



Practical Steps for Implementing FairWild Certification

How to get started

Certification is an excellent way to implement the FairWild Standard in practice. Successful certification, however, requires some preparation by all partners involved. This general guidance document aims to provide practical advice for companies intending to become FairWild-certified.

While the FairWild certification scheme allows for improvement of performance over time, a certain level of socially and environmentally responsible sourcing practices is required for certification from the beginning. Hence, the following preparatory steps are suggested:

1. Download FairWild Standard version 2.0 and performance indicators from the website and read the documents carefully.
2. Perform a critical self-assessment of your / the wild collection operation.
3. Contact an accredited certification body and inform them about your intention to become FairWild-certified and the species to be considered. Complete the FairWild application form.
4. Following an initial discussion with the certification body on feasibility of the audit, contact the FairWild Foundation to arrange a risk analysis of the species selected.
5. Arrange with the selected certification body a date for pre-audit or audit of your operation.

The FairWild Standard

The Fairwild Standard is publicly available (free of costs). You can either download it from www.fairwild.org/documents or contact the FairWild Foundation which will be happy to send you the Standard upon request. The Standard provides general best practice guidance, and is accompanied by the FairWild Standard version 2.0 performance indicators – a set of control points that will be used for verification of performance as assessed against the FairWild Standard.

Critical Self-Assessment

FairWild companies are expected to take over responsibility for their enterprise and for sustainable sourcing of plants from the wild. For this reason, it is crucial that all companies interested in FairWild certification familiarize themselves with the FairWild Standard and carry out a critical self-assessment of their performance according to the prerequisites of the Standard. If a company acts as mandator for another FairWild operator (e.g. an importer or processor who does not collect plants itself but purchases material from a wild collection operator), the company should either carry out a critical assessment of its supplier or have the supplier carry it out on its own.

It is important that self-assessments are as realistic as possible and in case of doubt rather too strict than too generous in order to avoid unpleasant surprises when being audited externally. The company should analyze the results of the self-assessment and implement corrective measures as soon as possible, especially with regard to control points that must be fulfilled from the beginning.

The assessment can also be delegated to a certification body. In this case, normally a pre-audit is carried out. This means that the certification body checks a company according to their FairWild performance but does not present a certification decision at the end of the audit and review process but delivers to the company a report on performance and corrective action to be taken for certification. The advantage of this procedure is that companies get a third party certifier's analysis from the beginning; the disadvantage is potentially higher costs as compared to a critical self-assessment.

Contact FairWild Foundation and Certification Body

After or parallel to the self-assessment, a company interested in FairWild certification should directly contact an accredited certifier. The FairWild Foundation can provide the company with information on which certifiers are accredited to perform FairWild audit and certification services. The FairWild Foundation is not directly involved in certification and contracting interested parties; this responsibility has been fully delegated to the accredited certification bodies. Queries can be referred to the FairWild Foundation Secretariat at any time.

However, the FairWild Foundation is responsible for a first risk assessment of the species to be included in the scope of FairWild certification of an interested party. This risk assessment must be arranged by the applicant. It is carried out based on the information provided in the FairWild application form, and the cost is payable to the FairWild Foundation.

Risk Analysis

Each wild collection operation of plants or plant parts has unique effects on the populations of target species and on ecosystems. In order to determine the level of rigour required for implementing core provisions of the FairWild Standard, the FairWild Foundation carries out a risk assessment as soon as it is informed by a certification body about intended FairWild certification. Parameters that influence the risk categorization are e.g. abundance of the species; plant part collected; habitat specificity; and IUCN or national red list classification, among others. Collection of target species / parts will be classified as low, medium or high risk. This information is important for the certifier to know the level of rigour required when auditing core aspects such as resource assessments, regular monitoring or management planning, but it also helps the wild collection operator to develop an appropriate control system that guarantees sustainable wild collection.

Pre-Audit vs. Audit

In cooperation with the selected accredited FairWild certifier, a date / time for FairWild audit or pre-audit should be arranged by the company. The certifier will inform you about the time required and the related costs. Audits should – whenever possible – be carried out at the time of wild harvesting of the target resources. For a pre-audit, the costs normally only cover the time of the auditor needed for the pre-audit visit, analysis of the results and reporting as well as the time required for the certifier's office staff for communication with the company, evaluation of reports and an office overhead fee. FairWild audits will additionally include certification fees. In the case of trade of certified products, trader registration and/or license fees may also be applicable (payable to FairWild Foundation).

Pre-audits are especially useful for companies that 1) do not have sufficient capacities to carry out a critical self-assessment, 2) operate with complex sourcing structures, 3) collect high-risk species, or 4) can use development funds. A pre-audit provides a company with an independent third party review of the status quo of FairWild implementation, required performance improvements and suggested actions to be taken by the company before first FairWild certification. Pre-audits do not directly result in certification.

Towards Certification

Certification Process

Audit

FairWild certification is based on annual third party audits carried out by an accredited FairWild certification body. The organization of audit and certification process is the sole responsibility of the certification body. It is responsible for auditor training and assignment and communication with the company in all matters related to the audit. Information obtained by a certification body during an audit and certification process is confidential and must not be provided to third parties unless a data release declaration has been signed by the company. Audits are normally carried out during collection seasons of target plants or plant parts. Exceptions are possible when audits cannot be arranged during that period. Regular annual audits are always announced and agreed upon by the company and the certification body. More than one annual audit visit may be required if a company collects several medium or high risk species that are not collected at the same time of year.

Spot-check

Spot-checks are announced or unannounced checks of company performance. They may be prerequisites for continuation of certification. Announced spot-checks are e.g. made when collection methods of a high risk species could not be verified during the annual audit, but would be required before certification of this particular species can be granted. Unannounced spot-checks are performed by the certification body in case of founded first, second or third party complaints or in case of suspicion of incompliance with critical performance criteria of FairWild (e.g. child labour). Companies must allow unannounced spot-checks by the certification body for the continuation of certification.

Evaluation

Audit reports are evaluated by the certification body after the audit. The evaluation is not carried out by the auditor but by an independent evaluator. The aim of evaluation is to make sure that the audit results reflect the realities as much as possible, that ratings and conditions are in line with common practice and that the audit was performed well and in accordance with general audit rules.

Certification Decision

Evaluated reports are – together with the respective certificate and notification letters – reviewed by a certification officer of the certification body or – in case of complex issues to be discussed before a certification decision can be made – by a certification committee.

If a certification decision is positive, the company will receive a FairWild certificate, a notification letter and all evaluated audit reports, including certification conditions with timelines. For continuation of certification, companies are required to reach compliance by implementing the conditions detailed in the respective reports.

FairWild Concept: Minimum Requirements and Stepwise Improvements

FairWild certification is based on the concept of easy initial access and compulsory stepwise improvement of performance. This is implemented through increasing the minimum requirements to achieve certification over three years, and increasing overall performance over five years. This system allows companies to enter the certification programme with a relatively low bar, but it requires dedicated continuous improvement of implementation to keep up certification. If a company fails to improve accordingly, certification may be suspended or a company may not be re-certified.

Prerequisites for certification in Year 1

In order to become newly FairWild certified, a company needs to reach a rating of 60% of the Total Norm Points and fulfill all minimum criteria for year 1. The main points are:

- The conservation status of the target plant species must be known.
- Species must be clearly identified, without any taxonomic doubt, and voucher specimens must be available. In case of doubt, taxonomic identification by a botanist may be required.
- Collection areas must be clearly separate from intensively cultivated agricultural land.
- Maps of collection areas are available and all boundaries and zones excluded from collection are marked.
- Collection instructions have been developed and implemented.
- Plant specification form is available for all target species, including information on reproductive system and on sustainable collection practices, and an optimum sustainable yield estimate.
- No prohibited inputs are used by the operator or any third party.
- Collection permits are obtained if required.
- Traditional use and access rights are acknowledged; resources are not diminished by commercial collection.
- Contracts and agreements are in line with national and international legislation.
- No discrimination of collectors based on race, colour, religion, gender, political opinion or social or national origin.
- No children under 15 years of age have been contracted.
- No forced labour.
- Payment of fair price (above market average) to collectors without delay and deductions.
- FairWild Premium use is well administered and documented transparently.
- Processing machinery is without major safety risks.
- Pregnant women are excluded from hazardous work.
- Emergency exits are clearly marked and always unobstructed and unlocked.
- Wages must be at or higher than defined minimum wage or industry benchmark.
- Open and transparent communication is maintained with all stakeholders and their participation in all important decision making processes is guaranteed.
- Products are fully traceable along the entire chain of custody. Purchase and sales records are complete and transparent.
- Certification status is marked on all invoices.

Further core requirements for FairWild certification after Year 1

Additional certification conditions for years 2 and 3 are more complex and detailed. The main challenges after first certification are the set-up of a working resource assessment and monitoring system and of a comprehensive and adaptive management plan.

The rigour required for **resource assessments** depends on the risk categorization of the target plant / plant part. If the risk of unsustainable harvesting is low, resource assessments may be simple and allow monitoring general population development and trends in the collection areas; for common species, this should work as an early warning system that allows taking fast action and appropriate measures if unusual population decline is observed. In high risk species, resource assessments need to be more formal, and refer to baseline inventories and regular systematic and documented population monitoring. A guidance document on resource assessment has been prepared and is available through the FairWild Foundation.

The level and complexity of **management planning** also depends on the complexity of the wild collection operation. Management plans should detail all relevant aspects of resource, personnel, and business management and be developed together with all concerned stakeholders whenever possible. A management planning guidance has been developed is available from the FairWild Foundation.

Appropriate implementation of **Social and FairTrade provisions** is one of the key characteristics of a FairWild certified company; requirements are especially detailed after year 1 when a company starts implementing a fair trade system. This is based on the payment and transparent negotiation of a fair trade price to collectors and fair wages to workers and on the FairWild Development Premium. This Premium is a certain percentage (normally about 10%) over the collector selling price that is charged to the buyer of a FairWild product in addition to the normal product price. The FairWild Premium is listed separately on invoices and is paid to a separate account. The Premium fund can be used for social community investment; all beneficiaries of the FairWild system must participate in the discussions and decision of FairWild Premium use. A guidance manual covering important Social and FairTrade requirements of FairWild is available through the FairWild Foundation.

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