

GRIEVANCE SYSTEMS

An Integral Part of Due Diligence



As more and more countries enact laws on human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD), companies are increasingly putting due diligence systems in place in their supply chains. At the Rainforest Alliance, we believe that strong due diligence systems are crucial to a well-functioning grievance system, and critical to achieve our mission of creating a world where people and nature thrive together.

In agricultural supply chains, the greatest risks of human rights violations and environmental degradation happen in farm and agricultural processing operations. Our system is, therefore, designed to ensure that allegations of human rights abuses or environmental destruction are identified and remediated at the most direct level—the farm or certified operation—whenever possible.

Our grievance system includes 3 levels.

1. Certificate Holder's (farm, group, or supply chain actor) own grievance mechanism
2. Certification Body grievance mechanism
3. Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure (a grievance may be submitted via a form on our [Questions and Complaints page](#).)



DEFINITIONS

Grievance

"A grievance is a complaint or concern by any person about another person's or organization's actions or about its rules and policies that have negatively affected the complainant." See [Glossary, Annex 1](#).

Grievance mechanism

"A process through which individuals, workers, communities, and/or civil society organizations (including whistle-blowers) can raise their complaints of being negatively impacted by specific farm or business activities and/or operations. A grievance mechanism may be formal or non-formal, legal or non-legal. It includes the steps of submission of the complaint, treatment, remediation, and monitoring." See [Glossary, Annex 1](#).

All farms, farm groups, and supply chain actors that are part of the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program are required under our [Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard](#) to have a grievance mechanism in place in their own operations. The requirements align with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. For instance, we require that the grievance mechanism take steps to be accessible and trusted by all actors, including vulnerable people like women and migrants.

Independent third-party certification bodies (CBs) verify through audits that farms, farm groups, or supply chain actors seeking or renewing certification, meet these grievance mechanism requirements.

Farmers, workers, community members, and others can submit grievances via the grievance mechanism of the farm, farm group, or supply chain actor. Most grievances are handled and resolved at this level, incorporating locally available services and referral mechanisms where appropriate. The Rainforest Alliance requires that any grievances related to human rights issues be remediated per the process and steps in our [Remediation Protocol](#).

If a submitter finds that an issue is not resolved to their satisfaction, it can be submitted to the grievance mechanism of the CB that performed the audit of the farm, farm group, or supply chain actor in question. All CBs authorized by the Rainforest Alliance are required to have their own grievance procedures (also in compliance with section 7.13 of the ISO 17065 standard). Issues that remain unresolved through the above processes can be submitted to the Rainforest Alliance [Grievance Procedure](#). We encourage submitters to submit their grievances first through the local or CB grievance mechanisms, but we do accept and follow up on grievances that were not submitted to those mechanisms.

Of course, submitters also have access to other means of remedy, which they can use in addition to our options. These include the [ISEAL Complaints Procedure](#), since Rainforest Alliance is a member of ISEAL. These also include national or local-level judicial systems in the relevant countries and communities, and hotlines provided by government bodies, civil society organizations, and/or companies. The Rainforest Alliance system is not meant to replace, but rather complement, other means of redress.

DATA ABOUT GRIEVANCES

In any sector or country, a grievance mechanism must be managed in a sensitive manner, preserving the confidentiality of those who wish to remain anonymous. The Rainforest Alliance does not disclose any information of cases handled at farm, group, supply chain actor, or CB level. However, the Rainforest Alliance does publish aggregated data on grievances handled through the Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure through our [Questions and Complaints page](#).

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ON GRIEVANCE PROCESSES

The Rainforest Alliance seeks to continuously improve our grievance mechanism requirements and grievance procedures. We participate in research studies, internal and external benchmarking exercises, and maintain dialogue with partners to learn and adapt our approach. Please contact the Rainforest Alliance (grievances@ra.org) to learn about our latest research and improvements.



Photo: Giuseppe Cipriani

**RAINFOREST
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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.

[RAINFOREST-ALLIANCE.ORG](https://www.rainforest-alliance.org)

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