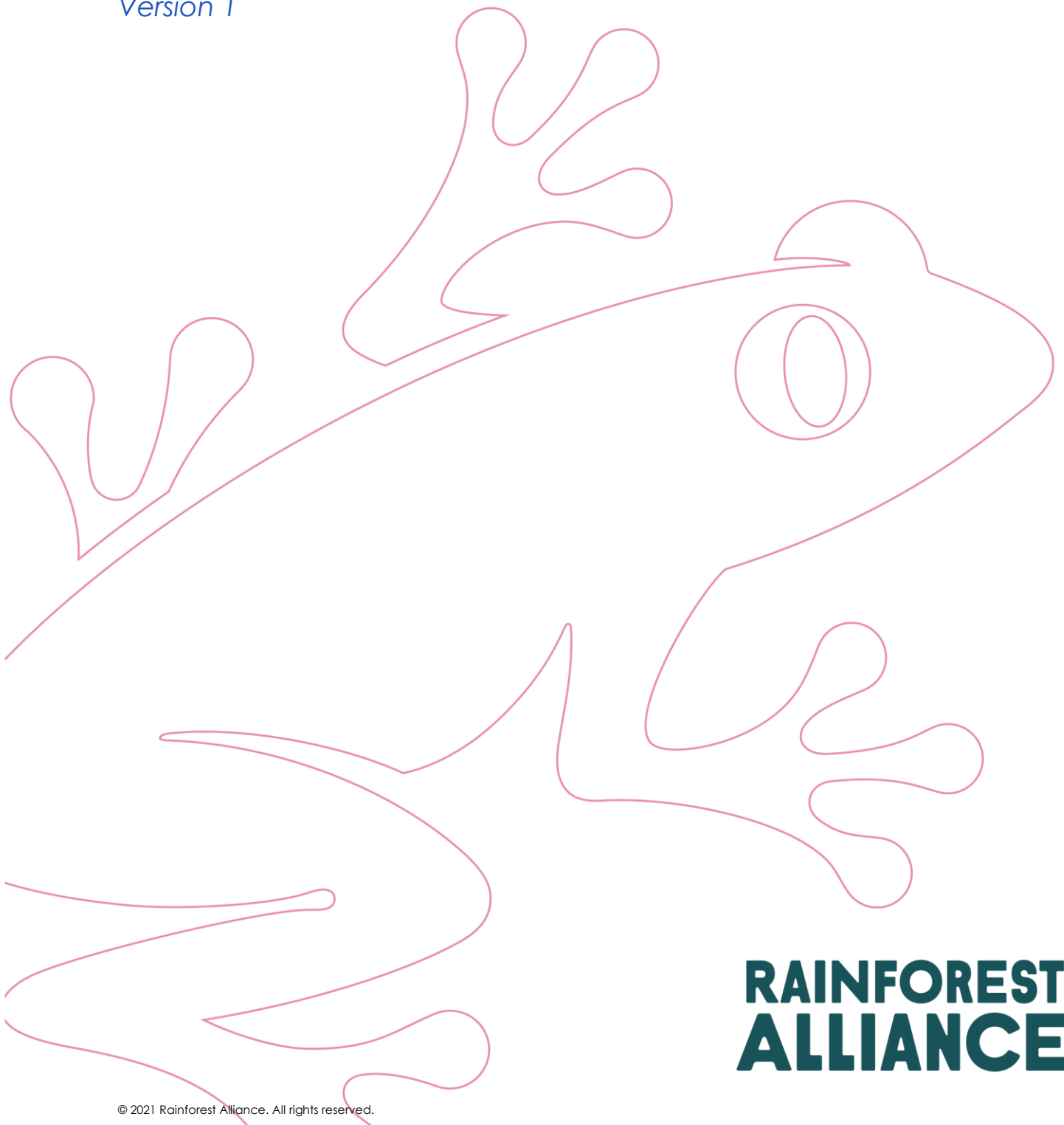


RAINFOREST ALLIANCE POLICY

For Rooibos Certification in South Africa

Version 1



**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE**



The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

Translation Disclaimer

For any question related to the precise meaning of the information contained in the translation, please refer to the official English version for clarification. Any discrepancies or differences in meaning due to translation are not binding and have no effect for auditing or certification purposes.

More information?

For more information about the Rainforest Alliance, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org, contact info@ra.org or contact the Rainforest Alliance Amsterdam Office, De Ruijterkade 6, 1013AA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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EXCEPTION POLICY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIBOS FARMS REGARDING THE CONVERSION OF INTACT FYNBOS ECOSYSTEM

1. INTRODUCTION

Rooibos farms (producers) that seek certification will need to certify under the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Programme or, if they also cultivate fruit or another crop for which they seek Rainforest Alliance certification, under the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program.

Both the UEBT 2020 Standard and the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard prohibit the conversion of intact ecosystems, from 1 January 2014 onward (UEBT indicator 1.2.1, RA (Rainforest Alliance) Requirement 6.1.1).

During the transition to the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance and 2020 Rainforest Alliance certification programs UEBT and Rainforest Alliance became aware that a number of Rooibos producers certified under the previous standards had cleared Fynbos Ecosystem after the 2014 cut-off date. To prevent these producers' exclusion from certification with the associated risk of further ecosystem conversion, and in line with the commitment of both organisations to continue to protect biodiversity, UEBT and Rainforest Alliance agreed to grant an exception to already certified Rooibos producers to remain certified and engage in rehabilitation of the cleared ecosystem.

This Exception Policy for South African Rooibos farms is applicable to rooibos producers who are currently UTZ, and Rainforest Alliance certified that have converted Intact Fynbos Ecosystem but seek to continue certification under the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Programme or the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program.

This Policy has been developed jointly by UEBT and the Rainforest Alliance with respect to the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Programme and the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program.

2. CONDITIONS FOR GRANTING THE EXCEPTION

2.1 Rooibos producers that will only certify Rooibos

Rooibos producers that are currently certified Rainforest Alliance and/or UTZ and would like to continue certifying only Rooibos, will move to the UEBT/RA Herbs and Spices Certification Program. Please consult and follow the [UEBT Exception Policy for Rooibos in South Africa](#).

2.2 Rooibos producers that will certify Rooibos and another crop eligible for Rainforest Alliance certification

Rooibos producers that are currently certified Rainforest Alliance and/or UTZ and would like to continue certifying Rooibos with another crop, such as citrus or table grapes, will move to the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program. Please follow the conditions set out in this exception policy.

- Producers that have converted intact ecosystems (i.e., fynbos) between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2021, may request an exception to Requirement 6.1.1 under the following 3 conditions:



- i. The certified farmer must prove that the land in question was legally converted. In cases where this is not the case, measures must be taken to legalize the converted area, AND
 - ii. The certified farmer must engage in rehabilitation of the area converted between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2021, AND
 - iii. From 1 January 2022, the certified farmer may make no further land conversion of intact ecosystems, legal or otherwise.
- Producers that were not UTZ or Rainforest Alliance certified in 2021 are not eligible for this exception.
- The exception and conditions apply to land that has been converted for any crop produced on the same farm, such as citrus.
- The exception and conditions apply to both owned and rented lands (including those that were converted under previous ownership).

3. EVIDENCE REQUIRED TO QUALIFY FOR THE EXCEPTION UNDER EITHER THE UEBT/RA OR 2020 RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

To qualify for this exception the producer must provide the following evidence:

3.1 Evidence required to comply with conditions for legality or legalisation of land clearance

- In case of land legally converted after 1 January 2014, evidence of legality of the conversion must be provided at the audit and submitted to the Rainforest Alliance before the 2022 certificate can be issued.
- In case of illegally converted land after 1 January 2014, evidence must be provided to commit to legalization by filing a Section 24G with the competent authority or waiting for the outcome of consultations with the competent authorities in South Africa to develop a specific process for legalization. However, if during this period no specific process for legalization is agreed upon, UEBT and Rainforest Alliance may require legalization through existing provisions.

3.2 Evidence required to comply with the condition for rehabilitation

- An approved rehabilitation plan must be in place before the 2022 certificate can be issued (see criteria below).
- The rehabilitation plan should include:
 - i. Location of the land
 - ii. Rehabilitation ambition
 - iii. Foreseen actions/measures/timelines
 - iv. Indicators to be monitored
 - v. Name and organization of the person who defined the plan.
- Rehabilitation must take place on the converted area. When not possible, the producer will be responsible to engage with government to see if there is an opportunity to rather rehabilitate an area of equivalent ha on-farm.

- The rehabilitation plan should meet the following criteria¹:
 - i. **Proportional**: the area included in the rehabilitation plan is at least equivalent in size to the area that has been converted. The ambitions set for the rehabilitation

¹ Detailed guidelines are being developed and will be made available upon request.



plan aim to restore the same ecological conditions (e.g. physical conditions, species composition, structural diversity, functionality, etc.) of the ecosystem that existed before the conversion took place, or the closest conditions possible given the results of ecological assessment;

- ii. **Equivalent:** the area included in the rehabilitation plan is in the same ecosystem as the area that has been converted. The areas are in the same ecological conditions (e.g., the areas show equivalent physical conditions, species composition, structural diversity, functionality, etc.)
 - iii. **Viable:** there are no known constraints that may limit the implementation of the rehabilitation plan in the short/medium/long-term (e.g., the ownership of the land included in the plan is not limited in time). The ambitions set are achievable given the current ecological assessment results.
 - iv. **Measurable:** the rehabilitation plan includes measurable targets and those are regularly monitored through relevant monitoring indicators and ensure that equivalence is achieved.
- The rehabilitation plan should be integrated in the Farm Management Plan that Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certificate Holders are required to develop.
 - The rehabilitation plan should include a clear implementation schedule that shows that rehabilitation will start in the first half of 2022.
 - An annual progress report on the implementation of the rehabilitation plan and the achievement of its objectives must be submitted to the Rainforest Alliance each year until the rehabilitation has been finalized.

4. PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR THE EXCEPTION UNDER THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- Inform the Rainforest Alliance via herbsandspices@ra.org that you intend to transition to the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program and that intend to apply for the exception set out in this policy.
- Upon receipt of this email, Rainforest Alliance will send you an exception request form to complete. This needs to be sent back with the following documentation:
 - i. Polygon(s) of your farm to be certified (in 1 kml file)
 - ii. Commitment to developing the rehabilitation plan
 - iii. In case land has been legally converted evidence thereof
 - iv. In case land has been illegally converted, proof of filing a Section 24G or confirmation that the preference is to wait for the current period of ongoing discussions which may affect the legalization process for the next certification year
- Rainforest Alliance will validate the information sent and inform you if your application has been successful within 5 working days.
- If successful you will need to register, and follow the certification process in the [Rainforest Alliance Certification Platform \(RACP\)](#).
- Plan your Rainforest Alliance audit with an authorized Certification Body (CB) and share your audit confirmation and dates with the Rainforest Alliance.
- Your rehabilitation plan will need to be verified by the Rainforest Alliance before a positive certification decision can be taken by the CB and a license issued.

5. PROCEDURE FOR THE EXTENSION OF CURRENT UTZ AND RA2017 CERTIFICATES

To facilitate the transition to the Rainforest Alliance 2020 program, a Certificate Holder can apply for a time extension of their current UTZ or RA2017 certificates.

In order to receive a certificate extension, the CH must first complete the **Procedure to apply for the exception under the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program** (see section 4 above).



If the application is approved, the Rainforest Alliance will send confirmation, following which the CH can apply to their current CB to extend the certificate. If the certificate has already expired, the CH can make this request directly to the Rainforest Alliance.