



13 DECEMBER 2023

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SFA CASHMERE STANDARD



SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE

SFA Cashmere Standard Terms of Reference

Justification and scope

The first of its kind, created in 2017, the SFA Cashmere Standard covers the biggest market share for certified cashmere. Global in scope, it is the only standard that aims to improve goat welfare, safeguard biodiversity and land, promote decent work and enhance fibre quality through an effective management system and assured chain of custody. It is needed to truly represent producer voices through the strength of our herder relationships and heritage.

What is cashmere?

Cashmere is a fibre harvested from specific breeds of goat. Communities have used cashmere to make yarn, textiles and clothing for generations.

Today, the sustainability of the cashmere industry is under threat. Political transitions and international demand for this luxury fibre have prompted dramatic increases in goat numbers. Coupled with changing land use practices and climate change, this has led to overgrazed and degraded pastures that are less able to support both domestic livestock and native wildlife.

Faced with unstable markets and rising economic hardship, herders are forced to give up their nomadic lifestyle and migrate to the cities, where job prospects are limited. If given the choice, many of these 'stewards of the rangeland' would continue to live in the countryside and continue the herding tradition, living close to nature and their animals.

Growing consumer awareness and industry regulation means that brands and retailers are under pressure to demonstrate responsible sourcing in their supply chains. The SFA offers a holistic and globally-recognized standard that addresses the key sustainability and welfare issues related to cashmere production and provides assurance for 'responsibly-produced cashmere'.


[Version 1.0](#) of the SFA Cashmere Standard was published in Jan 2023 following an extensive revision and multi-stakeholder consultation throughout 2022. You can learn more about the revision process and the comments received [here](#).




Expected social, environmental and economic outcomes

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. The SFA Cashmere Standard outlines five global principles for responsible cashmere production (**Error! Not a valid bookmark self-reference.**). The specific requirements can be found in the [SFA Cashmere Standard](#).


Figure 1: The SFA Cashmere Standards five global principles for responsible cashmere production.

Principle	Definition and desired outcomes								
<p>Effective management</p> 	<p>An effective management system is the backbone that enables herders to achieve the other global principles of goat welfare, biodiversity and land use, fibre quality improvement and decent work. A management system is coordinated by the head of the herder organisation and includes the policies, processes and procedures used by herders to ensure that they can fulfil all the tasks required to meet the requirements of the SFA Cashmere Standard and the SFA Chain of Custody, and to enable continuous improvement in herding practices. The management system also plays a vital role in safeguarding the credibility of the SFA’s group assurance model, which involves auditing a selection of households from a herder organization.</p> <p>The desired outcomes are that:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="546 836 2054 1246"> <tr> <td data-bbox="546 836 618 932">1</td> <td data-bbox="618 836 2054 932">Producers have a clear strategy and set of protocols to safeguard their livelihoods and the welfare of their goats, and to demonstrate compliance to the SFA Cashmere Standard.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="546 932 618 1027">2</td> <td data-bbox="618 932 2054 1027">An inclusive, efficient approach to more sustainable cashmere production through continuous improvement, with the potential to reach a large number of producers globally and enable transformational change.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="546 1027 618 1123">3</td> <td data-bbox="618 1027 2054 1123">The workforce is competent and well-trained and competent in the production of cashmere and mitigating associated sustainability and welfare risks</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="546 1123 618 1246">4</td> <td data-bbox="618 1123 2054 1246">Producers are capable of collecting and reporting complete and accurate data and information about their activities to the SFA. Management indicators ensure that progress against fibre production criteria is monitored and assessed, and that field-level data is accurately maintained and systematically reported.</td> </tr> </table>	1	Producers have a clear strategy and set of protocols to safeguard their livelihoods and the welfare of their goats, and to demonstrate compliance to the SFA Cashmere Standard.	2	An inclusive, efficient approach to more sustainable cashmere production through continuous improvement, with the potential to reach a large number of producers globally and enable transformational change.	3	The workforce is competent and well-trained and competent in the production of cashmere and mitigating associated sustainability and welfare risks	4	Producers are capable of collecting and reporting complete and accurate data and information about their activities to the SFA. Management indicators ensure that progress against fibre production criteria is monitored and assessed, and that field-level data is accurately maintained and systematically reported.
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<p data-bbox="286 277 452 304">Decent work</p> 	<p data-bbox="562 277 2040 501">The sustainability of cashmere production encompasses not only environmental but also social considerations. The concept of ‘decent work’ was developed by the International Labour Organisation, the UN agency on work and employment, to describe work that provides opportunities for women and men to work productively in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The SFA have focused this aspect of their standard on fair hiring practices and working conditions, equality in wages, protecting traditional communities, preventing child labour and promoting health and safety. Gender equality and human rights feature prominently through this principle, ensuring that women receive equal pay and play an active role in cooperative decision-making, and that workers are respected and treated fairly.</p>	
	<p data-bbox="562 533 927 560">The desired outcomes are that:</p>	
	5	<p data-bbox="633 596 2040 660">There are good practices regarding fair hiring, which are free of discrimination and intimidation and directly combat risk factors for forced labour.</p>
	6	<p data-bbox="633 699 2040 762">Children are protected from exploitation, not engaged in dangerous work, and able to participate fully in formal education.</p>
	7	<p data-bbox="633 801 1989 833">Workers are treated fairly and respectfully, and environments are harmonious, motivating and productive.</p>
	8	<p data-bbox="633 865 2040 928">Workers receive payment in a transparent and consistent manner that is non-discriminatory and provides for appropriate rest and leave for the worker.</p>
	9	<p data-bbox="633 967 1850 999">Herding activities have minimal negative impact on local communities and indigenous peoples.</p>
	10	<p data-bbox="633 1038 1599 1070">The health of workers is not negatively impacted by their work environment.</p>





Principle	Definition and desired outcomes	
<p>Biodiversity and land use</p> 	<p>The adoption of SFA Cashmere Standard by herders and their communities will help reduce the negative impacts of cashmere production on the natural resources of rangelands. The criteria are focused on understanding the value of natural resources and how to protect them, and managing grazing in a way that maintains soils health, prevents degradation of pasture and minimises conflict with wildlife. Other criteria address the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and natural habitats, including non-lethal predator control, the management of water resources and minimising the introduction of hazardous materials. All of these elements are addressed through a Rangeland Management Plan that supports traditional herding practices, is integrated with local administrative land use planning and includes monitoring and evaluation.</p>	
	<p>The desired outcomes are that:</p>	
	11	Producers understand the value of natural resources and how to protect them.
	12	Grazing management maintains soil health, prevents degradation of pasture and minimises competition with wildlife.
	13	Biodiversity and natural habitats are conserved and enhanced.
	14	Water resources are managed to optimise the quality and availability of water for people, livestock and wildlife.
	15	Producers minimise the introduction of hazardous materials into the rangeland environment.
	16	Producers ensure the protection and enhancement of natural resources through a comprehensive Rangeland Management Plan (RMP).



Principle	Definition and desired outcomes	
Animal welfare 	<p>Maintaining a healthy herd is crucial to cashmere producers' way of life and future prosperity. Through the global principle of ensuring goat welfare, the SFA draws on traditional knowledge and internally recognised best practice to ensure goat health and well-being. In their revised standard, the SFA has shifted from the five freedoms model to five domains model of animal welfare: (1) nutrition, (2) physical environment, (3) health, (4) behavioural interactions and (5) mental state. This is to ensure that the standard encourages positive experiences and emotional states for goats, as well as minimising suffering and discomfort as much as possible.</p>	
	<p>The desired outcomes are that:</p>	
	17	Goats have access to adequate nutrition and forage.
	18	Goats have access to sufficient, clean and fresh water.
	19	Feeding equipment is kept clean and uncontaminated.
	20	Goats have daily access to long fibre.
	21	Goats have access to safe and comfortable shelter, housing or pens to protect from discomfort or injury.
	22	Goats must be handled and treated humanely in a manner that does not cause pain and is appropriate to the status of the animal and their specific needs.
	23	Goats must be routinely monitored for signs of sickness, disease, injury or abnormal behaviour and immediate action taken when a problem is identified.
	24	Goats experience positive social interactions with the environment, other animals and humans to maintain psychological well-being.
25	Breeding strategy shall address welfare issues and suitability for the type of environment in which the goats are raised.	
26	Kidding must be supervised, and timely action taken while keeping disturbances to a minimum.	



Principle	Definition and desired outcomes	
	27	Injurious husbandry procedures are limited to strict welfare needs.
	28	Euthanasia is conducted in a safe and humane manner that minimises pain and distress prior to death.
	29	Other working animals are treated humanely.
	30	Fibre harvesting methods must be appropriate to the production setting and weather conditions.
	31	Fibre harvesting methods must minimise discomfort and risk of injury.
	32	Handling and transportation must avoid distress, illness and injury.
	33	Duty of care for goat welfare extends to goats sold for slaughter.
<p data-bbox="286 746 452 778">Fibre quality</p> 	<p data-bbox="564 746 2040 967">The SFA recognise that the ongoing decline in the quality of cashmere fibre is one of the key threats to the global cashmere sector. To address this concern, they have included fibre quality improvement as a key principle in the SFA Cashmere Standard. Rather than establishing a base quality grade that must be achieved to meet this principle, the focus is on promoting the adoption of practices that are aimed at producing the best quality fibre possible and improving fibre quality over time, namely selective breeding and the post-harvest management of fibre. If herders can improve their fibre quality, this will help them secure price premiums and maintain the reputation of cashmere as a luxury product. The desired outcome of this criteria is that over time there is a marked improvement in the average fibre quality of SFA Certified fibre.</p>	
	<p data-bbox="564 1002 927 1034">The desired outcomes are that:</p>	
	34	Over time there is a marked improvement in the average fibre quality of SFA certified fibre.
	35	Fibre harvesting, and storage practices maintain fibre quality downstream processing and achieve added value for producers.

Governance

Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA) is a registered charity in England and Wales (Registered Charity Number 1165742), henceforth called the SFA Secretariat (or just, the Secretariat). The Secretariat is responsible for:

- the day to day function of the organisation and standards system of the SFA;
- the initial design and continual development of the SFA Standards (and associated assurance system);
- monitoring and evaluation of outcomes;
- capacity building and communications.

The process for standards development will be detailed in the [SFA Standard Setting Procedure](#), which is based on the [ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice](#). The next review of the SFA Cashmere Standard will begin in 2024. For more information on what we plan to review and how you can contribute please read our [statement of intent](#).

Decisions regarding the objectives of the SFA and the content of the SFA Standards are made by the SFA Secretariat on advice from the SFA Board of Directors and SFA Standard System Improvement Committee (SSIC), both of which are comprised of individuals representing a balance of interests from the stakeholder community. Applications to sit on the SFA Board of Directors or SSIC are open to all interested stakeholders. All decisions are announced and justified through the SFA website and newsletter.

Certification and accreditation

The SFA aims for compliance with the ISEAL codes of good practice at the earliest opportunity. Assurance is done following an third-party assurance model where certification is done by an accredited independent conformity assessment body with no ties to the SFA or the entity being assessed.

Risk assessment

The SFA has made an assessment of risks in implementing the standard, that is, identification of factors that may negatively affect the ability to achieve its outcomes, and of potential unintended consequences from its implementation. Also, possible corrective actions to mitigate the risks have been identified, that will partly fall under standard development and partly on implementation and other programmes. They can be summarized as follows:

Risk	Corrective action
Certification of cashmere cannot save rangelands that are used (and sometimes abused) by a range of actors over which they have no control.	The SFA is investigating how the SFA Cashmere Standard fits within potential landscape and/or jurisdictional approaches to certifying rangelands.
Lack of incentives for small-scale producers to invest in and implement the standard leads to a skew in certification towards larger operations.	The SFA funnels its charitable resources towards targeted capacity building training and certification fee support.
Standard contains too many topics / requirements - difficult to focus and provide quality	Standard consists of limited number of minimum criteria with focus on biophysical requirements
Insufficient access to inputs (e.g. vaccines and/or pain relief) for remote herders.	Make sure the compliance with minimum criteria is based on factors that can be controlled by entities seeking certification.
Differences in production practice between nomadic herders and landed farmers creates two systems with unequal requirements.	Make sure the compliance with minimum criteria is based on factors that are common to both types of production systems.
Requirement forces western values and approaches replace otherwise effective traditional practices.	Ensure that requirements are focused on outcomes rather than being prescriptive of particular approaches and/or technologies.

Stakeholder map

The stakeholder map for the SFA covers the traditional producers of cashmere, those bodies responsible for the governance of cashmere production, the participants in the cashmere value chains and a wide range of actors aiming to better understand rangelands and influence the policies that governs cashmere production (Table 1).

Table 1: Stakeholders for the SFA Cashmere Standard.

Traditional users	
Recreational users	Those with a lifestyle interest in rangelands.
Rangeland residents	Those who live on rangelands. Includes indigenous peoples.
Administrators	
Governance and/or management	Leadership/administration for the governance of cashmere production and/or rangelands and/or the people who live/work there.
Standard setters	Involved with developing, coordinating, promulgating, revising, interpreting, or otherwise producing technical standards.
Conformity assessment and/or accreditation organisations	Involvement with certifying third parties against an official standard and/or testing or other activities that determine whether a process, product, or service complies with the requirements of a specification, technical standard, contract, or regulation.
Cashmere value chains	
Production	Involved with the production and harvest of cashmere.
Processing and manufacturing	Involved with processing and transformation of raw cashmere to final products for consumption.
Traders, brand and retailers	Involved with the trading of cashmere.
Policy informers and influencers	
Academia	Those with an intellectual/theoretical interest in cashmere production and processing.
Non-governmental organisations	Those dedicated to effecting change according to their objectives, including but not limited to, environmental NGOs and industry lobby groups.