



Food and Agriculture  
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## WORLD BANANA FORUM GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTION

# VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS FOR BANANAS

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are standards developed at local, national or international level by organizations from the public and private sectors on environmental and social improvements. Private VSS are developed by businesses or NGOs. In the agricultural sector, VSS promote sustainability along the value chain. They define criteria to be met by the certified organization or product, often resulting in an identifiable label for consumers.

Over the last decade, certified commodities markets have grown at annual rates of between 20% and 100%, along with an increasing number of private standards. An increasing number of agricultural producers and traders get certified as they identify potential social, environmental but also economic benefits in VSS. Among the environmental and social labels, the most common in the agricultural sector are the Rainforest Alliance, organic agriculture and fair trade labels.

## VSS IN THE BANANA INDUSTRY

- VSS are becoming mainstream in the banana export market as big companies measure and showcase the improvement of their practices to limit supply and reputational risks.
- In 2013, most of the global certified banana production was compliant with GlobalG.A.P, followed by Rainforest Alliance, organic and Fairtrade.
- Between 2009 and 2012, standard-compliant banana production increased at a rate of 12% per annum. Latin America is historically a sustainable crop production area: the region produces more than 90% of global standard-compliant bananas.



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## Examples of VSS for bananas

### Organic agriculture

- Organic products have to comply with national organic standards. Private organic standards also exist but do not replace the public organic standard in place.
- The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) federates 750 member organizations (non-governmental organic certifying organizations, producer organizations, NGOs, importers and retailers) in more than 120 countries.
- The IFOAM Family of Standards operates as basic voluntary standards to harmonize the different organic certifications.



### Rainforest Alliance

- Based on the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) Standard, which is built around the guiding principles of effective farm planning and management, protection of biodiversity and natural resources, and improved livelihoods.
- Founded in 1987.
- Certifies producers of all sizes.
- The Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) is an association of non-profit conservation organizations (including the Rainforest Alliance) that promote the environmental and social sustainability of agricultural activities through standards for best practices, certification and training for farmers.
- 3.5 million hectares of agricultural land has currently achieved Rainforest Alliance certification, and 1.4 million people have been trained in sustainable land use practices.



### Fairtrade International

- Focuses on small farmer cooperatives and was originally oriented towards social criteria to guarantee fair trading relations and fair production conditions, increasingly incorporating environmental criteria over the years.
- Fairtrade International (FLO) is a not-for-profit multi-stakeholder association that develops Fairtrade standards.
- Founded in 1988 in Germany.
- The Fairtrade system includes 1.65 million farmers and workers in 1 226 producer organizations in 74 countries



### GlobalG.A.P.

- Focuses on production processes
- The Global Partnership for Good Agricultural Practices was founded in 1997.
- Today, more than 400 member organizations such as producers, retailers, industry and service providers support the initiative in more than 100 countries.



### SA8000

- Management standards that aims to measure and improve social performance across all industrial sectors on issues such as child labour, forced and compulsory labour, health and safety, freedom of association and right to collective bargaining, discrimination, disciplinary practices, working hours, remunerations and management system.
- Its criteria are based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and conventions of the ILO and the UN.
- The standard was developed by the Social Accountability International (SAI) multi-stakeholder organization
- Founded in 1997.



#### **Benefits of VSS for producers**

- ✓ Improvement of labour relations
- ✓ Empowerment of employees, in particular women
- ✓ Possibly higher sale prices
- ✓ Environmental impact reduction leading to potential cost reduction
- ✓ Increased awareness of farmers about social and environmental issues related to their work
- ✓ Added value on the market

#### **Benefits for the VSS market**

- ✓ Value assigned to production processes
- ✓ Incentive effect on the market
- ✓ Increased responsibility of consumers

#### **Challenges for producers**

- ➡ Additional costs of certification
- ➡ Conciliation of multiple objectives
- ➡ Mainstream standards could be a barrier to market access
- ➡ Difficulty to comply with labour-related standards due to the seasonal character of banana production

#### **Challenges for the VSS market**

- ➡ Need for harmonization to avoid a “standards war” due to multiple standards
- ➡ Risk of declining requirements to reach mainstream markets
- ➡ Difficulties ensuring the compliance of all suppliers

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## Example of VSS: Rainforest Alliance Certified™

Rainforest Alliance certification is granted to farms that comply with the environmental and social standards of the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN). As an NGO, Rainforest Alliance works closely with the Latin American banana industry. In 1993, the independent farm Platanera Rio Sixaola in Costa Rica became the first certified banana plantation worldwide by obtaining the Rainforest Alliance certification. RA Cert is the Rainforest Alliance's certification arm, and its activities are conducted as an inspection body of Sustainable Farm Certification, Inc. (SFC.)



### Objectives

- ✓ Encourage farmers to grow sustainably.
- ✓ Define practices for sustainable agriculture (SAN standards)
- ✓ Train and support producers.
- ✓ Certifying producers who meet these standards.

## SAN Sustainable Agricultural Standard:

The SAN Sustainable Agricultural Standard for bananas consists of four principles:

- ✓ Effective Planning and Management System
- ✓ Biodiversity Conservation
- ✓ Natural Resource Conservation
- ✓ Improved Livelihoods and Human Wellbeing

Each principle comes with two types of Performance Criteria:

### ➤ Critical Criteria

- ➔ Critical Criteria establish a fundamental baseline and guarantee of quality for certified farms and producer groups.
- ➔ Compliance with Critical Criteria is essential for certification to be granted.

### ➤ Continuous Improvement Criteria

- ➔ The SAN Continuous Improvement System defines performance improvements happening over a 6 year period.
- ➔ In order to remain certified, farms must show increasing levels of compliance with the criteria over time.
- ➔ There are three levels of compliance: 'Good' (Level C); 'Better' (Level B); 'Best' (Level A).
- ➔ To encourage the improvement of farm practices there is a three-step minimum compliance process, with the minimum compliance percentages increasing with each step:

**1** 1st Audit, Year 0: 50% of Level C criteria

**2** 2nd Audit, Year 3: 90% of Level C criteria; 50% of Level B criteria

**3** 3rd Audit, year 6: 90% of Level C criteria; 90% of Level B criteria; 50% of Level A criteria.

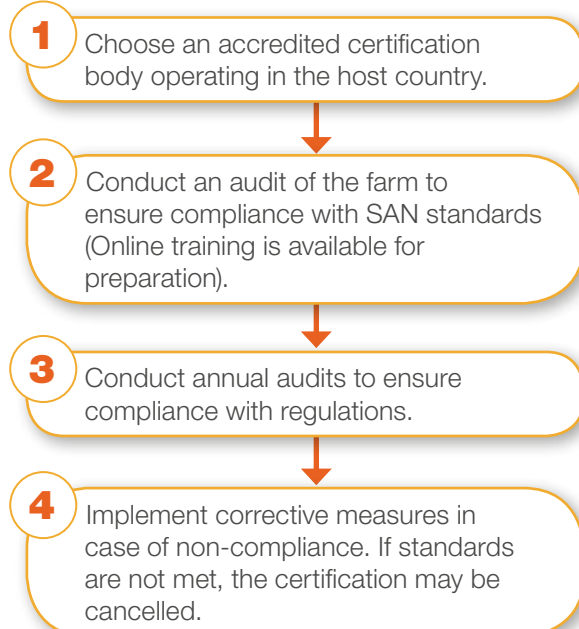


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### Examples of measures taken by Rainforest Alliance Certified™ farms:

- ✓ Treat banana processing wastewater before release.
- ✓ Avoid the use of the paraquat herbicide.
- ✓ Record keeping on agrochemicals.
- ✓ Conduct proper procedures before using agrochemicals.
- ✓ Return banana stalks to the field to enhance organic matter.
- ✓ Proper disposal of plastic bags.

### Certification process



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## Facts on Rainforest Alliance certification for bananas

- By the end of 2016, 1 557 banana farms in 16 countries were Rainforest Alliance Certified, covering close to 145 000 production hectares. Total production volume was 7 350 000 MT.
- Six countries represented close to 90% of the total Rainforest Alliance/SAN banana area: Colombia (38 000 hectares), Costa Rica (29 000 hectares), Guatemala (26 000 hectares), Ecuador (20 000), Honduras (8 500 hectares) and Panama (5 500 hectares).
- The Rainforest Alliance/SAN banana area has increased by 106% between 2008 and 2016.