



**AUDIT EXCEPTION POLICY FOR COVID-19**  
MARCH 2020 REVISED 17 AND 30 MARCH 2020

**RAINFOREST  
ALLIANCE**



## SUMMARY

<b>Issue Date:</b>		<b>Binding date:</b>		<b>Expiration date:</b>	
March 7, 2020 Revised 17 March 2020 and 30 March		March 7, 2020 Revised 17 March 2020 and 30 March		May 31, 2020	
<b>Developed by:</b>			<b>Approved by:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rainforest Alliance</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director, Standards and Assurance</li> </ul>		
<b>Linked to (code and name of documents, if applicable):</b>					
UTZ related documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UTZ Assurance Certification protocol, version 4.3 December 2018</li> <li>UTZ Code of Conduct for individual and multi-site certification, version 1.1 + relevant crop annexes</li> <li>UTZ Core Code of Conduct for group and multi-group certification, version 1.1 + relevant crop annexes</li> <li>Chain of Custody Standard + relevant crop annexes</li> </ul>			Rainforest Alliance related documents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RA Certification Rules, July 2017 version 1.2</li> <li>RA Chain of Custody Policy 2015</li> <li>Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard, July 2017 version 1.2</li> </ul>		
<b>Reporting to RA</b>					
CBs are required to inform Rainforest Alliance via <a href="mailto:certification@ra.org">certification@ra.org</a> when putting this policy in place for desk audits and certificate extensions. RA reserves the right to review these extensions and respond accordingly.					
<b>Applicable to:</b>					
Rainforest Alliance authorized certification bodies as well as Farm and Chain of Custody certified entities (for both UTZ and Rainforest Alliance programs).					
<b>Regions:</b>					
All regions subject to public health and mobility restrictions due to Covid19 according to information from the public health authorities for that country.					
<b>Crops:</b>			<b>Type of organizations:</b>		
All			Farm and Chain of Custody entities		



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Rainforest Alliance is a growing network of people who are inspired and committed to working together to achieve our mission of conserving biodiversity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. For more information about Rainforest Alliance, visit its website: <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org>.

## 2. POLICY FOR AUDIT EXCEPTIONS DUE TO COVID-19

### 2.1 JUSTIFICATION

Currently, due to restrictions on travel and access to certain sites due to public health risks related to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), cases are arising in some localities where it is not possible to follow the planned schedule of audits in the annual audit cycle. Rainforest Alliance considers this to be a situation of force majeure which affects the normal implementation of our certification program. For this reason a specific policy has been developed to govern exceptions arising from disruptions to audit activities due to corona virus or public health measures imposed by the authorities in the country of operation. This procedure is in effect as of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This is a temporary measure which is currently valid only until 31 May 2020. Information on any further extension or modification of the policy will be communicated before the end of that period.

### 2.2 POLICY FOR CURRENT UTZ AND RA CHAIN OF CUSTODY STANDARDS

- a) All rules in the current certification document apply and continue to be mandatory (UTZ Assurance Certification protocol, version 4.3 December 2018 and RA Chain of Custody Policy).
- b) For existing certificate holders, where it is not possible for an Auditor to conduct an in-person audit, Rainforest Alliance authorizes CBs to carry out remote CoC audits of Participating Operators (CoC POs). These will replace the onsite audits required for the current audit cycle per the relevant certification documents.
- c) For existing certificate holders where a desk audit is also not possible, an extension of licence is allowed up to 30 August 2020 which is 3 months after the expiry of this policy (31 May 2020). Audits must be conducted before 31 July 2020 to allow for new certificates to be issued as soon as possible thereafter.
- d) For new certificate holders who had already scheduled their audit before 30 March 2020 and have begun trading RA or UTZ volumes, a desk audit is to be conducted now, followed by an on-site audit when feasible. The desk audit does not eliminate the need for the on-site audit. This also applies to entities that were once audit exempted/endorsed and no longer fall into that category. The certificate and/or license will be issued as a result of the desk audit.



- e) No new certifications will be issued for chain of custody operations, who did not schedule an audit before 30 March 2020, without an on-site certification audit using the normal procedure.
- f) Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to insist on an on-site audit for companies as needed. In this case an extension of the existing licence may be granted to cover the period until an on-site audit can be conducted.

### **2.3 POLICY FOR CURRENT UTZ CODE OF CONDUCT AND RA SAS 2017 FARM STANDARD**

- a) All rules in the current certification document apply and continue to be mandatory (UTZ Assurance Certification protocol, version 4.3 December 2018 and RA Certification Rules, July 2017 version 1.2).
- b) Existing certificate holders with certificates expiring on or before 31 May 2020, may be granted a license extension for a period up to 30 August 2020, which is 3 months after the expiry of this policy (31 May 2020) for an on-site audit to be conducted.
- c) Certificate validity extensions do not change the dates of the current audit cycle. This means that the next audit following the extension audit will take place according to the original schedule, even though less than 12 months have elapsed. For example, if this year's audit was to be carried out March 1st but was carried out on June 1st due to an exemption under the COVID19 policy, the regular March 1st audit schedule shall be maintained for the coming year.
- d) License extensions may be granted for a maximum of 50% additional certified volume. The additional authorized volume of 50% will be based on the current approved volume and will be deducted from the total volume certified when the in-person audit takes place. The final authorized volume for the certificate will be verified during the on-site audit. The CB must indicate the total amount verified and approved in the report and certificate / license.
- e) No certifications will be issued for new farm operations without an on-site certification audit using the normal procedure
- f) All pending on-site audits until 31 May must be conducted before 31 July 2020 to allow for new certificates to be issued as soon as possible thereafter.
- g) Requests by CBs to carry out remote audits for existing farm level certification will be reviewed and may be granted as long as an on-site follow-up audit is conducted as soon as realistically possible. No certifications will be issued for new farm or group operations without an on-site audit using the normal procedure
- h) For Short-Harvest Window crops, a remote audit is possible. The auditor must assess compliance with the internal inspection carried out by the certified organization. The CB has



the right to charge for these services and the following audit should be semi-announced or unannounced.

- i) For RA Certificate Holders who must conduct a verification audit or a surveillance audit before May 31, an extension until June 30 will be allowed for the audit to be carried out and for the certification decision to be made. Once the verification/surveillance audit has been completed the CB should indicate in Salesforce that the delay was caused by COVID-19