



29 OCTOBER 2025

SFA EQUIVALENCE POLICY & PROCEDURE

VERSION 1.0



SUSTAINABLE FIBRE ALLIANCE

Overview

Review

Review of this document shall start no later than five years after the publication of this document, or with the publication of a revised version of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice v1.0, whichever is sooner.

Feedback on this Document

We always welcome feedback and comments on any part of the SFA program, including this procedure and any specific determinations of equivalence recorded in the SFA Requirements Benchmarking Database, which is available to any interested stakeholder upon request. You can do this through the [SFA's open feedback portal](#). This portal is always open, though content may change at any time without notice.

Amendment Record

This procedure is reviewed to ensure its continuing relevance to the systems and processes that it describes. Any amendments shall be approved by the SFA Secretariat and shared with the SFA Board of Trustees for their information. A record of contextual additions or omissions will be provided below.

Version	Context	Revision	Date
Version 1.0	N/A	N/A	29.10.2025

Purpose & Governance

Purpose of this Document

Normally, the claim that a specific product is 'SFA Certified' can only be made on products that have been produced, processed and traded according to the SFA standards system, as defined by the [SFA Chain of Custody Standard](#).

This document defines the process for establishing whether other standards systems may be considered partially or fully 'equivalent' to the SFA standards system for determining whether a particular entity or a specific product of those systems may be considered to be 'SFA Certified'.

Principles of this Policy

Other standards systems recognised by the SFA as partially or fully 'equivalent' shall be meaningfully equivalent to the SFA standard system¹.

Equivalence is based on:

- the relevance and applicability to the contexts in which the systems are applied;
- the credibility of the standards systems' assurance process and complaints mechanisms (confidence of compliance);
- similarities between the standards' specific requirements (intended performance);
- the standard system owners' willingness to be transparent and collaborative, within reason.

¹ ISEAL Code of Good Practice v1.0, [ISEAL Codes of Good Practice](#)

Governance

The owner of this document is the Sustainable Fibre Alliance (SFA). It is the responsibility of the SFA Executive to deliver any assessments of equivalence as per this policy and ensure that any determination of equivalence is communicated to SFA stakeholders alongside the details of the equivalence.

Determinations of equivalence are treated like a major change to the content of Standards and are made following the [SFA Standard Setting Procedure](#), with determinations of equivalence being made by the SFA Standard System Improvement Committee. Any major change to either of two equivalent standards shall trigger a review of that equivalence to reevaluate the equivalence as per this policy.

Requirements

Requirements for Determining Equivalence

1. Establishing relevance and applicability

- 1.1 To be considered for partial or full equivalence with the SFA standards system, the other standard system shall be relevant to at least one of the principles for at least one of the value chain stages listed in *Table 1* for one or more of the following animal fibres:
- cashmere.

2. Benchmarking of the assurance process

- 2.1 The other standard systems shall operate a third-party assurance scheme or another system that can be considered equally or more rigorous.
- *This means that neither the entities being certified nor the standard system operator shall make certification decisions.*
- 2.2 The other standard systems shall demonstrate sufficient equivalence with the [SFA Assurance and Certification Manual \(ACM\)](#) or demonstrate compliance with the clauses in Section 7 (Assurance) of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.
- *Where the standard system is determined sufficiently compliant, but does not fully conform to the ACM, communication of the determination of equivalence shall include justification for why the equivalence has been deemed sufficient.*
- *Note that the other standard system does not have to demonstrate code compliance with the ISEAL Code of Practice, just practical implementation of the items in Section 7.*

3. Benchmarking requirements

- 3.1 For two clauses from different standards systems to be considered equivalent, they shall:
- a) be of comparable intent; and
 - b) require a similar outcome or better (*Table 2*).
- *Clauses from other standards that require a declaration of behavioural intent are never considered to be equivalent to SFA clauses that require actual behaviour.*

3.2 Evidence of conformity to equivalent clauses of other standards may be used as evidence of conformity to specific clauses of the SFA Standards.

- *Equivalence of the intended performance of other Standards against the SFA Standards is recorded in the SFA Requirements Benchmarking Database, which is available to any interested stakeholder upon request.*
- *The list of SFA Standards can be found in the [SFA Assurance and Certification Manual](#).*

4. Establishing a memorandum of understanding

4.1 The SFA and the other standard system holders shall enter into a memorandum of understanding that includes:

- a) clear definitions of the overlapping scopes and jurisdictions (including if multi-jurisdictional) covered by each standard system;
- b) an agreement to share certification and chain of custody data, with clear definitions of and justification for any information redacted;
- c) an agreement to cooperate on matters of conformity assessment body oversight, including a willingness to engage in joint investigation of assurance incidents and risks;
- d) a commitment to collaborate on monitoring, evaluation and learning, particularly regarding evaluating whether requirements that have been deemed equivalent are resulting in similar certification outcomes irrespective of which standard system they are being assessed through;
- e) a commitment to collaborate on communications and stakeholder engagement;
- f) a commitment to collaborate on any fees raised on certificate holders and/or conformity assessment bodies, such that loopholes to avoid paying the fees are avoided and ensure that fees are not duplicative;
- g) a commitment to consult each other on any changes to the equivalent standard systems;
- h) where both standards are in English, a commitment to clarify where the two standard systems use different words to mean the same thing;
- i) where the other standard is in a language other than English, a commitment to ensure that both standards are faithfully translated into both languages;
- j) how any conflicting legal requirements for the jurisdictions in which the standards operate will be applied.

- *For example, conflicting data protection laws.*

Table 1: The principles and value chain stages that are in the scope of the SFA standards system.

Value Chain Stage	Principles								
	Environmental Health	Animal Welfare	Decent Work	Effective Management	Fibre Quality	Chain of Custody	Traceability	Claims	Whistleblowing
Production	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sorting						X	X	X	X
Dehairing	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Scouring	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
Weaving						X	X	X	X
Spinning						X	X	X	X
Recycling						X	X	X	X
Other Manufacturing						X	X	X	X



Table 2: Equivalence of clauses across standards depends on the nature of the clauses being compared. Note that improvement indicators are clauses that become mandatory over time. Optional clauses are not considered by the SFA to be requirements or improvement indicators.

SFA Standard	Other Standard	Equivalence
Requirement	Requirement	Yes
Requirement	Improvement indicator	No
Improvement indicator	Requirement	Yes
Improvement indicator	Improvement indicator	Yes
Requirement or improvement indicator	Non-mandatory clause	No

5. Process for assessing the equivalence of scope certificates

- 5.1 Where certification against another standard meets all of the requirements of an SFA standard, an entity may use its scope certificate against the other standard in place of an SFA scope certificate.
- 5.2 Where certification against another standard meets some but not all of the requirements of an SFA standard, the entity may seek certification against the SFA standard through a reduced assessment.
 - *To see which other standards can be used to meet some of the requirements of an SFA standard (and how) refer to the SFA Requirements Benchmarking Database, which is available to any interested stakeholder upon request.*
- 5.2.1 A reduced assessment shall cover those specific requirements for which the other standard is not considered equivalent as per the SFA Requirements Benchmarking Database, which is available to any interested stakeholder upon request.
- 5.2.1.1 A reduced assessment shall assess those requirements not considered equivalent as per the [SFA Assurance and Certification Manual](#).
- 5.2.2 A reduced assessment may be needed for requirements that are considered equivalent according to the SFA Requirements Benchmarking Database, but do not appear to have been applied equivalently in practice as per a desk review by the assessor of the certification and/or assessment reports for the other standard.
- 5.2.3 The expiry date of an SFA scope certificate based on a reduced assessment shall be set as the earliest expiry date for any other certificates used as evidence for eligibility for the reduced assessment.

6. Process for recognising other products as 'SFA Certified'

- 6.1 Products that have been certified in compliance with the SFA standards system (as defined in the [SFA Chain of Custody](#)) or equivalent/s (recognised as per this procedure) may be claimed to be 'SFA Certified'.



Published by:

SFA

For more information, please visit <http://sustainablefibre.org> or contact info@sustainablefibre.org