Rainforest Alliance Standards Development Procedure

January 2018

1. Introduction

1.1 The Rainforest Alliance ("RA") Standards Development Procedure ("Standards Development Procedure") describes the rules of procedure for the development, the review and the revision of RA Sustainable Agricultural Standards ("Standards").

1.2 RA is a full member of ISEAL Alliance. The Standards Development Procedure is in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards v.6.0 (December 2014).

1.3 The Standards Development Procedure takes effect on 1 January 2018. RA reviews the Standards Development Procedure at least every 5 years, or before every review of a Standard, whichever is sooner.

1.4 The Standards Development Procedure is published on the RA website. RA also publishes on its website an up-to-date overview of the Standards that are being developed, reviewed or revised or that have been recently adopted.

1.5 RA welcomes feedback to the Standards Development Procedure at info@utz.org.

2. Actors

2.1 As a multi-stakeholder initiative, RA wants to ensure that participation in the standard development process reflects a balance of interests among parties involved in the certification program.

2.2 Below are listed the various actors mentioned in the Standards Development Procedure, including their function and composition.

Actor	Function in the Standard development process	Composition
RA Board	- Provides strategic direction for the organization; - Approves proposals for adding or deleting agricultural products; - Approves final versions of RA Standards.	Multi-stakeholder group that reflects diversity across backgrounds, experiences and regions.
RA Standards Committee (see also § 3)	- Approves the Terms of Reference and the Work Program for the development or revision of RA Standards; - Approves draft versions of RA Standards.	Multi-stakeholder group with representatives from Producers, Industry, NGO's, Certification Bodies.
RA Stakeholders	- Are invited to participate in the stakeholder consultation. - Can give feedback on the RA Standard development during workshops and public consultation periods.	Producers, Technical Assistants, NGO's, Processors, Traders, Retailers, Governmental institutions, Representatives of workers, communities
RA Management Team	- Approves the draft Terms of Reference and Work Program for the development or revision of RA Standards; - Approves draft versions of RA Standards, - Sets procedures for urgent revisions	RA Staff
RA Standards Team	- Coordinates, organizes and prepares the standards development	RA Staff

	- Drafts the Standard and ToR - Coordinates the SC meetings - Analyze and consolidates inputs from stakeholders - Coordinate field trials	
RA Technical experts	- Provide technical guidance and content, e.g. on social topics, climate change etc	RA Staff
Technical Working Groups (optional)	- Can be established to give technical advice or support, as a sounding board	Multi-stakeholder group of external experts, composition depending on specific needs.

3. RA Standards Committee

3.1 The RA Standards Committee ("Standards Committee") is responsible for discussing, weighing and deciding on the feedback received during the multi stakeholder consultations, and for approving draft versions of Standards. The Standards Committee may also advice on standards related documents, and on related strategic topics.

3.2 The Standards Committee consists of a minimum of 10 up to a maximum of 15 individuals (excluding non-voting ex officio member(s) with recognized expertise in standards and certification, important aspects of the RA program or specific expertise of one or more of the RA products.

3.3 Members of the Standards Committee are appointed by the RA Board ("Board") on proposal of the RA Management Team ("Management Team").

3.4 The composition of the Standards Committee represents the various stakeholders involved in the different RA programs (i.e. coffee, tea, cocoa, rooibos, bananas, hazelnuts etc). In order to ensure a balanced representation, the members of the Standards Committee are grouped into the following categories. The number of representatives for each category is binding.

Category number and name	**Number of representatives**	**Comments**
1. Producer representatives	Minimum of 2	If not a producer him- or herself then professionally, closely linked to an organization working with producers. The interests of both producer group members (smallholders) and estates must be represented.
2. Industry representative	Minimum of 2	Working for a manufacturer, processor, trader, retailer, etc.
3. NGO representative or individual expert	Minimum of 2	.
4.Certification Body representative	Minimum of 1	
5. RA staff	Maximum of 2	Non-voting ex officio member(s)

3.5 Additional to the above-mentioned categories, the following rules apply for the composition of the Standards Committee:

- At least 50% of the representatives have to come from RA origin (production) countries
- The composition of the Standards Committee strives to represent a broad range of products RA has a certification program for.

3.6 The members of the Standard Committee are appointed for a term of two years. The maximum number of terms a member of the Standard Committee can serve is three. Hence, maximum duration is six years. The possibility to serve for several terms allows for greater continuity and consistency in the Standards Committee's performance.

3.7 Standards Committee members make the following commitments and/or meets the following requirements:
- Willingness to know RA and the environment in which the organization operates;
- Ability to dedicate an appropriate amount of time to the Standards Committee;
- Attendance to Standards Committee meetings (both physical and web-based) and adequate preparation for meetings and discussions;
- Ability to listen to other points of view and go beyond individual and organizational perspectives in order to reach broad consensus on what is the best interest of the RA programs.
- The Standards Committee member's organisation/ company supports RA's mission and implementation strategy;
- Disclose participation in other activities that could cause potential conflict of interest.

3.8 The Standards Committee and RA may agree to discontinue a member's participation if any of these commitments/ requirements are not met.

3.9 The Standards Committee is informed by the Management Team about ongoing standards developments and revisions as well as specific topics linked to them.

3.10 The Standards Committee meets twice per calendar year – one meeting is a physical meeting and one meeting is usually web-based (web conference). If needed, the Standards Committee can request additional meetings. The request can be approved by the Management Team, based on resources and time available.

3.11 The Standards Committee takes decisions where possible by consensus, that is, in the absence of sustained opposition, but it does not require unanimity; where a consensus is not possible, decisions are taken by majority vote with any dissenting views noted if wished. If there is a tie vote, there is no majority, and the decision cannot be taken.

3.12 A quorum shall exist at any meeting of the Standards Committee if half plus one of the Standards Committee members are present in person or by proxy, and if there is not one stakeholder category that could reach a majority of the votes by itself. Proxies may be given by any Standards Committee member to any other Standards Committee member present at the meeting.

3.13 Standards Committee members agree to keep confidential and not to share with third parties any information they receive in their role as Standards Committee member that is reasonably to be understood as confidential, unless the disclosing Party has given its written consent. Information is not confidential if:

a) it was known to the receiving Party prior to disclosure,
b) it is or becomes publicly available through no fault of the receiving Party or
c) it is rightfully received from a third party without a duty of confidentiality.

3.14 Draft minutes of all meetings of the Standards Committee will be prepared within one month and distributed to all members for comments. Minutes will be finalized and approved by email.

3.15 Being a member of the Standards Committee is a voluntary, non-paid position. However, RA will pay for the expenses occurred for attending the physical meeting, based on the cheapest direct economy class flight and appropriate accommodation. Expense requests need to be handed in to RA within one month after the meeting, using the RA expense sheet with original receipts attached. For each meeting, a dedicated RA staff member will be made available for organizing the logistics and travel arrangements associated with the meeting, e.g. flights, visa, hotel, et cetera. Members may organize their own travel arrangements, or make use of the services provided by RA.

3.16 One or two RA staff member(s) can be appointed as ex-officio non-voting member on the Standards Committee, with a task, among others, to:
- Ensure that decisions are viable for implementation by the certification program operations (i.e. possible to align with traceability or assurance systems) and in accordance with Standard setting protocols;
- Establish the agenda of the Standards Committee meetings in consultation with the Management Team and the members of the Standards Committee;
- Facilitate the Standards Committee meetings;
- Represent the Standards Committee towards the Management Team.

4. Development

Proposal

4.1 Based on signals or requests from stakeholders, the Management Team may decide to explore possibilities for the development of a new Standard, which includes adding a new agricultural product to a Standard.

4.2 The Management Team appoints a responsible person or team among the RA staff to conduct a demand assessment. The demand assessment includes:
- overall goal of the Standard;
- analysis of who needs and will use the Standard;
- description of how the demand can be met;
- problem and risk analysis (including financial risks);
- assessment of the extent to which existing standards fully or partially meet the same goals.

4.3 If the demand assessment shows a demand and plausible way in which the Standard can reach its general goal and contribute to the mission, the Management Team submits a proposal for the development of a new Standard to the Board.

4.4 Upon approval of the Board, a Standards Team will be formed. The composition and size of the Standards Team will depend on the scope and size of the Standard to be developed.

Preparation

4.5 The Standards Team prepares a Time Plan for the preparation and development of the Standard, including the intermediate goals and timelines.

4.6 The Standards Team collects information about sustainability and production issues related to the Standard:
- most important research documents from respected NGOs active in the sector;
- academic and technical literature;
- relevant websites of industry bodies, roundtables and public-private-partnerships;
- media coverage;

- other relevant sources of information.

4.7 The Standards Team conducts a stakeholder mapping to identify interested sectors, key issues for those sectors, and key players within those sectors.

4.8 The Standards Team consults and/or informs relevant stakeholders about the plan to develop a Standard (such as research institutes, local commodity boards, local NGOs, other international voluntary standard initiatives working in the same commodity, industry experts and other authorities on the subject).

4.9 The Standards Team performs a crosscheck with existing Standards to define possible synergies and differences. The Standards Team may conduct field visit(s) to major production countries to discuss with local and international stakeholders.

4.10 Optionally, a Technical Working Group (TWG) is set up, comprised of external people, to function as a sounding board. Based on the results of the stakeholder mapping, possible members for the TWG are asked to participate. The members of the TWG are technical experts on a specific aspect of production of the crop and form part of the stakeholders defined in the stakeholder mapping as indispensable for the standard development process, i.e. representing important NGOs with different core objectives (i.e. social, environmental, good agriculture, development support) and representatives from all parts of the sector's commodity chain (producers, retailers, processors, traders). The Technical Working Group may establish subgroups that work more intensively with specific aspects (such as social and environmental aspects) of the Standard.

4.11 The Standards Team prepares the Terms of Reference for the Standard. The Terms of Reference include the following elements:
- the proposed scope of the Standard and the intended geographic application;
- a justification of the need for the Standard, including:
    - an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the Standard;
    - an explanation of whether the proposed Standard will meet an expressed need;
    - and documentation of other standards operating, or in development, that meet all or part of the expressed need;
- clear social, environmental and economic outcomes that the Standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the organization's intended change; and
- an assessment of risks in implementing the Standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the Standard to achieve its outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks.

4.12 The Terms of Reference are submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

4.13 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, The Terms of Reference and the Time Plan are published on the RA website.

Development

4.14 The Standards Team develops a Standard Version 0.1 based on the Terms of Reference, RA Technical expert's input, the findings of the research, and any other relevant source of information, such as local expertise or advice of a TWG.

4.15 The Standard Version 0.1 is submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

4.16 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, the Standards Team publishes the Standard Version 0.1 on the RA website for the first round of public consultation which lasts 60 days from the date of publication. The public consultation is announced in the RA newsletter and other relevant internal and external communication channels.

4.17 Stakeholders are provided with appropriate and balanced opportunities to contribute to the development of the new Standard. There is an online feedback tool on the RA website. The Standards Team may organize in-person meetings or workshops. The Standards Team will identify stakeholders that are not adequately represented, and actively seek their contribution.

4.18 Based on the comments received, RA Technical expert's input and – if necessary – after conducting additional research (e.g. a field pilot) or seeking technical advice (e.g. from the TWG), the Standards Team prepares a Standard Version 0.2.

4.19 The Standard Version 0.2 is submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

4.20 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, the Standards Team publishes the Standard Version 0.2 on the RA website for the second round of public consultation which lasts 30 days from the date of publication. The public consultation is announced in the RA newsletter and other relevant internal and external communication channels.

4.21 Together with the publication of the Standard Version 0.2, the Standards Team publishes on the RA website a summary of the comments received during the first round of public consultation, the way they have been addressed and the main changes. Original anonymized comments are available upon request.

4.22 Stakeholders are provided with appropriate and balanced opportunities to contribute to the development of the new RA Standard. There is an online feedback tool on the RA website. The RA Standards Team may organize in-person meetings or workshops. The RA Standards Team will identify stakeholders that are not adequately represented, and actively seek their contribution.

4.23 Based on the comments received, RA Technical expert's input and – if necessary – after conducting additional research (e.g. a field pilot) or seeking technical advice (e.g. from the TWG), the Standards Team prepares a Standard Version 0.3.

4.24 The Standard Version 0.3 is submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

4.25 Where substantive, unresolved issues persist after the consultation rounds, or where insufficient feedback was received, the Standards Committee may request to organize an additional round of public consultation of 30 days (or longer if deemed necessary by the Standards Committee).

4.26 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, the Standard is submitted for approval to the Board, who bases its decision on an overall assessment of adherence to the Standards Development Procedure and overall alignment with the RA strategy.

4.27 Upon approval by the Board, the Standards Team publishes on the RA website the new Standard and a summary of the comments received during the second (and consecutive) round(s) of public consultation, the way they have been addressed and the main changes. Original anonymized comments are available upon request.

5. Review and Revision

Proposal

5.1 RA reviews the Standards at least every 5 years for continuous relevance and for effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives.

5.2 The Management Team appoints a responsible person or team to conduct the review. The review takes into account, among others:
- information gathered from stakeholder input;
- auditing results;
- organizational monitoring and evaluation; new knowledge or practices.

5.3 The review results in a proposal to do a full revision, a partial revision or no revision. The Management Team needs to approve the proposal.

5.4 Upon the approval to (partially) revise a Standard, a Standards Team will be formed. The composition and size of the Standards Team will depend on the scope and size of the Standard to be developed.

Preparation

5.5 The Standards Team prepares a Time Plan for the revision of the Standard, including the intermediate goals and timelines.

5.6 The Standards Team collects information about sustainability and production issues from:
- most important research documents from respected NGOs active in the sector;
- academic and technical literature;
- relevant websites of industry bodies, roundtables and public-private-partnerships;
- media coverage;
- other relevant sources of information.

5.7 The Standards Team updates the stakeholder mapping to identify interested sectors, key issues for those sectors, and key players within those sectors.

5.8 The Standards Team consults and/or informs relevant stakeholders about the plan for a revision (such as research institutes, local commodity boards, local NGOs, other international voluntary standard initiatives working in the same commodity, industry experts and other authorities on the subject).

5.9 The Standards Team prepares an update of the Terms of Reference for the Standard. The Terms of Reference include the following elements:
- the proposed scope of the Standard;
- a justification of the need for the revision of the Standard, including:
    - an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the Standard;
    - an explanation of whether the proposed Standard will meet an expressed need;
    - and documentation of other standards operating, or in development, that meet all or part of the expressed need;
- an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the Standard, and documentation of other standards operating, or in development, that meet all or part of the expressed need;

- clear social, environmental and economic outcomes that the Standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the organization's intended change;
- an assessment of risks in implementing the Standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the Standard to achieve its outcomes, unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation, and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks.

5.10 The Terms of Reference are submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

5.11 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, The Terms of Reference and the Time Plan are published on the RA website.

Revision

5.12 The Standards Team develops a Standard Version X.1 based on the review, the Terms of Reference, RA Technical expert's input, the findings of the research, and any other relevant source of information, such as local expertise or advice of a TWG.

5.13 The Standard Version X.1 is submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

5.14 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, the Standards Team publishes the Standard Version X.1 on the RA website for the first round of public consultation which lasts 60 days from the date of publication. The public consultation is announced in the RA newsletter and other relevant internal and external communication channels.

5.15 If it concerns a partial revision of the Standard, there is a clear communication that the public consultation is limited to the identified part(s) of the Standard.

5.16 Stakeholders are provided with appropriate and balanced opportunities to contribute to the revision of the Standard. There is an online feedback tool on the RA website. The Standards Team may organize in-person meetings or workshops. The Standards Team will identify stakeholders that are not adequately represented, and actively seek their contribution.

5.17 Based on the comments received, RA Technical expert's input and – if necessary – after conducting additional research (e.g. a field pilot) or seeking technical advice (e.g. from the TWG), the Standards Team prepares a Standard Version X.2.

5.18 The Standard Version X.2 is submitted for approval first to the Management Team and then to the Standards Committee.

5.19 Where substantive, unresolved issues persist after the consultation round, or where insufficient feedback was received, the Standards Committee may request to organize an additional round of public consultation of 30 days (or longer if deemed necessary by the Standards Committee).

5.20 Upon approval by the Management Team and the Standards Committee, the Standard is submitted for approval to the Board who bases its decision on an overall assessment of adherence to the Standards Development Procedure and overall alignment with the RA strategy.

5.21 Upon approval by the Board, the Standards Team publishes on the RA website the revised Standard and a summary of the comments received during the first (and consecutive) round(s) of public consultation, the way they have been addressed and the main changes. Original anonymized comments are available upon request.

Non-substantial revisions

5.22 In case of a need for a non-substantive change to the standard (e.g. to clarify language), there is no need for a formal revision process. There will be a notification of the change(s) in the subsequent review and revision process.

Urgent revisions

5.23 In case of a need for an urgent substantive change to the standard, the Management Team defines the appropriate procedure to adopt such a change. The procedure for such an urgent revision consists of a selection of the above-described steps of the revision procedure, and as a minimum:
- information on the RA website of the proposed change, including the reasoning and the urgency;
- identification and consultation of key stakeholders that will be directly affected; and
- approval of the Standards Committee.

6. Publication

6.1 All approved Standards will be published on the RA website.

6.2 Drafts and final Standards will at all times be available in English, which is the official language of RA. RA seeks to ensure that translations of the Standard are available in additional languages where this supports the use of the Standard.

6.3 Published Standards shall each include at least the following information:
- date of approval of the Standard and the date of the next review;
- indication of the transition period by which a revised Standard comes into effect;
- RA's contact details;
- invitation to all stakeholders to send in their feedback and comments on the Standard as well as proposals for changes in future revisions;
- information on how to submit complaints about the Standards Development Procedure and how complaints are resolved, based on a publicly available complaints resolution mechanism;
- indication that electronic copies are available for free;
- indication that the English version is the guiding and only binding version of the Standard;
- indication of languages in which the standard is available, and a
- copyright statement.

6.4 RA will keep on file for at least five years the following records related to each standards development or revision process, and shall make these available to stakeholders upon request:
- policies and procedures guiding the standard-setting activity;
- lists of stakeholders contacted;
- stakeholders involved at each stage of the process;
- comments received and a synopsis of how those comments were taken into account; and
- all draft and final versions of the standard.