

WHAT'S IN OUR 2020 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

Creating resilient, future-proof farms

Climate change is disrupting all our lives as we know it. Unpredictable weather patterns, shorter growing seasons, droughts, extreme temperatures, and increased exposure to pests and crop diseases pose daunting challenges to farmers around the world. These challenges aren't just felt at the farm level though; they create a ripple effect that can lead to unstable supply chains, limited availability of products, and increased prices. Our Climate-smart agriculture approach can help farmers adapt to and prepare for impacts in order to preserve—and even improve—their livelihoods while also securing future access to crops like coffee, cocoa, and tea that we've all come to rely on. In short, making agricultural supply chains more resilient.

WHAT IS CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE?

Climate-smart agriculture is an approach [first developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#). It isn't distinct from sustainable agriculture; rather, it's a way of combining various sustainable methods to tackle the specific climate challenges of a *specific* farming community, system, or crop.

It does this through three main pillars:

- Sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes;
- Adapting and building resilience to climate change; and
- Reducing and/or removing greenhouse gas emissions where possible.

In our new certification program, climate-smart agriculture uses a variety of tools built upon this established international framework to assess the climate risks and vulnerabilities of a landscape/community/household/system, taking the local ecosystem conditions and the specific crop needs into account. Finding the right combination of strategies to manage a specific farm's climate challenges—and to build resilience to future impacts—is what makes climate-smart agriculture “smart.”

HOW IT FITS WITHIN THE NEW SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE STANDARD

Instead of a standalone climate chapter or requirement, the whole standard is now inherently oriented towards climate-smart agriculture with a focus on adaptation and resilience. The relevant climate-smart aspects are now embedded throughout the chapters of the new standard's Farm Requirements:

- **Chapter 1 – Management:** Farms conduct an overall risk assessment, one component of which is the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment. This assessment allows farmers to gain an understanding of what might happen as the local climate changes, where they are most at risk, and which measures or actions they can take to help.
- **Chapter 4 – Farming Practices:** Based on the local context identified in the risk assessment, this chapter focuses on the agricultural practices farmers will be required to implement in order to adapt to the effects of climate change and become more resilient. Farmers will learn how to prioritize management and farming activities to address specific identified risks. For example, where drought is a concern, farmers will develop soil management strategies that improve soil health and combat drought impacts.
- **Chapter 6 – Environment:** Not only does the standard prohibit farmers from destroying natural ecosystems, but it offers them techniques for how to protect, conserve, and rehabilitate natural ecosystems and biodiversity on and around farms. Farmers are guided on how to increase the amount of native vegetation through set aside lands (conservation areas) and/or agroforestry systems, water conservation and management best practices, and how to carry out carbon footprint assessments in order to make their farm operations more energy efficient. These are just a few of the adjustments that can help increase a farm's resilience against the effects of climate change while also reducing their impact on the climate.





A REIMAGINED, ADAPTABLE APPROACH

With our vision of [reimagining certification](#), we are moving away from a one-size-fits-all model to a context adaptable approach. By combining many different methods for adapting to—and mitigating—the threats posed by climate change under the umbrella of climate-smart agriculture, we ensure every farm gets the contextualized information and resources they need to prepare for the future.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT FROM OUR PREVIOUS STANDARDS?

While the UTZ standard addressed climate change and a need for climate-smart agriculture in its Code of Conduct and crop-specific modules, the climate-smart aspects are much more prominent throughout the new Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard. The 2017 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard was already climate-smart; the only differences now are how the approach is presented in the structure of the new standard and adaptations for context.

IS THIS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR CERTAIN CROPS OR COUNTRIES?

Climate-smart agriculture applies to every crop and country globally, though in the new standard it is mainly focused on coffee, cocoa, and tea and is especially relevant in the tropics, where people tend to be more reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods. Our climate-smart agriculture approach is vital for farmers and businesses around the world who will need to adapt to a changing climate in order to secure the future of their crops, products, and supply chains.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Read more about [climate-smart agriculture](#) 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.



Photo: Sergio Izquierdo

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