

The Rainforest Alliance Certified™ Sustainable Agriculture Program

Agricultural expansion is the single largest threat to the world's remaining tropical forests. In the tropics, farms are often responsible for deforestation, soil erosion and the contamination of waterways. In response to these problems, the Rainforest Alliance has undertaken a major effort to promote sustainable agriculture in these biodiversity-rich regions.

The Rainforest Alliance and the other members of the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) — a coalition of independent, nonprofit conservation groups — have created a comprehensive farm certification program. To become certified, farms must meet strict standards developed by the SAN through consultations with social and environmental groups, farmers, industry, government and other stakeholders. These standards, covering all aspects of production, protect the environment, the rights and welfare of workers and the interests of local communities.

Farms that meet the standards are awarded the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal of approval, which can be used to market farm products. By displaying the seal on their goods, farmers can tap into the growing market of enlightened consumers who are choosing to support sustainable agricultural practices through their purchases.

Coffee, cocoa, tea, tropical fruit (banana, orange, pineapple, passion fruit, mango, guava), flower and fern farms are certified according to the environmental and social standards of the SAN. Farms producing a number of smaller crops — including açai, avocado, chestnuts, macadamia nuts, plantains and vanilla — often grown in association with these commodities, are also certified. As of the last quarter of 2008, more than 33,000 farms on nearly 1.3 million acres (521,000 hectares) in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the Philippines and Tanzania were Rainforest Alliance Certified.

From Farm to Supermarket: Linking the Supply Chain

The Rainforest Alliance is involved at every stage of the supply chain. We work with producers, importers, wholesalers and vendors to promote responsibly produced agricultural goods.

Our online Marketplace (www.rainforest-alliance.org/farmproducts) helps companies selling Rainforest Alliance Certified products



On Rainforest Alliance Certified farms, wildlife habitat is protected and forestland is conserved.

promote their brands and link with farmers and buyers. From small local stores to large international corporations, we are working with an increasing number of businesses who understand that sustainability is good for the bottom line — and that certification is the best way to guarantee that their products are sustainably sourced.

The Process — and Benefits — of Certification

The certification journey begins with a voluntary application to the Rainforest Alliance Certified program from a farmer or group of farmers, followed by a farm visit by specialists to determine the changes necessary to achieve certification. Once farmers are satisfied that their lands are meeting the certification standards, they can request a full audit (inspection). An experienced and independent auditor or team of auditors visits the farm to review



OUR MISSION

The Rainforest Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior.

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every aspect of its compliance with the standards. Based on the auditors' report, an independent certification body, Sustainable Farm Certification Intl., determines whether or not the farm merits certification. All farms or groups are inspected every year and must demonstrate continual progress. Farmers pay for the initial certification of their farms and the annual follow-up inspections. In many cases, certification services are underwritten by foundations, brokers and buyers.

By meeting the SAN standards and earning certification, farms make a positive impact in three key areas:

Environmental Conservation — The standards provide guidelines for the conservation of wildlife, forests and other valuable habitats in and around farms — certified farms often serve as buffer zones around parks and as “wildlife corridors” between protected lands. Areas not suitable for agriculture must be replanted with a variety of native tree and plant species. Waterways and soil on the farms must be protected. Waste is reduced as farm by-products are composted and used as natural fertilizer, while other wastes, such as plastics, glass and metals are recycled where possible. Farm managers must use biological or mechanical alternatives to pesticides whenever possible — and if they determine that agrochemicals are necessary to protect the crop, they have to choose the least toxic alternatives at hand and use every available safeguard to protect human health and the environment.

Social Conditions — By focusing on how farms are managed, the standards cover the full range of worker protection issues including: the rights to organize; to a safe, clean working environment; to be paid at least the national minimum wage or the regional average wage, whichever is higher; to dignified housing (including access to potable water); to medical care for workers and their families; and to education for children. The Rainforest Alliance and the SAN engage with all types of farms — from small cooperatives and family farms to large plantations owned by multinational corporations — to promote change and ensure that all agricultural workers are well-treated.

The children of workers on Rainforest Alliance Certified farms benefit from access to schools, healthcare and decent housing.



Photos: A. Morgan, L. Pedersen, J. Vogel Bass, R. Goodier

For more information about the Rainforest Alliance's sustainable agriculture program, please visit www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/agriculture



Farms producing a wide array of crops — including cocoa, tea, cut flowers, bananas and vanilla — are eligible for certification.

Economic Benefits — The certification process often increases efficiency on farms. Workers are healthier and more satisfied, and trained seasonal workers are more likely to return each year — which helps improve productivity and reduce costs. Through better management and more consistent techniques and training, the quality of a farm's products also generally improves. Certified farm owners have better access to specialty buyers, contract stability, favorable credit options, publicity, technical assistance and premium markets. Although the Rainforest Alliance and other SAN members are not directly involved in negotiations between farmers and their product buyers, most farmers are able to leverage their certification to receive a price premium.

The Growing Market for Rainforest Alliance Certified Products

Once used only among conservation groups and development agencies, the term “sustainable” has entered the public consciousness as shorthand for wide-ranging efforts to fight poverty and pollution and protect the Earth's resources. As this “people, planet and profits” message spreads throughout the marketplace, demand for goods from sustainable farms continues to grow. And there is a growing consensus that certification is the most effective way to promote sustainability — by ensuring the establishment and enforcement of management practices that protect the environment, the rights of workers and the interests of local communities.

The Rainforest Alliance Certified seal stands for sustainability. The green frog is now seen in thousands of markets, cafés, restaurants and offices around the world. Eco-conscious shoppers everywhere know that products carrying the seal come from responsibly managed farms. Trendsetting food companies and supermarkets interested in knowing more about how, where and by whom their products are grown — and about the social and environmental benefits of the sustainable farming process — have come to trust and respect the integrity of the Rainforest Alliance Certified seal.



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