



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.

GRIEVANCES

Interim Report 2025

October 2025

Reporting Period: January 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025





CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Highlights | 3 |
| Definitions | 3 |
| Grievance system—three levels | 4 |
| Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure | 4 |
| What is covered by the grievance mechanism? | 4 |
| What is the scope? | 4 |
| How are grievances processed? | 4 |
| 2025 grievances and outcomes | 5 |
| Number of grievances received and eligibility | 5 |
| Subject of the grievance | 5 |
| Types of grievances | 6 |
| Results of grievance investigations | 6 |
| Conclusion | 7 |



INTRODUCTION

At the Rainforest Alliance, we believe that a strong grievance mechanism is an important element of our assurance system—and essential to fulfilling our mission of fostering a world where people and nature thrive in harmony. This mechanism offers stakeholders a formal channel to express concerns or submit complaints. By ensuring grievances are acknowledged and addressed, we help build trust, promote transparency, and uphold the integrity and credibility of the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program.

The Rainforest Alliance has established a mechanism to receive, document, assess, and when necessary, investigate grievances. This interim report (covering the period January 1 – September 30, 2025) provides an overview of the grievances that the Rainforest Alliance received, following the [Rainforest Alliance Grievance and Appeal Procedure](#). We intend to continue providing updates on an annual basis.

The report indicates the type of grievances the Rainforest Alliance received, those found eligible, and the outcomes of these grievances. The final 2025 report will be published in early 2026.

Highlights

- This report covers grievances received between January 1, 2025 and September 30, 2025.
- Of the 48 grievances received, 19 were within the scope of the Grievance and Appeal Procedure and considered eligible grievances.
- We received different types of grievances related to Certification Bodies' (CBs) certification decisions; CBs' performance; cases of fraud; Certificate Holders' (CHs) compliance with the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard; and compliance with the Rainforest Alliance's own processes and procedures.
- As per October 1, 2025, seven eligible grievance cases have been closed. There are different outcomes to those grievances (e.g., exceptions have been granted, a CH's license was suspended, and certification decisions were upheld and overruled), which have led to improved assurance.

Definitions

Grievance

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

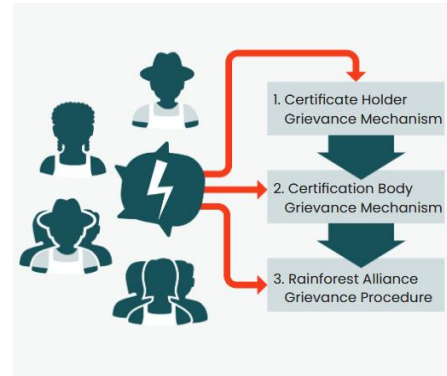
A process through which individuals, workers, staff, communities, and/or civil society organizations (including whistle-blowers) can raise their complaints of being negatively affected by specific farm or business activities and/or operations. A grievance mechanism may be formal or non-formal, legal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



Grievance system—three levels

Please note that our [grievance system](#) is structured into three distinct levels:

- Level 1: The CH's grievance mechanism:
See the [Sustainable Agriculture Standard](#) for more information.
- Level 2: Authorized CB grievance mechanism:
See the [Rules for Certification Bodies](#) for more information.
- Level 3: The Rainforest Alliance Grievance and Appeal Procedure



We encourage submitters to submit their grievances first through the CH's or CB's grievance mechanisms. This report is about the third level of the grievance system.

Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure

What is covered by the grievance mechanism?

You can submit a grievance if you have concerns or complaints about:

- a. A certified farm, group or company
- b. An authorized CB
- c. The Rainforest Alliance itself

What is the scope?

The Rainforest Alliance grievance mechanism covers grievances regarding:

- Compliance with our Certification Program (standards, rules, policies and procedures)
- Potential, as well as actual, instances of corruption and misrepresentation of our Certification Program and its trademarks.

How are grievances processed?

We can summarize the process as follows:

1. **Submit a grievance**
Anyone can submit a grievance via the [online form](#) or verbally.
2. **Initial review**
The Rainforest Alliance checks if the grievance is eligible or not.
3. **Investigation**
If eligible, an appointed grievance manager will investigate the issue. This may involve talking to the parties involved and reviewing evidence.
4. **Proposed action and follow-up**
A proposed resolution is communicated, and actions are taken if needed. The person who submitted the grievance and if applicable, the subject of the grievance, is informed.
5. **Appeal option**
If someone disagrees with the decision, they can appeal. A separate team reviews the case again.

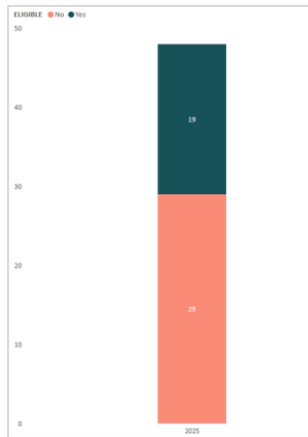
For more information, please consult the [Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure](#).



2025 GRIEVANCES AND OUTCOMES

Here follows an overview of grievances received in the first three quarters of 2025.

Number of grievances received and eligibility



In **2025**, we received **48 grievance submissions** in total, of which **19** were considered **eligible** and **29** were considered **non-eligible**.

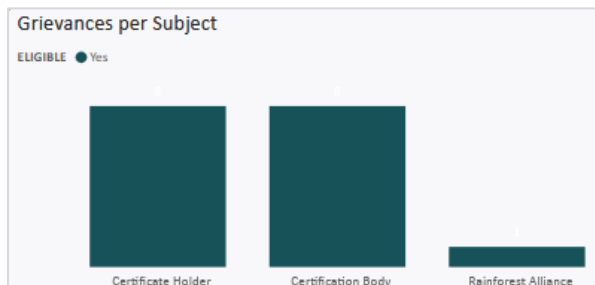
Grievances are often considered non-eligible if they fall outside the scope of this grievance system, if direct level grievance mechanisms, such as those of the CH or CB have not yet been used, or if the issue only requires further clarification rather than prompting a formal investigation.

Even if grievances fall outside of scope, we may refer the complainant to the correct person or channel in order to have their concerns addressed. For example, if it's a question instead of a complaint, we'll still forward it to the appropriate person at the Rainforest Alliance who can answer that question. When most

direct levels of the grievance system haven't been used yet, the complainant is advised to first use those mechanisms and may resubmit the grievance if the outcome of that grievance process is unsatisfactory.

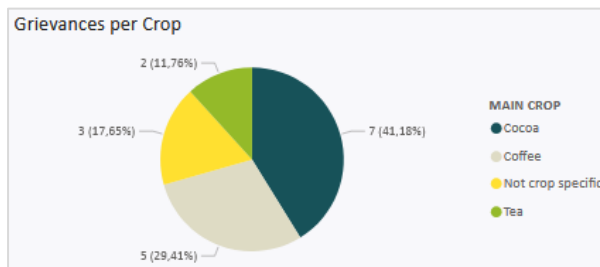
Subject of the grievance

Grievances can be raised against different subjects: the CH, the CB, the Rainforest Alliance as an organization, or against a specific Rainforest Alliance employee, process, or procedure.

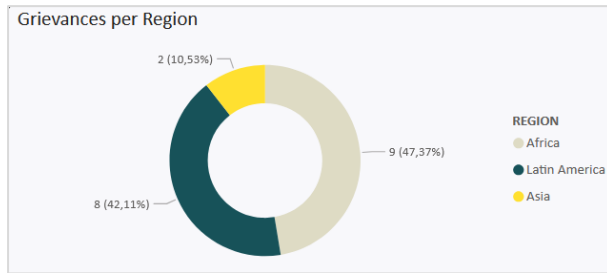


The 19 eligible grievances are raised against:

- **9 CHs**
- **9 CBs**
- **1 Rainforest Alliance procedure**



The eligible grievances were mainly related to the cocoa and coffee sectors.



The majority of the eligible grievances raised were related to complaints that occurred in **Africa and Latin America**.

Types of grievances

The eligible grievances are divided into five categories. The below overview shows the type of grievances we received in the first three quarters of 2025.

| Category | Description and example | # in Q1-Q3 of 2025 |
|---|---|--------------------|
| CB certification decision | Disagreements with the certification decision that the CB made. E.g., The CH appeals a certification decision made by the CB, based on different interpretations of standard requirements. | 5 |
| CB performance | Complaint against the performance of the CB. E.g., Allegation of a non-conformity at the CB due to the use of CB personnel without required approvals. | 3 |
| Fraud/bribes | Allegation of fraud by a CH and/or CB. E.g., Allegations of a CH trying to bribe the CB. | 1 |
| CH compliance with standard | Allegations of non-conformities at the CH. E.g., Allegation of the use of prohibited pesticides or non-payment of the Sustainability Differential / Sustainability Investment. | 9 |
| Rainforest Alliance policies and procedures | Complaint against the content of a Rainforest Alliance policy or procedure. E.g., Complaint about the CB's monitoring activities | 1 |

Results of grievance investigations

There can be different outcomes of grievance investigations. Of the 19 eligible cases, seven have been closed prior to October 1, 2025.

The outcomes of the closed eligible cases are as follows:

- 2 CHs maintained their certification license
- 1 appeal was granted: the CB's negative certification decision was overruled and the CH now has an active license
- 1 CB decision was upheld
- 1 certification license was suspended
- 1 exception was granted for a CH to change their CB
- 1 non-conformity was dismissed



CONCLUSION

The Rainforest Alliance grievance mechanism is not only a tool for resolving complaints, but also a proactive system for identifying risks, promoting transparency, and driving corrective actions. It supports the implementation of the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program and is embedded within the broader Rainforest Alliance Assurance System.

We would like to thank all individuals who submitted grievances. Your voices are essential to improving our practices and ensuring accountability.



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