



Q&A on the RA-Cert/NEPCon Union

Below are some questions and answers related to the NEPCon and RA-Cert union.

General

Why is RA-Cert separating from Rainforest Alliance?

In January, the [Rainforest Alliance and UTZ](#) (a leading certification scheme for coffee, cocoa, and tea) merged as an organization. Also at this time, Rainforest Alliance assumed [ownership of the agriculture certification program](#) that had been previously managed by the SAN (Sustainable Agriculture Network). These changes have positioned the new Rainforest Alliance as an agriculture certification scheme and standard owner. On this basis, Rainforest Alliance is making its in-house certification body, RA-Cert, independent.

What will be the future NEPCon relationship with Rainforest Alliance?

Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon will uphold their collaborative relationship, including synergies on standards development, impacts reporting, and continued innovations in certification delivery. Our close partnership includes continued use of the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal for NEPCon clients certified for FSC and Sustainable Tourism, in addition to Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture.

What is the timeline?

NEPCon's acquisition of RA-Cert has been formalized with an agreement signed in July 2018. This is followed by transition planning for the RA-Cert program to formally move to NEPCon during Fall of 2018, during which time RA-Cert staff become employed by NEPCon and client agreements with Rainforest Alliance are assigned to NEPCon.

Who is NEPCon?

NEPCon (Nature Economy and People Connected) is an international non-profit organization that works to build capacity and commitment for mainstreaming sustainability. Founded in 1994 in Denmark, NEPCon works to foster sustainable land use and responsible trade in forest commodities through innovation projects, capacity building, and sustainability services. NEPCon is an accredited certifier for sustainability schemes such as [FSC](#), [PEFC](#), [RSPO](#) and [SBP](#). NEPCon offers Farm and Chain of Custody certification according to the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard. The organization also certifies to their own LegalSource Standard and Carbon Footprint Management standards. NEPCon is also exclusive verification partner for the sustainable tourism recognition scheme The Long Run. Learn more at www.nepcon.org.

Why did Rainforest Alliance choose moving forward with NEPCon?

Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon have been close collaborators since 1998, initially working together on FSC certification. Currently NEPCon is RA-Cert's agriculture certification representative in Europe, managing RA-Cert's clients and audits in that region, and we jointly

developed our FSC auditor training program. NEPCon has been an innovator on topics/systems such as group certification, smallholders, forest legality, risk assessments and other valuable areas. NEPCon has a strong record of focusing on the quality and credibility of certification processes and decisions. Rainforest Alliance is confident in NEPCon as a mission-oriented certification body (CB), as well as an organization that is working across many other innovative solutions for responsible practices. RA-Cert and NEPCon have almost no overlap in geographic scope for our core services. This means RA-Cert is able to preserve its staff and partners with NEPCon.

Who is the head of the organization?

[Peter Feilberg](#), NEPCon Executive Director will continue leading the organization.

Where is NEPCon's head office?

NEPCon's headquarters office is in Copenhagen, Denmark. NEPCon has operations in 20 countries across Europe and Asia, as well as Russia and the United States. RA-Cert will bring additional operations from Africa, Latin America, Asia, the US and Canada, where NEPCon has been establishing new legal entities.

What kind of services will you deliver?

We will continue certification, verification and assurance services that both NEPCon and RA-Cert have been delivering in forestry, agriculture, tourism, responsible sourcing, biomass, and carbon footprinting.

Certification & Clients

Will clients' primary contacts for certification change?

We are planning a transition that does not include changes to your current contacts. RA-Cert and NEPCon have very little overlap in the regions where our suite of services is offered. This allows our clients to work with the same local representatives.

Will clients' audit schedule and auditors change?

We are planning a transition that will not disrupt your normal audit process. We will continue to work with the same expert staff, partners, and auditors RA-Cert has established globally.

Will clients have to change their certification code (for current RA-Cert clients)?

Clients will be able to continue using "RA" for an extended period. The transition to "NC" will begin in 2021 and will allow clients to change with their next certification period. In all cases, the 6-digit number in the certification code will remain the same.

Will clients be able to continue using the RAC Seal?

Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon will continue their long-standing collaboration that includes NEPCon's FSC and Sustainable Tourism clients continuing to have access to the RAC seal. More details on the future program will be provided when they are ready. The Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture certification program will continue to offer the seal as already defined in that scheme.

Will there be changes to client certificates (for current RA-Cert clients)?

NEPCon will hold all of the accreditations, which means that the certification body for all current RA-Cert services will be NEPCon. Clients will thus be issued new certificates under the NEPCon name. All other client and scope details will remain the same on the certificates.

How will client certificates and agreements transition to NEPCon?

We are planning a streamlined process with nearly all actions being taken by Rainforest Alliance and NEPCon, and very little disruption to clients. One formality is the need to “assign” client certification agreements to NEPCon. RA-Cert is initiating this process with ample notice to clients and with very little action needed on their part. Clients are invited to contact their local representatives if they have any questions about this step.

Please note, clients moving to NEPCon will not be considered certificate “transfers” since it is a change of ownership for the accredited certification program (RA-Cert). Clients will not need to initiate steps for transfer as would normally take place when certified operations change CBs.

Will clients be able to keep their same certification and auditing program with NEPCon?

Yes, all services currently offered by RA-Cert will be provided with NEPCon as well. This includes Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture, UTZ, Sustainable Tourism certification, timber legality, as well as customized assurance and verification services.

When RA-Cert joins NEPCon, will sustainable agriculture audits, or any of its other programs end?

No. RA-Cert is committed to its certification and auditing programs which includes agriculture, forestry, and tourism standards. NEPCon will continue to offer all of RA-Cert’s existing certification services and conduct audits to these standards, including Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture and UTZ, when RA-Cert joins NEPCon.

Tourism

Is the standard for Sustainable Tourism going to change?

When RA-Cert joins with NEPCon, NEPCon will continue to offer the same tourism certification services against the current certification standard requirements. The name of the standard will change to NEPCon – GSTC-recognized – Sustainable Tourism Standard, based on a change in ownership of the RA-Cert business and its assets. The standard is approved by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which requires a periodic review and revision process that will be undertaken in 2018.

Assurance

Will NEPCon provide auditing services for non-certification areas?

Yes, and NEPCon is already doing this. They offer bespoke tailored services for responsible sourcing. The RA-Cert Corporate Assurance program will move with RA-Cert to NEPCon as part of the acquisition.

