# RAINFOREST ALLIANCE GUIDANCE:

## License Renewal During No Audit Years

*Document SA-G-SC-53*

*Version 1*

*English*

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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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| Rainforest Alliance Guidance: License Renewal During No Audit Years | September 5th, 2024 | Until further notice |
| **Linked to** | | |
| SA-R-GA-4 Certification Rules | | |
| **Replaces** | | |
| SA-P-GA-31-V1 Policy for License Renewal During Rainforest Alliance Review Years | | |

| Applicable to |
|---|
| Supply Chain Certificate Holders, Certification Bodies |

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# 1. No Audit Years

In version 1.0 of the [Certification Rules](#), the Rainforest Alliance Review was replaced by No Audit years in the verification method table (Table CR 9: Verification Levels). The No Audit year is applicable to CHs that fall under verification level A for all 3 years in the cycle, and verification levels B and C during year 2 surveillance.

**This document and the outlined process is exclusively applicable to CHs with verification levels B and C, as it involves the Certification Body (CB) as the third party.**

The table below illustrates in which year and for which risk level 'No Audit' is applicable:

Table CR 9: Verification Levels

| Verification level | Verification method | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Certification | Surveillance 1 | Surveillance 2 |
| A-very low | No audit | No audit | No audit |
| B-low | CB remote certification audit | CB remote surveillance audit | No audit |
| C-medium | On site CB certification audit | CB remote surveillance audit | No audit |
| D-high | On site CB certification audit | On site CB surveillance audit | CB remote surveillance audit |
| E-very high | On site CB certification audit | On site CB surveillance audit | On site CB surveillance audit |

The verification of conformity during the No Audit years is conducted by the Rainforest Alliance throughout the duration of the license. It is important to note that the supply chain CHs must first complete their yearly license renewal in the RACP by updating their Supply Chain Risk Assessment (SCRA) and receiving verification level(s). The CH will then fill out their self-assessment and contact their CB, who will formally send the updated documents (see section 3 below) to the Rainforest Alliance for license renewal.

# 2. Responsibilities for License Renewal During No Audit Years

## Certificate Holders

- Update and re-confirm the certification scope in RACP yearly for verification levels to be calculated again. For verification levels B-E, the email that includes the most recent pending license code of the Supply Chain Risk Assessment (SCRA) must be forwarded to the CB. CHs are responsible for completing their license renewal 3-6 months prior to their license expiration.
- Complete the self-assessment and determine conformity or nonconformity to each requirement. Columns **D and E should be filled in completely** in the document and uploaded to the RACP yearly.
- Ensure there is a valid License Agreement in RACP.
- Initiate the Handshake with the CB.
- After completing the above points, the CH should contact their CB and request the update to the certificate's validity for the license renewal.
- NOTE: There may be administrative fees charged by the CB for completing the license renewal process.
- NOTE: The CB is not responsible for reminding the CH to update their certification scope, SCRA, self-assessment, or license agreement. Compliance with these requirements is the sole responsibility of the CH.

## Certification Bodies

- Receive the CH's updated verification level(s) and assess the verification method for that year.
- Complete the Handshake with the relevant CH.
- Review the RACP scope of the CH to verify any updates to the certificate and attached annex.
- Update and submit the certificate with the new license validity dates on the CH's certificate annex and request the license renewal via the Microsoft Form to the Rainforest Alliance.
- For CHs who submitted a corrective action plan for NCs received, the CB must verify whether those NCs have been effectively closed. In addition to the updated certificate, the audit report with evidence of closure of those NCs must be sent to the Rainforest Alliance.

## The Rainforest Alliance

- Ensures that the CH has their next pending license created in RACP and has received verification levels for all their sites.
- Completes checks to ensure the license renewal request by the CB and documentation by the CH are complete and correct (Certificate, Self-Assessment, valid License Agreement, and additional documentation, if applicable).

- Informs the CH and/or CB whether any of the above documents are missing or incomplete before granting the license.
- Takes final decision on granting new license in RACP and notifies the CB.
- Verifies CH's conformity to the applicable requirements and follows-up with the CH to ensure compliance. This review may occur either during or after the license renewal has been granted to the CH.
- Informs the CB if the CH has any non-conformities which could lead to suspension of the license or an increase in their verification level.

# 3. Exceptions for No Audit Years

There are two exceptions in which CBs should still perform an audit for CHs who would usually not require one:

## Full closure of non-conformities

If a CH has submitted a corrective action plan for NCs received and some of those NCs are still pending verification of closure, the CB must carry out a follow-up audit to verify the closure of the NCs within 12 months of the previous audit start date. This can be done through remote checks, if possible.

## Multi-site CHs with different verification levels

In the case of multi-site CHs with different verification levels (A, B-E), the Rainforest Alliance will not carry out separate or additional verifications for sites that fall under 'No Audit'. This is because these sites are already included in the management plan presented by the CH's central management location during the audit by the CB and included on the CB certificate.

# 4. FAQ

**Q:** How will the Rainforest Alliance verify the CH's conformity during No Audit years?

**A:** The Rainforest Alliance will verify a CH's conformity based on their RACP profile, the completed self-assessment, online traceability, payments of SD/SI, and any other applicable requirements.

As outlined in the Certification and the Auditing Rules, the Rainforest Alliance reserves the right to suspend a license and/or to increase the verification level, if the applicable requirements are not complied with.

*However, please note that this process for the review is subject to change. We recommend staying updated with the Rainforest Alliance for any updates or clarifications regarding this process.*

**Q:** Can the CB issue an invoice for the No Audit year?

**A:** Yes, CBs can issue an invoice to CHs to submit the request for renewal of the license for the No Audit years. There may be additional costs incurred if verification of closure of non-conformities is required. This invoice is for administrative purposes only, and the Rainforest Alliance is not involved in this process nor responsible for calculating or managing these fees.

**Q**: What if a CH indicates an NC in their self-assessment? How will this be checked?

**A:** The Rainforest Alliance will review the self-assessment for all CHs after receiving the request for their new license. If a NC is identified during the review, the Rainforest Alliance will follow up directly with the CH to resolve this.

For any further questions or inquiries, please contact us at [cbcert@ra.org](mailto:cbcert@ra.org) (for CBs) or at [customersuccess@ra.org](mailto:customersuccess@ra.org) (for CHs). We are here to assist you and provide any additional information you may need.