

WHAT'S IN OUR 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

ASSESS-AND-ADDRESS

Our approach to tackling child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and workplace violence and harassment in agriculture



Photo: Charlie Watson

Human rights abuses are widespread in the production of many of the world's most commonly traded goods, from coffee, cocoa, and tea to timber products and palm oil. While progress has been made over the past couple of decades, child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and workplace violence and harassment still exist in many of these supply chains.

The reasons for this are complex—multi-dimensional poverty, lack of social protection and laws, and systemic inequality are just some of the issues to blame. When we look at the issue of child labor alone, we see the magnitude of the problem. The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 152 million children worldwide involved in child labor, with approximately 71% working in agriculture. Many of these children are often working long hours and in dangerous settings.

While these injustices have never been—and will never be—tolerated by the Rainforest Alliance, we have learned through many years of experience that simply prohibiting these human rights violations in our standard is not enough. Outright bans and prohibitions that, if broken, lead to immediate decertification, have proven to be counterproductive. In fact, this often drives abuses underground, making them harder for auditors and for us to detect, thereby perpetuating the problem. That's why our [2020 Certification Program](#) promotes an [assess-and-address approach](#) to tackling these issues. This new, risk-based approach focuses on prevention, engagement, improvement, and incentivizing farms and companies to tackle these issues rather than hiding them. It also aligns with the growing international consensus around good practices in human rights due diligence as laid out by the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#).

HOW DOES ASSESS-AND-ADDRESS WORK?

Assess-and-address requires certificate holders to set up an internal committee responsible for assessing and mitigating risks of child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and workplace violence and harassment. The committee will monitor the farm, farm group or processing site for signs of these violations and

have access to training in how to remediate cases if identified. Remediation steps must follow a new Rainforest Alliance Remediation Protocol. The Rainforest Alliance will also use risk maps to pinpoint countries and sectors where stricter risk mitigation measures will be required. Within our Supply Chain Requirements, first processors of certified commodities after farm will be required to implement the assess-and-address system at their facilities when the risk of human rights abuses is identified as high.

Without solving the root causes of human rights abuses, the problems will not go away. That's why the Rainforest Alliance promotes collaboration between certified farms, governments, civil society, and supply chain partners to solve these issues together. Farms will be able to share information on the progress they are making with their supply chain partners and seek further support from them in addressing the issue to facilitate this sense of shared responsibility.

OPTING FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OVER PASS-FAIL

In our reimagining of certification, we are moving away from the idea that certification is only a series of pass/fail requirements. By working with farms and processors to correct human rights issues over time, rather than immediately taking away their certification when a violation occurs, we are building on existing continuous improvement approaches to protect the children and workers that certification is designed to help. In severe cases sanctions such as suspension and decertification can still be used.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT FROM OUR PREVIOUS STANDARDS?

The 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard used a simple prohibition approach to all of these issues. The UTZ Code of Conduct, on the other hand, already requires farms and farm groups with a risk of child labor to appoint a community-based liaison officer who is responsible for preventing, monitoring, and remediating child labor. The 2020 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard builds on the UTZ approach to child labor and goes further by extending the assess-and-address system to forced labor, discrimination,

and workplace violence and harassment. This is the first time our Supply Chain Requirements include criteria for the first processors after farm to tackle human rights violations as well. The new standard also provides more guidance on how the approach should be implemented and several tools to assist certificate holders with implementation.

WHAT OTHER RAINFOREST ALLIANCE INTERVENTIONS SUPPORT THIS APPROACH?

Beyond certification, the Rainforest Alliance also promotes human rights through other strategic interventions. For example, supply chain, landscape, and community programs to tackle child labor in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Uganda. These programs set up community and district committees that support farming communities with access to education and village saving and loan schemes. The committees also raise awareness about child labor and motivate communities to send their children to school. What we see is that the more integrated supply chain programs are within the community or wider landscape, the more sustainable the system to tackle child labor. We are currently looking at expanding these programs to Asia and Central America as well.

Another example is our work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment among farmers and workers, which is essential to tackle the issues of child labor, forced labor, discrimination and workplace violence and harassment. Through our [Sector Partnerships Program](#), for instance, we have worked to empower local chapters of the International Women's Coffee Alliance in Honduras and Uganda, which has led to better access of female actors in the supply chain to inputs, resources, and decision making.



The Rainforest Alliance is working with the Uganda National Teachers Union to train teachers in identifying students who may be involved in child labor and providing the extra-curricular support needed to get kids in the classroom full-time.

IS THIS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR CERTAIN CROPS OR COUNTRIES?

Child labor is found in many different sectors and geographies where multi-dimensional poverty exists, but it is a particularly big risk in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and in places where families migrate with their children to harvest crops, such as coffee farms in Central America and hazelnut production areas in Turkey. Forced labor is also widespread—any country or crop that makes heavy use of hired labor, especially migrant labor and labor hired through third-party providers, is at risk. Discrimination and workplace violence and harassment are especially common with more vulnerable populations, including women, children and youth, migrants, and indigenous people.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

With support from market partners, the Rainforest Alliance is in the process of pilot-testing the assess-and-address approach in the Central American coffee sector and West African cocoa sector. Read more about the [assess-and-address approach](#) and [what to expect in our new certification program](#).

For specific questions, email us at cs@ra.org

REIMAGINING CERTIFICATION AND THE 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Reimagining certification is our long-term vision for the future of certification. It is part of our wider strategy at the Rainforest Alliance to drive change through our four main areas of work: climate, forests, livelihoods, and human rights.

In June 2020, the Rainforest Alliance takes the first step on its journey towards "reimagining certification" with the publication of its 2020 Certification Program. We've been working on this new program since 2018, when the Rainforest Alliance and UTZ merged.

The 2020 Certification Program—including a new Sustainable Agriculture Standard—is a unique opportunity to really change the way that certification works and how it delivers value to the many people and businesses around the world that use it.

Between June 2020 and mid-2021, the Rainforest Alliance will roll out the new program around the world, including a comprehensive training plan. Audits against the new program will begin in mid-2021.

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