



Chapter 6: Environment

6.1 Forests, other Natural Ecosystems and Protected Areas

Natural ecosystems include terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems

All-natural terrestrial ecosystems:

- Natural forests
- Woodlands
- Shrublands
- Savannahs
- Grasslands
- Paramo
- Deserts



All natural aquatic ecosystems:

- Lakes
- Rivers
- Oceans
- Wetlands

6.1 Forests, other Natural Ecosystems and Protected Areas

No.	Base requirements	Group certification			Ind. cert.
		S-farms	L-farms	Group mgt.	S/L
6.1.1	<p>From January 1st, 2014, onward, <u>natural forests</u> and other natural ecosystems have not been <u>converted</u> into agricultural production or other land uses.</p> <p><i>Please see A-09-SCRL-B-FA –Environment Annex</i></p>	✓	✓		✓
6.1.2	<p>Production or processing does not occur in protected areas or their officially designated <u>buffer zones</u>, except where it complies with applicable law.</p> <p><i>Please see A-09-SCRL-B-FA –Environment Annex</i></p>	✓	✓		✓
No.	Specialized requirement				
6.1.3	<p>The management plan includes mitigation measures from the Risk Assessment Tool (1.3.1) for High Conservation Values (1.3.2). Management implements these measures.</p> <p><i>Please see A-11-SCRL-B-CH Risk Assessment Tool</i></p>		✓	✓	✓

Read the requirements and their applicability before you move on to the next page

6.1.1

No conversion of natural forests and other natural ecosystems into agricultural production or other land uses

The requirement applies to conversion of natural forest and other natural ecosystems that have taken place since **January 1st, 2014**.

This means that conversion of natural forests (deforestation) and other natural ecosystems after this cut-off date **is not allowed**.



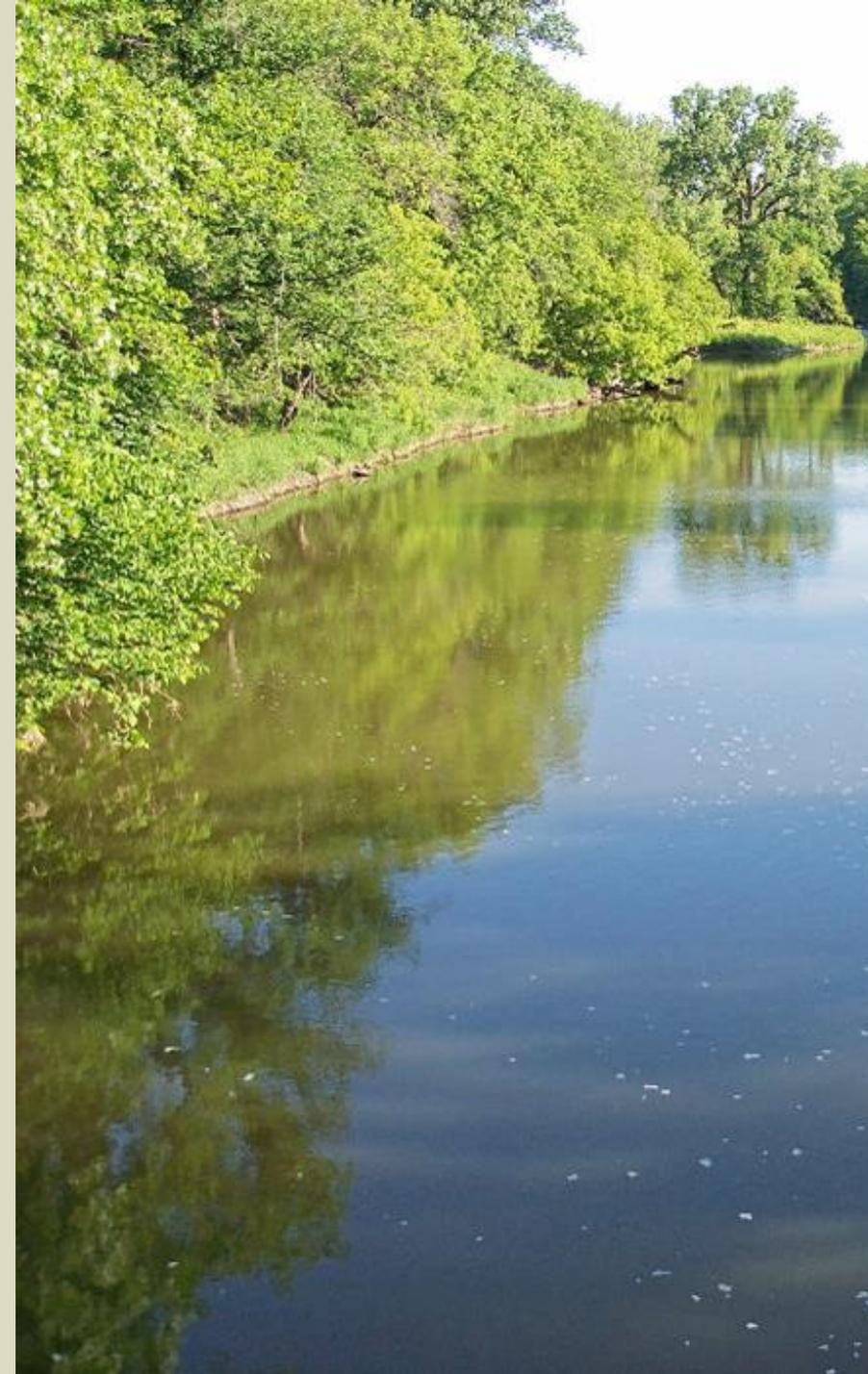
6.1.1
6.1.2

Geodata risk assessment

The Rainforest Alliance provides Farm Certificate Holders with a geodata risk assessment that includes the following information:

- Deforestation risk map
- Encroachment into protected areas risk map (see 6.1.2)*
- Geodata risk table of each farm unit with the level of risk of deforestation and encroachment into protected areas

* *Encroachment into protected areas refers to the use of land inside protected areas for agricultural purposes.*



6.1.1

Identification of Conversion

In the deforestation risk assessment, farm Certificate Holders upload **geodata** to determine whether a **farm unit** possesses **a risk** of deforestation from 2014 onwards. That means any deforestation or conversion after January 1, 2014, is taken into consideration for the assessment.

Based on the percentage of the area of the farm unit that **overlaps with the deforested area**, three risk levels are assigned:

- low risk (**green**) **0%** overlap
- medium risk (**orange**) up to **1.2%** overlap
- high risk (**red**) **more** than **1.2%** overlap

Low risk is considered insignificant risk, while **medium and high risk** are considered **significant risk**.



6.1.1

Results of the risk assessment are used to identify risk areas for non-compliance

After identifying the risks, the Certificate Holder must **evaluate** them and take steps to **manage** them appropriately.

For farm units with a significant risk of deforestation, the Certificate Holder is required to conduct **internal inspections** of these areas.

The inspections must confirm **whether any land conversion has occurred** by collecting evidence through **farmer interviews** and **field observations**.

The evidence must be available and kept safe throughout and after the audit process.

Please see: Environment Annex



6.1.1

Acceptable land use changes

Sometimes the deforestation risk assessment may not differentiate between conversion and **acceptable land use changes**, such as:

- **Forest plantations** that are harvested and converted to agricultural use but do not involve conversion of natural ecosystems
- **Harvesting of shade trees** that does not involve conversion of natural forests
- **Tree cover loss** that occurred before the 2014 cut-off date



6.1.1

Thresholds of minor conversion that has already occurred

If the internal inspection before the 1st certification audit finds conversion that occurred **between January 1st 2014 and December 31st 2020** the Certificate Holder must check if it falls within the minor conversion **thresholds**, implement a **restoration plan** and submit it to RA.

A) Large farms in groups and individual farms: conversion must not comprise more than **1%** of the **land of the farm** or more than 10 hectares (whichever is smaller).

B) Small farms in group certification: conversion must not comprise more than **1%** of the **total** land of the farm unit area.

Please see: Environment Annex



6.1.1

Restoration plan of minor conversion that has already occurred

Farm management must create a restoration plan with an ecologist to remediate the converted forest or ecosystem. **The restoration plan must be:**

- **Proportional:** The area to be restored must be at least as big as the converted area.
- **Equivalent:** The ecosystem to be restored must be equivalent to the lost natural ecosystem in ecological value.
- **Additional:** The restoration activities must be additional to the activities planned for other reasons such as compliance with the requirements on natural vegetation.
- **Permanent:** The restoration activities must be designed in a way to ensure long-term viability.



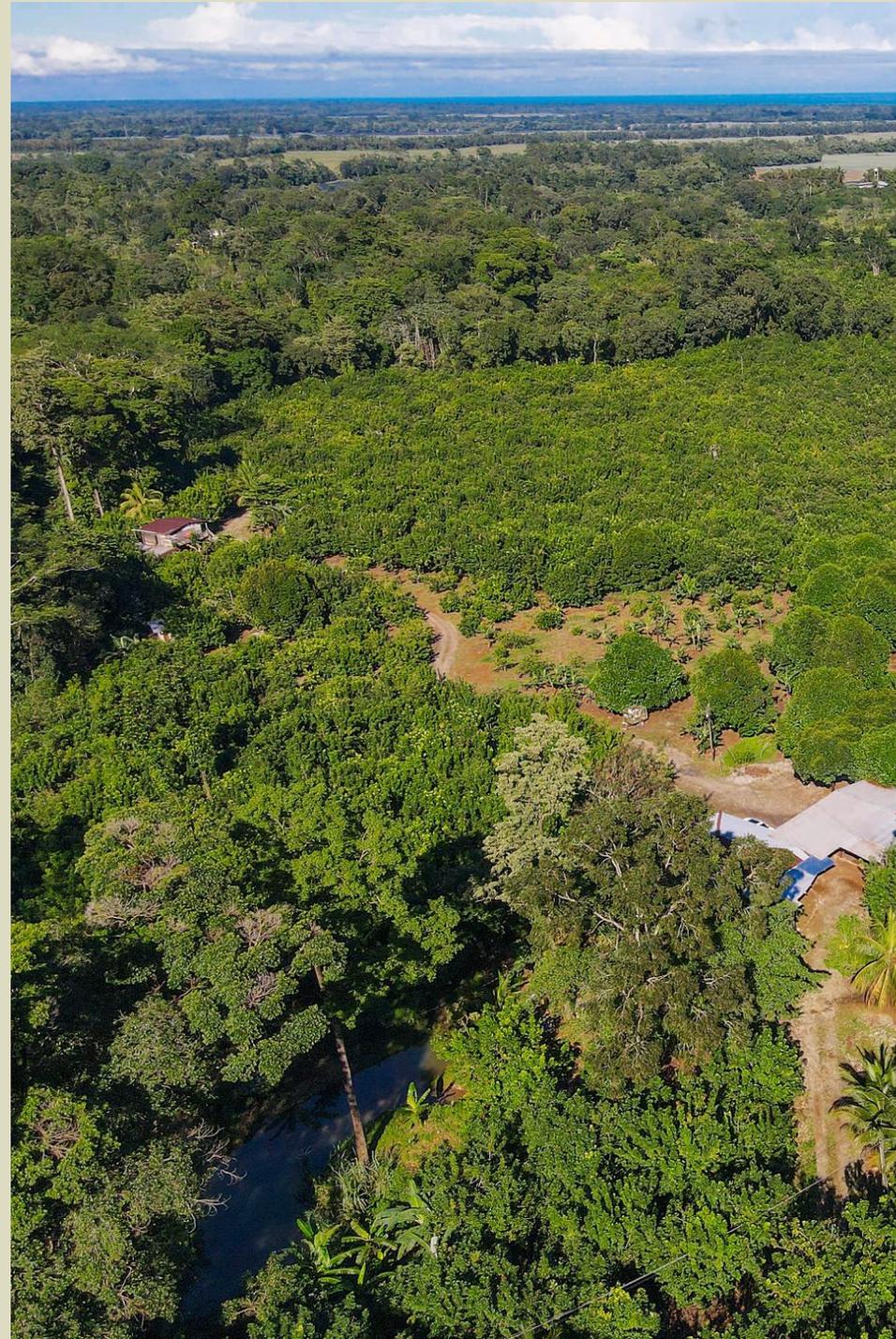
6.1.1

Additional Measures for Groups

To avoid further conversion, group management must implement for groups:

- **A sanction system**
- **Awareness-raising** measures
- **Collection of polygons** of farm units with significant risk of deforestation.

When the conversion(s) are above the thresholds, the Certificate Holder shall **exclude the non-compliant group member or farm from the certification program.**



Case scenario

Let's look at the conversion requirement more through an example.



A Rainforest Alliance **certified tea plantation** was established in **2005**.

The location of the farm is on a **converted marsh**.

When the plantation first started, the marshes were drained, and dry areas were artificially created for planting purposes.

?

Is this farm going to lose their certificate because of the conversion?

Think about the answer before you move on to the next page

Case scenario - Solution

The answer is **"No"**, the farm will not lose **their certificate** due to the conversion taken place in 2005.

While draining marshes is a conversion of a natural ecosystem, and the standard requirement 6.1.1 prohibits this, the conversion took place in 2005, **before the cut-off date of 2014.**

Therefore, this tea farm is compliant with the requirement.



Case scenario

Let's look at the conversion requirement more through another example.



A **banana** farm was established in **2016** after **clearing a tropical rainforest**.

In 2020, the farm got to know the Rainforest Alliance certification and decided to try to pursue certification.

?

Can this farm become Rainforest Alliance certified?

Think about the answer before you move on to the next page

Case scenario - Solution

The answer is **"No"**, the farm will not be able to become certified.

The conversion of the natural forest into a banana plantation was conducted in 2016, which is **after** the cut-off date 2014.

Therefore, this farm does not comply with the requirement for non-conversion and cannot become eligible for certification.

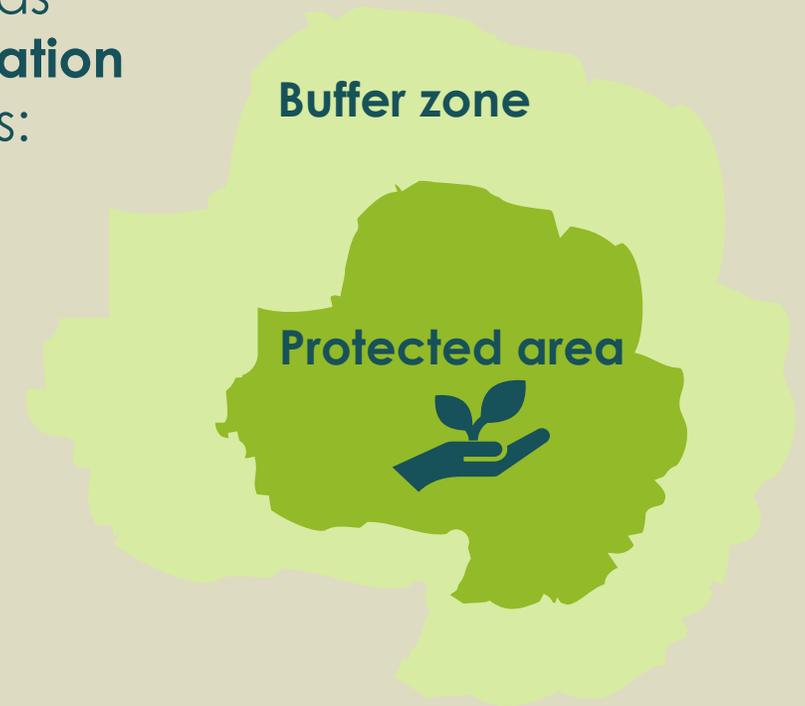


6.1.2

Production or processing does not occur in protected areas or buffer zones

These are areas of land declared or designated as protected by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, and relevant authorities such as:

- Strict nature reserves
- Wilderness areas
- National parks
- Natural monuments
- Private reserves, or other protected areas
- UNESCO Biosphere reserves
- World Heritage Sites



In these protected areas and their buffer zones, classified as **“No-go”** by the Rainforest Alliance, **agricultural production is not allowed** under any circumstance.

6.1.2

Production in protected areas or buffer zones

In some protected areas agricultural production is allowed according to **applicable law** such as:

- Habitat/species management areas
- Protected landscapes
- Protected areas with sustainable use of resources
- Other protected areas not classified by IUCN.



In these protected Areas and their buffer zones, classified as “**Go**” by the Rainforest Alliance, agricultural production **is allowed under certain conditions** and producers need to demonstrate land use and/or legal rights in compliance with national legislation.

Case scenario

Let's look at the requirement on protected areas and buffer zones more through an example.



A coconut farm is located **within the buffer zone** of a national park. The national park is a protected area.

According to the law of the country, **buffer zones are recognized as multi-use zones**, whereby certain activities including agricultural production are permitted.

However, the standard requirement 6.1.2 prohibits production in buffer zones of protected areas.

?

Following the local law, is the farm non-compliant with the Standard?

Think about the answer before you move on to the next page

Case scenario - Solution

The answer is "**No**". **The farm is compliant** with the Standard because they follow the local law.

Although the farm is located within the buffer zone of a protected area, agricultural production is permitted by the applicable law.

Therefore, it falls under the exception and is allowed.



6.1.3

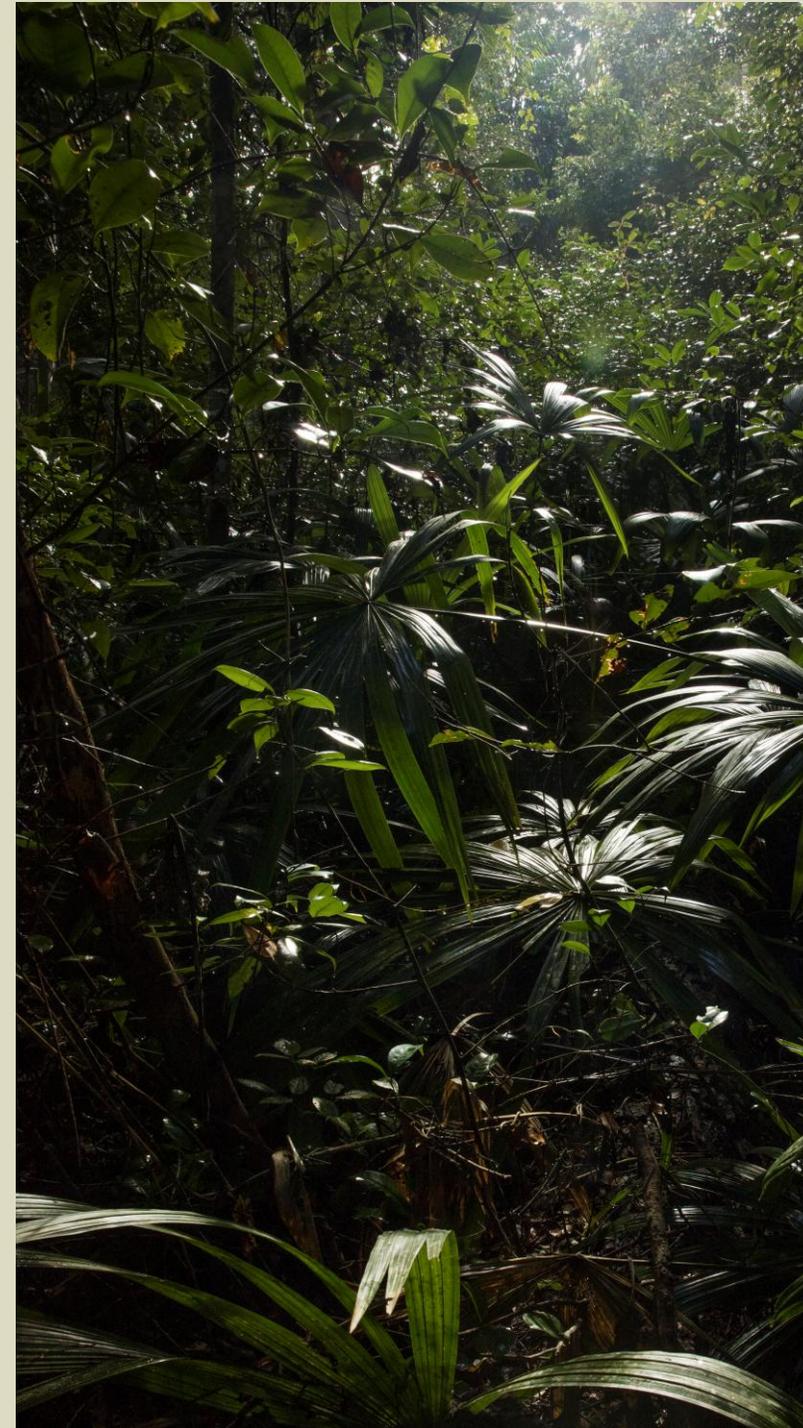
Management plan includes mitigation measures from the Risk Assessment Tool

In the **Risk Assessment Tool** there are risk evaluation questions for High Conservation Values.

Based on the answers, the tool will propose a series of mitigation measures.

These mitigation measures need to be included in the farm's management plan and consequently implemented to comply with requirement 6.1.3.

Please see Guidance: Risk Assessment Tool





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