

# MUTUAL RECOGNITION

## Chain of Custody certification process for companies

*Guidelines*



Joining forces  
for a better future

## MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF CHAIN OF CUSTODY CERTIFICATION

### PROPOSED EFFECTIVE DATE” 3<sup>RD</sup> OF DECEMBER

The mutual recognition of the Chain of Custody certification is the first phase of a larger piece of work currently underway which is looking at how we can facilitate our partners’ transition towards one certification system. Please find specific guidance around the steps for mutual recognition below. Depending on the category that your company falls into there are specific steps to be taken.

For any questions please contact [membersupport@utz.org](mailto:membersupport@utz.org) or [agcoc@ra.org](mailto:agcoc@ra.org).

### PROCESS STEPS FOR COMPANIES

#### 1. Companies with no Rainforest Alliance or UTZ certification and wish to get certification:

Company has the option to pick the program of their choice (UTZ or Rainforest Alliance) and start the regular process with the respective program, until completion of registration and the UTZ certificate/license or Rainforest Alliance certificate/endorsement is issued. After the process in one of the programs is completed, company follows the steps in either option 2 or 3 below to obtain UTZ licensed or Rainforest Alliance certified/endorsed status respectively.

#### 2. Companies with only UTZ certification/license and wish to start working with Rainforest Alliance certified products as well:

- a. Company goes through Rainforest Alliance CRA\* to initiate mutual recognition process
  - i. Log in to Marketplace ([marketplace.ra.org](http://marketplace.ra.org)) and create account
  - ii. Initiate CRA through Marketplace
  - iii. Select UTZ for “other certifications” and upload associated certificate with UTZ Account Name and Member ID
  - iv. Contact [agcoc@ra.org](mailto:agcoc@ra.org) with questions
- b. Rainforest Alliance Chain of Custody team verifies validity of the UTZ certificate/license in online platform. If all verified, company ends up in Very Low Risk Category;
- c. Rainforest Alliance sends 1.3 Declaration and Endorsement Agreement to be signed by the company;
- d. The Endorsement Certificate is valid for the period of the UTZ license. The starting date will be either the starting date of the UTZ license or the day after the expiry date of the previous Rainforest Alliance Certificate/Endorsement;
- e. Cost of \$100 for processing of CRA and Endorsement.

#### 3. Companies with only Rainforest Alliance certification/endorsement and wish to start working with UTZ certified products as well:

- a. Company logs in to Good Inside Portal ([goodinsideportal.org](http://goodinsideportal.org)) and creates account;

- b. Company contacts UTZ at [membersupport@utz.org](mailto:membersupport@utz.org) to initiate audit exemption process (note this will only apply to crops that UTZ works with – coffee, cocoa, tea) and indicate Rainforest Alliance Endorsement or Chain of Custody Certificate code;
- c. UTZ verifies validity of the Rainforest Alliance certificate in online platform;
- d. Company signs a legally binding declaration (*Request for Chain of Custody Standard Audit Exemption based on Mutual Recognition*) where the company confirms its full compliance with UTZ Chain of Custody Standard;
- e. UTZ issues a license\*\* that provides access to the Good Inside Portal;
- f. The license is valid for the period of the Rainforest Alliance certification/endorsement. The starting date will be either the starting date of the Rainforest Alliance certification/endorsement or the day after the expiry date of the previous UTZ license;
- g. No cost for audit exemption request from UTZ.

**4. Companies with both UTZ and Rainforest Alliance certification and wish to continue with either of them:**

- a. If Rainforest Alliance certificate will expire first, company lets this certificate expire and then follows option 2 above;
- b. If UTZ certificate/license will expire first, company lets this certificate expire and then follows option 3 above;
- c. If expiring at the same time or not expiring for a couple of years, company can decide as to which they would like to continue with and follow option 2 or 3 above;
- d. If non-conformities exist, these will need to be closed through a verification audit with the Certification Body before the mutual recognition process can be initiated.

\*CRA (Chain of Custody Risk Assessment)

\*\* The license is only digital. UTZ will not provide any document (neither electronically nor in paper). The company can find all the details regarding their license and its validity in the Good Inside Portal.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

**1. We have just completed our UTZ audit process and will receive the certificate soon. How should we proceed?**

If your company would like to also receive Rainforest Alliance certification you can complete the steps highlighted in scenario 2 above to receive the Rainforest Alliance Endorsement.

**2. We are certified to both UTZ and Rainforest Alliance, will we be subject to more audits in our current certification cycles if we were to maintain those certificates?**

We will need to review your case to see where you are in the certification cycles with both and if any additional audits are required. It is possible that none are required and then it would make most sense to maintain both certifications for the time being until the new combined standard is released.

**3. My certificate for Rainforest Alliance (or UTZ) is about to expire, what do I do next? What are my options?**

In that case please follow the steps highlighted in scenario 2 above to receive the Rainforest Alliance Endorsement (or the steps highlighted in scenario 3 above to receive an audit exemption from UTZ side).

**4. I have already scheduled a Rainforest Alliance and/or UTZ certification audit and signed a contract with a Certification Body. What shall I do?**

If the audit is for both Rainforest Alliance and UTZ certification then you can limit it to just one and save on the certification/audit costs for the other. Each scenario is a bit different and we recommend contacting us directly to discuss options.

**5. My company had a successful Rainforest Alliance certification audit. I want to start working with UTZ certified products too. Will I need to comply with UTZ Chain of Custody requirements?**

If you wish to work with both Rainforest Alliance certified and UTZ certified products, your company needs to be compliant with the requirements for both certification programs. However if you already had a successful audit for one of them you will not be audited by a third-party certifier for the other program. Rainforest Alliance and UTZ will be monitoring your compliance through review of the audit exemption/endorsement and have the right to conduct audits at any time.