

# Sustainable Fibre Alliance **Standard Setting Procedure**

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Document Reference

SCS-036-02.2-EN

## Approvals

The signatures below certify that this procedure has been reviewed and accepted, and demonstrates that the signatories are aware of all the requirements contained herein and are committed to ensuring their provision.

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## Amendment Record

This procedure is reviewed to ensure its continuing relevance to the systems and process that it describes. A record of contextual additions or omissions is given below:

Page No.	Section	Context	Date
5	Introduction (1)  Scope (3)	Added China and farmers to acknowledge expansion from just Mongolia; corrected language from accredit to certify; updated mission.  Added “but naturally due consideration of these are required during standard criteria definition and deliberation.” for context regarding assurance and monitoring.	05/07/2022
6/7	Terms and Definitions (4)	Changed ‘Certification Body (CB)’ to ‘Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)’ as per updated terminology.  Revised ‘Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC)’ definition to accurately reflect committee structure  Removed ‘Steering Group’ definition to accurately reflect committee structure.  Updated ‘Standard’ definition to ‘Standard (voluntary)’ to use ISEAL quote for definition of a voluntary standard.  Updated ‘Technical Group’ definition to clarify the guidance provided by the group will be ‘technical’ advice.	05/07/2022
8/9	Roles and Responsibilities (6)	6.1.4 - Removed bullet points a-d  6.2.3 – Updated to reflect an accurate structure of the SSIC  6.3.1 – changed wording from ‘dissent’ to ‘opposition’ and added clarifying statement ‘(General agreement characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests.)’.	05/07/2022
9	Development/Revision Process (7)	6.3.2 – ‘A decision is considered to pass with a majority consensus (75% majority required)’ added.  7.1.2 – Changed wording from ‘a Senior Manager within the SFA’ to ‘the SFA CEO in consultation with the SFA Board of Directors’ to more accurately reflect the decision-making process.  7.1.4 removed reference to ‘previous’ SSIC being reconvened.	05/07/2022
7	Terms and Definitions (4)	Updated the example contained within the definition of element from Conformity Assessment Scheme to the SFA Cashmere Standard, the Clean Fibre Processing Standard or the Chain of Custody Guidelines	27/01/2023

Page No.	Section	Context	Date
6	Scope (3)	Updated to include current elements of the SFA Standard System are the SFA Cashmere Standard, the Clean Fibre Processing Standard or the Chain of Custody Guidelines.	27/01/2023

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## Disclaimer

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# 1 Introduction

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The Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) is a UK-registered charity working with the extended cashmere value chain, from herders to retailers, to promote a global sustainability standard for cashmere. Our vision is a future where cashmere is produced in a way that minimises environmental impact, safeguards herder livelihoods and meets high welfare standards. Founded in 2015, we are a standard holding and capacity building organisation working with herding communities in Mongolia and China to promote best practice in rangeland management and animal husbandry. Our cashmere standard was developed according to ISEAL best practice guidelines and represents the world's first holistic, evidence-based sustainability standard for cashmere that is both global in focus and locally adaptable.

For permission to use the SFA logo, or for more information, please contact: [info@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:info@sustainablefibre.org)

## 2 Objectives

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These Standard Setting Procedures (hereafter 'procedures') are intended to guide the process of developing or revising the SFA's Standard System and the related elements of the standard system. The objectives of these procedures are:

- to ensure the development process for the SFA's standards is inclusive and transparent to affected stakeholders
- to provide a robust review process that ensures the SFA's standards effectively meet their respective goals
- to ensure that the development and revision of the SFA's standards comply with international best practices for standard setting (e.g., the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards and ISO/IEC 17067: 2013 Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes).

## 3 Scope

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The procedures are applicable for the development and revision of the SFA's standards.

Standard setting does not include the assurance, monitoring or evaluation of the standard, but naturally due consideration of these elements are required during standard criteria definition and deliberation.

The current elements within the SFA Standard System are:

- the SFA Cashmere Standard
- the SFA Clean Fibre Processing Standard
- the SFA Chain of Custody Guidelines.

These procedures shall undergo a scheduled review at least every four years. This is subject to earlier revision and update if deemed necessary, such as in the case of major standard revisions by the SFA.

Any complaints about the process for standard development shall be addressed through SFA-037-01.0-EN Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure. Any complaints received about the content of a standard will be forwarded to the Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC) and will be considered through the development and review process.

## 4 Terms and Definitions

Advisory Group	Members of the Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC), available for comment and direction into specific elements of the standard system.
Conformity Assessment Bodies (CAB)	Organisation performing professional and objective assurance of producers and processors operating the certification systems (also known as Certification Bodies).
Consensus	General agreement characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interested parties.
Element	A self-contained unit which makes up part of a standard (e.g., the SFA Cashmere Standard, the Clean Fibre Processing Standard or the Chain of Custody Guidelines)
Interested party	Any person or group concerned with or who may be directly affected by a standard.
Interim review	Documented process of a review of the performance of a standard at the mid-point of the standard's development and review cycle. The review will analyse all achievement data and stakeholder feedback for signs of poor performance or unintended consequences.
Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC)	The group of stakeholders actively engaged in the development or revision of a standard. The SSIC is supported by the SFA as Secretariat and is fed by Technical Group Members and Advisory Group members to inform their decisions.
Public Summary	A notice on a public-facing website that includes the information as detailed in section A1.3.
Workplan	The step-by-step plan for developing or revising a standard or element within a standard. The Workplan is provided to all SSIC members and includes an estimated timeline.
Terms of Reference (TOR)	<p>A document which includes a summary of key information to guide the process of standard development or revision:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Justification of the need for the standard or element of a standard</li> <li>b) Existing standards addressing similar materials or issues</li> <li>c) Proposed scope, including geographic regions</li> <li>d) Clear objectives for the standard</li> <li>e) An assessment of risks in implementing the standard or element of a standard, and how to mitigate for these:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its objectives</li> <li>ii. Unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation</li> <li>iii. Possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Secretariat	SFA Staff carrying out the administrative role of the SSIC, including record keeping, stakeholder management, and other functions.
Standard (voluntary)	Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory..

Summative review	Documented process of a review of the performance of a standard at the endpoint of the standard's development and review cycle. The review will analyse all achievement data, stakeholder feedback, changes to the sector and any other relevant performance activity.
Technical Group	Members of the SSIC, available for providing technical advice and guidance into specific elements of the standard.
Public Consultation	The consultation held prior to a revision of an existing standard, open to any interested parties; announced using a press release, etc. Feedback is given on the current version of the standard.

## 5 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
ISO17067	Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes
EA 1/22	EA Procedure and Criteria for the Evaluation of Conformity Assessment Schemes by EA Accreditation Body Members
IAF MD 25	Accreditation Assessment of Conformity Assessment Bodies with Activities in Multiple Countries
ISEAL	Setting Social and Environmental Standards – Code of Good Practice



# 6 Roles and Responsibilities

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## 6.1 The SFA

- 6.1.1 The SFA is the owner of standards developed and reviewed using these procedures and retains authority to establish and change the requirements of a standard.
- 6.1.2 The SFA shall play the role of Secretariat for all standards development and revisions or designate another party to do so.
- 6.1.3 The Technical Group is responsible for ensuring that all elements within the standard system are developed in accordance with this document.
- 6.1.4 During the course of the development process, the Public Summary shall be made publicly available by the SFA.

The Public Summary will include the following information:

- a) The overview of the work being done on the standard (notes, decisions, drafts, etc.)
- b) Relevant details about the elements of the standard
- c) How to contribute or participate in the process
- d) Draft Terms of Reference of the standard
- e) Steps in the standard-setting process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing
- f) Decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them. This shall be a reference to this document
- g) Regular updates on the status of the standard development or revision activities; and
- h) Relevant SFA contact information.

## 6.2 Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC)

- 6.2.1 The development of the SFA's standards shall be managed and released by the Standards System Improvement Committee (SSIC).
- 6.2.2 Participation in the SSIC is on a voluntary basis.
- 6.2.3 The SSIC oversees conformance to these Procedures and are the main decision-making body for standard Setting activities. The Technical Groups are currently managing guidance for Mongolia (through the SFA Mongolia Office) and China (through ICCAW). Further Advisory Groups may be created or consulted on specific issues and topics.
- 6.2.4 SSIC Membership shall be open to all interested parties and shall not be limited in number. Voting shall be ?? representative across the following sectors:
  - a) Brands/Retailers
  - b) Supply Chain
  - c) Material Producers

- d) Civil Society
- e) Professional Services (e.g., Conformity Assessment Bodies).

### 6.3 Decision Making

- 6.3.1 The standard-setting process shall strive for consensus among all voting members of the SSIC. Consensus shall be considered the absence of expressions of opposition. (General agreement characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests.).
- 6.3.2 In the event that consensus is not met:
- a) The member(s) who disagree from the majority shall present alternative solutions for consideration
  - b) If a compromise cannot be reached within the group, input from the wider stakeholder group shall be invited; after consideration of this feedback, the members shall attempt to form a consensus. A decision is considered to pass with a majority consensus (75% majority required).

## 7 Development/Revision Process

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### 7.1 Initiating Development/Revision

- 7.1.1 Proposals to develop or review a new standard or element of a standard may be submitted by any interested party to the SFA and a Document Change Request (SCS-068-01.0-EN) shall be completed and submitted to the SFA Board. The request must demonstrate a market need for the standard development or review.
- 7.1.2 The final decision of whether to develop a new standard or element of a standard shall be made by the SFA CEO in consultation with the SFA Board of Directors, and authorisation shall be provided in writing.
- 7.1.3 In some cases, it may be necessary to conduct an urgent revision of a standard. The cases that trigger a revision may include, but are not limited to, the following:
- a) Standard's requirements result in critical unintended consequences that compromise the goals of the standard;
  - b) The Standard contains a mistake, incorrect guidance, or language that was unintended by the SSIC.
- 7.1.4 When these types of revisions are necessary, the SSIC shall be reconvened and consulted for a final decision. This process shall not be considered a full revision of the standard or element of the standard, and therefore shall not affect the timing of the previously scheduled revision.
- 7.1.5 In some cases, a small-scale revision may be used to add a regional scope or application of the standard. The following criteria apply:
- a) The full SSIC shall approve an additional scope, and the writing of the new section may be run as a task force revision
  - b) Stakeholder mapping shall be conducted to identify interested parties affected by the new section
  - c) Public Stakeholder Draft Consultation shall be followed.

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- 7.1.6 Revisions shall begin with a Public Stakeholder Standard Consultation, see Terms and Definitions. This shall be at least a 60-day period. Previously received feedback should be entered into the Consultation Log:
- a) This log shall include the sector and geography represented by the submission
  - b) Individuals and organisations that submit comments to the Public Standard Consultation shall be considered a stakeholder and notified of changes or future revisions.
- 7.1.7 A review process shall consider a standard's continued relevance, effectiveness, and whether external circumstances have changed to the point where change is required:
- a) All comments from the Public Stakeholder Standard Consultation
  - b) Analysis of achievement and certification data
  - c) Information on the impact of the standard, as identified through the SFA's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
  - d) New technology developments
  - e) Changes in industry best practices including normative reference document updates
  - c) New or changed legislation.
- 7.1.8 The revision timetable for a standard's review shall be planned and conducted using the following intervals:
- a) 6 Months after publication – interim review
  - b) 18 months after publication – oversight review
  - c) 3 years after publication – full performance review, including analysis of assessment results, feedback, and two public consultations.
- 7.1.9 The Secretariat shall draft the initial ToR document to guide the process. See the definition of Terms of Reference.
- 7.1.10 The Secretariat will complete a Standard Development and Review Checklist to ensure that all parts of the development or review process are completed.

## 7.2 Stakeholder Engagement

- 7.2.1 The Secretariat shall conduct stakeholder mapping to develop an initial list of potential stakeholders and interested parties for outreach:
- a) Clear stakeholder participation goals shall be set and communicated for each stakeholder sector (Brand and Retailer, Supply Chain, Material Producers, Civil Society, and Professional Services). These participation goals shall ensure representation from affected geographic regions and market sectors of the given standard.
  - b) Under-represented stakeholders and disadvantaged stakeholders shall be identified in the stakeholder mapping and targets shall be set to seek their participation through coordination with local organisations, supply chain visits, and/or pilot projects.
    - I. The Secretariat shall identify parties who may be directly affected by the standard and those that are not adequately represented and proactively seek their contributions.
    - II. Key stakeholders and interested parties, including organisations that have developed related standards, shall be contacted about the standard and the ways that they can participate.
  - d) For revisions, the list of previous stakeholders and interested parties may be used and updated to ensure broad stakeholder engagement.

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- 7.2.2 The Secretariat shall invite participation in the Standards System Improvement Committee and keep record of all parties that indicate interest in the development or revision process. SSIC members may self-select their participation (i.e. Voting Member, Advisory Group) in the SSIC during the open invitation period.
- 7.2.3 The Secretariat will screen and appoint Technical Group members ensuring their knowledge and experience in the technical and conformity aspect(s) of the standard being developed or revised. This will be done by applicants completing and submitting an SSIC Member application Form (SCS-069-01.0-EN) and supporting evidence (e.g., Technical/Qualification Certificates and CVs).
- 7.2.4 The Secretariat shall draft a Work Plan that outlines the roles, responsibilities and timelines involved in participation with the Standard Development or Revision. Members are required to declare their commitment to comply with the Work Programme by signing a declaration.
- 7.2.5 SSIC Members are required to declare their commitment to protect the confidentiality of information provided by parties involved in the standard by signing a declaration.
- 7.2.6 The Secretariat shall publicize its intention to develop/revise the standard and invite expressions of interest in participation. See the definition of Public Summary.
- 7.2.7 Throughout the development of the standard:
- a) Participation in standards consultation is open to all interested parties and that participation reflects a balance of among interested parties in the subject matter and in the geographic scope to which the standard applies.
  - b) Constraints on disadvantaged groups to participate effectively in standards development and revision shall be addressed in the standards development process.
  - c) Interested parties shall be provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development or revision of a standard, through direct comments or during the stakeholder review process.
  - d) Records of standard development or revision activities shall be regularly posted on the corresponding website while the standard is still in development, with an open invitation to send comments. For revisions, the existing stakeholder mapping shall be reviewed, amended as needed, and approved by the SSIC.

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## 7.3 Writing (or Revising) the Standard

- 7.3.1 The Standards System Improvement Committee shall be responsible for reviewing and revising the TOR, with final approval given through consensus.
- 7.3.2 The Technical Group shall be responsible for writing the drafts of the standard.
- 7.3.3 When preparing the final draft of the standard, the Standards System Improvement Committee shall follow the decision-making process, Section 6.3. The SFA standards shall comply with the following clauses (7.3.4 – 7.3.19):
- 7.3.4 The criteria within the standard shall be linked to desired outcomes that align with the objectives of the standard, as defined in the TOR.
- 7.3.5 The standard shall not seek to restrict trade in anyway or give preference to one geographic region over another.
- 7.3.6 The standard shall include guidance for local applicability where necessary and helpful.
- 7.3.7 In setting the requirements for the standard, consideration shall be given to regulatory requirements, market needs, as well as scientific and technological developments.
- 7.3.8 Each requirement shall be clear, objective and verifiable, and clearly contribute to the achievement of the standard's objectives.
- 7.3.9 The standard shall be structured in consideration of monitoring and evaluation.
- 7.3.10 The standard shall be expressed in terms of a combination of process, management and performance criteria. To this end, the standard shall be outcome-based as much as possible, to avoid being prescriptive.
- 7.3.11 The standard shall not deliberately favour a particular technology or patented item.
- 7.3.12 The standard shall have an implementation manual to give further guidance for the requirements of the standard. These may be updated by the SFA as often as deemed necessary without going through the revision process.
- 7.3.13 The standard shall attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content.
- 7.3.14 The standard shall include the anticipated timing of the next revision, and how to submit feedback or complaints.
- 7.3.15 The Secretariat shall obtain external Regulatory Approval in writing where appropriate.
- 7.3.16 All national or regional standards shall be based on international standards, unless they would be ineffective or inappropriate, and shall be as consistent as possible with relevant international standards and at least as stringent.
- 7.3.17 All standards developed or reviewed must follow the requirements of the SFA's Internal Management System (IMS).
- 7.3.18 The requirements of the standard shall be written unambiguously, using wording that is objective, logical, valid and specific and enable consistent application and evaluation.

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- 7.3.19 Where the requirements of a standard are directly linked to legislation, the requirements must not contradict legislation and must be identified as a mandatory requirement for achievement of the standard or element of the standard. The standard must not be written to solely fulfil applicable legal requirements but must add value over and above that of relevant legislation.

## 7.4 Public Consultation

- 7.4.1 SSIC Members shall approve the draft standard or the draft revised standard before releasing it for Public Consultation.
- 7.4.2 Upon completion of the standard draft (or draft of changes in the case of a revision), all standards shall undergo Public Consultation, which shall involve at least two rounds of stakeholder feedback (one Public Consultation is sufficient in the case of a revision). The launch of a Public Consultation shall be publicly announced.
- 7.4.3 The first round of Public Consultation shall include:
- a) A period of at least 60 days for submission of feedback
  - b) Standard draft made available for public view
  - c) Publicised process for submitting feedback
  - d) Invitations sent to all stakeholders identified during the stakeholder mapping.
- 7.4.4 The Secretariat shall collect and record all feedback submitted during the Public Consultation, with the geography and sector of the contributor noted. Individuals and organisations that submit comments to the Public Consultation shall be considered a stakeholder and notified of changes or future revisions.
- 7.4.5 The Secretariat shall consider all comments and input received during the Public Consultation under consideration. All feedback shall be reviewed by the Technical Group. Actions taken, or not, on each point of feedback shall be recorded by the Secretariat:
- a) For revisions, a second round of Public Consultation shall be carried out if substantive, unresolved issues persist after the first round, and shall include the same steps as the first round, for a period of at least 30 days
  - b) For development of new standards, a second round of Public Consultation shall be carried out for a period of at least 30 days.

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- 7.4.6 The final version of the standard shall be approved by the SSIC Voting Members prior to release.
  - 7.4.7 The Secretariat shall prepare a written synopsis (Feedback Summary) of how each point of feedback has been addressed. For Revisions, the Feedback Summary shall include the comments received during the initial Public Standard Consultation.
  - 7.4.8 The Feedback Summary shall be made publicly available, and all parties that contributed comments shall be sent a copy.
  - 7.4.9 The SFA shall determine the ownership and governance of the final standard.
  - 7.4.10 Any document released for public consultation will be made available in English and in the main written language where affected stakeholders are located

## 7.5 Publishing the Standard

- 7.5.1 The SSIC will release the final version of the standard to the Secretariat for publishing.
- 7.5.2 All current draft and final standards shall be published by the Secretariat and will be publicly available for free download on the corresponding website. The following documents shall be published upon release of a final standard:
  - a) Final Standard
  - b) Final implementation guidance (Implementation Manual)
  - c) Feedback Summary of all feedback collected, organised by topic, with explanations of how it was addressed
  - d) Updated Logo User Guide and Claims Guide, if needed
  - e) Statement of all major changes to the standard and the effective date.
- 7.5.3 The following shall be noted on page two of the standard:
  - a) That the official language of the standard shall be English and in the case of inconsistency between translated versions, the English version shall prevail
  - b) Reference to the release date and effective date
  - c) A disclaimer stating that the SFA shall not be held liable for use of the standard
  - d) A copyright statement.
- 7.5.4 Hard copies and translations shall be provided upon request, dependent on resources.
- 7.5.5 The location and retention period for records relating to standards development and review is managed in accordance with SFA IMS Clause P002 6.3. Copies will be available to stakeholders on request.
- 7.5.6 Records of development activities on completed standards shall be made available upon request. These shall include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Terms of Reference (see Definitions)
  - b) Public Summary
  - c) Stakeholder Mapping
  - d) Feedback Summary

7.5.7 Following a revision of an existing standard, the following shall also be made available:

- a) Transition details for existing sites to the new version
- b) Summary of all substantive changes
- c) Detailed list of all changes, available upon request.

7.5.8 SFA standards shall be reviewed at intervals of no more than 5 years. The date of the subsequent scheduled review shall be listed within the standard.

7.5.9 There shall be a one-year transition period for certified organisations to transition to the revised version, starting from the release date of the revised standard. This date shall be known as that standard version's 'Compliance Date'.

7.5.10 On the Compliance Date:

- a) Certified sites are to be operating in compliance with the new version of the standard, even if their annual audit has not occurred yet. Conformity Assessment Bodies are not required to alter the renewal audit time period in order to confirm compliance
- b) Conformity Assessment Body staff shall have been trained and shall be performing all certification activities in accordance with the new version, including unannounced audits. They may begin earlier than this date, but any non-conformities identified – and solely occurring because of changes in the new version – shall be deferred until the Compliance Date.