



Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules

For Single Farms and Group Administrators

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Version 2.1

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

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Rainforest Alliance Mission

Our mission is to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices, and consumer behavior.

Objective

This document defines the rules for a single farm or a group administrator to become or remain certified to the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard for Farms and Producer Groups involved in Crop and Cattle Production, July 2017¹, including the description of the rights and obligations of audited and certified organizations, from the application until the moment the organization's certificate is granted, suspended or cancelled.

Binding Date and Certification Rules for Audits

- The binding start date for audit and certification processes based on the Rainforest Alliance Standard is July 1, 2017
- This document substitutes the SAN-R-SP-1-V1 SAN Certification Rules for Single Farms and Group Administrators (2017).

1. General conditions

- a) Audits are based on an evaluation of conformity with the latest version of the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Standard, the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Lists for Pesticide Management (Lists of Prohibited and Risk Mitigation Use Pesticides), and this 2017 Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules document.
- b) For the purpose of these rules, two organization types are recognized: single farms and group administrators.
- c) The same organization may not hold two valid certificates from Rainforest Alliance authorized certification bodies (CBs) simultaneously.
- d) Organizations that cultivate products considered illegal by applicable law in the country where they are grown or by international agreements and conventions shall not be subject to Rainforest Alliance audits or Rainforest Alliance certification. Certification of unicellular organisms² and aquaponic systems is not permitted either.
- e) Organizations that cultivate annual, bi-annual or perennial species that are not restricted by clause 1.d), may be audited and certified. These species include but are not limited to trees of perennial crops such as fruits, nuts, coffee, cocoa, and tea, as well as ornamental plants, vegetables, grains, spices and grasses.

¹ Hereafter referred to as "2017 Standard".

² A unicellular organism, also known as a single-celled organism, is an organism that consists of only one cell, including bacteria, archaea, protozoa, unicellular algae, and unicellular fungi.

- f) Cattle³ operations may be certified, provided that the cattle is not completely raised in stables or under nomadic production systems. The certification of cattle production systems with feedlots as part of the farm or group administrator scope is only permitted if animals have the opportunity for movement and exposure to sunlight in outdoor ranging areas, and if feedlots are used only during the final fattening stage of the animals.
- g) If destruction of natural ecosystems - but never for HCV areas - up to 1% of the total certified land area is planned by a certified farm or group administrator, it will not be a cause for certificate cancellation provided that the organization informed the responsible CB beforehand and the CB authorized this minor destruction under the following conditions:
 - i. Destruction of natural ecosystems will take place only for the reason of installing new farm infrastructure or repairing previously existing farm infrastructure (roads, irrigation infrastructure, including pumping facilities, channels, ponds, reservoirs, dams, and impoundments), permanently installed machinery, and facilities for washing, processing, or packing) or for smallholder farms for the purpose of planting food crops;
 - ii. Applicable law is complied with.
- h) When the applicable law is stricter than the standard, the law applies. When the standard is stricter than the law and it does not contradict it, then the standard applies. When the interpretation of applicable law poses a challenge in terms of complying with the respective criteria of the 2017 Standard, the Rainforest Alliance will analyze each specific situation and communicate the corresponding decision.
- i) Rainforest Alliance reserves the right and holds the authority to analyze and define the interpretation of this document and decide on unforeseen cases. Furthermore, Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to modify the content of this document and other Rainforest Alliance standards or policy documents at any time, which will be communicated by CBs and will be available at www.rainforest-alliance.org.

1.1 Rules for group administrators

- a) The minimum number of member farms of a group administrator is two member farms.
- b) All member farms of a group administrator shall be located within the same country.
- c) A member farm shall not belong to two certified groups simultaneously.
- d) The group administrator is responsible for trading and commercializing the products covered in the scope of the certificate, unless it decides to delegate the responsibility for validating their claims in the Rainforest Alliance traceability systems to third parties.
- e) If a member farm wishes to sell certified product individually, it shall have a written agreement with the group administrator who shall keep register of each individual transaction, indicating the volume of certified product sold individually by members.
- f) The group administrator is responsible for ensuring that all member farms covered by the Rainforest Alliance certificate scope comply with the Rainforest Alliance Standard

³Cattle: Domesticated animals of the family Bovidae, including the species *Bos taurus* and *B. taurus indicus* (zebu), or crosses of these two, as well as buffalo breeds (*Bubalus bubalis*), that are raised for meat or dairy production.

Performance Criteria and Rules for Single Farms (Section 7.1) of the performance level corresponding to the organization's year in the Rainforest Alliance performance system.

2. Rights

The audited or certified organizations may apply the following rights:

- a) Obtain an answer to any question relating to interpretation of the 2017 Standard, 2017 Rainforest Alliance Lists for Pesticide Management (Lists of Prohibited and Risk Mitigation Use Pesticides), and this 2017 Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules document.
- b) Get the updated versions of Rainforest Alliance standards and policy documents from their CB.
- c) Receive an audit report within the 40 calendar days following the audit closing meeting.
- d) Submit a complaint related to the service provided by a CB.
- e) Appeal a certification decision made by a CB.
- f) Start being a client of a different CB, under the condition that the organization does not have open nonconformities on critical criteria, is suspended, cancelled or is going through an investigation audit.
- g) Request for rescheduling an unannounced surveillance, investigation, shadow or review audit once. Valid reasons for requesting the rescheduling include force majeure conditions⁴ and when the organization's representatives responsible for assuring compliance with the 2017 Standard can proof previously acquired commitments with supporting evidence.
- h) Request the cancellation of its certificate at any moment.
- i) Commercialize with Rainforest Alliance Certified claims all the product volume harvested after the starting date of the audit that led to a positive certification decision. In the case of crops with harvest seasons shorter than five weeks, the whole volume harvested during harvest season may be commercialized, regardless of the audit dates.
- j) When a certified organization needs additional product volume for the next harvest season which has not yet been approved through an audit process, a 50% of the volume may be authorized, but only after the certified organization submits or updates the online application form to confirm an audit will be scheduled. Otherwise, the certified organization can schedule their audit prior to their due date in order to carry out sales transactions for the new harvest.

3. Obligations

All certified organizations accept the following obligations:

- a) Submit a complete application, using the Rainforest Alliance Client Application, with truthful, accurate, updated information to a CB that is accredited to operate in the region where the

⁴ Extraordinary event or circumstance that is beyond the organization's control, and that prevents it from complying with these Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules. This includes risks beyond the control of the organization, incurred not as a product or result of negligence or malfeasance.

organization is located. In the case of groups, this includes the Group Member List template. The certified organization should contact the CB to program a certification audit, at least 120 days before the anniversary date of the certificate in order to successfully complete the respective audit process on time.

- b) Inform the CB of any significant change in its management system, size, composition, production activities, productivity or its infrastructure, and update the information on the Rainforest Alliance Application template accordingly. The certified organization shall notify the CB when it adds new area or member farms to its scope.
- c) Keep its buyers and other commercial partners timely informed of any events that may jeopardize their certification status.
- d) Sign a certification agreement with the CB.
- e) Not sell more product volume than the harvested product volume while holding a valid certificate.
- f) Obtain Transaction Certificates (TCs) in the Rainforest Alliance traceability system for all crops determined in the Certificate Scope.
- g) Authorize the Rainforest Alliance and the CB to publish audit report public summaries that include the description of nonconformities.
- h) Authorize the Rainforest Alliance and its partners to use data associated with the audit process for analyses and reporting about the Rainforest Alliance certification program, provided that these do not disclose information about applicants or certificate holders.
- i) Pay the required costs associated with any type of audit.
- j) In the case of group administrators submit an electronic list with truthful, accurate, updated information about all member farms within the Rainforest Alliance certificate scope using the Rainforest Alliance Group Member List template.
- k) Ensure that the audit team has access to all relevant documentation and to the whole area within the audit scope, including leased lands and infrastructure, and that it has the right to interview workers and people living on the farm, as well as members of neighboring communities without the presence of field supervisors, the farm management or group administrator or their representatives.
- l) Allow and cooperate with unannounced surveillance audits and investigation audits carried out by the CB, by the Rainforest Alliance or any organization acting on their behalf.
- m) Request and receive authorization from the Rainforest Alliance prior to using any Rainforest Alliance trademarks, including the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal.
- n) In the event it disputes a certification decision or related matter, it must follow the appeal process as indicated herein prior to initiating any other remedies such as a legal actions including lawsuit, injunction, request for declaratory relief or other claim or legal action against the Rainforest Alliance.

4. Audit Scope

- a) Applicable criteria of the 2017 Standard will be evaluated at individual farms as well as on each of the group administrator's member farms that form part of the audit sample, in the

case of group administrators. Principle 5 of the 2017 Standard only applies to organizations requesting the cattle scope in their application. Audited organizations shall demonstrate compliance with applicable criteria as of the date they applied for the first certification audit.

- b) Level B and/or level A continuous improvement criteria will only be audited during the first certification audit, if specifically requested by the organization. Level A continuous improvement criteria will only be audited during the second certification audit, if specifically requested by the organization.
- c) Leased portions of land inside certified farms shall comply, at least, with Rainforest Alliance zero-tolerance critical criteria.
- d) Organizations leasing land and seeking Rainforest Alliance certification shall be able to implement changes that allow them to comply with the 2017 Standard and its Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3), when they are located inside a non-certified farm.
- e) Providers of services carrying out activities subject to the 2017 Standard⁵ on behalf of the audited organization.

4.1 Single farms

In this model, one certificate is granted to one single farm.

- a) The whole area and activities within the farm's limits are covered by the audit scope. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Areas destined for agricultural and cattle production, with focus on products intended to be sold with Rainforest Alliance Certified claims.
 - ii. HCV areas, forests and other natural ecosystems, as well as fallow land.
 - iii. Areas involving human activity and other infrastructure within its limits that include but are not restricted to administrative infrastructure, collection points, processing and packing units and storage facilities.
 - iv. Leased areas inside the farm.
 - v. Farm personnel, including all contracted and subcontracted workers, supervisory and administrative staff, and management and owner representatives.
 - vi. People who live temporarily or permanently on the farm.
 - vii. All documentation relating to social, agronomic and environmental management and considered relevant to determining compliance with the 2017 Standard.
 - viii. Documentation related to trading of the certified and non-certified⁵ product handled by the farm.
- b) Infrastructure owned or leased outside the farm limits but which is directly related to activities included in the audit scope. This may include, but is not limited to administrative infrastructure, collection points, processing and packing units and storage facilities.

⁵ See the Rainforest Alliance Chain of Custody Policy for certification rules with respect to the Rainforest Alliance Chain of Custody Standard.

- c) Residents of surrounding communities who are or may be directly affected by the farm’s activities.

4.2 Group administrators

In this model, one certificate is granted to an organization, called the ‘Group Administrator’, who acts on behalf of a group of farms and is responsible for their compliance with the 2017 Standard. The Group Administrator is responsible for implementing an Internal Management System (IMS), including but not limited to coordinating the commercialization of product, training and technical assistance for staff and group members, as well as internal inspections and the corresponding follow-up actions in addition to improvement actions for closing nonconformities detected during external audits.

Group administrators fit three basic models:

- i. Multi-site, where a single legal entity owns or holds more than one discrete farm or site with separate production management system, but under one IMS of the group administrator;
- ii. Groups that have a democratic structure, such as cooperatives, associations and federations; and
- iii. Private entities, such as plantations with associated product suppliers, exporters or a consultant’s office.

The audit scope of a group administrator includes the following:

- a) Infrastructure owned or administered by the group administrator, related to the production activity in the scope. This includes but is not limited to roads, housing, administration, collection, storage, processing and packing infrastructure, as well as their surroundings.
- b) All personnel hired or subcontracted by the group administrator.
- c) All documentation relating to the IMS.
- d) Documentation related to trading of the certified and non-certified product handled by the group administrator.
- e) Member farms are subject to the farm audit scope as described in section 4.1.

5. The 2017 Standard Performance System

There are two types of criteria in the 2017 Standard – critical and continuous improvement criteria. Each criterion is evaluated as follows:

Conformity Status	Conditions
Conformity	The audited organization meets all the criterion’s provisions.
Nonconformity (NC)	The audited organization does not meet <u>or only partially meets</u> the provisions of the criterion.
Not Applicable (N/A)	The subject of evaluation is not present within the audit scope.

5.1 Critical criteria

Critical criteria cover the highest-priority and highest-risk environmental, social and labor issues. Farms and group administrators are required to comply with all applicable critical criteria at all time as a condition to grant or maintain the certificate.

5.1.1 Zero-tolerance critical criteria

The Rainforest Alliance recognizes the following five ‘zero-tolerance’ critical criteria. Failing to comply with any of these results in the denial or the immediate cancellation of the certificate, without prior suspension:

- a) Criterion 2.1 – No destruction of High Conservation Value areas after November 2005
- b) Criterion 4.1 – No forced labor
- c) Criterion 4.2 – No mistreatment of workers; no sexual harassment
- d) Criterion 4.3 – No discrimination
- e) Criterion 4.6 – No worst forms of child labor

5.2 Continuous improvement criteria

- a) The 2017 Standard contains a continuous improvement system that requires farms to gradually increase their compliance over three performance levels: C, B and A. This system is based on a six-year period, and for this purpose, the first certification audit based on the 2017 Standard will be considered as ‘Year 0’.
- b) The specific binding level requirements corresponding to the organization’s year the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3), will not change under any condition, including suspension or cancellation of a certificate, modification of scope or the change of a CB.

6. Audits

6.1 General rules

- a) On the application, the organization may voluntarily request to be audited against the continuous improvement criteria of a higher performance level. However, the audited organization will achieve certification, or remain certified, if it does not meet the requirements for the higher level but still complies with the requirements of the level it is supposed to be, as outlined in Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3.
- b) In the case of certification or surveillance audits, an audited organization may demonstrate compliance with any open nonconformities before the final report is issued. The option to close nonconformities before the final report is issued may not apply where the nonconformities relate to zero tolerance critical criteria and the Rainforest Alliance and/or the certification body, in their sole opinion, judge that an immediate certificate cancellation is necessary.

- i. The period for closing nonconformities may be up to 60 calendar days, in the case of highly perishable products, such as fruits, cut flowers and vegetables⁶, and up to 30 calendar days for all other crops.
- ii. Nonconformities may be closed remotely only if documentary evidence is sufficient. Otherwise, a field visit is necessary.
- iii. In the case of investigation audits, only five calendar days are allowed, and exclusively for nonconformities that may be closed through documentation.
- iv. The CB may charge for additional costs of this process.

6.2 Certification Audit

- a) A certification audit is carried out when the organization applies for Rainforest Alliance certification for the first time, and then every three years, or after a certificate cancellation to establish the level of conformity of the organization with all applicable 2017 Standard's criteria.
- b) Organizations have to comply with the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3) for the respective year of the certification audit in the Rainforest Alliance certification system for the 2017 Standard.
- c) Certification audits shall always take place on site, during a period of activity when workers, crop plants and/or cattle are present.

6.3 Verification audit

- b) If the organization does not comply with the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3) for the respective year in the certification system, it shall be subject to a verification audit that shall be concluded with its respective certification decision within 120 calendar days after having received the previous certification decision. The certificate is suspended until Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3 are complied with.
- c) The objectives of a verification audit are:
 - i. To control whether open nonconformities that prevented a positive certification decision were addressed, can be closed, and the certificate may be issued or maintained; and
 - ii. To determine whether the organization has reached the minimum performance level of the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3) corresponding to its year in the Rainforest Alliance performance system, and the certificate may be issued or maintained.
 - iii. To assess compliance with any other relevant critical criterion that may be directly or indirectly related to the open nonconformity(ies).
- d) If during a verification audit, an audited organization does not comply with the Sections 7.2 or 7.3, the certificate is not issued or is cancelled. This audited organization shall then be subject of a certification audit to reinstate its certificate.

⁶ The CB should send the audited organization the list of open nonconformities that must be addressed to achieve or maintain certification, within the first week after the audit closing meeting. The next six weeks should be used by the audited organization to close the nonconformities and by the CB to check conformity. The last week should be used by the CB to finish writing the audit report.

- e) Organizations with nonconformities on any of the zero-tolerance criteria are not eligible for a verification audit.
- f) A verification audit may take place remotely, when it is possible to evaluate the improvement actions through documents or remote interviews with farm management or group administrator representatives.
- g) For verification audits following a scope expansion audit for group administrators, the certificate holder may decide to remove some or all the recently added member farms before the audit takes place.
- h) Verification audits are not allowed after investigation audits that resulted in a negative certification decision.

6.4 Surveillance audit

- a) In order to maintain its certified status, the certified organization shall pass two surveillance audits after a certification audit.
- b) Surveillance audits take place after a certification or a previous surveillance audit. The certified organization shall undergo two surveillance audits, that must take place within the following timeframes, counting from the date the audit that led to a positive certification decision started:
 - i. First surveillance audit: between 9 to 18 months;
 - ii. Second surveillance audit: between 21 to 30 months;
- c) Organizations have to comply with the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3) for the respective year of the surveillance audit in the Rainforest Alliance certification system for the 2017 standard.
- d) The objectives of the surveillance audits are:
 - i. To ensure the certified organization complies with all applicable critical criteria;
 - ii. To determine whether the organization has implemented the improvement actions for continuous improvement criteria according to Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3.
 - iii. To evaluate farms' or group administrators' activities that were not taking place in the certified organization during previous audits.
- e) In the case of farms or group administrators cultivating seasonal crops, at least one surveillance audit shall take place during the harvest season, and one during non-harvest season.
- f) Farms and group administrators are subject to unannounced or short-noticed surveillance audits at any time. The CB may inform the certified organization about unannounced or short-noticed surveillance audits with no more than two working days in advance, with the exception of group administrators of smallholder members, for which up to five working days in advance apply.

6.5 Investigation audit

- a) Investigation audits are carried out in response to a complaint, reported incident, or substantial information regarding the performance of a certified organization relating to one or more critical criteria of the 2017 Standard.
- b) An investigation audit may be carried out at any time, when the CB or the Rainforest Alliance determines there is sufficient evidence of a potential nonconformity. Upon request from the CB, Rainforest Alliance may authorize that an investigation audit is replaced by a certification or surveillance audit, if these are already programmed within two months from the date the complaint was received.
- c) Investigation audits are unannounced. However, the certified organization may be given advanced warning (no more than two working days), when doing so can avoid significant logistical obstacles and the issue at hand cannot be influenced by an advanced warning.
- d) The certified organization may be subject to a desk investigation audit only if it is possible to demonstrate conformity through documents.
- e) Should the complaint that led to an investigation be confirmed, the audited organization will cover the costs of these audits. Otherwise, the CB will cover the cost of the audit.
- f) Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to carry out investigation audits by itself when deemed necessary.

6.6 Scope expansion audit

- a) The objective of a scope expansion audit is to assess compliance with the Rainforest Alliance Certification Rules for new areas, activities or member farms that a certified organization wishes to add to its scope before a certification or surveillance audit.
- b) All applicable criteria of the 2017 Standard are evaluated for the new areas or for a sample of new member farms (in the case of group administrators), as well as for new crops or cattle species.

7. Obtaining the certificate

7.1 General rules

- a) Organizations wishing to achieve certification or certified organizations that are due a certification audit shall submit an application to an accredited CB.
- b) At 'Year 0', and every three years from then, the organization shall be subject to a certification audit.
- c) The CB will issue a certificate to the audited organization once Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3 have been complied with.

7.2 Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules for single farms

- a) In order to pass a certification or surveillance audit, farms shall fully comply with
 - i. All applicable critical criteria; and
 - ii. With the Rainforest Alliance Compliance Rules for Continuous Improvement Criteria corresponding to its year in the Rainforest Alliance performance system, according to the following table.

Year	Minimum Compliance Percentage per Level and Year
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	Level C	Level B	Level A
Year 0	50%	-	-
Year 1	65%	-	-
Year 2	80%	-	-
Year 3	100%	50%	-
Year 4	100%	65%	-
Year 5	100%	80%	-
Year 6	100%	100%	50%

- b) If the minimum compliance percentages of Level C or B criteria for Years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 are not achieved, the audited organization shall be subject to a verification audit to proof compliance with these minimum compliance percentages.
- c) After having achieved the 100% minimum compliance percentage level for Level C (year 3 onwards) or B criteria (year 6 onwards), a maximum of 10% of non-conformities on level C or B criteria is allowed on any audit, under the condition that these non-conformities be closed by the next surveillance or certification audit.

7.3 Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules for group administrators

- a) Section 7.2 also applies for the applicable criteria of the 2017 Standard for the group administrator's audit scope as determined in Section 4.2 a), b), c) and d).
- b) Section 7.2 applies for all member farms of the audit sample (see Audit Scope Section 4.2.e)). All member farms shall always comply with all applicable critical criteria.
- c) Only in the case of group administrators with smallholder⁷ members, a maximum of 20% of the audited sample may fail on the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules for Level C or Level B continuous improvement criteria as determined in Section 7.2. These non-complying group members form part of the respective audit sample of the next surveillance or certification audit and non-conformities shall be closed by this next surveillance or certification audit.
- d) During surveillance audits to group administrators, at least 30% of the sample of member farms will be selected during the opening meeting.

7.4 Validity of the certificate

- a) The certificate has a 36-month validity, starting with the date of issue.
- b) The expiry date of the certificate is fixed, but the validity of the certificate may be extended in the following cases, without modification to the original certificate issue date:
 - i. Up to a maximum of six months in the event of a force majeure condition.
 - ii. Up to a maximum of three months, when the organization is going through an appeal process, when the certification decision was to cancel the certificate.

⁷ A producer who primarily relies on family or household labor, or reciprocal workforce exchange with other members of the community

8. Modifying the scope of the certificate

- a) The certified organization may request to change the certificate scope at any time in order to increase or reduce the production area, or increase or reduce the number or composition of member farms.
- b) Certified organizations requesting to include new crop activities or new cattle species within the scope of a certificate, or requesting to increase the available product volume beyond 25% of what was assigned in the most recent audit, shall be subject to a scope expansion audit.
- c) Maximum once per year, a certified organization may increase its certificate scope of production area or number of member farms by up to 10%, add up to 10% of new member farms, or add one member farm, without being subject to a scope expansion audit, certification audit or surveillance audit. If the increase in area or number of member farms exceeds 10%, or if the group has more than 10% of new member farms, then the certified organization shall be subject to a scope expansion audit (see Section 6.6).
- d) The certified organization may decide to increase its scope through a certification audit or surveillance audit, which shall include an evaluation of all applicable criteria of the 2017 Standard for these new areas or this sample of new member farms (in the case of group administrators), as well as for new crops or cattle species. If this is the case, clause 3.b) shall be complied with, and a scope expansion audit is not necessary.
- e) Modifications to the scope of the certificate will not change the expiration date of the certificate or the organization's year and compliance level with respect to the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules (Section 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3).

9. Incentives

- a) Group administrators and single farms complying with the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules of Sections 7.2.a) and 7.3.a) and b) of year three, or higher, by the time of their first certification audit, or those of the year six by the time of their second certification audit respectively are subject to the following benefit:
 - i. The next surveillance audit may be off-site without auditors visiting the individual farm or group administrator's members' farms. The group administrator or single farm will still be subject to one unannounced surveillance audit within 27 months after the previous certification audit.
- b) Group administrators complying with the Rainforest Alliance Standard Performance Criteria and Rules of Sections 7.2.a) and 7.3.a) and b) of year three, or higher, by the time of their first certification audit, or those of the year six by the time of their second certification audit respectively are additionally subject to the following benefits:
 - i. The size of the audit sample of the group administrator's next surveillance audit will be reduced by 50%.
 - ii. Increase the group administrator's scope of new member farms up to 25% without the need of a scope expansion audit.

10. Sanctions

10.1 Suspension

10.1.1 Conditions

The CB will suspend the certificate of an organization when the certified organization:

- a) Does not fulfill one or more of its obligations, as described in Section 3.
- b) Does not comply with sections 7.2 or 7.3 during certification, surveillance or scope expansion audits.
- c) Not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CB that lead to suspension.
- d) When a surveillance audit is not carried out within the timeframes determined in Section 6.4.b).
- e) The CB or Rainforest Alliance may also decide to suspend a certificate holder's certificate before or at any point during an investigation audit process, if there is enough evidence of a potential nonconformity.

10.1.2 Consequences

- a) The suspension will last up to a maximum of 120 calendar days.
- b) From the moment the CB notifies the organization about the suspension, the organization shall not sell products with Rainforest Alliance Certified claims. Should the certificate be reinstated, the organization is allowed to sell as certified all the product in stock that was harvested during the suspension period subject to an inventory verification by the CB. All verification costs shall be covered by the organization.

10.2 Cancellation

10.2.1 Conditions

The CB will deny or cancel the certificate of an organization in the following cases:

- a) When the organization does not comply with one or more zero-tolerance critical criteria.
- b) When the organization did not comply with the verification audit rules of Section 6.3.
- c) If a suspension is not lifted within 120 calendar days.
- d) When the organization rejects an unannounced audit for the second time.
- e) Not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CB leading to cancellation.
- f) When the certified organization voluntarily requests the cancellation of its certificate.
- g) When the certification audit of a certified organization was not carried out while the certificate was valid.
- h) Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to request the CB to suspend or cancel a certificate, when a case involving one or more critical criteria has been proven in a court, or when a case can potentially cause significant harm to the reputation of Rainforest Alliance.

10.2.2 Consequences

- a) The cancellation is valid starting with the date of the CB's communication about the certificates cancellation to the organization of a certificate and lasts:

- i. One year in the case of non-compliance with zero-tolerance critical criteria;
 - ii. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the Rainforest Alliance or the CB, the organization exerted coercion or made any form of implicit or explicit threats to the moral or physical integrity or the life of any members of the CB auditing team or staff, through the employees of the organization, or people under its influence or orders;
 - iii. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the Rainforest Alliance or the CB, the organization participated in illegal, fraudulent or unethical activities that could discredit the certification program.
- b) Organizations whose certificate was cancelled due to non-compliance with non zero-tolerance critical criteria after a verification audit and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
- c) Organizations who voluntarily requested the cancellation of their certificate and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
- d) From the moment the CB notifies the certified organization about a certificate cancellation, the organization is not authorized to sell product with certified claims with the only exceptions of
 - i. Organizations subject to an appeal process (see Section 12); or
 - ii. Organizations whose certificate was voluntarily cancelled. In this case, organizations will be permitted to sell off all stored certified product within a maximum sell-off period of six months, period subject to an inventory verification by the CB. These verification costs shall be covered by the organization.

11. Appeals

- a) Once during the 36-month validity of the certificate, certificate holders may appeal a certification decision of a CB within five business days after the CB communicated such decision, except for decisions resulting from verification audits.
- b) Decisions of verification audits may only be appealed, in the case of new nonconformities detected during a verification audit. In this case, appeals are restricted to these newly detected nonconformities. Organizations are not permitted to request another verification audit for these newly detected nonconformities.
- c) The scope of appeals shall be restricted to any combination of the following:
 - i. Interpretation of the standard criteria based on the evidence available during the audit;
 - ii. Evaluation of relevant evidence that the audited operation believes the audit team intentionally or unintentionally did not consider during the audit; or
 - iii. Possible infractions or violations of the requirements in this document, CB audit and certification procedures, or conflicts of interest or other ethical issues on the part of the audit team or CB.

- d) Audited operations can submit additional evidence during the appeals process if the audit team had access to this evidence during the audit process. Additional evidence of compliance that was not available during the audit, or that was the result of improvements made since the audit, cannot be considered as part of an appeal.
- e) Organizations maintain their pre-decision certification status during an appeal process.
- f) Organizations are permitted to continue selling certified product during an appeal process, with exception of organizations that have open nonconformities on zero-tolerance critical criteria, or on any of the following critical criteria: 1.2 (traceability), 1.3 (traceability), 3.4 (prohibited pesticides), or 3.6 (GM crops).
- g) An organization may only appeal the cancellation decision with the Rainforest Alliance as a last resort, and only after the CB has communicated the final decision regarding the appeal. Decisions from Rainforest Alliance are final and may not be appealed further.
- h) Certification decisions about audit processes carried out directly by Rainforest Alliance cannot be appealed.

12. Reinstatement of the certificate

- a) In order to reinstate a certificate that was cancelled, the organization shall submit an application for a certification or surveillance audit.
- b) An organization whose certificate was cancelled, shall comply by the new certification audit with the performance rules corresponding to the compliance year when they were cancelled, as described in Sections 7.1 and 7.2 or 7.3.
- c) In addition to the requirements described in Sections 7, organizations whose certificate was cancelled due to nonconformities relating to minor destruction of natural ecosystems (Critical Criterion 2.2) shall comply with Section 13.1. Organizations whose certificate was cancelled due to nonconformities relating to worst forms of child labor (Critical Criterion 4.6), shall comply with Section 13.2.

12.1 Compensation for unannounced minor destruction of natural ecosystems

- a) Minor destruction of natural ecosystems - but never for HCV areas - that have inadvertently been conducted by a certified farm manager or member farm of a certified group administrator or certified group administrator is permitted only under the following conditions:
 - i. The destruction event is the first one during the organization's Rainforest Alliance certification history;
 - ii. The converted area is located outside of HCV areas, protected areas, or land that is illegal to convert;
 - iii. A plan with objectives, quantitative targets and parameters, time-bound management actions, resources and responsible personnel for the required restoration is prepared by an ecological restoration specialist and submitted for approval to the Rainforest Alliance within three months of the date of destruction, including the following requirements:

- A. The destruction is mitigated through restoration in the or close to the converted area or by setting-aside for conservation at least a 1:1 ratio of ecologically comparable areas;
- B. The converted natural ecosystem area is taken out of agricultural production and designated with the aim to restore the area to its former natural condition;
- C. On larger farms, destruction of natural ecosystems of up to 2% of the farm area or 50 hectares (whichever is less) is only permitted if such destruction is compensated by at least a 1:1 ratio of ecologically comparable areas, as specified in a time-bound plan prepared by a qualified professional and approved by the Rainforest Alliance or its representative;
- D. Destruction of up to 10% of the farm area or 1 hectare (whichever is less) is permitted without the need for compensation. In the case of smallholder groups, these thresholds apply at the level of each member farm.

12.2 Child labor remediation

- a) The farm management or group administrator that removed a child laborer⁸ from his or her job after having received a non-conformity for critical criterion 4.6 of the 2017 Standard shall prove to the CB that it conducted the following remedial actions for the child and his or her family:
 - i. Timely access to medical services;
 - ii. Timely access to psychological and rehabilitative services, as indicated by the child's condition;
 - iii. Facilitation of the child's entrance and integration into local school until the legally permitted school-leaving age; and
 - iv. Hiring of the child's immediate or extended family member, if available. If no such family member is available for hiring, the farm management or group administrator pays the child's family a wage support no less than the removed child's wages until the child reaches the legal school-leaving age or age 15.

⁸ Child engaged in hazardous child labor, or working with an age of less than 15 years on commercial farms or group administrators. Non-hazardous activities of young workers on smallholder farms are excluded.