



Rainforest Alliance Priority Research Topics - January 2021

Outcome Area	Research Topic
Biodiversity Conservation	Effects of Rainforest Alliance certification on deforestation, natural ecosystem encroachment, and restoration at both the farm- and landscape-level
	Contribution of on-farm natural ecosystems to composition and structure (including connectivity) of habitats at a landscape level
	Effects of certification on the size, configuration, health, and management regime of on-farm natural ecosystems, shade cover, and other native vegetation
	Effects of certification on species assemblages (e.g., birds) on farms
Natural Resource Conservation	Aggregate effects (e.g., at watershed scale) of certification-prescribed best management practices on water quality and water flow (using modeling methodologies)
	Effects of certification on net greenhouse gas emissions of agriculture
	Effects of certification on key aspects of stream health on/around farms (erosion, sedimentation, eutrophication, agrochemical pollution, water flow regimes)
Farmer, Worker and Family Wellbeing	Roles and effectiveness of different group administrator types in promoting the success & advancement of member farmers (e.g., training, support, marketing, revenue distribution, decision-making, transparency)
	Effects of certification on worker wellbeing (e.g., wages, benefits, and health & safety) on smallholder farms . Requires documenting attributes of employment on smallholder farms.
	Effects of certification on worker wellbeing (e.g., wages, benefits, and health & safety) on med/large farms . (Also relevant to understand labor relationships & characteristics [e.g., permanent vs seasonal, contracts, worker origins, unions])
	Effects of certification on smallholder household assets and income (including income from focal crop[s], other crops, subsistence products, and other earnings)
	Effects of certification on child wellbeing and development (incl. education levels, child labor, and opportunities)
	Wellbeing and equality of, and opportunities for, women participating in Rainforest Alliance programs (certification or technical assistance)

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	The size and extent of sustainability differentials (price premiums), and the use of any such revenue
	Effects of certification on the roles & effectiveness of farmer and worker organizations and collective action
	Effects of certification on the design, implementation and effectiveness of due diligence and operational grievance mechanisms
	Effectiveness of the Assess-and-Address approach in identifying and remediating child labor, forced labor, discrimination and workplace violence/harassment
Farm Productivity and Profitability	Effects of certification on the net income / profitability of production of focal crop(s)
	Effects of certification on yield of focal crop(s) (potentially including assessment of variety, age, and regeneration status of perennial crops)
	Cost/benefit of program participation for producers (looking at investment in sustainability improvements and/or in certification)
	Effects of certification on product quality
	Effects of certification on efficient or optimal use of farm inputs
	Roles & effects of female participation in smallholder agriculture on farm productivity, quality, and income
Supply chain	Rates of adoption of responsible business practices related to traceability and shared responsibility along the supply chain, and the effects of that adoption
	Types of data used by supply chain actors, and the ways these data are used
	Payment of sustainability differentials and sustainability investments by supply chain actors, and drivers/blockages in different sectors or regions
Cross-cutting	Relation of certified lands to areas of high social or environmental value or risk
	Spillover effect relative to specific sets of best management practices, i.e., the effects of interventions on nearby (non-participating) properties/land managers
	Unintended consequences related to the implementation of certification or other Rainforest Alliance programs
	Changes made in preparation for certification (which are not typically captured by evaluation or impact studies)
	Level of producer satisfaction with participation in certification (or producers' experience of participation) and contribution of different factors (e.g., productivity, training/support, price, environmental quality, health) to satisfaction
	Effectiveness of training and support, i.e., the uptake of best management practices and increased farmer knowledge following training
	Effects of certification on the resilience of farms and farming households to climate change and other shocks
	Effects of certification on the quantity, type, and toxicity of applied agrochemicals, and effects on people & environment
	Rates of implementation of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, and their effects on outcomes related to the environment, worker health and farm economics

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Learning/R&D	Barriers to adoption of specific best management practices required by the Rainforest Alliance standard (e.g., improved agrochemical management; riparian zone protection, waste management)
	Key factors in farmer decision-making about shade canopy management (e.g., crop yield, pest management, wildlife conservation, and climate change resilience)
	The effectiveness of data collection and risk assessment tools in helping certificate holders plan and manage their activities
	The effectiveness of landscape interventions in fostering collaboration and preserving and restoring sustainable landscapes
	The effectiveness of corporate advisory services in improving corporate sustainability programs and actions
	The effectiveness of advocacy efforts in contributing to a positive enabling environment for sustainability in the government and corporate sectors