



REIMAGINING CERTIFICATION

Driving continuous improvement for deeper sustainability transformation



Connecting farmers and forest communities who are investing in sustainability to companies committed to responsible sourcing and consumers seeking to make better choices: this is where the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ both began their journeys decades ago. Today, as a newly merged organization, we are building on decades of experience to unify our agricultural certification programs, which touch millions of farmers, thousands of companies, and consumers in more than 130 countries around the world.

Yet the sectors and landscapes we work in have changed dramatically since we began. After decades of working with and learning from our partners, from the field to the boardroom, we believe that we must reimagine certification to effectively meet the urgent environmental and social challenges facing our world today.

FROM “DIPLOMA” TO “SMART METER”

We now understand sustainability to be a journey of continuous improvement—and to achieve meaningful, lasting change, we must provide guidance and support every step of the way. Eliminating harmful practices is a good starting point, but there is always further to go. In an era of climate crisis, avoiding deforestation is a crucial step, but the restoration and/or reforestation of degraded landscapes are the ultimate destination. By the same token, achieving minimum wage is not the end goal, but rather a milestone on the trajectory toward a living wage.

Reimagining certification means shifting away from the idea that it is a diploma of compliance indicating whether a farm has met a certain set of requirements. We’re designing our new system to incentivize a consistent flow of information, allowing frontrunners to share their successes, and those in the early stages of their sustainability journey to learn from them. In this system, certification serves as a “smart meter” that helps producers and companies set sustainability goals and measure progress, shines a light on farming practices and supply chains, and brings stakeholders together on a shared journey of improvement.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF DATA

Progress on sustainability depends on reliable, real-time information. For this reason, we’re putting data and technology at the heart of our new certification system. For farmers, this means gaining access to information and tools that can help them improve their business. Audits will become more effective and efficient when auditors can access digital records and use geospatial technology. Companies will be able to access valuable insights into sustainability performance and risk in their supply chains, helping them to target investment and communicate more clearly about their impact.

Better information will also make our system more responsive to significant differences in the various regions where we work. A large coffee estate in Brazil faces an entirely different set of challenges than a smallholder cocoa farm in Cote d’Ivoire, for example. In order to drive improvement and ensure that certification is more useful for all of the producers we work with, we will integrate a two-way stream of information to different contexts.

STRENGTHENING ASSURANCE

To ensure our certification system can meet future challenges, we must invest in innovation for tools and processes used to check that the requirements of our standards have been met. Our new system will enhance traditional approaches, such as

The Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program is the first step on our journey towards reimagining certification.

audits and training for certification bodies; it will also harness new technology to capture data that cannot be easily detected in a single auditor's visit, making the auditing and assurance processes more effective.

It's important to note, however, that no system can monitor a

farm 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. For this reason, we are moving towards a more risk-responsive approach, adopting an 'assess and address' approach to social issues such as child labor and forced labor. This means working with farms to ensure the right set of monitoring and remediation processes are in place to support more sustainable practices all year round.

THE 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

We are working to integrate all these elements into our 2020 certification program, beginning with the publication of our new, unified standard. But this is just the beginning; our work to reimagine our entire certification system will continue over the years to come as we test new approaches and adapt to new realities on the ground. Our timeline is as follows:

June 2020 – PUBLICATION

2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard and Chain of Custody published (followed by the herbs and spices program 6 months later).

2020 – 2021 – ROLL-OUT

Focus on training development and implementation to support the new standard.

MID 2021 – LAUNCH

2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard becomes mandatory for producers. From this date, producer audits will be against the new standard.

For the latest information on the 2020 Rainforest Alliance certification program please visit www.rainforest-alliance.org/business



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