



# **SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE**

Requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies

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## Purpose

This document specifies the Sustainable Fibre Alliance's (SFA's) the requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs). This document is a normative document and will be used alongside other normative documents to evaluate CABs against SFA criteria for approval to perform assurance and certification according to the Sustainable Fibre Alliance's Cashmere Standard (CS). The SFA reserves the right to change these requirements at any time, in accordance with the SFA's review and approval process.

## Scope



These procedures and requirements are applicable for all new and existing SFA approved CABs.

## Responsibility for these requirements

The SFA Standard Setting and Improvement Committee (SSIC) is the body responsible for the SFA Requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies. The SSIC will review the contents of the document on an ongoing basis. A record of amendments is shown below.

## Approvals

The signatures below certify that this document has been reviewed and 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	08/08/2022
Approved by	Una Jones		Chief Executive	16/08/2022

## 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

## Normative References

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

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

## Terms and Definitions

The following terms and definitions are used throughout this document.

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

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

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



# 1. General Requirements

## 1.1. CAB Approval

### 1.1.1. Applying for Approval

CAB interested in applying for SFA approval must complete and submit an Application Form (available upon request from [standards@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:standards@sustainablefibre.org)).

Applications shall be submitted by email to [Standards@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:Standards@sustainablefibre.org).

### 1.1.2. Prerequisites

- A. CABs applying for SFA approval must comply with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065.
- B. CABs shall be accredited by an accreditation body (AB) that is a signatory of and in good standing with, the IAF Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for Certification.
- C. Where the SFA approves a CAB to deliver the Cashmere Standard before they are accredited to ISO/IEC 17065, they must become accredited within 9 months from the date that approval is granted. Refer to the requirements set out Appendix B.

### 1.1.3. SFA Cashmere Standard Scopes

Approval can be applied according to one of or more of the following scopes:

- A. Animal Husbandry - Certificate of Compliance
- B. Rangeland Stewardship - Certificate of Compliance
- C. Clean Fibre Processing
- D. Chain of Custody.

### 1.1.4. Applying for more than one standard scope

An organisation may seek accreditation for more than one standard scope, but conformity assessment bodies shall NOT provide both conformity assessment and consulting service to the same client unless they comply with mechanisms outlined in ISO 17011:2017 sections 4.4.12 and 4.4.13 to prevent conflicts of interest.

### 1.1.5. Application information required

The application must indicate:

- A. Legal name, legal status, address, and legal representative of applicant
- B. Full names, contact details and qualifications of all personnel involved in the provision of SFA related services.
- C. A description of the internal controls that the organization will use to monitor the integrity and continuity of SFA related services, including ensuring ability to address geographic and industry sector experience and qualification requirements (See sections 1.1.6, 3.1, and 3.5).
- D. How the organization will market its SFA services; and
- E. A list of valid and relevant accreditations and certifications held by the organization.
- F. The Geographical Scope (Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, China...).

### 1.1.6. Supporting Evidence

The completed application must be supported by the following evidence:

- A. Evidence of accreditations held as described above (section 1.1.2)
- B. Internal procedures for SFA Cashmere Standard Certification as detailed in section 3.
- C. Copies of the relevant professional qualifications and experience including Curriculum Vitae for all assurance personnel.

## 1.2. Process for Application Review

### 1.2.1. Applications

The SFA will not process an application for approval unless the CAB agrees to:



- A. arrange for key identified staff from the organisation performing SFA assurance and certification services to acquire and maintain the relevant competence and any other SFA trainings as may be required by the SFA in accordance with section 3.
- B. ensure that identified staff performing AWS services maintains the necessary competences.
- C. Allow the SFA to assess internal processes as defined in section 3 and witness representative activities (including of certification audits) of the service provider as part of the review process for SFA Approval.

#### **1.2.2. Application Review**

- A. Approval may be granted globally, for a specific list of countries, or for another defined geographic region.
- B. Upon receipt of the application, the SFA will issue an invoice for a non-refundable application Fee of £500 GBP plus tax if applicable.
- C. The CAB shall pay fees to The SFA within 30 days of receipt of an invoice. The SFA may suspend or withdraw CAB approval for non-payment of fees.
- D. The SFA shall decide if approval according to the applied scope(s) (refer to section 1.1.3) will be granted to the CAB. The SFA may decide to grant approval only for one or some of the applied scopes and to refuse approval for others.
- E. After the application is successful, the applicant will be issued with a CAB agreement between the Sustainable Fibre Alliance and the prospective CAB which shall signed and retained, and a copy returned to the SFA. The SFA reserves the right to suspend or terminate the contract, to limit the approved scope as detailed in the CAB agreement and to investigate any arising problems.
- F. Only after receipt of the signed CAB agreement is the CAB entitled to act as an SFA approved CAB and provide corresponding Cashmere Standard certification.
- G. CABs shall always maintain accreditation to ISO/IEC 17065 as well as SFA approval.

#### **1.2.3. Evaluation and monitoring of CABs**

The SFA will include the following specific minimum evaluation and monitoring components in its respective approval and monitoring procedure:

- A. Desktop approval of the application, which may include a telephone/video meeting with the CAB
- B. Continuous monitoring of approved CABs, including performing at least one monitoring activity every year with the office conducting certifications. This activity may be a visit or be conducted remotely by video conference.
- C. The CAB's assurance personnel to ensure competence with the relevant scopes that the CAB is approved to certify. All assurance personnel must be registered with the SFA.
- D. Any certification decision taken by the CAB.

#### **1.2.4. Personnel**

Within the application, CABs shall identify the person(s) who work in each service area and ensure that they have met the relevant personnel competence requirements as detailed in section 3.5 and shall include:

- A. Evidence of relevant qualifications and experience in the scope (geographic region and industry sector) applied for.
- B. Evidence of current SFA training related to the scope; and
- C. Language skills and local knowledge (e.g., animal husbandry/welfare, land/environmental management, fibre processing etc.) appropriate in the context of the region of activity.

### **1.3. Publication of approved CABs and their conditions**

Approved CABs and their approved scope(s) shall be published on the SFA's website. This document shall also be published on the SFA's website to enable reporting of any perceived violations to the SFA.

## 2. The SFA Cashmere Standard

### 2.1. The SFA's Cashmere Standard

#### 2.1.1. SFA Cashmere Standard Scopes

The components of the standard that provide the scope for the producers' and processors' requirements for compliance with the Cashmere Standard are as follows:

- A. Animal Husbandry and Cashmere Harvesting Code of Practice
- B. Rangeland Stewardship Code of Practice
- C. Clean Fibre Processing Code of Practice
- D. Chain of Custody.

#### 2.1.2. Cashmere Standard normative documents

The SFA shall maintain and publish a directory of components of the Cashmere Standard and the relevant normative documents on its website.

#### 2.1.3. Assurance activities

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

Conformity Assessment activities	
Selection	Planning and preparation for assessment, specification of the criteria, and sampling planning
Determination	On-site 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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 Cashmere Standard.

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.

#### 2.1.4. Planning and preparation for the assessment

##### 2.1.4.1. Sampling

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 (See section 5.2.2).

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.

##### 2.1.4.2. Preparing for the assessment

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.

#### **2.1.5. 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.

#### **2.1.6. 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.

#### **2.1.7. 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 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.

#### **2.1.8. 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 section 2.1.12.

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. An example of a Certificate of Compliance can be found in Appendix D; however, if the CAB wishes to use their own Certificate Template, they may do so with written approval from the SFA.

#### **2.1.9. 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.

#### **2.1.10. 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.

### 2.1.11. Awarding Criteria

The Cashmere Standard recognises the need for improved land management, animal welfare and environmental and best practices. The Cashmere Standard uses a continuous improvement approach to compliance. It recognizes and motivates progress to the highest level of compliance. The continuous improvement model would enable producers and processors to demonstrate sustainable practices implemented across the cashmere supply chain.

#### *a. Traffic lights*

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

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

#### *b. Indicators*

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

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

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

Core indicators are classified as such if they are:

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

2.1.12. Achievement Criteria

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

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

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

### 2.1.13. Assurance Activities

The assurance activities include:

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

### 2.1.14. Assurance

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

The main objectives of the assurance model are to:

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

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

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

### 2.1.15. Core Indicators

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

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

Producers and processors must comply with all relevant Core Indicators to be licensed to sell 'SFA Certified' cashmere.

### 2.1.16. Continuous Improvement Criteria

The Cashmere Standard contains a continuous improvement system that requires producers and processors to gradually increase their compliance over three performance levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

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

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

### 2.1.17. Feedback to the SFA on the Cashmere Standard requirements

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

## 2.2. Users of the Cashmere Standard

### 2.2.1. Producers and Producer Organisations

Under the Cashmere Standard, 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:

- **Producer** - An individual herding family, farmer, or farm where the production of Cashmere fibre forms part of their livelihood
- **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 to obtain group certification.

For Group Certification, annual on-site assessments of the Producer Organisation's Internal Control System (ICS) are required as described in section 5.5.

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

### 2.2.2. Processors

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

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



## 2.3.Rights and Obligations

### 2.3.1.Rights

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

- A. Obtain an answer to any question relating to interpretation of the Cashmere Standard.
- B. Get the updated versions of Cashmere Standard and policy documents from their CAB.
- C. Receive an assessment report within the 40 calendar days following the assessment closing meeting.
- D. Submit a complaint related to the service provided by a CAB.
- E. Appeal a certification decision made by a CAB.
- F. Start being an applicant of a different CAB, under the condition that the producer or processor does not have open non-conformities on core criteria, is suspended, cancelled or is going through an investigation.
- G. Request for rescheduling an unannounced monitoring, investigation, shadow, or review visit once. Valid reasons for requesting the rescheduling include force majeure conditions and when the producers or processors representatives responsible for assuring compliance with the Cashmere Standard can provide proof of previously acquired commitments with supporting evidence.
- H. Request the cancellation of its certificate at any moment.
- I. Make 'SFA certified' claims when selling cashmere harvested after the starting date of the assessment that led to a positive certification decision.

### 2.3.2.Obligations

All certified producers and processors accept the following obligations:

- A. Submit a complete application, with truthful, accurate, updated information to a CAB that is approved to operate in the region where the producer or processor is located. In the case of groups, this includes the Group Member List.
- B. Submit a completed self-assessment, with truthful, accurate supporting evidence of compliance with the requirements of the Cashmere Standard.
- C. The certified producer or processor should contact the CAB to arrange an evaluation assessment. Where the producer or processor has already been issued with a certificate, they should contact the CAB to arrange a monitoring assessment at least 120 days before the anniversary date of the certificate to successfully complete the respective assessment process in time.
- D. Inform the CAB of any significant change in its management system, size, composition, production activities, productivity, or its infrastructure. The certified producer or processor shall notify the CAB when it adds new areas or members to its scope.
- E. Keep its buyers and other commercial partners informed of any events that may jeopardize their certification status in good time.
- F. Sign a certification agreement with the CAB.
- G. Applicants 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 CS-006-02.0-EN Use of Logo Procedure, have applied for and been issued with a Licensing agreement (CS-070-01.0-EN) and are in receipt of a current Conformity Mark License (CS-071-01.0-EN).
- H. Not sell more cashmere than the harvested volume while holding a valid certificate unless previously agreed with the Scheme Owner.
- I. Obtain Transaction Certificates (TCs) in the SFA Chain of Custody system for all cashmere determined in the certificate scope.
- J. Authorise the SFA and the CAB to publish assessment report public summaries that include the description of non-conformities. These summaries will not contain any commercially or personally sensitive information.
- K. Authorise the SFA and its partners to use data associated with the assurance process for analyses and reporting about the Sustainable Cashmere Standard scheme if these do not disclose information about applicants or certificate holders.
- L. Pay the required costs associated with any type of assessment.
- M. In the case of group administrators, submit an electronic list with truthful, accurate, updated information about all group members within the Cashmere Standard certificate scope.

- N. Ensure that the assessment team has access to all relevant documentation and to the whole area within the assurance scope and that it has the right to interview workers and members of neighbouring communities, where appropriate, without the presence of field supervisors, the farm management or group administrator or their representatives.
- O. Allow and cooperate with unannounced monitoring visits and evaluation visits carried out by the CAB, by the SFA or any organisation acting on their behalf.
- P. Request and receive authorisation from the SFA prior to using any SFA trademarks, including the 'SFA Certified' logo.
- Q. In the event it disputes a certification decision or related matter, it must follow the appeal process as indicated in section 4.6 prior to initiating any other remedies such as a legal action including lawsuit, injunction, request for declaratory relief or other claim or legal action against the SFA.

## 3. Requirements for Conformity Assessment Bodies

### 3.1. General

- A. CABs shall not offer SFA conformity assessment services before being accredited by the SFA.
- B. The CAB shall only provide SFA conformity assessment services in the geographic region(s) and industry sector(s) for which they have demonstrated qualifications and in line with SFA certification requirements for audits.
- C. CABs shall comply with the applicable legal requirements of the countries in which they operate.
- D. The structure of the CAB shall demonstrate confidence in its certification operations. In particular, the CAB shall have documents attesting to its status as a legal entity and an organisation chart identifying the management (body, group, or person) that has overall responsibility for the functioning of the CAB, including its finances.
- E. The CAB shall have adequate arrangements (e.g., insurance or reserves) to cover liabilities arising from its operations and shall have the financial stability and resources required for its operations.
- F. CABs shall demonstrate knowledge of relevant legal and regulatory requirements, as well as knowledge of animal welfare and/or environmental issues, in the countries in which they operate, as evidenced by personnel competence and internal procedures.
- G. CABs shall have documented internal procedures covering all aspects of SFA assurance and certification, including, at a minimum:
  - a. Procedures for the assignment of suitably qualified assessor to assessment teams.
  - b. Procedures for conformity assessments.
  - c. Procedures for assessment of group schemes; and
  - d. Procedures for monitoring and control of the use of the SFA logo(s), the SFA claim or
  - e. other SFA assets by clients such as on-product claims or any other licensing arrangements which may arise in the future.
  - f. Procedures for quality control of SFA related standard system processes. This includes procedures to ensure that audits and audit reports undergo peer review by CAB personnel separate from the audit team.
- H. CABs shall have a credible dispute resolution process which shall include procedures for handling complaints and appeals.
  - a. The CAB's dispute resolution process shall function independently of the SFA Complaints Procedure.
  - b. The CAB's dispute resolution process shall not undermine in any way the scope of application of the SFA Complaints Procedure.
- I. CABs are expected to provide the SFA with access to all assurance and certification related documentation (assessment reports, checklists, notes, assessment agendas, client communications, etc.) for review purposes when requested and in a timely manner, as agreed upon by the CAB and SFA.

### 3.2. Certification agreement (contract)

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

- A. Include a description of the rights and duties of the producers and processors offering certified processes, including a commitment to comply with the relevant criteria of the Cashmere Standard, the Manual for the Implementation of the Cashmere Standard, the Labelling and Licensing Guide and other provisions of the Cashmere Standard certification program as provided by the SFA.
- B. Allow the CAB and the SFA access to all units of the inspected facilities, including to units where no SFA Cashmere Standard products are processed, stored, or administered, if applicable, and to all relevant documentation and records, including financial records.
- C. Contain provisions that upon suspension, withdrawal or termination of certification, the producer or processor discontinues its use of all advertising matter that contains any reference to it and acts as required by the certification procedure (e.g., the return of certification documents)
- D. Require that the producer or processor keeps records of all complaints received related to compliance with certification requirements and makes these records available to the CAB and/or the SFA on request, to take appropriate action about such complaints and any related deviations to the certification requirements found and to document the actions taken

- E. Require that the applicant informs the CAB, without delay, of any information or changes that may affect its ability to confirm with the certification requirements
- F. Contain provisions to allow the CAB to exchange information with other approved Conformity Assessment Bodies, National Accreditation Bodies and the SFA to verify relevant information, especially the certification status of the producer or processor, its processes and products, as part of its ongoing evaluation
- G. Requires the producer or processor to confirm that it does not and will not hold certification for the Cashmere Standard with another CAB at the same time.
- H. The SFA is not responsible for costs associated with conformity assessment or certification.
- I. The SFA has the right to change the certification requirements; and
- J. The SFA may introduce new methodologies on a trial or other basis from time to time.

### 3.2. Language

The official language of the SFA Standard is English. The CAB shall translate any of its documents and records requested by The SFA into English on request, at the CAB's expense. All regular reporting by the CAB shall be submitted in English.

### 3.3. Responsibility for certification decisions

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

The SFA commits to accepting the results from CABs accredited by any EA MLA or IAF MLA signatory which follows the requirements laid down in the Cashmere Standard.

### 3.4. Acceptance of prior certification

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

### 3.5. Personnel

#### 3.5.1. General

- A. The CAB shall employ sufficient personnel competent to perform certification functions and operate its system
- B. The CAB will ensure that personnel have sufficient and verifiable knowledge and training or experience relevant to the object of conformity assessment.
- C. The CAB shall conduct annual performance reviews of assessors, certification decision makers, and other personnel involved in the certification process.
- D. The CAB shall maintain up-to-date records on personnel. The records shall include:
  - a. name and address
  - b. position held
  - c. educational qualifications and professional status
  - d. experience and training
  - e. the assessment of competence
  - f. periodic performance review
  - g. authorisations held within the CAB
  - h. date of most recent updating of each record.

#### 3.5.2. Personnel competence

##### 3.5.2.1. Assessors

The minimum criteria for the competence of assessors to be engaged in Cashmere Standard certification services as follows:

- A. One of the following options for professional experience:
  - a. Tertiary education (college/university qualification) in a relevant discipline and one year of relevant professional experience; or
  - b. Secondary education (high school diploma) and two years of relevant professional experience.
- B. Completion of a course/qualification on auditing/assessment techniques
- C. Demonstrated knowledge of the relevant the SFA's standard scope(s), which should include a training course where available.

- D. Demonstrated knowledge of:
  - a. the CAB's procedures
  - b. the general context of the producer or processor to be assessed
  - c. the general production methods and/or processes applicable to the organisations to be assessed
  - d. the preparation of written assessment reports that are clear, accurate, and complete, and which articulate the assessment findings in relation to the Cashmere Standard and other applicable requirements.

#### **3.5.2.2. Certification decision maker**

Certification decision makers shall meet the following minimum qualifications:

- A. Either
  - a. current assessor/auditor qualification for the Scheme (preferred option); or
  - b. meets requirements 3.5.2.1.A, C, D and E
- B. Knowledge of
  - a. the CAB's procedures for certification decision making
  - b. the Scheme and all relevant related documents, interpretations, and guidance.
- C. Be an employee of the CAB or one of its fully or majority-owned subsidiaries
- D. Completion of a minimum of three certification decisions under the supervision of a qualified certification decision maker.

#### **3.5.2.3. Shadow Assessors**

Shadow assessors (assessors evaluating other assessors) shall be qualified assessors who are independent of the organisation being assessed, shall not be involved in the certification decision for the assessment and shall not be family members of the assessor being evaluated.

### **3.5.3. Capacity-building**

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

In particular, the CAB shall:

- A. Review the competence of its personnel considering their performance to identify training needs:
  - a. Ensure that new personnel have sufficient competence.
  - b. New assessors must receive training of on-site assessment and undergo an on-site approval period accompanying on-site assessments while under the supervision of shadow assessor.
  - c. All assessment decisions of new assessors must be countersigned by a shadow assessor until they have successfully completed their approval period
  - d. The shadow assessor may take over the conduct of an assessment if it is determined to be necessary for the successful completion of the assessment. In this case, the assessor being evaluated has not met the requirement for a shadow assessment.
  - e. At least 3 assessments are to be accompanied
  - f. The training and accompanied assessments must cover each approval scope in which the assessor will be assigned
- B. Provide, as necessary, training programs on assurance and certification processes, methodologies, activities and other relevant standard requirements
- C. Participate in the Cashmere Standard training system (e.g., courses, seminars) as offered by the SFA.

### **3.5.4. Assignment of personnel**

The CAB shall require personnel, involved in the assurance process to:

- A. Commit themselves to observing the policies and procedures of the CAB
- B. Declare any prior or present association with an applicant seeking assessment or certification to which they are to be assigned to perform assessment procedures.

### 3.5.5. Subcontracting (outsourcing)

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

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

The CAB will need to maintain documented procedures for the assessment and monitoring of sub-contractors, and a list of sub-contractors and the facilities used by them to carry out work packages on behalf of the CAB.

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

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

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

## 3.6. Impartiality and objectivity

### 3.6.1. Organisational structure and stakeholder involvement

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

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

### 3.6.2. Management of impartiality

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

- A. Require personnel, committee, and board members to declare existing or prior association with a producer or processor subject to certification. Where such an association threatens impartiality, the

CAB shall exclude the person concerned from work, discussion and decisions at all stages of the certification process related to the potential conflict of interest

- B. Follow defined rules for appointing and operating committees involved in certification activities to ensure that decisions taken are not influenced by any commercial, financial and/or other internal or external interest.

### **3.6.3. Division of functions**

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

- A. Produce or supply products of the type it certifies
- B. Give advice or provide consultancy services to the applicant as to methods of dealing with matters which are barriers (e.g., non-conformities identified during the certification process) to the Cashmere Standard certification.

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

### **3.6.4. Accessibility**

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

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



### 3.7. Reporting

The CAB is required to report the following information to the SFA 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

### 3.8. Access to Information

#### 3.8.1. Publicly accessible information

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

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

- A. The Cashmere Standard and its reference documents as provided by the SFA (for these documents the CAB may link to the SFA's website)
- B. Information about procedures applied for evaluating whether applicants meet the CS
- C. Information about procedures applied to Cases where certification is extended
- D. Information about procedures where non-conformities with the certification requirements are detected
- E. The fee structure for its services
- F. A description of the rights and duties of applicants, including requirements and restrictions
- G. Information about procedures for handling general complaints and appeals against its certification decisions.

#### 3.8.2. Confidentiality

When accessing confidential information, the CAB shall make adequate arrangements to safeguard the confidentiality of the information obtained during its certification activities at all levels of its organisation, including committees and external bodies or individuals acting on its behalf. Arrangements shall:

- A. Protect proprietary information of an applicant against misuse and unauthorized disclosure, and
- B. Grant the CAB the right to exchange information with other Certification Bodies, National Accreditation Bodies and the SFA to verify the authenticity of the information.

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

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

- A. Issue Licensing agreements (CS-070-01.0-EN) and Conformity Mark Licenses (CS-071-01.0-EN)
- B. Exercise control over ownership, use and display of licenses, certificates, and logos that it can authorise certified entities to use
- C. Review and approve the intended use of the 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling by certified entities in advance; the CAB is expected to:
  - a. have a procedure for a written 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling release in place
  - b. provide individual label release at least for each different artwork, product group and applicant
  - c. ensure that applicants of the certified entity have indeed a valid scope certificate, in Case the applied labelling contains a license number of the applicants
  - d. Ensure that any non-certified applicant of the certified entity is being made aware about the applicable licensing conditions for using the applied on-product 'SFA Certified' labelling.

- D. Be able to request a producer organisation to discontinue use of certificates and logos that it authorizes certified entities to use
- E. Apply suitable actions and sanctions to deal with incorrect or misleading references to the certification system or use of licenses, certificates as well as 'SFA Certified' logo and labelling that it authorizes certified entities to use.

## 4. Quality Management System

### 4.1. General

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

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

### 4.2. Management system manual

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

### 4.3. Document control

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

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

### 4.4. Maintaining and managing records

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

#### 4.5. Internal audit and management review

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

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

#### 4.6. Appeals and complaints

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

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

#### 4.7. CAB use of SFA Logos

A CAB that successfully achieves SFA approval may use the 'SFA Approved' logo on their website and in promotional material. If the CAB wishes to use accompanying text to promote their partnership with the SFA, they should contact the SFA via [Standards@sustainablefibre.org](mailto:Standards@sustainablefibre.org) for approval of the wording.

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

## 5. Process for Conducting Certification

### 5.1. Application procedures

#### 5.1.1. Information for users of the Cashmere Standard

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

- A. Contractual conditions, including fees and possible contractual penalties
- B. The producers and processor's rights and duties, including the appeals procedure
- C. The current version of Cashmere Standard and corresponding relevant documents released by the Scheme Owner
- D. Program changes, including regular updates of procedures and standards
- E. The evaluation and assessment procedures applied by the CAB during certification, and
- F. Documentation to be maintained by the applicant to enable verification of compliance with Cashmere Standard by the CAB.

#### 5.1.2. Application form and the applicant's obligations

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

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

### 5.2. Evaluation

#### 5.2.1. Scope

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

#### 5.2.2. Sampling Strategy

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

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

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

The sampling strategy should include an obligation for assessor progression and the need to inform the SFA of the results of conformity assessments.

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

- A. Prior to the assessment, the CAB shall review the application documents to ensure that certification can be carried out and that application of certification procedures is possible. In particular, the CAB shall review whether:
  - a. Documents submitted by the producer or processor are complete
  - b. The producer or processor appears to be able to comply with all certification requirements (CS and applicable related procedures).
- B. The CAB shall assign qualified personnel to the evaluation in line with the requirements of sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2, and provide them with appropriate work-related documents
- C. The CAB shall inform assessors about any non-conformity and the associated requests for corrective action issued previously, to enable the assessors to verify whether the non-conformities have been resolved.
- D. The CAB shall provide as a minimum the following information in writing to the applicant ahead of the assessment:
  - a. The criteria of the scheme
  - b. The date of the assessment
  - c. Name of the assessor(s)
  - d. The venue(s)/sites of the assessment
  - e. Who needs to be available for the assessment
  - f. What will be covered during the assessment
  - g. How long the assessment will take
  - h. How evidence will be recorded.

### 5.2.4. Assessment protocol

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

The stages of the assurance are:

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

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

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

### 5.2.5. Reporting

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

- A. Assessment reports shall follow a format appropriate to the type of producer or processor assessed, and facilitates a non-discriminatory, objective, and comprehensive analysis of compliance with the requirements of the Cashmere Standard system
- B. The assessment report shall cover all relevant aspects of the standards, and adequately validate the information provided by the applicant. It shall include:

- a. A statement of any observations relating to conformity with the certification requirements
  - b. Date and duration of the assessment, persons interviewed, facilities visited; and
  - c. Type of documents reviewed.
- C. The CAB shall promptly notify the applicant of any non-conformity to be resolved to comply with applicable certification requirements
- D. The CAB shall document and apply measures to verify effectiveness of corrective actions taken by producer or processor to meet the requirements.

### 5.3. Decision on certification

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

#### 5.3.1. Division of functions

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

#### 5.3.2. Basis for the decision

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

#### 5.3.3. Documentation

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

#### 5.3.4. Dealing with non-conformities

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

#### 5.3.5. Exceptions to certification requirements

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

#### 5.3.6. Issuing of certification documents

- A. For positive certification decisions the CAB shall issue official certification documents to each certified entity
- B. The validity period of the Scope Certificate must not exceed 36 months from the date of issue.
- C. Before issuing a Certificate of Compliance, the CAB must ensure that each certified entity fully complies with:
  - a. All applicable Core Indicators; and
  - b. Complies with a minimum of one additional Improvement Criteria since the last evaluation or Monitoring activity; and
  - c. Takes no longer than six years to achieve full compliance from the date of the first evaluation activity.
- D. A positive certification decision can only be made for producer or processor groups if less than 20% of the audited sample fail to comply with the requirements of the Cashmere Standard. These non-complying group members will form part of the respective audit sample of the next Monitoring audit and all non-conformities shall be closed by this next Monitoring audit.
- E. The CAB shall only use the Certificate of Compliance template provided by the SFA (Annex 1 of CS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Standards) which includes a statement of conformity compliant with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17000:2020, as detailed in CS-043-01.2-EN Cashmere Standard Cashmere Standard Manual (clause 5.1.7).



## 5.4. Extension and renewal of certification

### 5.4.1. Monitoring

- A. The CAB shall regularly re-evaluate applicants to verify whether they continue to comply with Cashmere Standard. Mechanisms shall be in place to effectively monitor whether corrective actions have been implemented
- B. The CAB shall report and document its re-evaluation activities, and shall keep applicants informed about their certification status
- C. Re-evaluation generally follows procedures outlined in 5.2 (i.e., Evaluation). However, evaluation for the purpose of renewal may focus on certain measures related to risk and might not repeat all procedures listed in 5.2.

### 5.4.2. Frequency of assessment

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

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

- A. The CAB shall require producers and processors to inform the CAB about changes cited in section 5.1.1.
- B. The CAB shall determine whether the announced changes require further investigations. If such is the Case, the applicant shall not be allowed to release certified products produced under the changed conditions until the CAB has notified the producer or processor accordingly
- C. In response to an application for amendment to the scope of a certificate already granted, the CAB shall decide what evaluation procedure, if any, is appropriate, to determine whether the amendment should be made and shall act accordingly.

### 5.4.4. Changes in the certification requirements

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

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

## 5.5. Producer Organisation Group Certification

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

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

### 5.5.1. 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 Cashmere Standard
- E. The Producer Organisation and all members shall be in the same country.

### 5.5.2. Internal Control System Requirements

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

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

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

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

### 5.5.3. Inspection of Members

The ICS shall document and implement an inspection protocol to ensure that the Cashmere Standard requirements are met by all group members and shall meet requirements 5.5.4 - 5.5.5.

### 5.5.4. Handling non-conformities

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.5.5. Adding and Removing Members

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

- A. Information required by 5.5.2.B and 5.5.2.B has been received by the ICS
- B. The ICS Inspector has completed an inspection of the site

- C. All critical and major non-conformities for the site have been closed
- D. The ICS has received approval from the CAB for the addition of the site.

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

## 5.6. Further specific conditions for Cashmere Standard approved CABs

### 5.6.1. Public data base, reporting on activities

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

### 5.6.2. Cooperation with other approved CABs

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

## 6. Managing Non-Conformance

### 6.1. Suspension

#### 6.1.1. Conditions

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

- A. It does not fulfil one or more of its obligations, as described in section 2.3.2.
- B. It does not comply with section 5.3.6 during certification, monitoring or scope expansion assessments.
- C. It is not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CAB that led to suspension.
- D. A monitoring assessment is not carried out within 18 months of an evaluation audit
- E. the CAB or SFA decide to suspend a certificate holder's certificate before or at any point during an investigation audit process if there is enough evidence of a potential systemic non-conformity.

#### 6.1.2. Consequences

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

### 6.2. Certificate Cancellation

#### 6.2.1. Conditions

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

- A. When the producer or processor does not comply with one or more core critical criteria.
- B. When the producer or processor did not comply with the verification audit rules of Section 5.3.
- C. If a suspension is not lifted within 120 calendar days.
- D. When the producer or processor rejects an unannounced audit for the second time.
- E. Not fulfilling those clauses of the agreement with the CAB leading to cancellation.
- F. When the certified producer or processor voluntarily requests the cancellation of its certificate.
- G. When the certification audit of a certified producer or processor was not carried out while the certificate was valid.
- H. The SFA reserves the right to request the CAB to suspend or cancel a certificate, when a Case involving one or more core criteria has been proven in a court, or when a Case can potentially cause significant harm to the reputation of the Scheme Owner.

#### 6.2.2. Consequences

- A. The cancellation is valid starting with the date of the CAB's communication about the certificate's cancellation to the producer or processor of a certificate and lasts:
  - a. One year in the Case of non-compliance with core critical criteria.
  - b. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the SFA or the CAB, the producer or processor exerted coercion or made any form of implicit or explicit threats to the moral or physical integrity or the life of any members of the CAB auditing team or staff, through the employees of the producer or processor, or people under its influence or orders.
  - c. Three years if, in the sole opinion of the SFA or the CAB, the producer or processor participated in illegal, fraudulent, or unethical activities that could discredit the certification program.
  - d. Producer or processors whose certificate was cancelled due to non-compliance with non-core critical criteria after a verification audit and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
  - e. Producer or processors who voluntarily requested the cancellation of their certificate and who wish to renew the certificate may apply to a certification audit at any time.
  - f. From the moment the CAB notifies the certified producer or processor about a certificate cancellation, the producer or processor is not authorised to sell product with certified claims with the only exceptions of:
    - i. Producer or processors subject to an appeal process (see Section 6.3.E); or

- ii. Producer or processors whose certificate was voluntarily cancelled. In this Case, Producer or processors will be permitted to sell off all stored certified product within a maximum sell-off period of six months, period subject to an inventory verification by the CAB. These verification costs shall be covered by the organisation.

### 6.3. Appeals

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

### 6.4. Reinstatement of the certificate

To reinstate a certificate that was cancelled, the producer or processor shall apply for a certification or monitoring assessment.

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

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

## 6.5. Non-Conformity of Core requirements

<b>Definition</b>	Critical non-conformities represent serious failures to meet the fundamental principles of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard.	
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry	
<b>Initial Audit</b>	Timeline	Prior to certification
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall not be issued
<b>Monitoring/recertification Audit</b>	Timeline	Immediate
	Consequence if not closed	Scope certificate shall be suspended
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>A. Critical non-conformities shall be reserved for requirements identified as critical in the Sustainable Cashmere Standard, or for intentional fraud.</p> <p>B. The assessor shall notify the CAB immediately when a critical non-conformity is identified.</p>	

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

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

6.5.3. The CAB shall immediately notify the SFA of all critical non-conformities, including details of the non-conformity.

## 6.6. Major Non-Conformity

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. affect a wide area,</li> <li>d. affect the integrity of the product or the Standard,</li> <li>e. are not corrected or adequately addressed once they are identified.</li> </ul> <p>D. Scope certificates shall be suspended immediately if there are three or more open major non-conformities.</p>
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## 6.7. Minor Non-Conformity

<b>Definition</b>	Minor non-conformities occur when a single observed lapse has been identified in a procedure required as part of the applicant’s management system.	
<b>Applicable scopes</b>	Certification of Rangeland Stewardship Certification of Animal Husbandry	
<b>All Audits</b>	Timeline	60 days from the audit (closing meeting)
	Consequence if not closed	Non-conformity is upgraded to become a major non-conformity with a timeline 30 days from the original deadline
<b>Requirements</b>	<p>Minor non-conformities shall be issued in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. For requirements which are indicated as minor requirements, unless the CAB determines that the non-conformity is major based on the requirements above, OR</li> <li>B. Where the non-conformity is a temporary lapse, non-systemic, limited in scale or does not represent a fundamental failure to achieve the objectives of the Standard.</li> </ul>	

## 6.8. Recommendations

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



# APPENDIX A – Risk Assessment Process

The following process applies whenever a CAB is required to conduct a risk assessment. Risk assessments are used for a range of requirements, though the process is the same.

1. Risk assessments shall be conducted by the CAB prior to each assessment and at other times as needed (e.g., due to change in certificate scope or additional assessment), using the applicable risk assessment table.
2. The CAB shall document the risk assessment and shall inform the organisation of the assigned risk designation of very low (where applicable), low, medium, or high.
3. The CAB shall consider any additional relevant criteria it is aware of when conducting risk assessments. The CAB should notify The SFA of such criteria if the criteria may be broadly relevant.
4. Where the risk assessment is conducted on a set of sites (e.g., farm group members, subcontractors), that set may be divided into subsets of similar sites which each receive a separate risk assessment and related sampling.

## Qualitative Risk Assessments

5. In a qualitative risk assessment, criteria are assigned one of five designations, as follows. Some designations may not be used on all risk assessment tables.
  - i. Critical – Criteria which indicate automatic high risk. If one or more critical criteria are met, a high-risk designation shall be assigned.
  - ii. High – Criteria which contribute significantly to a high-risk designation.
  - iii. Medium – Criteria which contribute to a high-risk designation.
  - iv. Low – Criteria which do not contribute to a high-risk designation.
  - v. Very Low – Criteria which indicate a very low risk designation may be given. This is generally for products or processes where certification is in place.
6. To conduct a qualitative risk assessment, the CAB shall identify and document which risk criteria apply to the organisation or subset. Based on the criteria which apply, a risk designation shall be assigned.

## Quantitative Risk Assessments

NOTE: Quantitative risk assessments are not used by The SFA at this time but may be used in the future.

7. In a quantitative risk assessment, criteria are assigned a numerical score. To conduct a quantitative risk assessment, the CAB shall identify and document which risk criteria apply to the organisation or
8. Scores from quantitative risk assessments may be used directly (e.g., to calculate sampling rates) or may be correlated to risk designations. The CAB shall assign risk scores and designations as defined for the specific risk assessment.

## APPENDIX B – Grace Period Requirements

Contracts between The SFA and an applicant CAB (CB) may allow for a grace period of up to 9 months, during which The SFA grants the CAB a limited license to perform certifications to the specified Scheme(s) prior to completing full accreditation by a third-party accreditation body (AB). The grace period is intended to reduce barriers to entry for new CABs and to help to facilitate the assessment process.

1. The CAB shall identify the planned accreditation body during the initial application process. Once the application is accepted by The SFA the accreditation body shall be agreed upon.
2. The SFA will only agree to a grace period upon the recommendation of the agreed upon accreditation body.
3. Upon receipt of an application form, the accreditation body shall complete a document review of the CAB's systems. This should be completed within one month of receipt of the application form and documents for review.
4. Upon completion of the document review, the accreditation body may submit a written recommendation that a grace period be granted to the CAB provided that the CAB:
  - a. Holds an existing accreditation to a The SFA Scheme, or:
    - i. holds an existing accreditation to ISO17065 for any Scheme; and
    - ii. has sufficient legal, staffing, and financial infrastructure to provide certification within the proposed scope.
  - b. Has personnel with sufficient experience with the industry and region of the proposed scope, including the following as applicable to the Scheme:
    - i. livestock of the type to be certified (e.g., goat)
    - ii. social conformity
    - iii. environmental conformity
    - iv. chemical use assessment
    - v. volume reconciliation calculations.
  - c. Has adequate procedures and documents to initiate certification to the Scheme(s).
  - d. Received 10 or fewer major non-conformities because of the document review.
  - e. Did not receive any major non-conformities to the topics identified above because of the document review.
5. Following the successful completion of an assessment, the accreditation body may also recommend a grace period of up to 9 months for any CAB if there are no major non-conformities or that all major non-conformities have been closed.
6. Upon receipt of the accreditation body's recommendation, The SFA may offer the CAB a contract which includes a grace period.
7. The grace period shall be valid:
  - a. from the date the contract is fully signed
  - b. until the specified date, which shall not be later than 9 months after the date of the initial application to the SFA
  - c. for a specified number of certified sites per Scheme, which shall not be greater than 10 and should ordinarily be 5.

NOTE: The specified number of sites may be included in one or more Certificates of Conformity. For group certificates, the number of sites to be assessed shall be counted toward the total number of sites.

8. The following conditions apply during the grace period:
  - a. The CAB agrees to perform certifications to the Scheme(s) in accordance with ISO17065 and CS-066-01.2-EN Accreditation and Certification Procedures for SFA Schemes.
  - b. The CAB agrees to achieve accreditation to the Scheme(s) with the agreed upon accreditation body by the end of the grace period. If this does not occur, all Certificates of conformity issued by the CAB to the Scheme(s) shall be suspended.
  - c. Assessing and other certification activities shall not be outsourced during the grace period, except to individual freelance assessors.
  - d. The reporting and payment requirements of the contract with The SFA shall be met in the required timeframes.

## APPENDIX C - Requirements for the Evaluation of Group Certification

The requirements in this appendix apply to groups and may only be used when group certification is defined within a Scheme.

### Group Assessments

1. Assessments of group certifications shall consist of
  - a. an assessment of the internal control system (ICS) for the group
  - b. an assessment of a sample of group members; and
  - c. an assessment of each site included in the Certificate of Conformity, which is not part of the group, or does not meet the criteria to be a group member.
2. The assessment of the ICS shall include an evaluation of the ability of the ICS to manage the group members. The CAB shall set an annual growth limit for the group which shall not exceed 100% of the number of group members included in the assessment sampling.
3. The CAB shall conduct a risk assessment on the group to determine the sampling rate to be used, based on the risk criteria and sampling rates in the Certification Procedures. Group members may be divided into sets for the purpose of risk assessment and sampling.
4. Sites shall be selected for assessment to
  - a. represent the group in terms of geography, activities, and size
  - b. include randomly selected sites
  - c. aim to include all sites over time
  - d. include any sites identified as carrying particular risk (e.g., due to complaints or past non-conformity).
5. Non-conformities may be issued to the ICS or to one or more sites. If the same non-conformity is identified at several sites, it shall be considered a systemic issue within the group and shall be issued to the Cashmere Standard.

### Approval of New Group Members

1. The CAB shall approve the certification of new sites upon request from the ICS, provided that
  - a. the group has not exceeded its growth limit
  - b. the ICS provides documentation to demonstrate that the site is in conformity with the requirements of the Scheme, including a report of an inspection by the ICS
  - c. the site is not banned from certification.
2. If a group has reached its growth limit and wishes to add additional sites prior to the next annual or recertification assessment, the CAB shall assess the ICS and a sample of the new sites which have been added since the previous assessment prior to approving additional sites. In this case, a new growth limit may be approved.



<CAB LOGO>

## CERTIFICATE OF CONFORMITY

The <INSERT NAME OF CAB> hereby certifies that the <INSERT 'Producer' or 'Processor'> named below has complied with the published general and specific rules of the Sustainable Cashmere Standard for the <INSERT 'production' or 'primary processing'> of SFA Certified Cashmere Fibre

---

<INSERT PO NAME>

< INSERT ADDRESS>

Registration No <INSERT REGISTRATION NUMBER>

---

The titled holder is compliant with the following elements of the SFA's Cashmere Standard

<INSERT CAS ELEMENT TITLE> AT <INSERT LEVEL>

<INSERT CAS ELEMENT TITLE> AT <INSERT LEVEL>

Una Jones  
CEO

---

<INSERT CAB SIGNATURE>

<INSERT CAB REPRESENTATIVE NAME>  
<INSERT CAB REPRESENTATIVE POSITION>

Issuance date: <INSERT ISSUE DATE>

Expire date: <INSERT EXPIRY DATE>