

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE POLICY

For Rooibos Certification in South Africa

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**RAINFOREST
ALLIANCE**



The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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Policy for Rooibos certification in South Africa	11.02.2022	Until further notice
Linked to:		
SA-S-SD-1 Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard, Farm Requirements and all other annexes, guidance documents and policies listed in this document SA-R-GA-1 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification and Auditing rules SA-R-GA-2 2020 Rainforest Alliance Rules for Certification Bodies UEBT Exception Policy for Rooibos in South Africa		
Replaces:		
SA-P-AF-15-V1 Policy for Rooibos certification in South Africa		
Applicable to:		
Farm Certificate Holders producing rooibos in South Africa; Certification Bodies		

Policies are binding. Policies complement and/or supersede related rules or requirements for the parties they are applicable to.

[More information](#)

For more information about the Rainforest Alliance, visit www.rainforest-alliance.org, contact info@ra.org or contact the Rainforest Alliance Amsterdam Office, De Ruijterkade 6, 1013AA Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

[Translation Disclaimer](#)

For any question related to the precise meaning of the information contained in the translation, please refer to the official English version for clarification. Any discrepancies or differences in meaning due to translation are not binding and have no effect for auditing or certification purposes.



TABLE OF CONTENT

Main changes from Version 1 of 11 February 2021.....	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Conditions for granting the exception	7
2.1 Rooibos producers that only have Rooibos and will move to the UEBT/RA Herbs and Spices certification program	7
2.2 Rooibos producers that have Rooibos and another Rainforest Alliance Certified crop and will be certified under the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program	7
3. Evidence required to qualify for the exception under the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program.....	7
3.1 Evidence required to comply with conditions for legality of land clearance.....	7
3.2 Evidence required to comply with the condition for rehabilitation	8
4. Procedure to apply for the exception under the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program	9



MAIN CHANGES FROM VERSION 1 OF 11 FEBRUARY 2021

The table below summarizes the main changes in this version of the policy from the previous version published on 11 February 2021.

Summary Table		
Pg	Clause	Change
2	Overview table	ADDITION: Also applicable to Certification Bodies.
6	Introduction	CLARIFICATION: Large parts of the Cape Floral Kingdom are zoned for agricultural use so conversion is allowed under South African legislation.
6	Introduction	AMENDMENT: Policy allows Rooibos producers to apply for the exception if they have converted land after 2014 and followed the South African environmental legislation.
6	Introduction	AMENDMENT: The policy is now also open to producers who have not been previously certified with the UTZ and/or RA2017 programs.
7	2.2	<p>ADDITION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Rehabilitation is only needed if required by the EIA conducted. ii. In cases where the land was not legally cleared, the certified farmer must engage with the responsible government entities and implement the requested measures to legalize the cleared land (which might include rehabilitation). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 1 January 2022, any farmer that has done illegal land conversion will not be permitted into the Certification Program • From 1 January 2022, any farmer that has done legal land conversion must provide proof thereof to the Rainforest Alliance and the Certification Body (CB) before conducting an audit. • Producers that were not previously certified with UTZ and/or Rainforest Alliance are eligible for this exception. • The exception and conditions also apply to land that has been converted and is no longer used for rooibos cultivation. • The exception and conditions also apply to other fynbos species, in compliance with the UEBT policy. <p>REMOVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The certified farmer must prove that the land was legally converted AND engage in rehabilitation iii. From 1 January 2022, the certified farmer may make no further land conversion of intact ecosystems, legal or otherwise
7	3.1	<p>AMENDMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In case of land legally converted after 1 January 2014 the following evidence must be submitted to Rainforest Alliance and the CB at least 2 weeks before the audit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ EIA that was conducted ○ Outcome of the EIA and action that was taken following this outcome ○ All farm polygons (in 1 kml /kmz file) • In case of land illegally converted after 1 January 2014 the following evidence must be submitted to Rainforest Alliance and the CB at least 2 weeks before the audit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evidence demonstrating that the legalization process has been formally initiated ○ During subsequent audits progression on the legalization process must be provided to the CB. If no progression is seen



		<p>without clear evidence as to why not, the CB and Rainforest Alliance has the right to withdraw the certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There must be a communicated deadline of this process within a maximum of 3 years. ○ Commitment to rehabilitation as outlined in 3.2 if required by the legalization process. ○ All farm polygons (in 1 kml/kmz file)
8	3.2	<p>AMENDMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An approved rehabilitation plan is developed with support from a local expert and must be in place before the certificate can be issued • Rehabilitation must take place on-farm but does not need to take place on the exact piece of land that was cleared. Off-farm rehabilitation cannot be included. • Rehabilitation activities that have taken place on the farm between 2014 and 2022 may be included, provided the rehabilitation activities and outcomes are documented, and the documented rehabilitation is validated by the CB during the audit; • The rehabilitation plan should include a clear implementation schedule that shows that rehabilitation will start at the latest within 3 months of the audit taking place. • Annual progress report must be checked by the CB during each annual audit.
	4.	<p>SIMPLIFICATION:</p> <p>Rainforest Alliance need to be informed about the intention to certify and application to make use of the exception policy by e-mail.</p>
	5.	<p>REMOVED:</p> <p>Not relevant anymore.</p>



EXCEPTION POLICY FOR SOUTH AFRICAN ROOIBOS FARMS REGARDING THE CONVERSION OF FYNBOS ECOSYSTEM

1. INTRODUCTION

Rooibos farms (producers) that seek certification will need to certify under the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Programme or, if they also cultivate fruit or another crop for which they seek Rainforest Alliance certification, under the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program.

Both the UEBT 2020 Standard and the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard prohibit the conversion of natural ecosystems, from 1 January 2014 onward (UEBT indicator 1.2.1, RA (Rainforest Alliance) Requirement 6.1.1).

During the transition to the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance and Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Programs, UEBT and Rainforest Alliance became aware that a number of Rooibos producers certified under the previous standards had cleared within the Fynbos Ecosystem after the 2014 cut-off date. To prevent these producers' exclusion from certification with the associated risk of further ecosystem conversion, and in line with the commitment of both organisations to continue to protect biodiversity, UEBT and Rainforest Alliance agreed to offer the opportunity to already certified Rooibos producers to remain certified and engage in rehabilitation of the cleared ecosystem.

This resulted in the development of the Exception Policy for South African Rooibos farms Version 1 applicable to rooibos producers who were UTZ and Rainforest Alliance certified at the time but wished to continue certification under the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Programme or the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program

Since implementation of the policy only few producers have chosen to finalise their certification under UEBT/RA or RA 2020. This is largely because many producers have converted land in the Cape Floral Kingdom post 2014, which is allowed under South African legislation. Large parts of the Cape Floral Kingdom is zoned for agricultural use and only the Cederberg and Groot Winterhoek Wilderness areas are protected areas in which there is no rooibos farming.

Under South African environmental legislation any conversion of more than 1 hectare or 300sqm for Critically Endangered and Endangered vegetation needs an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which is able to identify areas of High Conservation Value (HCV), including identification of threatened/protected species. If the EIA identifies any HCV area within the area requested for clearing, this will be denied. Rainforest Alliance therefore considers the South African legislation adequate to protect the biodiversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom. For this reason, the Policy has been adapted to allow Rooibos producers to apply for the exception if they have converted land after 2014 and have followed the South African environmental laws.

The policy is now also open to producers who have not been previously certified with the UTZ and/or the RA2017 programs.

This Policy has been developed jointly by UEBT and the Rainforest Alliance with respect to the UEBT/Rainforest Alliance Herbs and Spices Program and the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Certification Program.



2. CONDITIONS FOR GRANTING THE EXCEPTION

2.1 Rooibos producers that will only certify Rooibos

Rooibos producers that are currently certified Rainforest Alliance and/or UTZ and would like to continue certifying Rooibos, will move to the UEBT/RA Herbs and Spices Certification Program. Please consult and follow the UEBT Exception Policy for Rooibos in South Africa.

2.2 Rooibos producers that will certify Rooibos and another crop eligible for Rainforest Alliance certification

Rooibos producers that are currently certified Rainforest Alliance and/or UTZ and would like to continue certifying Rooibos with another crop, such as citrus or table grapes, will move to the Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification Program. Please follow the conditions set out in this exception policy.

- Producers that have converted intact ecosystems (i.e., fynbos) between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2021, may request an exception to Requirement 6.1.1 under the following conditions:
 - i. The certified farmer must prove that the land in question was legally converted. Rehabilitation is only needed if required by the EIA conducted.
 - ii. In cases where the land was not legally cleared, the certified farmer must engage with the responsible government entities and implement the requested measures to legalize the cleared land (which might include rehabilitation).
- From 1 January 2022, any farmer that has done illegal land conversion will not be permitted into the Certification Program
- From 1 January 2022, any farmer that has done legal land conversion must provide proof thereof to the Rainforest Alliance and the Certification Body (CB) before conducting an audit.
- Producers that were not previously certified with UTZ and/or Rainforest Alliance are eligible for this exception.
- The exception and conditions apply to land that has been converted for any crop produced on the same farm, such as citrus.
- The exception and conditions apply to both owned and rented lands (including those that were converted under previous ownership).
- The exception and conditions also apply to land that has been converted and is no longer used for rooibos cultivation. Taking converted land out of production is not sufficient to comply with the requirements of this policy and legalization is still required.
- The exception and conditions also apply to other fynbos species, such as honeybush and buchu which are cultivated in the Cape Floral Kingdom. However, for these other species it is necessary to comply with the UEBT policy as certification will be under UEBT/RA and not Rainforest Alliance 2020 Certification.

3. EVIDENCE REQUIRED TO QUALIFY FOR THE EXCEPTION UNDER THE 2020 RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

To qualify for this exception the producer must provide the following evidence:

3.1 Evidence required to comply with conditions for legality of land clearance

- In case of land legally converted after 1 January 2014 the following evidence must be submitted to Rainforest Alliance and the CB at least 2 weeks before the audit:
 - EIA that was conducted



- Outcome of the EIA and action that was taken following this outcome
 - All farm polygons (in 1 kml /kmz file)
- In case of land illegally converted after 1 January 2014 the following evidence must be submitted to Rainforest Alliance and the CB at least 2 weeks before the audit:
 - Evidence demonstrating that the legalization process has been formally initiated
 - During subsequent audits progression on the legalization process must be provided to the CB. If no progression is seen without clear evidence as to why not, the CB and Rainforest Alliance has the right to withdraw the certificate
 - There must be a communicated deadline of this process within a maximum of 3 years.
 - Commitment to rehabilitation as outlined in 3.2 if required by the legalization process.
 - All farm polygons (in 1 kml/kmz file)

3.2 Evidence required to comply with the condition for rehabilitation

- If required through the legalization process, a rehabilitation plan is developed with support from a local expert and must be in place either during or after the audit, but before the certificate can be issued;
- The rehabilitation plan should include:
 - I. Location of the land
 - II. Rehabilitation ambition
 - III. Foreseen actions/measures/timelines
 - IV. Indicators to be monitored
 - V. Name and organization of the person who defined the plan
- Rehabilitation must take place on-farm, but does not need to take place on the exact piece of land that was cleared. Off-farm rehabilitation cannot be included.
- Rehabilitation activities that have taken place on the farm between 2014 and 2022 may be included, provided the rehabilitation activities and outcomes are documented, and the documented rehabilitation is validated by the CB during the audit;
- The rehabilitation plan should meet the following criteria¹:
 - **Proportional:** the area included in the rehabilitation plan is at least equivalent in size to the area that has been converted. The ambitions set for the rehabilitation plan aim to restore the same ecological conditions (e.g., physical conditions, species composition, structural diversity, functionality, etc.) of the ecosystem that existed before the conversion took place, or the closest conditions possible given the results of ecological assessment;
 - **Equivalent:** the area included in the rehabilitation plan is in the same ecosystem as the area that has been converted. The areas are in the same ecological conditions (e.g., the areas show equivalent physical conditions, species composition, structural diversity, functionality, etc.).
 - **Viable:** there are no known constraints that may limit the implementation of the rehabilitation plan in the short/medium/long-term (e.g., the ownership of the land included in the plan is not limited in time). The ambitions set are achievable given the current ecological assessment results.
 - **Measurable:** the rehabilitation plan includes measurable targets and those are regularly monitored through relevant monitoring indicators and ensure that equivalence is achieved.
- The rehabilitation plan must be integrated into the Farm Management Plan (requirement 1.3.2);
- The rehabilitation plan should include a clear implementation schedule that shows that rehabilitation will start at the latest within 3 months of the audit taking place;
- An annual progress report on the implementation of the rehabilitation plan with clear outcomes must be checked by the CB during each annual audit, and validated by the

¹ Detailed guidelines are being developed and will be made available upon request.



Rainforest Alliance or a local expert appointed by us, until the rehabilitation has been finalized.

4. PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR THE EXCEPTION UNDER THE RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Inform the Rainforest Alliance via herbsandspices@ra.org that you intend to certify under the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program and that your organization wishes to apply for the exception for Rooibos Certification set out in this policy.