

ANNEX CHAPTER 6:

Environment

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Included in this document:

[S12 Additional Details on Requirements for No-Conversion](#)

[S15 Additional Details on Conservation and Restoration Areas
Outside Farm Boundaries](#)



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.

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Replaces		Applicable to
SA-S-SD-24-V1 Annex Chapter 6: Environment		Farm Certificate Holders

Annexes are binding and must be complied with for certification.

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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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.

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OVERVIEW OF KEY CHANGES

Overview of key adaptations in this document

SA-S-SD-24-V1.1 Annex Chapter 6: Environment, published on February 6th, 2023,
compared to the previous version

SA-S-SD-24-V1 Annex Chapter 6: Environment, published on July 1st, 2022

Section	Subject	Change
1	Identification of Conversion	Text corrected and clarified
3	Planned Minor Conversion for Infrastructure	Added: Clause 3.iv Prior to converting, farm or group management must obtain approval from the Rainforest Alliance. To receive approval, management submits a plan to farmcert@ra.org including the reasons, plan and polygons of the area to be converted.

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S12 ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON REQUIREMENTS FOR NO-CONVERSION

Requirement 6.1.1 sets January 1, 2014, as the cut-off date after which no deforestation or conversion may occur. Any deforestation or conversion occurring later than this date renders a given area or production unit as non-compliant with the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard and may be cause for decertification or non-certification. However, for the management of infrastructure and for minor cases of deforestation or conversion that can be remediated, some flexibility is provided as detailed below.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF CONVERSION

The Rainforest Alliance's deforestation risk maps give an indication of potential past conversion (specifically deforestation) on farms for which geodata has been provided. Rainforest Alliance risk maps are updated each time the geolocation data is updated. The risk maps are available to certificate holders on the RACP.

Farm and group managers must use the Rainforest Alliance risk maps to identify areas and producers at particular risk of non-compliance, assess the risks and take steps to manage them appropriately.

It is important to note the risk maps cannot always distinguish between conversion and forms of legitimate land use change such as:

- Forest plantations that are harvested and converted to agricultural use but do not involve conversion of natural ecosystems;
- Harvesting of shade trees that does not involve conversion of natural forests
- Tree cover loss that occurred before the 2014 cut-off date;

Farm and group managers need to investigate identified risks to determine the most appropriate management solution.

2. MINOR CONVERSION THAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED

Large Farms and individual farms

For large farms (including those certified as part of a group) and individual farms, conversion of forests or other natural ecosystems to agricultural production or other land uses that occurred after January 1st, 2014, must not comprise more than 1% of the land of the farm or more than 10 hectares (whichever is smaller). For conversion that has occurred within this threshold, farm management must develop a restoration/compensation plan showing how the conversion of forest or ecosystem will be remediated in collaboration with an ecologist. The planned restoration must be:

- **Proportional:** The area to be restored must be at least as big as the converted area. This requirement can be met by taking the converted area out of production and restoring it, or by restoring and/or providing compensatory conservation benefits on a nearby area.



- **Equivalent:** The ecosystem to be restored must be equivalent to the lost natural ecosystem in ecological value. If the value of the restored area is or will be lower than that of the converted area, then a larger area must be restored.
- **Additional:** The restoration activities must be additional to the activities planned for other reasons including compliance with the Rainforest Alliance requirements on natural vegetation.
- **Permanent:** The restoration activities must be designed in a way to ensure long-term viability, including funding, management responsibilities, and clear land designations and land rights.

The plan shall include intermediate time bound targets, clear responsibilities of activities, and a plan for monitoring at least once every three years.

Group certification

For group certification, conversion of forests or other natural ecosystems to agricultural production or other land uses that occurred after January 1st, 2014 must not comprise more than 1% of the total land of the group or more than 10 hectares (whichever is smaller). For conversion that has occurred within this threshold the group must implement measures to remediate and avoid further conversion. These measures may include:

- Establishment of a sanctioning system for group members to prevent further deforestation.
- Implementation of awareness-raising measures or training for group members.
- Development and implementation of an agroforestry plan to mitigate loss of prior conservation values by transitioning an area at least three times the converted area. The plan includes intermediate time bound targets, clear responsibilities of activities, and a plan for monitoring at least once every three years with the goal of reaching the agroforestry targets within 6 years. This plan is included in the farm management plan.
- Plan to collect polygons of farms units of all producers of medium and high risk of deforestation and encroachment to protected areas.

3. PLANNED MINOR CONVERSION FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Conversion of natural ecosystems up to 1% of the total certified land area to maintain or expand infrastructure essential for farm or processing operations may be permitted under the following conditions:

- i. Conversion may take place only for the reason of installing new farm infrastructure or repairing or modernizing existing farm infrastructure (e.g., roads or irrigation infrastructure, including pumping facilities, channels, ponds, reservoirs, dams, and impoundments), permanently installed machinery, or facilities for washing, processing, or packing.
- ii. Farm or group management documents the plan for the installation in advance, including the reason why the proposed infrastructure installation or repair cannot be carried out without converting the relevant area.
- iii. Polygons of the overall certified land as well as the converted area are collected to demonstrate that the land area to be converted is below the allowed threshold of 1%



- of total certified land. NB The 1% threshold is the cumulative total allowable area from the first date of application for certification.
- iv. Prior to converting, farm or group management must obtain approval from the Rainforest Alliance. To receive approval, management submits a plan to farmcert@ra.org including the reasons, plan and polygons of the area to be converted.
 - v. The conversion fully complies with Requirement 6.1.2 of the RA 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard.
 - vi. The conversion fully complies with applicable law.
 - vii. The conversion is consistent with any designations or recommendations regarding High Conservation Values contained in any HCV assessment(s) of the site or area.



S15 ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION AREAS OUTSIDE FARM BOUNDARIES

1. CONDITIONS FOR CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION AREA OUTSIDE THE CERTIFIED FARM BOUNDARIES

The following conditions are applicable regarding requirement 6.2.3 when it is not possible to achieve the percentage of natural vegetation on the farm without a reduction in the productive agricultural area. Producers have the option to complement the area of on-farm vegetation with conservation or restoration areas outside the farm boundaries under these conditions:

- i. Producers can have conservation or restoration areas outside the farm boundaries only if they are not able to reach the required percentage of natural vegetation on their farms.
- ii. Producers do not convert existing natural vegetation on the farm into other land uses. Conservation areas outside farm boundaries can only be used to complement existing and additional on-farm vegetation. Eternal conservation areas cannot be used to replace on-farm vegetation.
- iii. Producers can have part of the required percentage of natural vegetation on their farm and a percentage of natural vegetation as conservation area outside the farm boundaries. For instance, a producer may have 5% of natural vegetation on the farm and 5% outside the farm.
- iv. The conservation or restoration area outside the certified farm boundaries effectively provides long-term protection of that area for at least 25 years.
- v. The conservation or restoration area outside the certified farm boundaries yields additional conservation value and protection status relative to the status quo: the area is maintained or improved in terms of biodiversity value.
- vi. The conservation or restoration area outside the certified farm boundaries is in a similar ecosystem to the certified farm. For instance, if the certified farm is in an area where rainforest is the predominant ecosystem, the conservation area is located in an area in which rainforest is predominant.

2. CONDITIONS FOR THE AUDITABILITY OF CONSERVATION OR RESTORATION AREAS OUTSIDE THE CERTIFIED FARM BOUNDARIES

- i. Certificate holders provide polygon data for the conservation or restoration area(s) outside farm boundaries.
- ii. Certificate holders indicate the size (ha) of the conservation or restoration area(s) as well as the percentage this represents in relation to certified farm area.
- iii. Certificate holders show documentation demonstrating that the conservation or restoration area(s) can be provided with effective long-term protection for at least 25 years.



- iv. The auditor visits the conservation or restoration area outside farm boundaries at least once every six years. Certificate holders pay any extra costs of auditing the conservation or restoration area outside the certified farm boundaries, e.g., for auditors to travel to the conservation or restoration area(s) for verification.
- v. Certificate holders may provide drone images and/or high-resolution satellite images as evidence to show that the conservation or restoration area(s) yields additional conservation value and protection status relative to the status quo. The auditor has the authority to define whether the evidence is sufficient and whether there is a need to visit the conservation or restoration area.