

# Biodiversity Performance Tool for Coffee Cultivation



## Biodiversity and the agricultural sector

The planet's biodiversity faces great threats; it is estimated that in the coming years around a million species could become extinct around the world. Among the major causes of biodiversity loss are: destruction and degradation of ecosystems, pollution, over-exploitation of natural resources, contamination, climate change and the effects of invasive alien species.

Intensive agriculture is one of the key drivers of transformation and loss of ecosystems, over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution and climate change. Therefore, the food sector, with agriculture as the main supplier, needs to improve the conditions for biodiversity and help to stop its loss. Food standards and sourcing requirements of food companies can be valuable instruments to protect and to enhance biodiversity. Effective criteria and training for farmers, evaluators and auditors are needed as well as practical tools to facilitate sound management of biodiversity in the agricultural sector.

## Improve and monitor the biodiversity performance of coffee farms

Biodiversity protection and enhancement requires management and measures adapted to the local context and the specific situation on the farm. The Biodiversity Performance Tool Coffee supports farmers in getting a sound baseline report of the current situation of biodiversity on the farm.

The 45 questions cover topics such as knowledge about the habitats on the farm and in the surroundings, restoration of habitats and other ecological structures, quality of forests and other habitats, management and protection of aquatic ecosystems, management of habitats, quality of shade trees, quality of hedges and other ecological structures and training on biodiversity for managers and staff.

The key data and indicators behind the questions are compared to benchmarks in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the farm. These are made visible by a simple traffic light system. Strengths and weaknesses are an important input for the farmer to select the measures for the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Measures of the BAP should address two big lines of action: the creation of potential for biodiversity (creation and improvement of habitats, protection of species, biotope corridors etc.) and the reduction of negative impacts on biodiversity (sound pesticide and fertilizer management, protection of water sources and soil etc.). Some questions and recommendations for measures refer to the quality of habitats (e.g. number of species, width of buffer zones) – underlining the need of not only improving in quantity, but also in quality of habitats, soil biodiversity and species protection.

## Monitoring via BPT

Improvements that are achieved through implementation of the action plan are visualized in form of graphs. This allows farmers, assessors and auditors to get easily a good overview on the strengths, weaknesses and improvements on the farm, and to demonstrate their improved performance

## Rainforest Alliance Standard 2020 und the BPT Coffee

The RA standard 2020 aims to make biodiversity a fundamental principle of all aspects of farming and environmental protection. Biodiversity conservation is woven throughout the new farm requirements and several criteria in the management, farming, and environmental chapters aim at both preventing negative impacts from farming on biodiversity as well as fostering positive ones. The conservation of existing natural ecosystems areas is key to this mission. Besides not allowing for

conversion of any natural ecosystems since 2014, there is a risk-based approach to safeguarding HCVs. Particularly relevant to the BPT coffee are the requirements to manage natural ecosystems on the farm (6.2.1), maintain remnant forest trees (6.2.2) and establish a minimum percentage of natural vegetation on the farm (6.2.3-6.2.6) as well as riparian buffers (6.3).

The BPT Coffee helps to get a practical overview of the biodiversity performance on the farm and identify opportunities and most important management actions. It also facilitates demonstrating improvements. Therefore, Rainforest Alliance strongly recommends the use of the BPT Coffee.

### Next steps

It would be important to develop an approach how BPT Coffee alongside with the new RA standard can be used best in group and farm management as well as in auditing.

Currently, the BPT Coffee is available as an Excel tool. The elaboration of a digital tool (programed excel or mobile application) to collect the data and the visualize the results would be the next logical step. With a digital BPT, farmers will be able to do multi-temporal analysis of their performance in improving biodiversity.

With a database, the BPT could also produce results based on aggregated data sets for a group, a region, a country ... to evaluate overall performance on biodiversity protection and management of the farms. The results of this overall monitoring are very relevant for decision making regarding development of criteria, future efforts to support farmers as well as reporting on the impact of the standard.

### Background

Rainforest Alliance agreed with Global Nature Fund, Lake Constance Foundation and Fundación Humedales to go further and adapt the Biodiversity Performance Tool to the particularities of coffee production in South America and test the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP) in coffee farms in Colombia. During the pilot project, three Colombian coffee farms developed Biodiversity Action Plans with ambitious and feasible measures to improve the protection of ecosystems and species and increase the potential of biodiversity in the future. Pilot farmers recognize positive effects on biodiversity as well as the protection of soil fertility and hydrological balance, and the adaptation to climate change.

The original Biodiversity Performance Tool (BPT) was developed in the LIFE Initiative "Food and Biodiversity". This tool facilitates the development and implementation of good action plans for biodiversity in the agricultural sector. Further information see [www.biodiversity-performance.eu](http://www.biodiversity-performance.eu)

UTZ, now merged with the Rainforest Alliance, was one of the first standards to join the initiative and contribute to the development of recommendations for effective biodiversity criteria.

### Further information

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