

WHAT'S IN OUR 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

Making farming part of the solution



Photo: David Dudenhoefer

Our vision is a world where people and nature thrive in harmony. This vision is more important than ever as the 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report estimates that around 1 million animal and plant species face extinction, many within decades, unless action is taken to reduce biodiversity loss. The main cause of this devastating loss of species is human activity, particularly from agriculture. The World Wildlife Fund estimates that habitat degradation and loss is the main driver of extinction for most species around the world—more than pollution, climate change, or exploitation.

While farming often has negative impacts on biodiversity, it also has the potential to create positive impacts by incorporating natural habitat into production systems, conserving soil life, and more. This makes farms better able to cope with the effects of climate change, helping secure better livelihoods for farmers. For these reasons, biodiversity conservation is among the main objectives of the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program.

HOW THE NEW STANDARD ADDRESSES IT

Our approach aims to make biodiversity a fundamental principle of all aspects of farming and environmental protection. This is why biodiversity conservation is woven throughout the new Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard. Several criteria in the management, farming, and environmental chapters aim at both preventing negative impacts from farming on biodiversity as well as fostering positive ones.

The conservation of existing natural ecosystems areas is key to this mission. Besides not allowing for conversion of any natural ecosystems since 2014, we have also put an additional safeguard on High Conservation Value (HCV) areas in the new standard. These are areas of outstanding biological, ecological, social, or cultural significance. Within our new program, HCVs are identified according to a risk-based approach, where, depending on the farm's risk level, different actions need to be taken. For example, if a Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farm is identified to be in or near a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), then specific management actions will be required to protect the

KBA's associated conservation feature such as important animal and plant life.

Various requirements in the new standard aim to maximize the positive impact and minimize the negative impact of production on biodiversity:

- Maintaining and increasing the diversity of native vegetation through practices like agroforestry (a practice of nurturing existing trees and planting new ones side by side with crops) and establishing wildlife corridors.
- Taking steps to diversify the type of crops and vegetation grown on the farm and support functional biodiversity (i.e. pollinators and natural predators of pests) through an Integrated Pest Management strategy.
- Supporting the protection of endangered species and other native flora and fauna by prohibiting hunting, minimizing the spread of invasive species, and taking steps to minimize human-wildlife conflict.
- Minimizing negative impacts from farming by improving soil health through mechanisms like erosion control and increasing soil organic matter.

In line with our reimagining of certification, we will harness the power of data to strengthen assurance on these criteria—satellite imagery will help us check for deforestation, data collected by producers will enable us to evaluate native vegetation cover, and more. Producers that demonstrate progress will also be able to communicate their results to buyers and partners through a certificate holder profile in an effort to encourage a philosophy of continuous improvement rather than a pass/fail approach.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDARDS?

The UTZ Code of Conduct and the 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard already aimed to conserve and protect biodiversity. We have strengthened this in the new stan-



Photo: Sergio Izquierdo



Photo: David Dudenhoefer

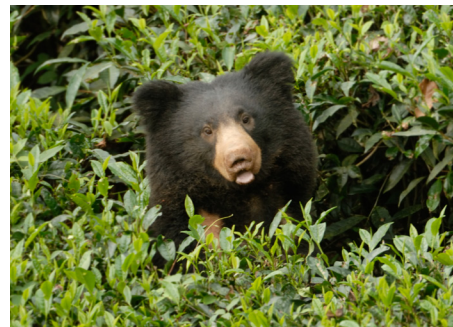


Photo: Kalyan Varma



Photo: Rainforest Alliance staff

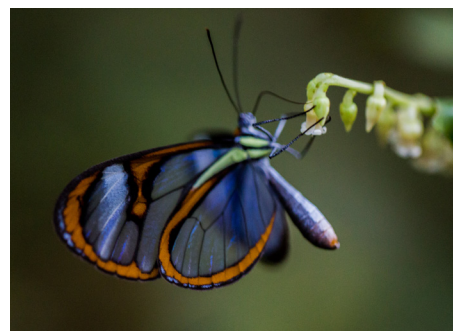


Photo: Mohsin Kazmi

dard by taking a novel, risk-based approach. In collaboration with the [HCV Resource Network](#), we developed risk questions to define the impact of farms on HCV areas. The questions are included in the overall risk assessment in Chapter 1 of the new standard. In addition, in the UTZ Code of Conduct, there are differences in requirements for minimum native vegetation, parameters of riparian buffers (vegetation areas next to aquatic ecosystems), and other particulars.

IS THIS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR CERTAIN CROPS OR COUNTRIES?

Protecting and increasing biodiversity is an issue globally, especially in Key Biodiversity Areas. In every context, taking steps to conserve biodiversity can make farms more resilient to climate change impacts and help farmers secure better livelihoods. Shade tolerant crops such as coffee and cocoa are particularly strong potential drivers of biodiversity as they work well with [agroforestry](#) practices.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Read more about [what to expect in our new certification program](#). For specific questions, email us at cs@ra.org.

REIMAGINING CERTIFICATION AND THE 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Reimagining certification is our long-term vision for the future of certification. It is part of our wider strategy at the Rainforest Alliance to drive change through our four main areas of work.

In June 2020, the Rainforest Alliance takes the first step on its journey towards “reimagining certification” with the publication of its 2020 Certification Program. We’ve been working on this new program since 2018, when the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ merged.

The 2020 Certification Program—including a new Sustainable Agriculture Standard—is a unique opportunity to really change the way that certification works and how it delivers value to the many people and businesses around the world that use it.

Between June 2020 and mid-2021, the Rainforest Alliance will roll out the new program around the world, including a comprehensive training plan. Audits against the new program will begin in mid-2021.

**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE**

United States:
125 Broad Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10004
tel: +1 (212) 677-1900
email: info@ra.org

The Netherlands:
De Ruyterkade 6
1013 AA, Amsterdam
tel: +31 20 530 8000
email: info@utz.org



Rainforest Alliance
[@RnfrstAlliance](https://www.instagram.com/RnfrstAlliance)
[@rainforestalliance](https://www.instagram.com/rainforestalliance)

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