



APRIL 2024

PRODUCERS

CERTIFICATION GUIDE



SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE

Producers: Certification Guide

WHAT IS THE SFA?

The Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) is a non-profit standard holding organisation. We represent a global alliance of supply chain actors, stakeholders and industry experts with a mission to ensure the long-term viability of the cashmere sector. Through our work, the SFA aims to minimise the environmental impact of cashmere, safeguard livelihoods and ensure high animal welfare standards. We work with the end-to-end supply chain, connecting livestock herders to brands and retailers in the global fashion industry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- What is the SFA Cashmere Standard? 3
- Benefits of Certification 4
- Get Certified 7





WHAT IS THE SFA CASHMERE STANDARD?

The SFA Cashmere Standard defines best practice for responsible cashmere production. Focused at the herder-level, the standard covers the most pressing sustainability issues associated with raw fibre production and outlines the intended outcomes achieved through the standard's adoption.

The SFA Cashmere Standard lays out the definition of responsible cashmere production, by upholding five global principles, which are that herders:



Ensure the **welfare** of their goats.



Safeguard **biodiversity** and use land responsibly.



Promote **decent work**.



Preserve and enhance **fibre quality**.



Operate an **effective management system**.

BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

1. Financial security with low-interest loans

The SFA has collaborated with Khan Bank to provide SFA registered herders and producers access to loans at favourable interest rates.

2. Increased value through SFA Cashmere Standard

Through certification of the SFA Cashmere Standard, producers will be able to demonstrate their commitment to, and success in, meeting animal welfare, biodiversity and decent work best practice claims. By doing so, producers will have the ability to sell SFA Certified fibre as part of the SFA Chain of Custody. The SFA also provides support, training, and assessments in the Standard.

3. Increased value through SFA Chain of Custody

To meet the growing consumer expectations for transparency and sustainably produced goods, the SFA has implemented a Chain of Custody within its Standards. This allows primary processors to validate their fibres as those originating from certified sources and attain greater value. Buyers along the supply chain can also trace the certified status of their purchases.

4. Links to domestic processors, traders, and other Chain of Custody participants and other buyers

By becoming SFA Certified, producers and herder organisations qualify for inclusion on cashmere-connect.com, an online platform that facilitates connections between various stakeholders, including herder organisations, domestic processors, traders, other SFA members, and Chain of Custody participants. The platform displays contact details, providing visibility for all SFA Certified organisations. It promotes trust between buyers and sellers of the cashmere sector through a common Standard.



BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

5. Opportunities to negotiate a higher fibre price

SFA certification strengthens the negotiating power of producers and herder organisations. This is due to several factors: 1) there is a growing demand for certified fibre in the international markets, 2) SFA Certified producers and herder organisations attract additional members, which means an increase in the quantity of certified fibre and an increase in the bargaining power of SFA registered producers and organisations, and 3) SFA Certified producers and herder organisations undergo training to produce fibre of superior quality, enabling them to command higher prices.

6. Knowledge of market trends and industry demands

The SFA plays a critical role in helping producers and herder organisations to comprehend and adapt to international market trends. Additionally, it facilitates opportunities for them to enhance trading relationships. Currently, the SFA's membership is expanding rapidly. This growth highlights the global market's transition towards responsibly produced cashmere and the growing demand across the entire supply chain.

7. Access to training and invitations to SFA events

In addition to the training initiatives conducted in accordance with the SFA standards, the SFA offers other exclusive events for its producers and herder organisations. These include "Herder Organisation & Processor Meet & Greets", where heads of herding organisations meet with agents from a number of processors. The SFA also provides training in finance and management, the fundamental elements of organisational growth and success.



BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

8. Invitations to member-sponsored programs

The SFA extends invitations to certified producers and organisations to participate in a range of work programs aimed at bolstering their livelihoods. These include:

- 1) J.Crew's Women Empowerment Program, which provides training in the sorting of cashmere fibre to create greater value.
- 2) Johnstons of Elgin's Young Herder Program, which is an extra-curricular course designed for school children. The course teaches young herders about their environment, its importance, and about sustainable herding practices.

9. Increased understanding of their agency as cashmere producers

The main objective of the SFA is to promote the production of sustainable and humane cashmere while safeguarding the livelihoods of herders. A crucial aspect of this mission involves empowering herders to take ownership of protecting their income and way of life. They are encouraged to adopt responsible practices in producing their cashmere and to understand how they can enhance the value of their fibre. This drives a behavioural change, emphasising the importance of fibre quality rather than quantity.

10. Input into herder-level Standards

The SFA's grassroots approach involves actively engaging with herders who integrate the Standards into their daily routines. Feedback from herders on how to demonstrate compliance and show improvements, including inputs on practical limitations, play a pivotal role in forming and refining the SFA Standards.



GET CERTIFIED

To unlock these benefits your producer or herder organisation will need to be certified against the SFA Cashmere Standard. It will also need to be certified against the SFA Chain of Custody Standard, which ensures that your operations know how to securely keep and trade 'SFA Certified' fibre in a way that your potential customers will trust and recognise.

1. Register with the SFA

Registration with the SFA is a prerequisite for certification against any of the SFA Standards for the production, processing and/or trade of 'SFA Certified' fibre. Registering with the SFA will generate a unique reference number for your company. To get started, email membership@sustainablefibre.org.

2. Find a conformity assessment body

Conformity assessment bodies (CABs) are independent third parties accredited to carrying out certification and other activities related to the assurance of certification schemes. The list of CABs approved to conduct certification activities for the SFA Cashmere Standard and SFA Chain of Custody can be found here: [Sustainable Fibre Alliance - Conformity Assessment Bodies](#).

3. Complete an assessment and if successful become certified

Your chosen CAB will be able to provide more information on the certification process including how long it takes and cost.

