






# **SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE**

Approval Procedure and Requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies

## Approvals

The signatures below certify that this Scheme Certification Manual has been reviewed, approved and demonstrates that the signatories are aware of all the requirements contained herein and are committed to upholding them.

	Name	Signature	Position	Date
Prepared by	Lesley Colvin		Standards and Compliance Manager	15/02/2022
Reviewed by	Charles Hubbard		Operations Manager (Temp.)	18/02/2022
Approved by	Una Jones		Chief Executive	22/02/2022

## Amendment Record

This Scheme Certification Manual is reviewed annually to ensure its continuing relevance to the systems and processes that it describes. A record of contextual additions or omissions is given below:

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# 1. NORMATIVE REFERENCES

The following referenced documents are to be used in conjunction as binding requirements wherever applicable. It is understood that any updated versions of these documents released from the relevant body will replace these references throughout these procedures and the relevant certification and accreditation bodies shall conform and follow these updated versions in accordance with the timeline established by the relevant body. References to individual requirements within these documents refer to the version noted in this section.

Standard	Title
ISO/IEC 9001: 2015	Quality Management Systems
ISO/IEC 17007: 2009	Conformity assessment — Guidance for drafting normative documents suitable for use for conformity assessment.
ISO/IEC 17011: 2017	Conformity Assessment – Requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies
ISO/IEC 17020: 2015	Conformity assessment — Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection
ISO/IEC 17021: 2015	Requirements for Certification Bodies
ISO/IEC 17030: 2021	Conformity assessment — General requirements for third-party marks of conformity
ISO/IEC 17065: 2012	Conformity Assessment – Requirements for Bodies Providing Certifying Products, Processes and Services
ISO/IEC 17067: 2013	Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes
EA-1/22 A-AB: 2020	EA Procedure and Criteria for the Evaluation of CASs by EA Accreditation Body Members
IAF MD 25: 2022	Accreditation Assessment of CABs with Activities in Multiple Countries
ISEAL	Setting Social and Environmental Standards – Code of Good Practice
ISEAL	Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards – Code of Good Practice
ISEAL	Assessing Impacts of Social and Environmental Standard Systems – Code of Good Practice

## 2. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this document.

SFA	The Sustainable Fibre Alliance, owner of the Conformity Assessment Scheme
Accreditation	A third-party attestation that a CAB is competent to carry out specific certification activities. Achieving accreditation gives a CAB the authority to grant certification to a Standard.
Applicant	Organisation or person responsible to a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) for ensuring that certification requirements, including product requirements, are fulfilled
Assessment	Systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria is being met, and where appropriate offer support for continuous improvement.
Assessor	A Conformity Assessment Body representative who conducts assessments.
Assurance	Systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively either in the form of assessment or audit
Audit	Systematic, independent, and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria is being met
Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)	Organisation performing professional and objective assurance of producers and processors operating the certification systems applying for initial or continued approval as CAB
CAR	Corrective Action Report.
Certification	The provision by an independent conformity assessment body of written assurance (Certificate of Conformity or a scope certificate) that the product, service or system in question meets specific requirements.
Certification Requirement	Specified requirement, including product requirements that are fulfilled by the applicant as a condition of establishing or maintaining Certification
Certified Organisation	An organisation who holds a Certificate of Conformity for the Scheme
Competence	Ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results
Conformity	Fulfilment of a requirement.
Conformity Assessment Scheme (CAS)	Certification system related to specified products, to which the exact specified requirements, specific rules and procedures apply
Consultancy	Participation in a) The designing, manufacturing, installing, maintaining or distributing of a certified product or a product to be certified, or b) The designing, implementing, operating or maintaining of a certified process or a process to be certified, or c) The designing, implementing, providing or maintaining of a certified service or a service to be certified
Correction	Action to eliminate a detected nonconformity
Corrective Action	Action to eliminate the cause of non-conformity and to prevent a recurrence
Documented information	Information required to be controlled and maintained by an organisation and the medium on which it is contained



Evaluation	Combination of the selection and determination functions of conformity assessment activities
Freelancer	An individual who is hired by an accreditation body or a CAB to act as an assessor or an auditor on a contract/non-employee basis, but subject to the accreditation/CAB's procedures. A freelancer may not also conduct applicant recruitment or management activities (see: subcontractor). An individual may be considered to be a freelancer if payment is made to a company (e.g. an incorporated consulting business), provided that the work is stipulated to be done by a named individual and that the business does not engage in applicant recruitment or management activities.
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
Impartiality	Presence of objectivity
MS	Management System
NAB	National Accreditation Body
NCR	Non-Conformity Report.
Process	Set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs
Processor	An organisation that undertakes as a the primary processing stages of raw cashmere fibre making it ready for onward processing activity such as spinning, dyeing and weaving.
Producer	A farmer, farm or nomadic herding family that produces cashmere fibre
Producer Organisation	A group of farmers, farms or nomadic herding families that work together to produce cashmere fibre
Product	Result of a process
Product Requirement	A requirement that relates directly to a product, specified in standards or other normative documents identified by the Conformity Assessment scheme
Scheme Owner	Person or organisation responsible for developing and maintaining a specific Conformity Assessment Scheme (CAS)
Scope of Certification	Identification of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The product(s), process(es) or service(s) for which the certification is granted,</li> <li>• The applicable Conformity Assessment scheme, and</li> <li>• The standard(s) and other normative documents, including their date of publication, to which it is judged that the product(s), process(es) or service(s) comply</li> </ul>
Service	Result of at least one activity necessarily performed at the interface between the supplier and the customer, which is generally intangible
Site	Any geographically distinct unit within a certificate scope. Locations which are geographically distinct or have different civic addresses are considered to be separate sites (see exception for farms). Subcontractors are not considered to be sites. Includes: farms, facilities, offices
Subcontractor	An independent legal entity hired by a CAB to provide services related to certification activities, excluding freelancers.  OR  An independent legal entity hired by an accreditation body to provide services related to accreditation activities, excluding freelancers.

Suspension	The limitation of a certificate of compliance or accreditation due to a specific non-conformity or issue. A suspension may be lifted when the non-conformity or issue is resolved, and the certificate of compliance or accreditation becomes active again immediately.
Top Management	The SFA Board of Directors and Charity Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of the Company delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Withdrawal	The revocation of a certificate of compliance or accreditation due to a specific non-conformity or issue, or at the request of the accredited/certified party. Following a withdrawal of accreditation/certification, a new assessment/audit is required for accreditation/certification to return to an active status.



## 3. INTRODUCTION

### 3.1 Objective of this manual

This document specifies the Sustainable Fibre Alliance's approval and monitoring procedures and sets out the requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies to achieve and maintain approval to perform certification according to the Sustainable Fibre Alliance's Sustainable Cashmere Standard Conformity Assessment Scheme referred to as the 'CAS' or the 'scheme' in the following document, and to implement its related quality assurance system. The Sustainable Fibre Alliance are referred to as the 'Scheme Owner' in the following document.

### 3.2 Principles

3.2.1 Organisations performing professional and objective assurance of operating product certification systems can apply for approval as an approved Conformity Assessment Body to the Sustainable Fibre Alliance. These Organisations are referred to as 'Conformity Assessment Bodies' or 'CABs' in the following document.

3.2.2 For this approval process as well as for continuous monitoring of the approved CABs, the Scheme Owner is cooperating with National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) that agree with the Scheme Owner to follow the approval and monitoring procedure and the requirements as specified in this document in their approval process for the CAS. The main cooperating partners for this process are the home Accreditation Body (hAB) (United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)) and ISEAL; however, the Scheme Owner may accept that the approval process is performed by the CAB's actual NAB, as long as this NAB is:

- a) a recognised national or international Accreditation Body (such as being bound by EA's and/or IAF's MLA)
- b) complies with the procedures of ISO/IEC 17011 "Conformity assessment - General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies"
- c) has the necessary competence, and
- d) follows the given procedures to accredit to the Sustainable Cashmere Standard scope(s).

3.2.3 The requirements for CABs set out in this manual are based upon the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 "Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services". The Scheme Owner shall not contradict or exclude any of the requirements included in ISO/IEC 17065.

3.2.4 The scheme owner will protect the confidentiality of information provided by parties involved in the scheme by ensuring all personnel have each signed a confidentiality agreement and conflict of interest declarations, and both are required and used in a manner consistent with SCS-072-01.0-EN Data Protection Policy.

3.2.5 The scheme owner shall maintain and publish a directory of components of the CAS and the relevant scheme documents on its website. This shall make the entire process transparent and avoid any fraudulent claim of certification.

### 3.3 Scope

The procedures and requirements as specified in this manual are applicable for all newly applying CABs as well as for current approved CABs. The general implementation deadline to fully comply with all requirements of the current issue of this manual is two years after its release (*February 1<sup>st</sup> 2022*) unless other / specific advice is given.

### 3.4 Approval and monitoring procedure

#### 3.4.1. Prerequisite for Conformity Assessment Bodies

Conformity Assessment Bodies applying for approval as approved CAB must complete an application form and be prepared to comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

Where the Scheme Owner approves a CAB to deliver the CAS before they are accredited to ISO/IEC 17065, they must become accredited within 9 months from the date that approval is granted. Refer to the requirements set out Appendix C of document SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards.

### 3.4.2. Application procedure

1. Applications for approval of newly applying CABs shall be submitted by email [Standards@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:Standards@sustainablefibre.org) using the Application Form for CABs on [scheme Owner resources website](#).
2. Applications will be considered only if they contain the following information / declarations:
  - a. Legal name, legal status, address and legal representative of applicant
  - b. List of all offices and branches of the applicant
  - c. Scope(s) according to which the applicant seeks approval  
Approval can be applied according to one of or all of the following scopes:
    - i. Animal Husbandry - Certificate of Compliance
    - ii. Rangeland Stewardship - Certificate of Compliance
    - iii. Clean Fibre Processing.
  - d. A copy of the applicant's accreditation certificate(s) and a list of ISO/IEC:17065 accredited scopes (if applicable)
  - e. Statement by the CAB on how it intends to carry out the CAS certification procedure
  - f. Declaration that the applicant agrees to the procedure and all requirements of this manual and that they agree to enter into a formal contract (CAB Agreement SCS-029-01.0-EN) if approved
  - g. Declaration that the CAB agrees to use the CAS as it is published, without any limitations and without any additions or reductions.
  - h. A summary presentation of the relevant professional qualifications and experience including Curriculum Vitae for all designated personnel.
3. Applications must be accompanied by a non-refundable Processing Fee of £400 GBP plus tax if applicable ("Processing Fee") to be transferred to the bank account of Sustainable Fibre Alliance
4. After acceptance of the application by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance the prospective CAB, applicants must make a further (non-refundable) payment of £5000 GBP plus tax (if applicable) ("Application Fee") to be transferred to the bank account of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance. This fee will be payable upon conclusion of an approval contract (or equivalent thereof) between the Sustainable Fibre Alliance and the prospective CAB.
5. Where there is evidence of accreditation by Textile Exchange for the Responsible Wool Scheme<sup>1</sup> in the form of a current Scope Certificate, the Scheme Owner will accept as evidence of compliance with the CAS CAB requirements the Application Fee will not apply. Instead, the CAB will be charged the scope Approval Fee of £2000 GBP plus tax to review the first approval scope, and £1000 GBP plus tax to review each additional approval scope. The CAB will be subject to Monitoring monitoring activities in order to retain their approval for the CAS going forward.
6. Additional fees may be charged where the Registration Fee or the Approval Fee does not cover all travel and subsistence costs that will be incurred during an audit visit. These will be calculated on an individual basis.

### 3.4.3. Evaluation requirements for conformity assessment bodies

When evaluating CABs the Scheme Owner will comply with the procedures of ISO/IEC Guide 17011:2004 "Conformity assessment - General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies" and follow the CAS approval and monitoring procedure as provided for in this manual.

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance will include the following specific minimum evaluation and Monitoring components in its respective approval and monitoring procedure:

- a. Approval visit to the headquarter / main office of the initially applying CAB
- b. Witness an assessment performed at a CAB applicant (provided that the CAB has applied for this scope)
- c. Continuous monitoring of approved Conformity Assessment Bodies, including performing at least one up-date Monitoring visit every second year to the/an office conducting certifications and at least one witness or review audit every second year of granted approval

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of approval/accreditation to other schemes may be accepted. Please contact the SFA with details of the scheme and we will carry out a benchmarking exercise to determine if there is sufficient correlation to the requirements of the CAS to accept current approval in lieu of an approval visit.

- d. A minimum of 5 applicant files or 5% of the files of applicants contracted by the CAB (whichever is greater) are to be checked on each (up-date) approval visit
- e. The CAB have access to an experts in quality assurance of the relevant scopes that the CAB is approved to certify, who is registered with the CAS.
- f. Inform the CAS on any certification decision taken.
- g. The Scheme Owner will report any perceived violations by the CAB to the applicable National Accreditation Body(ies).

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance reserves the right to review any records of assessment of a CAB at any time during its approval period.

#### 3.4.4. Approval decision

The Scheme Owner decides if approval according to the applied scope(s) (see 6.2.2.c) based on the procedures and requirements of this document will be granted to the CAB.

The Scheme Owner may decide to grant approval only for one or several of the applied scopes and to refuse approval for other applied scopes.

Granted approval is a prerequisite for conclusion of the 'Conformity Assessments Contract' between the Scheme Owner, which is the operating unit of CAS and the CAB. Only after conclusion of the 'Conformity Assessment Contract' is the CAB entitled to act as approved CAB and provide corresponding CAS certification. CABs shall maintain at all times accreditation to at least one standard according to ISO/IEC 17065 as well as 'Scheme Owner approval'. The Scheme Owner reserves the right to suspend or terminate the contract, to limit the approved scope as detailed in the 'Conformity Assessment Contract and to investigate any arising problems.

### 3.5 Publication of approved CABs and their conditions

The approved CABs and their approved scope(s) shall be published on the Scheme Owner's website. Further this manual shall be published on the Scheme Owner's website in order to enable reporting of any perceived violations thereof to the Scheme Owner and/or to the applicable National Accreditation Body.

### 3.6 CAS

The components of the CAS that provide the criteria for the producer's requirements for compliance with the 'SFA's Cashmere Standard' are as follows:

- Animal Husbandry and Cashmere Harvesting Code of Practice
- Rangeland Stewardship Code of Practice
- Clean Fibre Processing Code of Practice.

The scheme owner shall maintain and publish a directory of components of the CAS and the relevant scheme documents on its website. This shall make the entire process transparent and avoid any fraudulent claim of certification. Refer to SCS-036-02.0-EN Standard Setting Procedure clause 7.5 for full details.

#### 3.6.1 Awarding Criteria

Analysis during the development of the CAS identified that the concept of compliance criteria outside of legislative requirements would be something new. SFA members, however, insisted that their customers were demanding additional assurances activities above those required by the legislation of the products they produced. The scheme needed to recognise improved land management environmental and animal welfare best practices. Also, if the achievement criteria were set too high, there would be reduced scheme uptake. The analysis also concluded that producer and processing organisation take-up would improve if the scheme used a continuous improvement approach to compliance. It would recognise progress and motivate progress to the highest level of compliance. The continuous improvement model would enable producers and processors to demonstrate sustainable practices implemented across the cashmere supply chain.

#### a. Traffic lights

A 'traffic light' system is used to assess the level of compliance of a producer or processor with the Code of Practice requirements and is intended to incentivize continual improvement in compliance:

- **Green** - fully compliant (scores 2 points)
- **Orange** - partly compliant but needing improvement (scores 1 point)
- **Red** - not sufficient to comply with the Code's requirements (scores 0 points).

## b. Indicators

Each Code of Practice is made up of Core Indicators and Improvement Indicators.

- **Core indicators** – are identified as such if the instruction within the indicator is '**must**'
- **Improvement indicators** – are identified as such if the instruction within the indicator is '**should**'.

**IMPORTANT:** All core indicators are mandatory and must all be achieved at '**Green**' level before any certification will be considered.

Core indicators are classified as such if they are:

- **Safety Critical** - e.g., where there is a risk of illness, injury or death if the relevant processes and procedures are not carried out correctly
- **Technically Critical** - e.g., where there is a risk of damage to the fibre, machinery or property if the relevant processes and procedures are not carried out correctly
- **Legislative** – e.g., any criterion which refers to legislation.

Animal Husbandry			
	BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
Core indicators	100% (76)	100% (76)	100% (76)
+ Improvement indicators		50-94 % (36-67)	95-100 % (68-72)
Minimum scores required	76/76 + 0/72	76/76 + 36/72	76/76 + 68/72

Rangeland Stewardship		
BRONZE	SILVER	GOLD
29/58 (51-79%)	46/58 (80-89%)	52/58 (90-100%)

Clean Fibre Processing			
Mandatory Units	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Core indicators	100% (118)	100% (118)	100% (118)
+ Improvement indicators	0%	50-94 % (10-17)	95-100 % (18-20)
<b>Optional Units</b> (min 1 req'd)			
<b>Sorting</b>			
Core indicators	100% (14)	100% (14)	100% (14)
+ Improvement indicators	0%	50-94 % (2-3)	95-100 % (4)
<b>Scouring</b>			
Core indicators	100% (26)	100% (26)	100% (26)
+ Improvement indicators	0%	50-94 % (3-5)	95-100 % (6)
<b>De-hairing</b>			
Core indicators	100% (20)	100% (20)	100% (20)
+ Improvement indicators	0%	50-94 % (2-3)	95-100 % (4)
<b>Sampling</b>			
Core indicators	100% (12)	100% (12)	100% (12)
+ Improvement indicators	0%	50-94 % (4-7)	95-100 % (8)

3.6.2 Achievement Criteria



### 3.6.3 CAS Activities

The CAS activities include:

CAS activities	
Selection	Planning and preparation for assessment, specification of the criteria, sampling planning, normative references.
Determination	On-site 3 <sup>rd</sup> party assessment of processes for the production and primary processing of cashmere fibre
Review	Examining the evidence obtained during the assessment to establish whether the requirements have been met
Decisions on Certification	Granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing of certification
Attestation and licensing	Issuing a Certificate of Conformity and granting the right to use 'SFA Certified' Logos
Monitoring	Ongoing assessment to ensure continued compliance with the requirements of the CAS.

### 3.6.4 Assurance

The assurance model is a critical component of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard, which aims to improve livelihoods and economic development in cashmere-producing areas and reduce the environmental impact of cashmere production. The assurance model provides a roadmap for participating Producers to progress from baseline performance, to meeting the CAS Core Indicators, and eventually achieving long-term improvement goals.

The main objectives of the assurance model are to:

1. Verify that cashmere Producers have met the Core Indicators of the relevant Codes of Practice within the CAS.
2. Provide a framework to ensure that Scheme Owner Producers – once licensed – continue to make progress against their continuous improvement priorities and receive adequate capacity building support.
3. Create channels for ongoing learning, through sharing information back to Producers (and Implementing Partners, if applicable) to identify improvement opportunities and compliance gaps.
4. Measure the sustainability performance of Scheme Owner Producers and overall programme impacts, through regular collection of field-level (Results Indicator) data.

The Scheme Owner's approach to assurance is unique from many other standard systems in that it aims to balance credibility with scalability and cost-effectiveness, through combining third-party verification assessments with other types of assessments. The Scheme Owner's approach combines third-party visits with certificate assessments, support visits by Implementing Partners and regular self-assessments by Producers themselves.

In addition, the Scheme Owner assurance model puts a strong emphasis on capacity building and continuous improvement. Producers are required to make ongoing sustainability improvements in order to maintain their approval, and assessments focus not only on compliance but also on identifying areas where further support or capacity building is needed.

### 3.6.5 Core Indicators

Core criteria cover the highest-priority and highest-risk environmental, social and labour issues. Producers and processors are required to comply with all applicable critical criteria at all time as a condition to grant or maintain the certificate.

The Core Indicators provide the critical first steps in reducing the environmental impact of cashmere production and improving livelihoods among cashmere herding/farming communities.



Producers must comply with all relevant Core Indicators to be licensed to sell Scheme Owner Certified Cashmere.

### *3.6.6 Continuous Improvement Criteria*

The Sustainable Cashmere Standard contains a continuous improvement system that requires Producers and processors to gradually increase their compliance over three performance levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. This system is based on a six-year period, and for this purpose, the first certification audit based on the Sustainable Cashmere Standard will be considered as 'Year 0'.

Improvement Indicators can be used by Producers to help guide and measure their sustainability improvements in key areas.

Producers do not need to comply with Improvement Indicators to be licensed to sell Scheme Owner Certified Cashmere. Improvement Indicators are designed to incentivise and measure continuous improvement across all areas of sustainable production.

### *3.6.7 Feedback to the Scheme Owner on the CAS requirements*

The CAB shall seek and record feedback from Applicants and Assessors on any aspect of the CAS including non or poor performance of any component of the scheme, the scheme requirements and scheme assurance activities. The CAB will report this information to the Scheme Owner as indicated in SCS-043-01.2-EN Cashmere Standard CAS Manual (clause 6.6). This feedback will be reviewed by the Scheme Owner along with scheme performance data to ensure the CAS remains relevant and fit for purpose.

## **3.7 Users of the CAS**

### **3.7.1 Producers and Producer Organisations**

Under the SFA Sustainable Cashmere Conformity Assessment Scheme System, two different types of cashmere production system are recognised:

- **Herding:** Semi-nomadic grazing of livestock on communal rangelands
- **Farming:** Fixed and fenced production on privately owned farms

Semi-nomadic livestock herding is characteristic of cashmere production in Mongolia, while 'farmed cashmere' is the norm in China.

The Scheme will address the following producers:

- **Certified Producer** - An individual herding family, farmer or farm where the production of Cashmere fibre forms part of their livelihood
- **Certified Producer Organisation** - A group of herding families, farmers or farms where the production of Cashmere fibre forms part of their livelihood.

A Producer Organisation is a group of farmers, farms or nomadic herding families that work together to produce cashmere fibre and comply with the requirements of a scheme in order to obtain group certification.

For Group Certification, annual on-site assessments of the Producer Organisation's ICS are required as described in section 6.5.

After applying to an approved CAB, producers shall complete a self-assessment against the requirements of the Animal Husbandry and Rangeland Stewardship Codes of Practice and the supporting evidence shall be independently assessed against the CAS requirements and the producer evaluated for certification. Depending on their level of compliance for each code of practice, Producers are certified at bronze (all core indicators met), silver and gold level.

### **3.7.2 Processors**

- **Certified Processor** - An organisation where the primary processing of raw cashmere fibre forms part of their core business activity.

After applying to an approved CAB, processors shall complete a self-assessment against the requirements of the Clean Fibre Processing Code of Practice and the supporting evidence shall be independently assessed against the CAS requirements and the processor evaluated for certification. Depending on their level of compliance for each code of practice, processors are certified at bronze (all core indicators met), silver and gold level.

## 3.8 Rights and Obligations

### 3.8.1 Rights

The audited or certified producer or processor may apply the following rights:

- a. Obtain an answer to any question relating to interpretation of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard.
- b. Get the updated versions of Sustainable Cashmere Standards and policy documents from their CAB (CAB).
- c. Receive an assessment report within the 40 calendar days following the audit closing meeting.
- d. Submit a complaint related to the service provided by a CAB.
- e. Appeal a certification decision made by a CAB.
- f. Start being a applicant of a different CAB, under the condition that the producer or processor does not have open nonconformities on core criteria, is suspended, cancelled or is going through an investigation.
- g. Request for rescheduling an unannounced Monitoring, investigation, shadow or review visit once. Valid reasons for requesting the rescheduling include force majeure conditions and when the Producers or processors representatives responsible for assuring compliance with the Sustainable Cashmere Standard can provide proof of previously acquired commitments with supporting evidence.
- h. Request the cancellation of its certificate at any moment.
- i. Commercialise with the Scheme Owner certified claims all the product volume harvested after the starting date of the audit that led to a positive certification decision.

### 3.8.2. Obligations

All certified producers and processors accept the following obligations:

- a. Submit a complete application, with truthful, accurate, updated information to a CAB that is approved to operate in the region where the producer or processor is located. In the case of groups, this includes the Group Member List template.
- b. Submit a complete self-assessment, with truthful, accurate supporting evidence of compliance with the requirements of the CAS.
- c. The certified producer or processor should contact the CAB to arrange an evaluation assessment. Where the producer or processor has already been issued with a certificate, they should contact the CAB to arrange a Monitoring assessment at least 120 days before the anniversary date of the certificate in order to successfully complete the respective assessment process on time.
- d. Inform the CAB of any significant change in its management system, size, composition, production activities, productivity or its infrastructure. The certified producer or processor shall notify the CAB when it adds new areas or members to its scope.
- e. Keep its buyers and other commercial partners timely informed of any events that may jeopardize their certification status.
- f. Sign a certification agreement with the CAB.
- g. Not sell more product volume than the harvested product volume while holding a valid certificate unless previously agreed with the Scheme Owner.
- h. Obtain Transaction Certificates (TCs) in the Scheme Owner Chain of Custody system for all cashmere determined in the Certificate Scope.
- i. Authorise the Scheme Owner and the CAB to publish assessment report public summaries that include the description of nonconformities. These summaries will not contain any commercially or personally sensitive information.
- j. Authorise the Scheme Owner and its partners to use data associated with the assurance process for analyses and reporting about the Sustainable Cashmere Standard scheme, provided that these do not disclose information about applicants or certificate holders.
- k. Pay the required costs associated with any type of assessment.
- l. In the case of group administrators submit an electronic list with truthful, accurate, updated information about all group members within the Sustainable Cashmere Standard certificate scope.
- m. Ensure that the audit team has access to all relevant documentation and to the whole area within the assurance scope and that it has the right to interview workers and members of neighbouring

communities, where appropriate, without the presence of field supervisors, the farm management or group administrator or their representatives.

- n. Allow and cooperate with unannounced Monitoring visits and evaluation visits carried out by the CAB, by the Scheme Owner or any organisation acting on their behalf.
- o. Request and receive authorisation from the Scheme Owner prior to using any Scheme Owner trademarks, including the 'SFA Certified' logo.
- p. In the event it disputes a certification decision or related matter, it must follow the appeal process as indicated in section 7.3 prior to initiating any other remedies such as a legal action including lawsuit, injunction, request for declaratory relief or other claim or legal action against the Scheme Owner.

## 4. REQUIREMENTS FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES

### 4.1 Legal structure

The structure of the CAB shall foster confidence in its certification operations. In particular, the CAB shall have documents attesting to its status as a legal entity

- a. Identify the management (body, group or person) that has overall responsibility for the functioning of the CAB, including its finances.

### 4.2 Certification agreement (contract)

The CAB shall provide its certification service based on a legally enforceable agreement (contract) signed by the applicants. In particular, the agreement shall at least:

- a. Include a description of the rights and duties of the producers and processors offering certified processes, including a commitment to comply with the relevant criteria of the CAS, the Manual for the Implementation of CAS, the Labelling and Licensing Guide and other provisions of the CAS certification program as provided by the Scheme Owner
- b. Provide to the CAB and the Scheme Owner the right of access to all units of the inspected facilities, including to units where no CAS products are processed, stored or administered, if applicable, and to all relevant documentation and records, including financial records.
- c. Contain provisions that upon suspension, withdrawal or termination of certification, the producer or processor discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference to it and takes action as required by the certification procedure (e.g., the return of certification documents)
- d. Require that the producer or processor keeps records of all complaints received related to compliance with certification requirements and makes these records available to the CAB and/or the Scheme Owner on request, to take appropriate action with regard to such complaints and any related deviations to the certification requirements found and to document the actions taken
- e. Require that the applicant informs the CAB, without delay, of any information or changes that may affect its ability to conform with the certification requirements
- f. Contain provisions to allow the CAB to exchange information with other approved Conformity Assessment Bodies, National Accreditation Bodies and the Scheme Owner to verify relevant information, especially the certification status of the producer or processor, its processes and products, as part of its ongoing evaluation
- g. Requires the producer or processor to confirm that it does not and will not hold certification for the Conformity Assessment Scheme with another CAB at the same time.

### 4.3 Responsibility for certification decisions

The CAB shall have final responsibility for granting, maintaining, extending, suspending and withdrawing certification.

The Scheme Owner commits to accepting the results from CABs accredited by any EA MLA or IAF MLA signatory which follows the requirements laid down in the CAS.

### 4.4 Acceptance of prior certification

The CAB shall accept certificates and letters of approval issued in accordance with the CAS by other CAS approved CABs to conclude final certification.

### 4.5 Personnel

#### 4.5.1. General

- a. The CAB shall employ sufficient personnel competent to perform certification functions and operate its system
- b. The CAB will ensure that personnel have sufficient and verifiable knowledge and training or experience relevant to the object of conformity assessment as stipulated in SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards (clause 5.3.1.5).
- c. The CAB shall maintain up-to-date records on personnel. The records shall include:

- i. name and address
- ii. employees) and position held
- iii. educational qualification and professional status
- iv. experience and training
- v. the assessment of competence
- vi. periodic performance review
- vii. authorisations held within the CAB
- viii. date of most recent updating of each record.

#### 4.5.2. Qualification criteria and documentation

The Scheme Owner has defined the minimum criteria for the competence of personnel expected to be engaged in Cashmere Standard CAS certification services as stipulated in SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards (clause 5.3.1.5).

The CAB shall formally authorise personnel for functions in the certification process according to the requirements stipulated in SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards (clause 5.3.1).

Further the CAB must assure that personnel are familiar with the situation and specifics of the application of the CAS in relation to local cashmere sector to ensure the competent assessment and evaluation of the CAS social criteria is assigned.

#### 4.5.3. Capacity-building

The CAB shall ensure that personnel involved in certification (i.e. inspectors and other certification personnel, including members of certification committees) have and continue to have up-to-date technical knowledge in their respective fields of activity to enable them to conduct evaluation and certification effectively and uniformly.

In particular, the CAB shall:

- a. Review the competence of its personnel considering their performance in order to identify training needs:
  - i. Ensure that new personnel have sufficient competence. New inspectors must receive qualified training of on-site assessment for the CAS certification and undergo an on-site apprenticeship period accompanying assessments carried out according to the CAS certification system while under the supervision of qualified personnel. In case this is reasonably practical considering the given number and geographical structure of existing applicants at least 5 assessments are to be accompanied. The training and accompanied assessments must cover each approval scope in which the inspector will be assigned

Note: CABs can refer to ISO/IEC 17021 Annex D for guidance on the qualities and behaviours of good inspectors in assessing inspectors during the hiring process

- 2. Provide, as necessary, training programs on certification processes, methodologies, activities and other relevant certification scheme requirements
- 3. Participate in the CAS training system (e.g., courses, seminars) as offered by the SCHEME OWNER
- 4. Ensure that assigned personnel have access to the area of the CAS website restricted for CABs, where e.g. the training documents of all previous CAS trainings, the list of companies banned from becoming CAS certified, and specific questions & answers with regard to binding interpretation and implementation is provided and ensure that this information is considered, used and followed if applicable in the CAS certification process.

Note: The Scheme Owner is considering development of a customized social training course for assessors and certification personnel who will then be considered as a recognised course to meet this criterion. Further advice and reference to assessor courses which are recognised as equivalent may be provided through an up-dated issue of this manual or first on the corresponding website (*X insert website details X*)

#### 4.5.4. Assignment of personnel

The CAB shall require personnel, including committee members, involved in the certification process to:

- a. Commit themselves to observing the policies and procedures of the CAB
- b. Declare any prior or present association on their own part, or on the part of their employer, with an applicant seeking certification to which they are to be assigned to perform certification procedures.

#### 4.5.5. Assignment of committees

The CAB shall have formal rules and structures for the appointment and operation of any committees that are involved in the certification process, reflecting requirements of 2.5.1 and 2.5.2.

#### 4.5.6. Subcontracting (outsourcing)

The CABs are not permitted to outsource any part of the certification. The CAB may use their employees or subcontractors, however the CAB will have to exercise control regarding impartiality, integrity, competence development and performance review of such staff.

Where a CAB wishes to sub-contract any part of the assessment process, the Management System of the CAB will need to describe the procedures to be followed by the CAB to ensure compliance by the sub-contractors with the relevant requirements and to demonstrate that the sub-contractor is competent to carry out the task for which it has been engaged. Such competence will include, but is not limited to, the ability fully to conform to the requirements that are placed on the CAB itself in respect of the task contained within the subcontract. The CAB will need to maintain documented procedures for the assessment and monitoring of sub-contractors, and a list of sub-contractors and the facilities used by them to carry out work packages on behalf of the CAB.

The CAB will need to have fully documented agreements with its subcontractors. The CAB will need to maintain a Register of all sub-contractors which may be used by the CAB. The Management System will either contain the Register or will state where the Register is to be found. The agreements and the Register will need to be available for scrutiny at any reasonable time on request by the Scheme Owner or such other person as may be appointed on behalf of the Scheme Owner for that purpose.

When a CAB decides to subcontract work (outsourcing) related to assessment to an external body, a legally binding agreement (contract) covering the arrangements, including confidentiality and conflict of interest, shall be drawn up. The CAB shall:

- a. Take responsibility for such subcontracted work
- b. Directly hold the certification agreement with the producer or processor and keep final responsibility for the granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, suspending, or withdrawing of certification. Delegation of certification decisions is not permitted
- c. Ensure that the subcontracted body:
  - i. Is competent to perform the subcontracted work, and
  - ii. Its personnel that it uses, are not involved, either directly or through any other employer, with the operation, process or product that is subject to certification in any way that may compromise impartiality and
  - iii. Is committed to the policies and procedures as defined by the CAB
- d. Monitor the performance of the bodies subcontracted for the work
- e. Review that all communication of the external body about the subcontracted work is accurate
- f. Implement corrective actions for any breaches of the contract or other requirements related to the subcontracted work which it becomes aware
- g. Inform the producer or processor in advance of outsourcing activities, in order to provide the producer or processor with an opportunity to object
- h. Promptly notify the Scheme Owner about the body and the kind of the subcontracted work.

## 4.6 Impartiality and objectivity

### 4.6.1. Organisational structure and stakeholder involvement

The CAB shall be impartial; it shall not be financially dependent on single operations that are subject to its certification in any way that compromises its impartiality. Specifically, the CAB shall have a documented structure which safeguards impartiality by:

- a. Including provisions to ensure the impartiality of the operations of the CAB, and
- b. Providing for the participation of all parties concerned in a way that balances interests and prevents commercial or other interests from unduly influencing decisions.

#### **4.6.2. Management of impartiality**

The CAB shall identify, analyse and document the possibilities for conflicts of interest arising from its provision of certification, including any conflicts arising from its relationships. rules and procedures shall be established to prevent or minimize threat of conflicts of interest. In particular, the CAB shall

- a. Require personnel, committee and board members to declare existing or prior association with a producer or processor subject to certification. Where such an association threatens impartiality, the CAB shall exclude the person concerned from work, discussion and decisions at all stages of the certification process related to the potential conflict of interest
- b. Follow defined rules for appointing and operating committees involved in certification activities to ensure that decisions taken are not influenced by any commercial, financial and/or other internal or external interest.

#### **4.6.3. Division of functions**

The CAB shall not provide any other products or services which could compromise the confidentiality, objectivity or impartiality of its certification process and decisions. In case the CAB also performs other activities in addition to certification, it shall apply additional measures to ensure that the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of its certifications are not affected by these other activities. In particular the CAB shall not

- a. Produce or supply products of the type it certifies
- b. Give advice or provide consultancy services to the applicant as to methods of dealing with matters which are barriers (e.g. non-conformities identified in the course of the certification process) to the CAS certification.

Explanations regarding the CAS and its quality assurance system are not considered to be advice or consultancy. General information or training may be given as long as this service is offered to all applicants in a non-discriminatory manner.

#### **4.6.4. Accessibility**

The CAB shall make its services equally accessible to all applicants whose activities fall within its declared field of operation.

It shall work according to non-discriminatory policies and procedures, ensuring that no undue financial (e.g. with regard to the fee structure) or other conditions (such as size of applicant or membership of any association) are applied. The CAB shall accept CAS assessment assignments regardless whether they are for the entire processing chain, parts thereof or single applicants.

### **4.7 Access to Information**

#### **4.7.1. Publicly accessible information**

The CAB shall provide access to information to ensure confidence in the integrity and credibility of its certification.

The CAB shall make available (through publications, electronic media or other means) on request:

- a. The CAS and its reference documents as provided by the SFA (for these documents the CAB may link to the SFA's website)
- b. Information about procedures applied for evaluating whether applicants meet the CAS
- c. Information about procedures applied to cases where certification is extended
- d. Information about procedures and sanctions applied where non-conformities with the certification requirements are detected
- e. The fee structure for its services
- f. A description of the rights and duties of applicants, including requirements, restrictions
- g. Information about procedures for handling general complaints and appeals against its certification decisions.

#### **4.7.2. Confidentiality**

In order to gain privileged access to information, the CAB shall make adequate arrangements to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained in the course of its certification activities at all levels of its organisation, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf. Arrangements shall



- a. Protect proprietary information of a applicant against misuse and unauthorized disclosure, and
- b. Grant the CAB the right to exchange information with other Certification Bodies, National Accreditation Bodies and the Scheme Owner to verify the authenticity of the information.

#### **4.7.3. Reference to certification and use of certification logo (mark)**

In accordance with the provisions of SCS-006-02.0-EN Use of Logo Procedure, the CAB shall:

- a. Issue Licensing agreements (SCS-070-01.0-EN) and Conformity Mark Licenses (SCS-071-01.0-EN)
- b. Exercise control over ownership, use and display of licenses, certificates and logos that it can authorise certified entities to use
- c. Review and approve the intended use of the 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling by certified entities in advance; in particular the CAB is expected to:
  - i. have a procedure for a written 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling release in place
  - ii. provide individual label release at least for each different artwork, product group and applicant
  - iii. ensure that applicants of the certified entity have indeed a valid scope certificate, in case the applied labelling contains a license number of the applicants
  - iv. Ensure that any non-certified applicant of the certified entity is being made aware about the applicable licensing conditions for using the applied on-product 'SFA Certified' labelling.
- d. Be able to request a producer organisation to discontinue use of certificates and logos that it authorizes certified entities to use
- e. Apply suitable actions and sanctions to deal with incorrect or misleading references to the certification system or use of licenses, certificates as well as 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling that it authorizes certified entities to use.

# 5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

## 5.1 General

The CAB shall define, document and implement a quality management system in accordance with the relevant components of these requirements so as to impart confidence in its ability to perform organic certification. The quality management system shall be effective and appropriate for the type, range and volume of work performed.

The management shall ensure that the quality management system is understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation.

## 5.2 Management system manual

- a. The CAB shall address and document all applicable procedures, either in a manual or in associated documents, to ensure uniform and consistent application.
- b. The manual and associated documents, as appropriate for the type, range and volume of work performed, and considering the number of personnel involved in the process, shall contain:
  - i. An organisational chart showing lines of authority, responsibilities and allocation of functions
  - ii. A description of procedures applied by the CAB in the course of performing certification, including granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, suspending and withdrawing of certification
  - iii. Procedures for the recruitment, selection, training and assignment of the Certification Body's personnel
  - iv. Policy and procedures for appeal against certification decisions and other complaints, and
  - v. Policy and procedures for reviewing quality (e.g., internal audits, management review).
- c. The CAB shall ensure that the manual and relevant associated documents are accessible to all relevant personnel.

## 5.3 Document control

The CAB shall establish and maintain procedures to control its documents that relate to its certification functions. In particular, the CAB shall:

- a. Through authorised and competent personnel, review and approve documents for adequacy prior to their original issue or any subsequent amendment
- b. Maintain a list of all appropriate documents with the respective issue dates and duly identify their amendment status, and
- c. Control the distribution of all such documents to ensure that the appropriate documentation is provided to personnel of the CAB or its subcontractors when they are required to perform any function relating to the CAB's activities, and prevent the unintended use of obsolete documents.

## 5.4 Maintaining and managing records

- a. The CAB shall maintain a system of records (either electronic or paper documents) to demonstrate that the certification procedures have been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, evaluation or re-evaluation reports, and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, renewing, extending, suspending or withdrawing certification.
- b. The records shall be identified, managed and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information.
- c. Applicant records shall be up to date and contain all relevant information, including assessment reports and certification history.
- d. Records shall also be kept on exceptions granted, appeals and subsequent actions.
- e. Records shall be kept for at least five years, or as required by law, in order to be able to demonstrate how certification procedures have been applied.

## 5.5 Internal audit and management review

The CAB shall demonstrate that it seeks and achieves continuous quality improvement. It shall perform management reviews and internal audits according to the type, range and volume of certification performed.

- a. In particular, it shall periodically review all procedures in a planned and systematic manner, to verify that the quality system and its procedures are implemented and effective. Performance reviews conducted periodically shall be part of the review.
- b. Review intervals shall be sufficiently short to ensure that the objective of quality improvement is fulfilled. Records of quality reviews shall be maintained.
- c. Performance reviews of personnel responsible for evaluation, assessment and certification shall be conducted on an annual basis.

## 5.6 Appeals and complaints

The CAB shall have in place policies and procedures for the resolution of complaints and appeals received from applicants or other parties about the handling of certification or any other related matters. In particular, the CAB shall

- a. Take appropriate subsequent action to resolve complaints and appeals; and
- b. Document the action taken and its effect.

## 5.7 CAB use of SFA Logos

The CAB whose approval is currently in scope is permitted to use the SFA logos as directed by the SCS-006-02.0-EN Use of Logos Procedure. If the CAB wishes to use accompanying text to promote their partnership with the Scheme Owner, you should contact the SFA via [Standards@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:Standards@sustainablefibre.org) for approval of the wording.

Certificate Templates will be supplied with a blank field where the CAB can insert their own logo.

# 6. PROCESS REQUIREMENTS FOR CONDUCTING CERTIFICATION

## 6.1 Application procedures

### 6.1.1 Information for users of the CAS

The CAB shall provide producers and processors with an up-to-date description of the procedures to be applied for conducting certification. The CAB shall inform producers and processors about:

- a. Contractual conditions, including fees and possible contractual penalties
- b. The producers and processor's rights and duties, including the appeals procedure
- c. The current version of CAS and corresponding relevant documents released by the Scheme Owner
- d. Program changes, including regular updates of procedures and standards
- e. The evaluation and assessment procedures applied by the CAB during certification, and
- f. Documentation to be maintained by the applicant to enable verification of compliance with CAS by the CAB.

### 6.1.2 Application form and the applicant's obligations

The CAB shall require completion of an application form, signed by a duly authorized representative of the applicant. To enable evaluation and assignment of qualified personnel, the CAB shall require applicants to:

- a. Provide information about the scope of the desired certification, including a description, as specified by the CAB, of the production, products and facilities and sub-contractors to be certified
- b. Provide information as to whether another CAB has denied certification and any known reasons for that denial. Additionally, the applicant must provide a copy of their last assessment report, if one was performed to the standard, in order to ensure that unresolved non-conformities on the part of the applicant are taken into account by the new CAB
- c. Provide information about any past applications made; approvals received; approvals suspended or withdrawn or lapsed
- d. Provide information about any other certifications and CAB relationships that share the same scope as CAS.

## 6.2 Evaluation

### 6.2.1. Scope

- a. The CAB shall have a plan for the evaluation of activities to allow for the necessary arrangements to be managed.
- b. The CAB shall evaluate entities against all certification requirements specified. The evaluation shall consist of a review of documents and an on-site assessment visit

### 6.2.2. Sampling Strategy

The CAB shall have a sampling strategy which will inform their sampling plan and any variations made to it must be recorded. Every Producer and processor must be sampled to some degree.

For the Animal Husbandry and Rangeland Stewardship CoPs, the CAB shall use Simple Random Sampling to determine the initial sample. Using a Sampling Frame, the CAB shall identify the number of Producers or Processors. Producers and Processors are allocated a unique number and using an Excel formula (e.g. "=randbetween(1,200)" generates a random number between 1 and 200) and use this to randomly select 10% or 10 Producers whichever is greater. The sampling plan must include consideration of geographical location, previous assessment activity and feedback on performance/complaints.

For the Clean Fibre Processing CoP the sample shall be 100%.

The sampling strategy should include an obligation for assessor progression and the need to inform the Scheme Owner of the results of conformity assessments, as per section 6.6 of the Scheme Manual.

### 6.2.3. Review of application and preparation of assessment

- a. Prior to the assessment, the CAB shall review the application documents to ensure that certification can be carried out and that application of certification procedures is possible. In particular, the CAB shall review whether:
  - i. Documents submitted by the producer or processor are complete
  - ii. The producer or processor appears to be able to comply with all certification requirements (CAS and applicable related procedures).
- b. The CAB shall assign qualified personnel to the evaluation in line with the requirements of 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 above, and provide them with appropriate work-related documents
- c. The CAB shall inform assessors about any non-conformity and the associated requests for corrective action issued previously, to enable the inspectors to verify whether the non-conformities have been resolved.
- d. The CAB shall provide as a minimum the following information in writing to the applicant ahead of the assessment:
  - The criteria of the scheme
  - The date of the assessment
  - Name of the assessor(s)
  - The venue(s)/sites of the assessment
  - Who needs to be available for the assessment
  - What will be covered during the assessment
  - How long the assessment will take
  - How evidence will be recorded.

### 6.2.4. Assessment protocol

Assessment is carried out to verify information and compliance with certification requirements applicable to the CAS. It shall follow a set protocol to facilitate non-discriminatory and objective assessment.

The stages of the CAS assurance are:

1. The applicant submits a self-assessment report against the requirements of the CAS to the CAB, and includes supporting evidence of where they believe they meet the requirements.
2. A remote review of the self-assessment report and supporting evidence will be carried out by the CAB to determine if the Applicant is ready to receive an assessment visit and a report produced identifying the outcome, recommendations, developments and next actions required.
3. Where the remote review has identified recommendations, developments or actions for the Applicant, the Applicant must address the recommendations, developments or actions before resubmitting an updated self-assessment and supporting evidence to the CAB.
4. Where the remote review has identified that the Applicant is ready for an assessment visit, the CAB will allocate an assessor to make the appropriate arrangements and carry out the assessment visit.

The on-site assessment protocol shall at the very minimum undertake the following, as applicable to the assessed producer or processor:

- a. Identification of areas of risk to product integrity
- b. Verification of the applicant's risk assessment of contamination potentially including sample drawing for residue testing either as random sampling or in case of suspicion of contamination or non-compliance
- c. Verification that changes to the standards and to related requirements have been effectively implemented, and
- d. Verification that corrective actions have been taken.

### 6.2.5. Reporting

The CAB shall report evaluation findings according to documented reporting procedures to the producer or processor.

- a. Assessment reports shall follow a format appropriate to the type of producer or processor assessed, and facilitates a non-discriminatory, objective and comprehensive analysis of compliance with the requirements of the CAS system

- b. The assessment report shall cover all relevant aspects of the standards, and adequately validate the information provided by the applicant. It shall include:
  - a. A statement of any observations relating to conformity with the certification requirements
  - b. Date and duration of the assessment, persons interviewed, facilities visited; and
  - c. Type of documents reviewed.
- c. The CAB shall promptly notify the applicant of any non-conformity to be resolved in order to comply with applicable certification requirements
- d. The CAB shall document and apply measures to verify effectiveness of corrective actions taken by producer or processor to meet the requirements.

### 6.3 Decision on certification

Certification decisions must be made within two calendar months of the assessment.

#### 6.3.1. Division of functions

The CAB shall ensure that each decision on certification is taken by (a) person(s) or committee different from the one(s) that carried out the assessment.

#### 6.3.2. Basis for the decision

The decision shall be based solely on the conformity of the producer or processor with the CAS certification requirements, using information gathered during the assessment and evaluation process. The CAB certification personnel/committee shall review the assessment findings and verify the adequacy and effectiveness of the implemented system of the applicant assessed and accordingly, issue a Certificate of Compliance, if requirements are met.

#### 6.3.3. Documentation

Documentation of certification decisions shall include the basis for the decisions.

#### 6.3.4. Dealing with non-conformities

- a. Certification decisions may include requests for the correction of minor non-conformities within a specified time period. In case of major non-conformities, a certificate shall be withheld or suspended until implementation of corrective actions can be demonstrated. In serious cases certification shall be denied or withdrawn
- b. Reasons for denial, withdrawal or suspension of certification shall be stated with clear reference to the CAS criteria or other certification requirement violated
- c. In case reasons for denial or withdrawal of certification include fraudulent activities the CAB shall promptly notify Scheme Owner who will circulate among all approved CABs details of such producer organisations. CABs must not offer certification to those producers or processor within a period specified by Scheme Owner.

#### 6.3.5. Exceptions to certification requirements

The CAB shall have clear criteria and procedures for granting exceptions to requirements for certification and shall document the basis on which the exception is granted.

#### 6.3.6. Issuing of certification documents

- a. In case of positive certification decision the CAB shall issue official certification documents (= 'Certificates of Compliance') to each certified entity in accordance with the 'Policy and Template for issuing Certificates of Compliance (Scope Certificates, SCs).
- b. The validity period of the Scope Certificate must not exceed 36 months from the date of issue.
- c. Before issuing a Certificate of Compliance, the CAB must ensure that each certified entity fully complies with:
  - i. All applicable Core Indicators; and
  - ii. Complies with a minimum of one additional Improvement Criteria since the last evaluation or Monitoring activity; and
  - iii. Takes no longer than six years to achieve full compliance from the date of the first evaluation activity.
- d. A positive certification decision can only be made for producer or processor groups if less than 20% of the audited sample fail to comply with the requirements of the CAS. These non-complying group

members will form part of the respective audit sample of the next Monitoring audit and all non-conformities shall be closed by this next Monitoring audit.

- e. The CAB shall only use the Certificate of Compliance template provided by the Scheme Owner (Annex 1 of SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards) which includes a statement of conformity compliant with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17000:2020, as detailed in SCS-043-01.2-EN Cashmere Standard CAS Manual (clause 5.1.7).

## 6.4 Extension and renewal of certification

### 6.4.1. Monitoring

- a. The CAB shall regularly re-evaluate applicants in order to verify whether they continue to comply with CAS. Mechanisms shall be in place to effectively monitor whether corrective actions have been implemented
- b. The CAB shall report and document its re-evaluation activities, and shall keep applicants informed about their certification status
- c. Re-evaluation generally follows procedures outlined in 4.2 (i.e. Evaluation). However evaluation for the purpose of renewal may focus on certain measures related to risk, and might not repeat all procedures listed in 4.2.

### 6.4.2. Frequency of assessment

- a. In general applicants that are obliged to be certified in accordance with the criteria provided in CAS are to be inspected at least annually
- b. The CAB may decide on exceptions from the annual onsite assessment cycle in accordance with the criteria provided in the CAS and the Manual for Implementation
- c. In addition to the regular assessment visit, the CAB must conduct unannounced on-site assessments of certified entities in accordance with the stipulations provided in the latest issue of the Manual for Implementation.

### 6.4.3. Notification of changes made by the Applicant

- a. The CAB shall require producers and processors to inform the CAB about changes cited in 1.4.2 and 2.2.
- b. The CAB shall determine whether the announced changes require further investigations. If such is the case, the applicant shall not be allowed to release certified products produced under the changed conditions until the CAB has notified the producer or processor accordingly
- c. In response to an application for amendment to the scope of a certificate already granted, the CAB shall decide what evaluation procedure, if any, is appropriate, in order to determine whether or not the amendment should be made and shall act accordingly.

### 6.4.4. Changes in the certification requirements

If an component of the CAS is identified as no longer fulfilling the certification requirements, or there are changes to normative documents, the SFA will issue information in writing to the CABs detailing if the component will be withdrawn, replaced or updated as appropriate.

- a. The CAB shall ensure that each applicant is notified of any changes in the certification requirements without delay
- b. The CAB shall verify the applicant's implementation of such changes in a timely manner, within the given implementation periods.

## 6.5 Producer Organisation Group Certification

A Producer Organisation is a group of farmers, farms or nomadic herding families that work together to produce cashmere fibre and comply with the requirements of a standard in order to obtain group certification.

Annual on-site assessments of the Producer Organisation's ICS are required for Group Certification. The CAB's sampling strategy and sampling plan shall include assessments of Producer Organisation members according to the risk assessment of the CAB. The CAB may also carry out additional confirmation visits of Producer Organisation members without notice.



### 6.5.1. Eligibility for Producer Organisation Group Certification

- a. The Producer Organisation shall be managed by a legal entity which represents the entirety of the producer organisation group and is the applicant or certified organisation.
- b. Farms, Farmers and nomadic herders may be members of a Producer Organisation.
- c. The Producer Organisation shall have a defined internal control system (ICS) in place for the entire group.
- d. All Producer Organisation Members must commit to complying with the requirements of the CAS
- e. The Producer Organisation and all members shall be in the same country.

### 6.5.2. Internal Control System Requirements

The Producer Organisation shall have an internal control system (ICS) in place and shall appoint an ICS Manager who is responsible for the management of the ICS and for ensuring conformity to the CAS by all members.

The Producer Organisation shall cooperate with the CAB's risk assessment process and with the coordination of information and assessment for member sites.

- a) The ICS shall maintain documented procedures which show how Producer Organisation requirements are met, including procedures for at least the following components:
  - i. Accepting, adding and removing group members
  - ii. Maintaining records
  - iii. Training of group members and ICS personnel
  - iv. Internal inspection of group members
  - v. Use of SFA logos and marketing claims within the group.
- b) The ICS shall maintain the following records:
  - i. A documented management structure of the ICS
  - ii. A complete list of group members.
- c) The ICS shall maintain the following records for each member:
  - i. A signed membership agreement which specifies rights and obligations of group members to conform with the CAS and permit inspections by the ICS inspectors as well as assessments by the CAB
  - ii. Maps or sketches of the farm showing where livestock are located
  - iii. Completed Questions for each group member
  - iv. Records of internal inspection results, showing the member's conformity or non-conformity with all applicable requirements.
- d) The ICS shall ensure that:
  - i. all group members have access to a copy of the CAS or the relevant sections of the Standard
  - ii. all group members understand the relevant requirements of the Standard and are aware of consequences of non-conformity.

Group members and ICS personnel (including ICS inspectors) shall be provided with training regarding the CAS which is sufficient to meet their responsibilities. Training records shall be maintained.

### 6.5.3. Inspection of Members

The ICS shall document and implement an inspection protocol to ensure that the CAS requirements are met by all group members and shall meet requirements 6.5.4 - 6.5.5.

6.5.4 The inspection protocol shall include a process for handling non-conformity, including the following components:

- a) Identification of non-conformities against all applicable requirements of the Standard;
- b) Ensuring that non-conformities are closed within a specified timeline which is not more than 30 days for major non-conformities and 60 days for minor non-conformities
- c) Immediate suspension from the group in the case of critical non-conformities, until such non-conformities have been closed
- d) Records of non-conformities issued and closed, including explanation of corrective actions taken.

The ICS shall appoint one or more ICS inspectors to carry out inspections. The ICS manager may also be an ICS inspector. ICS inspectors shall not be responsible for inspections of family members or themselves.

The ICS shall carry out annual inspections of each group member. Inspections shall be carried out on-site.

A written inspection report shall be prepared for each inspection, including identification of all non-conformities. Photos or other verification of the date and location should be included.

#### **6.6.5. Adding and Removing Members**

Members may be added to the group after the following steps have occurred:

- a) Information required by 6.5.2.b and 6.5.2.c has been received by the ICS
- b) The ICS Inspector has completed an inspection of the site
- c) All critical and major non-conformities for the site have been closed
- d) The ICS has received approval from the CAB for the addition of the site.

The ICS shall have the authority to remove members from the group. If a member is removed, the ICS shall notify both the group member and the CAB of the removal in writing, including the reason for removal (e.g. voluntary, non-payment, non-conformity).

### **6.7 Further specific conditions for CAS approved CABs**

#### **6.7.1. Public data base, reporting on activities**

- a. CABs must keep the CAS public database up-dated at all times with the requested information regarding their certified entities (e.g. names, addresses, contact details, product specifications, field of operation, and validity date of certificate)
- b. A report on the relevant activities including a complete list of the inspected and/or certified entities and their facilities as well as withdrawn entities and their facilities in the preceding calendar year is to be sent by end of January of each year to the Scheme Owner
- c. CABs shall submit upon request by the CAS Technical Committee detailed procedural or individual documentation related to assessment, certification and in order to permit the CAS Technical Committee to supervise CAB's adherence to the CAS, the Manual for Implementation and any procedural rules and interpretation advises issued by the CAS Technical Committee. The CAS Technical Committee members shall be bound to treat any of this information confidentially
- d. CABs shall submit upon request of the Evaluator of a complaint any relevant information required to process the complaint.

#### **6.7.2. Cooperation with other approved Certification bodies**

CABs shall cooperate with all other CAS CABs to ensure worldwide equal application of the CAS assessment and certification procedures under the supervision of the SFA's Standards and Compliance Manager.

# 7. MANAGING NON-CONFORMANCE

## 7.1 Suspension

### 7.1.1 Conditions

The CAB will suspend the certificate of a producer or processor when:

- a. It does not fulfil one or more of its obligations, as described in Section 1.8.2.
- b. It does not comply with section 4.3.6 during certification, Monitoring or scope expansion audits.
- c. It is not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CAB that lead to suspension.
- d. A Monitoring audit is not carried out within 18 months of an evaluation audit
- e. the CAB or Scheme Owner decide to suspend a certificate holder's certificate before or at any point during an investigation audit process, if there is enough evidence of a potential systemic nonconformity.

### 7.1.2 Consequences

- a. The suspension will last up to a maximum of 120 calendar days.
- b. From the moment the CAB notifies the producer or processor about the suspension, the producer or processor shall not sell products with the Sustainable Fibre Alliance Certified claims. Should the certificate be reinstated, the producer or processor is allowed to sell as certified the entire product in stock that was harvested during the suspension period subject to inventory verification by the CAB. All verification costs shall be covered by the producer or processor.

## 7.2 Certificate Cancellation

### 7.2.1 Conditions

The CAB will deny or cancel the certificate of a producer or processor in the following cases:

- a. When the producer or processor does not comply with one or more core critical criteria.
- b. When the producer or processor did not comply with the verification audit rules of Section 6.3.
- c. If a suspension is not lifted within 120 calendar days.
- d. When the producer or processor rejects an unannounced audit for the second time.
- e. Not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CAB leading to cancellation.
- f. When the certified producer or processor voluntarily requests the cancellation of its certificate.
- g. When the certification audit of a certified producer or processor was not carried out while the certificate was valid.
- h. The Scheme Owner reserves the right to request the CAB to suspend or cancel a certificate, when a case involving one or more core criteria has been proven in a court, or when a case can potentially cause significant harm to the reputation of the Scheme Owner.

### 7.2.2 Consequences

1. The cancellation is valid starting with the date of the CAB's communication about the certificate's cancellation to the producer or processor of a certificate and lasts:
  - a. One year in the case of non-compliance with core critical criteria;
  - b. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the Scheme Owner or the CAB, the producer or processor exerted coercion or made any form of implicit or explicit threats to the moral or physical integrity or the life of any members of the CAB auditing team or staff, through the employees of the producer or processor, or people under its influence or orders;
  - c. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the Scheme Owner or the CAB, the producer or processor participated in illegal, fraudulent or unethical activities that could discredit the certification program.
  - d. Producer or processors whose certificate was cancelled due to non-compliance with non-core critical criteria after a verification audit and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
  - e. Producer or processors who voluntarily requested the cancellation of their certificate and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
  - f. From the moment the CAB notifies the certified producer or processor about a certificate cancellation, the producer or processor is not authorised to sell product with certified claims with the only exceptions of:

- i. Producer or processors subject to an appeal process (see Section 5.3.6); or
- ii. Producer or processors whose certificate was voluntarily cancelled. In this case, Producer or processors will be permitted to sell off all stored certified product within a maximum sell-off period of six months, period subject to an inventory verification by the CAB. These verification costs shall be covered by the organisation.

### 7.3 Appeals

1. Once during the 36-month validity of the certificate, certificate holders may appeal a certification decision of a CAB within five business days after the CAB communicated such decision, except for decisions resulting from verification audits
2. Decisions of verification audits may only be appealed, in the case of new non-conformities detected during a verification audit. In this case, appeals are restricted to these newly detected nonconformities. Producer or processors are not permitted to request another verification audit for these newly detected nonconformities.
3. The scope of appeals shall be restricted to any combination of the following:
  - a. Interpretation of the standard criteria based on the evidence available during the audit;
  - b. Evaluation of relevant evidence that the audited producer or processor believes the audit team intentionally or unintentionally did not consider during the audit; or
  - c. Possible infractions or violations of the requirements in this document, CAB audit and certification procedures, or conflicts of interest or other ethical issues on the part of the audit team or CAB.
4. Audited producer or processors can submit additional evidence during the appeals process if the audit team had access to this evidence during the audit process. Additional evidence of compliance that was not available during the audit, or that was the result of improvements made since the audit, cannot be considered as part of an appeal
5. Producer or processors maintain their pre-decision certification status during an appeal process
6. Producer or processors are permitted to continue selling certified product during an appeal process, with exception of Producers or processors that have open nonconformities on core critical criteria
7. A producer or processor may only appeal the cancellation decision with the Scheme Owner as a last resort, and only after the CAB has communicated the final decision regarding the appeal. Decisions from Scheme Owner are final and may not be appealed further Certification decisions about audit processes carried out directly by the Scheme Owner cannot be appealed.

### 7.4 Reinstatement of the certificate

1. In order to reinstate a certificate that was cancelled, the producer or processor shall submit an application for a certification or Monitoring audit.
2. A producer or processor whose certificate was cancelled, shall comply by the new certification audit with the performance rules corresponding to the compliance year when they were cancelled, as described in Section 4.3.6.

When non-conformity is identified during an audit, it shall be classified according to the levels below.

Evaluation of non-conformities shall be conducted on-site when this is needed for credible evaluation of the non-conformity. The use of alternative technologies (e.g., video conferencing) should be considered prior to requiring an additional site visit.

## 7.5 Non-Conformity of Core requirements

<b>Definition</b>	Critical non-conformities represent serious failures to meet the fundamental principles of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard.	
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry	
<b>Initial Audit</b>	Timeline	Prior to certification
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall not be issued
<b>Monitoring/recertification Audit</b>	Timeline	Immediate
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall be suspended
<b>Requirements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critical non-conformities shall be reserved for requirements identified as critical in the Sustainable Cashmere Standard, or for intentional fraud.</li> <li>2. The assessor shall notify the CAB immediately when a critical non-conformity is identified.</li> </ol>	

7.5.1 When a critical non-conformity is identified for a certified organisation, the CAB shall suspend the scope certificate immediately. In all cases, the suspension shall be enacted within a maximum of five business days from the day the critical non-conformity was identified, even if the entire audit has not yet been completed.

7.5.2 When a scope certificate includes multiple sites (including groups) and a site receives a critical non-conformity, the site may be suspended from the certificate to avoid suspension of the entire scope certificate.

7.5.3 The CAB shall immediately notify the Scheme Owner of all critical non-conformities, including details of the non-conformity.

## 7.6 Major Non-Conformity

<b>Definition</b>	Major non-conformities occur if, either alone or in combination with further non-conformities relating to other requirements, they result in, or are likely to result in, a fundamental or systematic failure to achieve the objectives of the standards system.	
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry	
<b>Initial Audits</b>	Timeline	Prior to certification
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall not be issued
<b>Recertification Audit</b>	Timeline	30 days from the audit (closing meeting), and prior to recertification
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall not be reissued, and shall be suspended if the 30-day timeline ends before expiry of the scope certificate
<b>Requirements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Major non-conformities shall be issued in the following circumstances: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. For requirements which are indicated as major requirements in the Sustainable Cashmere Standard. OR</li> <li>4. Where, either alone or in combination with further non-conformities, the non-conformity results in or may result in a fundamental or systematic failure to meet the objectives of the Standard. This may be indicated by non-conformities</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

	<p>which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. continue over a long period of time,</li> <li>b. are repeated or systematic,</li> <li>c. affect a wide area,</li> <li>d. affect the integrity of the product or the Standard,</li> <li>e. are not corrected or adequately addressed once they are identified.</li> </ol> <p>B. Scope certificates shall be suspended immediately if there are three or more open major non-conformities.</p>
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7.7 Minor Non-Conformity					
<b>Definition</b>	Minor non-conformities occur when a single observed lapse has been identified in a procedure required as part of the applicant's management system.				
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry				
<b>All Audits</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Timeline</td> <td>60 days from the audit (closing meeting)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Consequence if not closed</td> <td>Non-conformity is upgraded to become a major non-conformity with a timeline 30 days from the original deadline</td> </tr> </table>	Timeline	60 days from the audit (closing meeting)	Consequence if not closed	Non-conformity is upgraded to become a major non-conformity with a timeline 30 days from the original deadline
Timeline	60 days from the audit (closing meeting)				
Consequence if not closed	Non-conformity is upgraded to become a major non-conformity with a timeline 30 days from the original deadline				
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Minor non-conformities shall be issued in the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. For requirements which are indicated as minor requirements, unless the CAB determines that the non-conformity is major based on the requirements above; OR</li> <li>6. Where the non-conformity is a temporary lapse, non-systemic, limited in scale or does not represent a fundamental failure to achieve the objectives of the Standard.</li> </ol>				

7.8 Recommendations					
<b>Definition</b>	Recommendations are criteria that have been included as examples of best practice. They may indicate future expectations and flag what may be coming in future version of the standard.				
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry				
<b>All Audits</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Timeline</td> <td>None</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Consequence if not closed</td> <td>None</td> </tr> </table>	Timeline	None	Consequence if not closed	None
Timeline	None				
Consequence if not closed	None				
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Recommendations shall be issued for any animal welfare criteria which are not met and which are identified as recommendations.</p> <p>Recommendations shall be issued using 'should' language.</p> <p>The CAB is not required to follow up on recommendations.</p> <p>The CAB shall ensure that recommendations do not represent consultancy (see ISO/IEC:17065 3.2).</p>				

