




Sustainable Fibre Alliance
Sustainable Cashmere Standard
Conformity Assessment Scheme Manual



Approvals

The signatures below certify that this Scheme 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.)	17/02/2022
Approved by	Una Jones		Chief Executive	20/01/2022

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:

Page No.	Context	Revision	Date

Contents

CONTENTS	3
FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	6
1. SCOPE	6
2. NORMATIVE REFERENCES	8
3. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS	9
4. CERTIFICATION	13
4.1 CONCEPT	13
4.2 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME REQUIREMENTS	13
4.2.1 <i>Continuous Improvement</i>	14
4.2.2 <i>CAS Component achievement criteria</i>	15
4.3 OBJECTIVES	16
4.4 SYSTEMS MANUAL	16
4.5 PRODUCER ORGANISATION GROUP CERTIFICATION	17
4.5.1 <i>Eligibility for Producer Organisation Group Certification</i>	17
5. CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME	18
5.1 CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES	18
5.1.1 <i>Conformity Assessment Body requirements</i>	19
5.1.2 <i>Assessment Team competencies</i>	19
5.1.3 <i>Planning and preparation for the assessment</i>	19
5.1.4 <i>During the assessment</i>	20
5.1.5 <i>Examining the evidence</i>	20
5.1.6 <i>Decision of Conformity Assessment</i>	20
5.1.7 <i>Issuing certification</i>	20
5.1.8 <i>Monitoring</i>	20
5.2 SUSPENSION, WITHDRAWAL, OR TERMINATION OF CERTIFICATION	20
A) CONTINUATION OF CERTIFICATION UNDER CONDITIONS SPECIFIED BY THE CAB (E.G., INCREASED MONITORING)	21
B) REDUCTION IN THE SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION TO REMOVE NON-CONFORMING CAS COMPONENTS	21
C) SUSPENSION OF THE CERTIFICATION PENDING REMEDIAL ACTION BY THE APPLICANT	21
D) WITHDRAWAL OF THE CERTIFICATION.	21
5.3 PRODUCERS AND PROCESSORS	22
5.3.1 <i>Producers and Producer Organisations</i>	22
5.4 FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE CERTIFICATION SCHEME	22
6. DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF THE CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME	23
6.1 GENERAL	23
6.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS	23
6.3 SCHEME OWNER	24
6.4 DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE CASHMERE STANDARD CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME	26
6.4.1 DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW	26
6.5 CONTENT OF THE CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME	27

6.6 REPORTING TO THE SCHEME OWNER	27
7. CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME MANAGEMENT	29
7.1 INTRODUCTION	29
7.2 DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS	29
7.2.1 <i>General</i>	29
7.2.2 <i>Document Control</i>	29
7.2.3 <i>Control of Records</i>	30
7.2.5 <i>Publicly Available Documents</i>	30
8. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES	31
8.1 PLANNING	31
8.1.1 <i>Management System Planning</i>	31
8.1.2 <i>Management Representative</i>	31
8.2 MANAGEMENT REVIEW	31
8.2.1 <i>General</i>	31
8.2.2 <i>Review Input</i>	32
8.2.3 <i>Review Output</i>	32
9. MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SCHEME	33
9.1 IMPROVEMENT	33
10. INTERNAL AUDIT	34
10.1 GENERAL	34
10.2 IMPLEMENTATION & ASSESSMENT	34
10.2.1 <i>Users of the Conformity Assessment Scheme</i>	34
10.2.2 <i>Complaints</i>	34
10.2.3 <i>Assessments</i>	35
ANNEX A: SFA BOARD	36
<i>Constitution, Roles and Responsibilities</i>	36
ANNEX B: SCS STANDARD SETTING AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE	38
<i>Constitution, Roles, and responsibilities</i>	38
ANNEX C: CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE	39
<i>Constitution, roles, and responsibilities</i>	39
ANNEX D: MEDIATION COMMITTEE	40
<i>Constitution, Roles, and responsibilities</i>	40
ANNEX E: LIST OF KEY CAS AND MS DOCUMENTS	41

Foreword

- i. The Sustainable Cashmere Standard (SCS) Conformity Assessment Scheme (CAS) for Producers, Producer Organisations and Processors in the cashmere fibre sector is owned by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA).
- ii. Established in 2015 and recognised by the international retail community through its Membership scheme, the SFA collaborates with policy makers, international stakeholders, agricultural and animal welfare specialists as well as directly with cashmere producers and processors. The SFA is a trusted catalyst for developing sustainable cashmere manufacturing from fibre producers and suppliers to retail garments.
- iii. We promote the Sustainable Cashmere Standard to encourage Sustainable practices that benefit people, livestock, and the environment. Our scheme allows companies to demonstrate their commitment to transforming the capacity of the cashmere sector to make credible claims about their cashmere products' sustainability and provenance.
- iv. The market need for the Sustainable Cashmere Standard is driven by the requirements of the textile industry, fashion manufacturers and brands for responsible production of cashmere products. This includes evidence of improved environmental efforts to reverse land degradation, responsible animal husbandry and ethical fibre production. Other drivers are international legislation prohibiting the use of hazardous chemicals that have previously proliferated fibre processing and production operations. SFA members are also adopting key features of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Compliance with the Sustainable Cashmere Standard by participants indicates to the supply chain that there is a concerted effort to support these SDGs.
- v. Over the last 5 years approximately of 80% of the cashmere supply chain joined SFA as a member to tackle environmental, social and livelihood challenges together and supported the development and implementation of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard.
- vi. At the centre of the CAS are SFA Codes of Practice. Each one encourages improvement in how the user responds to environmental and animal welfare concerns close to the retail buying public's heart.
- vii. The CAS encourages retailers to invest in best practice within their supply chains, by demonstrating a commitment to integrate good animal welfare and sustainable environmental practice.
- viii. Initially launched in Outer and Inner Mongolia, the scheme aims to cover cashmere supply chain producers worldwide.
- ix. The SFA is more than a standard holding body. Through training, workshops and partnerships, it promotes collective action to encourage sustainable practices and builds the resilience of herding communities across Mongolia and China.
- x. With the support of its membership and partners, the SFA coordinates a variety of charitable projects to benefit cashmere producers. These include fibre sorting and breeding initiatives, educational opportunities for children of herders, women empowerment programmes, and annual sustainability awards for exceptional herders. The SFA also collaborates with a major national bank in Mongolia to provide low-interest loans to herders registered with the SFA, and actively works to build partnerships at the national and international levels in order to bring about sector-wide transformation of the cashmere industry. With a solid retail membership of over forty international retail brands at its core, the SFA works with the end-to-end cashmere supply chain, connecting herders to brands and retailers in

the global fashion industry. We offer a globally focused, locally adapted solution for sustainable cashmere.

Introduction

This manual addresses the requirements of ISO/IEC 17067: 2013. It details how the scheme owner meets the requirements of the individual clauses of ISO/IEC 17067 and makes references to procedures, policies and/or other documents, which address the clauses thereof.

The Manual and all associated procedures and documents have been drafted to embrace the principles outlined in ISO/IEC 17067 and ISEAL's Social and Environmental Codes of Good Practice.

The processes for the development of this Conformity Assessment Scheme (CAS) and subsequent reviews are referenced in the requirements of SCS-036-02.0-EN Standard Setting Procedure. This includes analysing the appropriateness and effectiveness of the CAS.

1. Scope

The Sustainable Cashmere Standard Conformity Assessment Scheme describes the fundamentals of certification the CAS and provides guidelines for understanding, developing, operating, or maintaining the CAS.

The CAS and its components have been developed to include the following Conformity Assessment Activities:

Selection	Planning and preparation for assessment, specification of the criteria, and sampling planning
Determination	Third party assessment of processes for the production and primary processing of cashmere
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.

The Scheme is intended for use by all stakeholders in the Cashmere fibre supply chain with an interest in certification, and especially by CABs.

2. 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 shall 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
ISO/IEC 17021: 2015	Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of Management Systems
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 Conformity Assessment Schemes by EA Accreditation Body Members
IAF MD 25: 2022	Accreditation Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies 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

3. Terms and Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this document.

The following verbal forms are used to indicate requirements, recommendations, permissions, or capabilities:

1. “shall” indicates a requirement,
2. “should” indicates a recommendation,
3. “may” indicates a permission, and
4. “can” indicates a possibility or capability.

SFA	The Sustainable Fibre Alliance, owner of the Conformity Assessment Scheme
Applicant	Producer or Processor responsible to a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) for ensuring that certification requirements, including product requirements, are fulfilled
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.
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 producer organisations 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.
International Accreditation Forum (IAF)	An association of accreditation bodies and other bodies developing a single worldwide program of conformity assessment. IAF Members have signed the IAF's Multi-Lateral Agreement.
Internal Control System (ICS)	The mechanisms, rules, and procedures implemented by a Producer Organisation to ensure the integrity of member information, evidence claims, and promote accountability.
Impartiality	Presence of objectivity

Monitoring	Ongoing assessment to ensure continued compliance with the requirements of the Conformity Assessment Scheme (CAS)
MS	Management System
National Accreditation Body (NAB)	An organization that provides accreditation services, which is a formal, third-party recognition of competence to perform specific tasks
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	<p>Identification of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The product(s), process(es) or service(s) for which the certification is granted, • The applicable Conformity Assessment scheme, and • 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
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	<p>An independent legal entity hired by a CAB to provide services related to certification activities, excluding freelancers.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>An independent legal entity hired by an accreditation body to provide services related to accreditation activities, excluding freelancers.</p>
Suspension	<p>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.</p>
Top Management	<p>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)</p>
Withdrawal	<p>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.</p>

4. Certification

4.1 Concept

4.1.1 This CAS aims to serve three purposes. The first is to award certification to producers and processors who demonstrate compliance with requirements of the SFA Codes of Practice, thereby meeting the rigorous requirements of the Scheme. The second aim is to inform and assure consumers through certification, that producers and processors, as certified under the Scheme, follow the best practice in animal welfare and sustainable fibre provenance. The third aim is to facilitate trade, market access, fair competition and consumer acceptance on a national, regional and international level.

4.1.2 The SFA, as scheme owner, promotes the Sustainable Cashmere Standard as a recognition of consumer trust by providing independent assurance by Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) that have demonstrated compliance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065, thus generating consumer awareness as well as encouraging consumers to confidently shop for sustainable cashmere products.

4.1.3 All CABs subcontracted by the SFA to conduct assurance and/or certification activity shall be legally bound by a contractual agreement (SCS-029-01.1-EN CAB Agreement) detailing the responsibilities of both parties. The purpose of the Agreement is to appoint the CAB as a partner of the SFA for the purposes of carrying out conformity assessments, issuing Certificates of Conformance, Issuing and monitoring Licensing Agreements and Conformity Mark Licences and performing other specified tasks related to the certification of products under this CAS.

4.1.4 The CAB shall agree to use the CAS as it is published, without any limitations and without any additions or reductions.

4.2 Conformity Assessment Scheme requirements

The CAS has been developed as Product Certification Scheme 1b (ISO/IEC 17067 Table 1). The conformity assessment activities of the CAS are selection, determination, review, decision on certification, attestation, and licensing. The procedures for complying with the requirements of the product certification scheme are set out in the respective scheme documents as listed in Annex E.

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

Requirements for:	Documented in:
Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Animal Husbandry and Cashmere Harvesting Code of Practice• Rangeland Stewardship Code of Practice
Processors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean Fibre Processing Code of Practice
CABs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval and Requirements for CABs• Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards

All of these documents along with other scheme documents are available to download from the [SFA's website](#).

4.2.1 Continuous Improvement

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 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 producers and processors with the CAS requirements and is intended to incentivise 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 CAS requirements (scores 0 points).

b. Indicators

The CAS components are 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 shall 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.




4.2.2 CAS Component achievement criteria

Rangeland Stewardship

Minimum scores required

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

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

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

4.3 Objectives

Certification to the Sustainable Cashmere Standard assures that producers and processors have adequate systems and infrastructure in place to provide confidence to its customers that the fibre it provides, or sources meets the requirements of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard and further assures that the systems of the organization have been independently assessed by an impartial third party.

All CABs recognised by the scheme owner shall conform to the ISO Standard, ISO/IEC 17065 and shall be accredited by the International Accreditation Forum member accreditation bodies such as the National Accreditation Board for CABs, United Kingdom Accreditation Service etc. The Scheme Owner shall not contradict or exclude any of the requirements included in ISO/IEC 17065.

4.4 Systems Manual

This manual has been prepared to describe the Sustainable Fibre Alliance’s Conformity Assessment Scheme, its management system, and associated procedures. It includes the processes needed to implement and

manage all aspects of our work as a provider of standards that underpin the production of goods from cashmere and other fibre. Each section of the manual refers to various procedures, forms and process maps relating to the requirements outlined in that section.

4.5 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 scheme in order to obtain group certification.

Annual on-site assessments of the Producer Organisation’s Internal Control System (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.

4.5.1. 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.

The Producer Organisation shall have an internal control system (ICS) in place. Refer to SCS-015-02.2-EN Approval Procedure for Conformity Assessment Bodies for Group Certification requirements.

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-015-02.2-EN	Approval Procedures for Conformity Assessment Bodies
SCS-029-01.1-EN	CAB Agreement

5. Conformity Assessment Scheme

This Conformity Assessment Scheme was developed under conformity assessment standard ISO/IEC:17067: 2013 *Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes* - section 5.3.3 1b, after researching the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011, ISO/IEC 17067 and ISO/IEC 17065 and determined the assurance mechanism suited the requirements of a certification scheme where the processes involved in cashmere production are validated by audit. 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*.

Any producers and processors looking to be assured against the Sustainable Cashmere Standard should submit a duly signed application form and enter into an agreement with an SFA approved Conformity Assessment Body (CAB). The CAB shall comply with ISO/IEC 17065 and shall employ trained / qualified assessors to assess the applicant against the specified criteria of the CAS. The CAB shall be accredited by a National Accreditation Body that can demonstrate compliance with ISO/IEC 17011 and be a member of a mutual recognition arrangement and be bound by EA's and/or IAF's Multi-Lateral Agreement (MLA)).

Where a CAB applies to deliver the CAS before they are accredited to ISO/IEC 17065, the scheme owner may allow for a grace period however they must become accredited within 9 months from the date of application. Refer to the requirements set out Appendix C of document SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards.

5.1 Conformity assessment activities

The following activities shall take place to ensure compliance with the CAS requirements:

Conformity Assessment activities	
Selection	Planning and preparation for assessment, specification of the criteria, and sampling planning
Determination	On-site 3 rd party assessment of processes for the production and primary processing of cashmere
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.

NOTE: There are currently no reciprocal arrangements in place with other scheme owners to accept conformity assessment results of their determination activities to meet the requirements of this Conformity Assessment Scheme.

5.1.1 Conformity Assessment Body requirements

The Scheme Owner has defined the requirements for the approval and operation of CABs delivering the Conformity Assessment Team in SCS-015-02.2-EN Approval Procedure and requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies and SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards which are available to download from the SFA's website.

5.1.2 Assessment Team competencies

The CAB shall 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).

5.1.3 Planning and preparation for the assessment

5.1.3.1 The CAB must produce a sampling plan based on their sampling strategy to determine who shall receive an assessment, what type of assessment they shall receive (e.g., on-site, remote etc.), who shall conduct the assessment and when the assessment shall take place.

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:

- Risk assessments
- Producers Organisations - Numbers, numbers of member families (the greater number of member families within a PO, the higher the risk)
- Assessment Locations
- Assessors - Experience (new assessors are higher risk), feedback received on performance, qualifications, workload, occupational experience.

5.1.3.2 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 shall be covered during the assessment
- How long the assessment shall take
- How evidence shall be recorded.

5.1.4 During the assessment

The assessor shall conduct direct observation and questioning of the processes relevant to the elements of the scope being assessed. The assessment shall include verification of documented evidence and interviews with concerned/authorized personnel.

5.1.5 Examining the evidence

In addition to the observation, the assessor shall collect and examine all evidence that supports the requirements of the scheme including but not limited to work product, formal questioning, witness testimony, photographs and videos.

5.1.6 Decision of Conformity Assessment

The assessor shall submit a documented report to the CAB on the assessment findings.

Any commercially confidential business information included in the assessment report shall be respected.

Additionally, each CAB shall carry out its own risk assessment regarding the ability of the applicant to maintain the requirements of the scheme and shall monitor the risk of potential non-compliance, the validity of the assessment, conflict of interest and confidentiality of information.

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.

5.1.7 Issuing certification

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 Conformity, if requirements are met. A producer or processor shall be certified only on achieving the required score for compliance awards of Bronze, Silver and Gold as defined in clause 4.2.2.

The Certificate of Conformity attestation states that the titled holder is compliant with the requirements of the respective CAS component(s) at the achieved level. The Certificate of Compliance Template can be found in Annex 1 of SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards.

5.1.8 Monitoring

Annual compliance assessments shall be necessary for all bronze and silver awards. On achieving a 'Gold award', Certificates of Conformity shall be valid for 3 years and CABs shall carry out 2 yearly Monitoring assessments and one unannounced assessment to ensure continuing compliance to CAS requirements, unless there is cause to conduct more frequent Monitoring assessments, e.g., formal complaint about the conduct of the applicant.

5.2 Suspension, withdrawal, or termination of certification

When a non-conformity with certification requirements is substantiated, either during an assessment or otherwise, the CAB shall consider and decide upon the appropriate action.

Appropriate action can include the following:

- a) continuation of certification under conditions specified by the CAB (e.g., increased Monitoring)
- b) reduction in the scope of certification to remove non-conforming CAS components
- c) suspension of the certification pending remedial action by the applicant
- d) withdrawal of the certification.

If certification is suspended, withdrawn or terminated, the applicant must immediately cease to advertise themselves as SFA certified and all certification documents must be returned to the CAB. The CAB must notify the SFA at the earliest possible opportunity of the findings and action taken. The SFA shall inform other CABs, SFA members and stakeholders of the suspension, withdrawal or termination of certification.

5.3 Producers and Processors

5.3.1 Producers and Producer Organisations

Under the CAS, 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.

5.3.2 Processors

- **Certified Processor** - An organisation where the primary processing of raw cashmere fibre forms part of their core business activity (e.g., Processing Plant).

5.4 Functions and activities in the Certification Scheme

The scheme owner has constituted a Management Board with four (4) committees under it to sustain the Sustainable Cashmere Standard' Scheme Certification. The roles, responsibilities and processes for each committee are detailed in the annexes to this Scheme manual as follows:

Annex A	SFA Board
Annex B	Standard Setting and Improvement Committee
Annex C	Certification Committee
Annex D	Mediation Committee.

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-015-02.2-EN	Approval Procedures for Conformity Assessment Bodies
SCS-066-01.2-EN	Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards

6. Development and operation of the Conformity Assessment Scheme

6.1 General

The CAS is open to any producer and processor wishing to use the criteria of the CAS and its systems to enable and support compliance thereof. The Scheme Owner has no role in the system implementation or certification process. The scheme owner has developed the CAS and reserves the right to review and revise the Scheme. The scheme owner shall continue seeking feedback from external interested parties and use their feedback for removing / clarifying any ambiguity or adding / amending/ deleting any scheme. The scheme owner has constituted a Technical Group as part the Standard Setting and Improvement Committee for the aforesaid purpose and has also provided provision for a Mediation Committee as and when required to receive any appeal / complaint related to certification from stakeholders.

6.2 Relationship between Conformity Assessment Scheme and Certification Process

6.2.1 The Scheme Owner has developed and implemented various documents and processes covering all aspects of Scheme implementation. The Sustainable Cashmere Standard elements comprise of generic and sector specific requirements. The certification process is defined in SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards and includes selection and qualification of CABs, defined assessment process including timelines, assessment reporting templates, certification review and decision-making process. All CABs shall demonstrate their compliance with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.

6.2.2 The information to be provided to a CAB by a producers and processors upon application is defined in SCS-015-02.2-EN Approval Procedure and requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies (clause 6.1.2). Producers and processors shall sign an agreement with selected CAB. The agreement between CAB's and producers and processors must include the rights, responsibilities, liabilities and necessary indemnity clauses. The agreement shall include all requirements to be met by the producer and processor to achieve recognition of compliance. The template for certification is defined and indicates the level of compliance achieved. Any restrictions regarding the use of logos or claim statements is dependent on the level of compliance assured by the certificate issued by the CAB.

6.2.3 Where a producer or processor represents more than one site, the scheme owner requires that a sampling plan be prepared by the CAB as defined by the requirements of SCS-015-02.2-EN Approval Procedure and requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies (clause 6.2.2). The CAB shall ensure that adequate evidence is presented by the producer and processor to determine conformity to the schemes.

6.2.4 All CABs shall comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065. This ensures consistency among all CABs. The Scheme Owner shall conduct an initial approval process and carry out regular monitoring in the form of Monitoring audits of the CAB to ensure it continues to meet the requirements of the Conformity Assessment Scheme. The Scheme Owner shall report its findings on CAB performance to its own local Accreditation Body, the CAB's Accreditation Body and if appropriate, to the EA and IAF.

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

6.2.6 Where an CAB wishes to subcontract any part of the assessment process, the Management System of the CAB shall 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 shall 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 shall 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.

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

6.2.8 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.

6.2.9 Where it is identified that certification under the scheme may be being claimed fraudulently, the CAB shall suspend the scope of the applicant while an investigation is conducted. If the investigate identifies that a claim has been made fraudulently, all scopes of the applicant shall be terminated with immediate effect. Where the applicant is a group, the Applicant must provide the CAB with a full list of all families linked to the group so that alternative assurance and certification can be pursued without detriment. The CAB shall report all its findings to the Scheme Owner at the earliest opportunity and the Scheme Owner shall notify its hAB, the CAB's hAB if known, other CABs, members and stakeholders of the termination of scope.

6.2.10 The scheme owner has developed SCS-037-01.0-EN Complaints, and Dispute resolution procedure and SCS- 048-01.0-EN Certification Scheme Appeal procedure both of which can be downloaded from the SFA website. A Mediation Committee shall be convened should any issue raised through these procedures not be resolved amicably by the CAB. This committee, reporting to the SFA Board, shall be responsible for receiving, investigation and resolution of any appeal/complaint. Any issue that cannot be resolved by the Mediation Committee shall be addressed to the SFA Board. The decision by the SFA Board shall be final and binding on all parties.

6.2.11 For the assessment of Producer Organisations Internal Control System (ICS) for Group Certification of Producer Organisations, CABs, and where applicable their subcontractors must be able to demonstrate that they meet the applicable requirements of ISO/IEC 17021 – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of Management Systems.

6.2.12 The scheme owner shall annually monitor CABs to ensure assessment and certification activities are conducted in accordance with the scheme requirements. This shall be done via a remote meeting and an agenda shall be provided in advance.

6.3 Scheme owner

6.3.1 The Sustainable Cashmere Standard Conformity Assessment Scheme is owned by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA), 41 Bryn Awelon, Mold, Flintshire, CH7 1LT. <https://sustainablefibre.org/>. The SFA is a membership organisation. A full list of current members and the Membership rules are available on request or to download from the SFA website.

6.3.2 The SFA is a registered UK Charity which is incorporated at the UK Companies House London, Registration Number 09389265. The scheme owner has adequate financial stability and resources to fulfil its role in the operation of the Scheme.

6.3.3 The scheme owner has overall ownership control (including copyrights) and responsibility towards the objective, content, and integrity of the CAS. The CAS has been developed and implemented by the authority of the SFA Board and is supported by various subcommittees. The committees comprise of members with diverse background (interested party representation and subject expertise) and are authorised to make recommendations to changes to the scheme to provide necessary support for the maintenance and development of the CAS. The scheme owner also has a team of administrative staff managing the CAS operations.

6.3.4 The Scheme Owner is cooperating with National Accreditation Bodies (NABs) regarding approval of the scheme and the allocation of CABs. The main cooperating partners for this process are the SFA's 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 hAB, if this hAB is:

- a) a recognised national or international Accreditation Body (such as being bound by EA's and/or IAF's Multi-Lateral Agreement (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 CAS.

6.3.5 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. Refer to SCS-036-02.0-EN Standard Setting Procedure clause 7.5 for full details.

6.3.6 The scheme owner shall ensure that it can provide necessary guidance to the CABs and provide any clarification to CABs, Accreditation Bodies (ABs), producers, processors, and other interested parties on any aspect of the CAS through scheme updates as and when required which shall be made available on the SFA website.

6.3.7 The scheme owner shall 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.

6.3.8 While the CAS addresses various components of the cashmere supply chain, it shall be still considered as a single CAS.

6.3.9 The scheme owner shall authorise the approved CABs the right to grant the use of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard (SCS) logo by issuing a SCS-070-01.0-EN Licensing agreement and SCS-071-01.0-EN Conformity Mark Licence to certified producers and processors.

6.3.10 The scheme owner has designed specific logo for each applicant segment as mentioned in clause 5.3. The certified organisation can use / display the SCS Logo represented under the Conformity Mark Licence, for business promotion provided the Organisation agrees to the conditions specified in the defined logo rules which shall be compliant with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17030. These rules have been detailed in SCS-006-02.0-EN Use of SFA Logos Procedure. How and when use of logos can be used is subject to a SCS-070-01.0-EN Licensing agreement and the holder being in receipt of a current SCS-071-01.0-EN Conformity Mark License.

6.3.11 The CAS is documented and open to public on the website <https://sustainablefibre.org>. The CAS is amended and updated on its website as and when required.

6.3.12 Then SFA shall carry out an annual risk assessment of its viability as an organisation and has insurance and/or reserves to cover liabilities arising from its operations. The SFA board reviews the reserves policy and funds held on an annual basis.

6.4 Design and Development of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard Conformity Assessment Scheme

The scheme owner has understood the assumptions, influences and consequences involved in establishing, operating, and maintaining the Sustainable Cashmere Standard CAS on an ongoing basis. All the committee members (representing all interested parties) are made aware of the objectives and assumptions underlying the Conformity Assessment Scheme. The CAS content, fundamental principles, ownership rights, governing and decision-making mechanisms have been reviewed and approved by the SFA Board.

Members of the SFA Board and all committees under it have agreed to participate and contribute voluntarily without any financial consideration. The SFA Board reviews the recommendations of these committees, and its decisions are binding on the CAS owner and the respective committees.

6.4.1 Design, Development & Review

6.4.1.1 The Sustainable Cashmere Standard has been developed in line with ISEAL's Setting Social and Environmental Standards – Code of Good Practice and Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards – Code of Good Practice, as well as the requirements identified in ISO/IEC:17067, EA-1/22 A-AB and IAF MD 25. The SFA is working with a National Accreditation Body (NAB) as a unique contact point for the evaluation of this Conformity Assessment Standard. In the case of international operations, the Scheme Owner shall form a relationship the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) in conjunction with the NAB.

6.4.1.2 The design, development, and review of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard is governed by processes set of in the document SCS-036-02.0-EN Standards Setting Procedure. This allows for a sequence of operations to ensure that due consideration is taken of the processes required to either review or develop a new scheme or component of a scheme.

6.4.1.3 Reviews are a standing agenda item for Board Meetings and committee meetings and SFA committees shall monitor and review the CAS periodically as a minimum at:

- 6 months – interim review
- 18 months – oversight review
- 3 years – full performance review, including analysis of assessment results, feedback, and two public consultations.

6.4.1.4 If an element of the CAS is identified as no longer fulfilling the certification requirements, the SFA shall issue information in writing to the CABs detailing if the element shall be withdrawn, replaced or updated as appropriate. The CABs must inform their respective applicants in writing detailing the changes and any implications of the changes and where appropriate the next steps.

6.5 Content of the Conformity Assessment Scheme

The Sustainable Cashmere Standard CAS is applicable to producers and processors involved in the cashmere supply chain. The CAS has defined three types of organisations (clause 5.3.1 & 5.3.2) who have the potential to comply with the requirements of the components within the Conformity Assessment Scheme. Should any organisation require clarification on the requirements of the Conformity Assessment Scheme, these are available from their CAB or directly from the scheme owner.

The SFA Sustainable Cashmere Standard is available for viewing on www.sustainablefibre.org

The certification process is defined in SCS document SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards.

6.6 Reporting to the Scheme Owner

The CAB is required to report the following information to the scheme owner using the timescales indicated below:

Information to report	Timescale for reporting
All critical non-conformities	Immediately
Suspension, Withdrawal or Termination of Certification	Immediately
Non or poor performance of any element of the scheme (e.g., due to unachievable criterion, technical error within criterion or guidance or typographical error)	Immediately
Feedback from Applicants or Assessors relating to any element of the scheme that doesn't fall under non or poor performance of any element of the scheme.	Monthly
Number and type of Assessments conducted	Quarterly
Number and type of Certificates Issued	Quarterly

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-006-02.0-EN	Use of SFA Logos Procedure
SCS-015-02.2-EN	Approval Procedures for Conformity Assessment Bodies
SCS-036-02.0-EN	Standards Setting Procedure
SCS-037-01.0-EN	Complaints and Dispute resolution procedure
SCS-048-01.0-EN	Certification Scheme Appeal Procedure
SCS-066-01.2-EN	Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards
SCS-070-01.0-EN	Licensing agreement
SCS-071-01.0-EN	Conformity Mark License
SCS-072-01.0-EN	Data Protection Policy

7. Conformity Assessment Scheme Management

7.1 Introduction

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) has implemented a Management System (MS) for establishing, documenting, and implementing our approach to the sustainable management of processes within the cashmere and other fibre production, manufacturing, and retail supply chain.

Our approach works with the requirements of the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice for sustainability standards to ensure that the desired results are achieved, and the effectiveness of the MS is maintained.

This includes measures to monitor and analyse the relevant processes and action to be achieved, thereby ensuring the continual improvement of our MS.

Specific responsibilities for, and the sequence and interaction of, key MS processes are detailed in the management procedures.

7.2 Documentation Requirements

7.2.1 General

This manual contains references to the documented procedures required by the MS and other documents needed to ensure effective planning, operation, and control of our key processes.

The level and type of MS documentation established for our business is continually reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate for the complexity of the interactions of our core processes and the competence of our employees. MS documents and data exist in hard copy and electronic format.

The MS documentation includes this manual, operating procedures, forms, and other internal and external documents and data needed to manage, perform, or verify work affecting the production and management oversight of the Conformity Assessment scheme, its components and other working documentation that impacts on the effectiveness and efficiency of our organisation's operations.

7.2.2 Document Control

All MS documents are controlled according to the SCS-41-01.0-EN Document Control Procedure which defines the process for:

- Approving documents for adequacy prior to issue
- Reviewing and revising as necessary and re-approving documents
- Ensuring that changes and current revision status of documents are identified
- Ensuring that relevant versions of applicable documents are available at points of use
- Ensuring that documents remain legible and readily identifiable
- Ensuring that documents of external origin are identified, and their distribution controlled
- Preventing the unintended use of obsolete documents
- Ensuring that documents of external origin are identified, and their distribution controlled

Documents that must be controlled include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Conformity Assessment Scheme Management System (MS) manual
- Procedures
- Records.

Controlled documents are identified with a document name (e.g., **SFA-001-01.0-EN**) and document number as indicated in the table below:

Field	Description	Format
Project code	Generic SFA = SFA; Sustainable Cashmere Standard = SCS	3 upper case characters
Number	A user or system-control number or a combination thereof	3 to 6 digits
Version number	The number allocated at the last major revision of the document	2 to 3 digits
Revision number	The latest iteration following a minor revision	1 to 2 digits
Language	Language Code (see below)	

Language	Language code
English	EN
Mongolian	MN
Chinese	CN

A list of key CAS and MS documents; including all procedures, forms and other key MS documents is in Annex E.

7.2.3 Control of Records

Records are established to provide evidence of conformity to the requirements specified by the standard, and of the effective operation of the CAS MS. They are formally controlled through the application of the SCS-044-01.0-EN Control of Records Procedure.

7.2.5 Publicly Available Documents

The scheme owner has developed a set of documents detailing various processes and activities related to the Sustainable Cashmere Standard CAS Certification. These processes are available to all Organisations, CABs, Consultants, Consumers and General Public on its website www.sustainablefibre.org/resources

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-044-01.0-EN	Control of Records Procedure
SCS-41-01.0-EN	Document Control Procedure

8. Management Responsibilities

The Board of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance, delegated to the Chief Executive, has the responsibility and authority for supporting the development and implementation of the Scheme Management System (MS), for ensuring that it remains relevant to the company's objectives, and the needs and expectations of users of the CAS, whilst promoting an ethos of continual improvement.

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the MS is appropriate for the goals of the business, that it promotes the continuing improvement of the effectiveness of the organisation, and that it is reviewed for continuing suitability.

Staff members of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance are expected to comply with the requirements of the MS and for reporting back to the organisation on the performance and effectiveness of the MS.

The Chief Executive and Board of Directors review risks towards the security of the CAS annually as part of an Annual Management Review.

8.1 Planning

8.1.1 Management System Planning

The MS planning process involves establishing and communicating our processes through issuance of this manual and its associated procedures. Accordingly, this manual constitutes our overall plan for establishing, maintaining, and improving the system. For each instance of MS planning, the output is documented accordingly, and changes are conducted in a controlled manner.

Our management review and internal assessment processes ensure the integrity of our MS is maintained when significant changes that affect key system processes are planned and implemented.

8.1.2 Management Representative

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance has appointed a Standards and Compliance Manager with delegated responsibilities for ensuring that a compliant CAS and Management System is established, implemented, and maintained; for ensuring that the performance of the MS is reviewed by the Board of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance for effectiveness, continuing suitability and the need for improvement as described in Section 9.

The Standards and Compliance Manager has the following responsibilities:

- Ensure that processes needed for the CAS and MS are established and implemented.
- Act as a liaison with external parties such as users or assessors on matters relating to the CAS and MS.
- Report to the Chief Executive and where appropriate the Board on the performance of the CAS and MS
- Organisational freedom to resolve matters pertaining to the maintenance of the CAS and MS.
- Resolve matters pertaining to CAS and MS issues.
- Promote initiatives for improvement.

8.2 Management Review

8.2.1 General

The Board of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance conducts a management review meeting at least once a year to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness of our CAS and MS. The primary inputs reviewed include data that measures the conformance and performance of our CAS and MS, and recommendations based on analysis of such data.

Conformance is primarily assured through internal assessments and demonstrated through a review of assessment results and our demonstrated ability to correct and to prevent problems.

Performance is primarily assured through the deployment of corporate and operational level objectives, and through a review of our demonstrated ability to achieve desired results.

The primary outputs of management review meetings are management actions to be taken to make changes or improvements to our CAS and MS, and the provision of resources needed to implement these actions.

8.2.2 Review Input

Assessment of the CAS MS is based on a review of information inputs to management review. These inputs can include the following:

- Planned changes that could affect the CAS or MS.
- Process performance
- Status of preventive and corrective actions
- Results of assessments and recommendations for improvement
- User feedback

8.2.3 Review Output

During management review meetings, the Board shall identify appropriate actions to be taken regarding the following *issues*:

- Improvement of the effectiveness of the Conformity Assessment Scheme, MS, and its processes
- Improvement of products related to user requirements.
- Resource needs

The primary outputs of management review meetings are management actions to be taken to make changes or improvements to our CAS or MS, and the provision of resources needed to implement these actions.

Responsibilities for required actions are assigned to members of the management review team. Any decisions made during the meeting, assigned actions and their due dates, are recorded on the management review presentation.

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-045-01.0-EN	Management Review Procedure

9. Maintenance and improvement of the Conformity Assessment Scheme

The scheme owner has formed a MS Management Committee and the development and review procedures is defined in the Annexes of this manual. The process includes reviewing the operations periodically to confirm validity and to identify aspects requiring improvement and feedback from interested parties. The review shall also ensure that the CAS requirements are being applied in a consistent manner.

This committee shall monitor the interested party feedback, changes in applicable regulatory requirements and make necessary changes in the schemes as and when needed, to keep pace with any required developments. Where such changes occur, the committee shall also identify any transition period, if required.

Each scheme is identified by a reference number and is issued with a review date. To control the planning, administrative support and their ongoing development, the Sustainable Fibre Alliance adopts the following measures to manage schemes and its components issued by the organisation:

- Document control as set out in section 7.2 of this manual
- Board minutes authorising changes to a scheme or a component of a scheme
- Regulatory requirements e.g., ISEAL, ISO
- User and/or member feedback.

9.1 Improvement

The company continually improves the effectiveness of its CAS and MS through the effective application of this manual, its processes, assessment and data analysis, corrective actions, and management reviews.

User satisfaction, audit, process, and scheme use data are then compared to progress against objectives or KPIs to identify additional opportunities for improvement.

The overall effectiveness of the continual improvement program, including corrective and preventive actions taken, as well as the overall progress towards achieving corporate level improvement objectives, is assessed through our management review process.

Additional feedback is included from CAB reviews and certification survey data, this information being reviewed by the Standards and Compliance Manager and forms part of the Management Review process (SCS-045-01.0-EN) and includes:

- Analysis of customer complaints
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Direct customer feedback
- Business expansion.

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-046-01.0-EN	Continual Improvement Procedure

10. Internal Audit

10.1 General

This section describes how the SFA defines, plans, and implements the CAS i.e., their use by third parties. These activities include training in the use of the codes of practice, their assessment at user level, and the checks put in place by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance to assure that the CAS is being properly adhered to.

These processes are identified in documented procedures and include the determination of applicable methods, including statistical techniques and the extent of their use:

- To demonstrate conformity of the product
- To ensure conformity of the requirements of the CAS and MS
- To continually improve the effectiveness of the CAS and MS

It is the role of the Standards and Compliance Manager to ensure appropriate documentation is in place to validate the use of the CAS by users.

10.2 Implementation & Assessment

10.2.1 Users of the Conformity Assessment Scheme

Users can apply for accreditation by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance with the definition of user being described within the relevant scheme. Each process is based on continuous improvement involving the key practices set out in SCS-015-02.2-EN Approval Procedure and Requirements for CABs.

This represents the first stage in committing to follow the requirements of the scheme and is ratified by the completion of an external assessment by an independent third-party organisation approved by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance. Third-party assessors in the form of CABs are required to ensure the process for checking compliance with the relevant scheme follows the guidance set out in the SCS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards.

Users that successfully achieve certification may use the SFA Certified logo on their website and in promotional material; however, they cannot make any claims about buying or selling 'SFA Certified' fibre, unless they are registered with and meet all the requirements of the SFA's the Chain of Custody as detailed in SCS-006-02.0-EN Use of Logo Procedure, have applied for SCS-070-01.0-EN Licensing agreement and are in receipt of a current SCS-071-01.0-EN Conformity Mark License.

10.2.2 Complaints

The Standards and Compliance Manager is the key contact for the resolution of customer complaints or queries and dispute arising from the CAS certification process.

For this purpose, the scheme owner has instituted SCS-037-01.0-EN Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure to address and respond to customer complaints and disputes. Appeals and queries relating to the awarding of Certificate of Conformity are addressed through SCS-048-01.0-EN Certification Scheme Appeal Procedure.

All complaints appeals and disputes whether received in writing, verbally or electronically through our web site or agencies acting on our behalf are immediately forwarded to the appropriate senior manager for action.

If the problem cannot be resolved, our Mediation Committee acts as the initial arbiter of any unresolved issue with a final decision being taken by the SFA Board.

10.2.3 Assessments

Assessment results are critical inputs that help in assessing the effectiveness of the CAS and MS by identifying opportunities for improvement, and by promoting awareness of the robust monitoring system to users and members of the Sustainable Fibre Alliance.

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance conducts assessments at planned intervals to determine whether the CAS or MS conforms to the arrangements for the development of schemes and components to the requirements of ISEAL Sustainability Codes of Good Practice, as well as to our MS requirements. The Sustainable Fibre Alliance shall determine if the CAS and MS is effectively implemented and maintained. This includes processes linked to accreditation and external assessment to ensure sufficient cognisance is taken of potential for improvement in processes that have a direct impact on users.

The SCS-038-01.0-EN Internal Auditing Procedure details the requirements for developing the assessment program, including the requirements for planning; taking into consideration the status and importance of the processes and areas to be assessed, as well as the results of previous assessments.

The assessment criteria, scope, frequency, and methods are defined by the assessment plan. The selection of assessors and their conduct ensures objectivity and impartiality throughout the assessment process.

Process owners do not assessment their own work. In cases where it is not possible to conduct an objective assessment, the services of independent external assessors shall be sought.

Supporting documentation:

Ref	Title & Description
SCS-006-02.0-EN	Use of Logo Procedure
SCS-048-01.0-EN	Certification Scheme Appeal Procedure
SCS-015-02.2-EN	Approval Procedure and Requirements for CABs
SCS-037-01.0-EN	Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure
SCS-038-01.0-EN	Internal Auditing Procedure
SCS-070-01.0-EN	Licensing agreement
SCS-071-01.0-EN	Conformity Mark License

Annex A: SFA Board

Constitution, Roles and Responsibilities

A1. Purpose of SFA Board

The SFA Board is made up of 6 members and is chaired by an individual nominated by Board Members. The board works closely with the SFA membership to ensure adequate representation of their views on SFA and CAS activities. Its tasks involve:-

- Approval and advice on strategy, designing the standards setting procedure, adopting schemes and rules, and providing the legal framework for regulating the CABs.
- Direct and approve overall working of the sub committees i.e. Technical Committee, Focused Retail Committee, Certification Committee and Mediation Committee.
- To extend support with critical strategic advice on final approval on schemes, modifications, CB assessment process, programs to establish the mark as the seal of consumer trust and functioning of the Conformity Assessment Scheme.
- To monitor the progress of the CAS from time to time with the Technical and Certification Committees and share their vision and ideas with heads of consumer brands, retail & support industries, policy makers, investors and all retail industry stakeholders.
- To formally review the CAS at least once a year and take proper account of the subcommittee decisions and views in its decision making by ensuring consultation with all interested stakeholders.
- To represent the "Sustainable Cashmere Standard" certification program in external meetings or other public forums.

A2. Organization of Trusted Board

- The SFA Board is currently chaired by the Managing Director of CHQM Services.
- The new members of the SFA Board are selected by the CEO with the approval of the existing Committee in a manner that ensures no one interest dominates.
- Members of Committees must be with appropriate experience, qualifications and exposure to work being overseen by that committee.
- Members may be removed from the committee by the Executive Director with the approval of the SFA membership when there is just cause.

A3. Responsibilities of SFA Board Members

- The CEO shall communicate with SFA Board members periodically via personal meetings, telephone and mail.
- Members must be available for consultation to the CEO and other members.

- Members must inform the CEO of any information, which may impact 'SCS' CAS operations, including any issues concerning how CB services are being conducted.
- Board Members can be represented by their legal, compliance, regulatory or retail operations' experts familiar with CAS documented system.

Annex B: SCS Standard Setting and Improvement Committee

Constitution, Roles, and responsibilities

The SCS Standard Setting and Improvement Committee consists of members with expertise in legal/ regulatory/ compliance/ Maintenance of the schemes from organisations in each retail format and from academics/ research/ consulting/ trade body/ Accreditation Body and Certification Body.

Their key role is to ensure that the Sustainable Cashmere Standard and its components are fit for purpose, and this is achieved by:

- Participating in annual Scheme reviews
- Exchanging knowledge & experience among fellow experts in order to identify current trends and assess the difficulties faced when implementing the code of practice.
- Reviewing CAS compliance criteria as required by customer feedback or programmed review.
- Raising awareness for the CAS amongst users of the codes of practice.
- Operating as a consultative body, and may from time to time deal with specific technical matters that are in the interest of all CAS users
- Participating in other SCS or SFA committee meets as the need arises.
- Ensuring that all legal/ compliance/ regulatory issues are looked into and are duly adhered to as per the prevailing laws in force.

The committee meets at least once a year.

Annex C: Certification Committee

Constitution, roles, and responsibilities

The Certification Committee is an operating committee reporting to the Technical Committee. The Certification Committee is made up of industry experts with knowledge of ISO standards and certification process. The Committee decides its own chairperson. The SFA CEO may invite additional members (on need basis) in consultation with Committee chairperson. The Certification Committee shall have at least 5 members to take a decision with respect to the certification process, CAB requirements and assessment issues. The Certification Committee enables the stakeholders to integrate their expertise for the improvement and the development of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard Conformity Assessment Scheme. The Committee shall meet once a year for a day and additional meeting can be called if required. The Committee shall formulate its own processes and procedures.

The purpose of Certification Committee includes -

- To discuss implementation issues and provide feedback as well as represent the activities of the CABs.
- To coordinate and supervise the activities of the CABs.
- To discuss changes if required in the certification process, CAB requirements, assessment issues.
- To review any specific trend based on issues / feedback received and recommends necessary changes in the CAS process to the Technical Committee.
- The Certification Committee reviews reports from various CABs to establish that the assessments and recommendations for Certification are arrived at through adherence to prescribed procedures and are supported by the evidence gathered during the assessment.
- These reviews may include:
 - Identifying the need for training of CAB personnel where repetitive errors are made, or applicant appeals are found to be justified.
 - Providing feedback to CABs where deviations from the prescribed procedures are found.
 - Evaluating feedback received from Accreditation body on CAB performance.
 - Appointing a team to carry out witness assessment on CABs assessment teams on a sample basis

Annex D: Mediation Committee

Constitution, Roles, and responsibilities

The Mediation Committee shall have representatives from various committees like the Technical Committee and Certification Committee in addition to other members drawn up from the membership of SFA. The Committee shall formulate its own processes and procedures.

The purpose of Mediation Committee is to resolve any differences between any two parties related to Sustainable Cashmere Standard Certification. The committee may receive an appeal or complaint from the aggrieved party (e.g. Retail organization, CB, or/ and Sustainable Cashmere Standard Secretariat). The Mediation Committee aims to -

- To act as a Mediator as and when required, resolving any disputes / issues of disagreement / redressal that may arise between the aggrieved parties.
- To ensure that aggrieved parties are given a fair and unbiased hearing before any final decision is taken by the Mediation Committee.
- To ensure that a fair and just decision is taken in resolving the matter keeping in mind best and fair practices in the interests of the retailing community.
- To review any specific trend based on complaints received and recommend necessary changes in the CAS process to the Technical Committee.

The Committee comes into operation once any complaint/appeal is received by the Committee Chairperson hence no frequency or duration of meetings is set for the Committee. This may be through the Sustainable Cashmere Standard Secretariat or direct. The committee may decide to meet to discuss the issue or may appoint any member to investigate the complaint. The Committee shall follow the defined SCS-037-01.0-EN Complaints and Dispute resolution procedure. The Committee may decide to change the procedure or amend the procedure for any specific case.

The Committee decision shall be final and binding on the aggrieved parties involved. Sustainable Cashmere Standard secretariat shall maintain all the records for future reference.

Annex E: List of Key CAS and MS documents

No:	Title
SCS-006-02.0-EN	Use of SFA Logos Procedure
SCS-015-02.2-EN	Approval Procedure and Requirement for Conformity Assessment Bodies
SCS-029-01.1-EN	CAB Agreement
SCS-036-02.0-EN	Standard Setting and Review Procedure
SCS-037-01.0-EN	Complaints and Dispute resolution procedure
SCS-038-01.0-EN	Internal Auditing Procedure
SCS-041-01.0-EN	Document Control Procedure
SCS-044-01.0-EN	Control of Records Procedure
SCS-045-01.0-EN	Management Review Procedure
SCS-048-01.0-EN	Certification Scheme Appeal Procedure
SCS-066-01.2-EN	Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards
SCS-070-01.0-EN	Licensing agreement
SCS-071-01.0-EN	Conformity Mark License
SCS-072-01.0-EN	Data Protection Policy