or labor organization, shall have at least one viable contact person to manage communications and further inquiries.
 - i) CBs shall record the actions taken to investigate and resolve the complaint in a digital complaint log. The actions recorded shall include the date the complaint is received, the name and contact information of the complainant, the nature of the complaint, the evidence, the name of the certificate holder involved, any actions

taken to investigate the complaint, the findings of investigations, and the decision made about the complaint.

- j) All complaints and reported incidents and their findings should be analyzed as part of regular quality management system reviews, and the necessary adjustments made to CB certification management systems and processes.

13. APPEALS PROCEDURES

- a) The procedures of a CB related to appeals shall be documented, available to the public on its website and provided to operation organizations.
- b) The procedures shall adhere to the timeframe, requirements, and appeal scope described in section 8.3 of the Rules for Planning and Conducting Audits. As stated in that document, the results of verification audits cannot be appealed.
- c) The CB shall not resolve appeals by changing the certification scope in order to eliminate a problem in the scope of the certification granted.
- d) The status of a certificate holder that has appealed a certification decision shall be as indicated in the Certification Rules.
- e) The appeals shall be analyzed by at least two persons who did not participate in the audit or decision-making process related to the certification, who do not have any conflicts of interest related to the operation, and one of whom shall have a level of lead auditor for the specific certification scope.
- f) CBs shall resolve and communicate the result of any appeal within 30 business days. The CB shall record the appeal date in the Certification Database and update the sub-status to an appeal process.
- g) The CB shall document the appeal and its results and assess whether any improvements to its systems are necessary.

14. TRANSFER OF CERTIFICATES

This section describes the conditions, regulations and requirements that govern the transfer of certificates from one CB to another. The Rainforest Alliance has the right to intervene in any certificate transfer process, including suspending or terminating the

process and reversing any existing transfers within a reasonable period, if the Rainforest Alliance deems that transfers may jeopardize the integrity of assurance and certification processes and outcomes.

- a) The following conditions shall be enforced for the transferring certificates to a new CB:
 - i. Certificate holders have the right to transfer their certificates to other CBs for legitimate business or strategic reasons. Reasons for transfers should not include evading of compliance or regulatory obligations, or because of perceptions or promises of more lenient treatment by new CBs.
 - ii. Operations that request transfers shall pay all related costs unless Rainforest Alliance establishes differently. The current CB shall provide the operation with an estimate of all transfer costs.
 - iii. CBs cannot establish compliance obligations for transfers beyond those established in the Certification Rules or Chain of Custody Policy.
 - iv. Certificates shall only be transferred to CBs approved for the geographic scope of the certificate holder. Certificates cannot be transferred to CBs with suspended or cancelled geographic scopes, or that applied for geographic scopes that have not been approved.
 - v. Transfers or certification applications to new CBs shall not be accepted for operations that:
 - I. Have had their certification cancelled within the past year from the date of notification by the previous CB;
 - II. Have requested more than one transfer in the past year and more than 3 transfers previously approved per operation. Rainforest Alliance will validate only 3 transfers per operation and will evaluate exceptions on a case by case basis;
 - III. Are seeking an expansion of scope as per section 6.6 of the Certification Rules;
 - IV. Have their certification suspended as per section 10.1 of the Certification Rules; or
 - V. Have a verification or investigation audit in process.
- b) The following process shall be enforced for the transfer of certificates:
 - i. The certificate holder shall present a formal written request for a transfer to its current CB, describing the reasons for the transfer and indicating the CB to which it wants to transfer. If the operation does not indicate the reason, the Rainforest Alliance can decide whether to accept or deny the transfer.
 - ii. The current CB shall acknowledge receipt of the documentation and notify the new CB and the Rainforest Alliance within five business days of the request. The current CB shall indicate to the certificate holder if there are any pending financial obligations that must be settled before the transfer can take

place. If there are no pending financial obligations, then the new CB is free to contact the certificate holders to begin the application and certification process.

- iii. The new CB must review the client's profile in advance of the transfer and before accepting the transfer request. This review must include:
 1. Confirmation that the certificate is in force and valid for the scope described;
 2. Identification of the reason for the transfer;
 3. Confirmation that the certification scope corresponds to the accreditation scope of the new CB;
 4. Confirmation that any complaint submitted has been resolved;
 5. Review of the client's audit history (where the provider can verify this history to the satisfaction of the new CB, based on copies of audit reports completed by the previous);
 6. Confirmation of the current stage of the audit cycle;
 7. The new CB may request the previous CB provide copies of audit reports, checklists, pending non-conformities, and evidence sent by the client to close open non-conformities and similar documents. The previous CB must provide these documents subject to written approval of the client that is making the transfer.
 - iv. Certificate holders shall settle all obligations with their current CBs before the transfer can take place. Once these accounts are settled, the current CB shall notify the new CB within five business days that the transfer can take place.
 - v. CBs accepting transfers shall request a transfer of the certificate in the Certification Database, and upload the letter sent by the operation requesting the transfer, as well as the email communication between the new CB and the previous CB where the transfer is agreed upon.
 - vi. Once the transfer is complete, under normal circumstances in the Certification Database, the new CB shall issue a physical certificate with the new certificate code and information about the new CB, while maintaining the same scope and dates of the previous certificate, after the certificate holder has undergone a new certification audit. If the certificate holder has requested a transfer under extraordinary circumstances, then the physical certificate can be issued immediately.
- 2) If a CB has its authorization or geographic scope cancelled, or for extraordinary reasons cannot complete an audit process, its affected operations will be allowed to transfer to another CB authorized for the respective geographic scopes. If there are no authorized CBs for the respective scope, the Rainforest Alliance will

assign a CB until the next certification audit, after which the certificate holders will be allowed to choose any other CB.

- 3) In the case of disagreement between two CBs involved in certificate transfer of an operation, the Rainforest Alliance will analyze the case and make a final decision.

15. USE OF SEALS, MARKS AND LOGOS

- a) CBs may use the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal in public documents in relation to the assurance or certification system, subject to prior written approval by the Rainforest Alliance for each proposed use.
- b) The CB shall comply with the Requirements and Guidelines for Use of the Rainforest Alliance Trademarks published on the Rainforest Alliance website at <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/sites/default/files/uploads/4/rainforest-alliance-marks-guide.pdf> for their use of the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal.

16. VALIDATING AGRICULTURE CLAIMS

- a) The CB shall ensure that its certification data entry process includes the following:
 - i. The sales contact for the certificate holder, as provided in the official application form, is included and entered into the Certification Database. The CB is responsible for updating the sales contact information at the request of the certificate holder in the Certification Database. If a certificate holder does not include a sales contact then by default the sales contact will be the contact person for certification as indicated on the application.
 - ii. Estimated volumes are entered in the Certification Database for the next annual period. This allows the certificate holder to continue to make sales claims and use the seal during any gaps between annual certified periods. If no estimated volumes are entered into the Certification Database, sales cannot be validated.
- b) The CB shall have a documented technical volume verification process to validate volumes reported by certificate holders—farms, groups and CoC operators—and volumes sold as certified based on sales and transaction certificate information provided by RA. The process shall take the following into account:

- i. Minimum, maximum and average production yields per hectare for the certified crop(s) for at least the last production period (year or harvest). This shall be at the national level at most, but preferably for the agronomic region in which a particular certificate holder is located;
 - ii. The crop variety involved;
 - iii. Type of production system and technology for that crop when that system or technology will affect the productivity rate. Examples include CCN 51 cocoa versus traditional production systems, shade versus sun grown coffee, and similar;
 - iv. Information on any agronomic or external factors that may have influenced production over the past production period, such as major pest or disease outbreaks, adverse weather events, or drastic fluctuation in market prices;
 - v. If the certificate holder has earned certifications from other certification programs, the following shall be validated:
 - a. Volumes for both RA certified and non-RA-certified products
 - b. The certificate holder's system for tracking and calculating volumes from these sources.
 - vi. The process shall evaluate the certificate holder's system to make sure that product that has been replaced or purchased as non-certified is not claimed to have come from a Rainforest Alliance farm or source when sold.
- c) The volume validation processes used by CBs to ensure the integrity of the volume data included in the Certification Database shall include the following:
- i. CBs shall assess whether to approve any request received from an operation to change or modify the approved volume of a certificate after it has been approved by the certification committee. CBs shall verify the reason for the change in volume, indicating whether it is due to a volume extension/modification or volume correction when there are errors during the recording of the information in the Certification Database.
 - ii. If the expansion of the volume is due to a request received from a operation, the CB shall check the % increase in volume. If the increase is less than 10% of the approved volume, it is not necessary to perform a technical verification process, but the CB shall record the reason the operation indicates this increase and the new volume in the Certification Database.
 - iii. If the expansion of the volume requested by the operation is between 10% and 25% more than the approved amount, the CB shall conduct a technical verification focused on the confirmation of the reasons that led to the increase in volume. If the CB verifies that the increase is justified,

the new volume approved shall be recorded in the Certification Database and attached to the audit report.

- iv. If the expansion of the volume requested by the operation is above the 25% of the approved volume, the CB must conduct a verification audit focused on the reasons that led to the increase in volume. If the CB verifies that the increase is justified, the new volume approved shall be recorded in the Certification Database and the verification audit report shall also be attached.
 - v. Identify if certificate holders are using inaccurate or false information about claims for products purchased and/or sold.
 - vi. Review product stocks and make sure that the volume validation processes during the audit differentiate between product stock and product to be harvested during the annual period, thereby ensuring that the approved volume for that annual period is the volume to be harvested only* (*Note: this is so that stocked volume is not included in the annual volume approved as this would then result in double counting of the same product volume).
- d) Communication with certificate holders regarding certified product sales:
- i. The CB shall inform the certificate holder that once their certificate has been approved and its status is active in the Certification Database, they can submit a request for approval of use of the seal and sell the related product volumes as certified.
 - ii. CBs shall inform certificate holders at the time of the voluntary termination of the certificate that they have no more than six months to sell off the remaining volume of product as indicated in Certification Rules and Chain of Custody Policy. If the remaining volume is sold off prior to the end of the sell off period then at that time no more sale validations will be issued and they can no longer make claims for these products. This period starts with the certificate cancellation date or end date.
 - iii. CBs shall inform the certificate holder when their certificate has been suspended, the reasons involved in the suspension, the steps to follow after the suspension and the applicable policy for selling products as certified during the suspension period.

17. GUIDELINES FOR VALIDATING AGRICULTURE CLAIMS IN FORCE MAJEURE CONDITIONS

The following guidelines for validating agriculture claims apply in the event that an audit cannot take place due to force majeure conditions. These conditions include war, riots, crimes, or natural phenomena such as hurricanes, floods, earthquake, and volcanic eruptions. Other human caused phenomena may be considered force majeure in some circumstances, but certificate holders should consult with their CB if in doubt.

- a) In the case of force majeure conditions, the certified organization must contact the CB no less than 30 days after the event and prior to the annual certificate end date.
- b) The CB shall request the volume to be harvested in the current period from the certified organization. Upon confirming this volume, it cannot be modified.
- c) The CB shall confirm that this shall be the volume assigned to the certificate's annual period upon being able to conduct the annual audit. This volume is assigned using the estimated volume field in the Certification Database.
- d) The CB shall inform the producer that no additional volume from the producer will be allowed to be sold other than what is registered as the estimated volume for that annual period.

18. ACTIONS FOR IDENTIFYING VIOLATIONS OF TRACEABILITY PROCESSES

- a) If the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal appears on any products or marketing materials, the auditor shall verify that the operation has a current and valid License Agreement signed with Rainforest Alliance.
- b) If an auditor detects the use of the seal on a product that does not originate from a certified organization or any other unapproved use of the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal, the CB shall document them in the Certification Database.
- c) The CB shall use the sales reports provided by Rainforest Alliance to verify any possible violations or fraudulent activity related to the sale of approved product volumes.
- d) If a CB decides to cancel a certification based on fraudulent traceability or selling activities, the CB shall document the suspected activity in the Certification

Database and confirm with Rainforest Alliance any related sales information prior to issuing the cancellation.

19. ASSURANCE COSTS

The Rainforest Alliance may charge fees for different Assurance System activities and services. These activities and services may include fees and costs for the authorization and the continual assessment processes for CBs, and fixed fees for certain certification services.

The Rainforest Alliance will review and publish fees on an annual basis. Rainforest Alliance will make every effort to ensure that the annual fee schedule is complete and reflects costs for the upcoming year. Rainforest Alliance can modify the fee schedule and include additional fees as needed, providing at least 90 calendar days of advance notice to CBs.

Until further notice, Rainforest Alliance will **not** charge CBs for:

- a) Costs of required regular quality and performance assessments and evaluations needed to maintain CB authorization to provide Rainforest Alliance certification;
- b) Auditor performance reviews (remote and online) as required by the quality assurance system;
- c) Desk evaluation and documentation reviews;
- d) On-site assessments;
- e) Witness and review audits;
- f) Use of the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal.

The Rainforest Alliance **will** charge CBs for:

- a) The verification of the implementation of corrective actions to achieve expected outcomes; including any on-site follow up visit, and
- b) Any Rainforest Alliance involvement in corrective actions, such as required training.