

Sustainability and Voluntary Certification in the Rwandan Coffee Sector

Developing an action plan to address opportunities and challenges

REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP HELD IN
KIGALI, RWANDA, FEBRUARY 28, 2019





Executive Summary

Voluntary Sustainability Certification (VSC) is increasingly affecting the Rwandan coffee sector, presenting both valuable opportunities and noteworthy challenges. Through a four-year program supported by the Swedish Government (SIDA), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is establishing advisory services on VSC in producing countries based on their information and capacity-building needs, with the objective of supporting informed decision making among sector stakeholders. IISD is conducting similar work in the tea sector in Kenya and has a long history in conducting standards-related research and providing advice on policy design and implementation.

To lay the foundation for this process, IISD has been engaging with key sector stakeholders since August 2018 to identify these information and capacity-building needs. Along with a desk review of the domestic policy environment, IISD is also examining which mechanisms can maximize the benefits and address the challenges related to VSCs in the Rwandan coffee sector, particularly in alleviating poverty among smallholder producers. This “needs assessment” culminated in a workshop on February 28, 2019, co-facilitated by IISD, the National Agricultural Export Development Board (NAEB), and Sustainable Growers. The event identified clear challenges and concrete recommendations, which will inform the development of a related “action plan.”

Among the challenges that workshop participants identified were:

- Cost of certification, in particular (annual) audit costs.
- Multiple certification challenges and the additional costs involved.
- Lack of credible data and information on the real costs, benefits and impacts of certification, as well as information on the program requirements.
- Insufficient extension services to provide information and support to smallholder producer groups.
- Limited uptake of certified product by market (i.e., imbalance between supply and demand of certified product for market).

Recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Identify strategies to reduce certification costs, such as simplifying documentation requirements, increasing competition among auditors by increasing the number of certifying bodies and extending the certification period beyond one year. Producing countries should take more ownership of the process by engaging in standard setting, and potentially developing a “Rwanda GAP” to empower decision making at the producing country level.
- Developing tools to support multiple certification and focus support on the core or common requirements of certification.

- Share credible, consistently gathered data (at a pre-competitive, aggregate level) between different stakeholders, including public and private actors.
- Expand extension services, build local capacity at producer group level on certification, and add certification to school and other educational programs’ curriculum.
- Provide information and build producers’ ability to select a certification program that can provide appropriate market access. Marketing programs for certified coffee could also be expanded.

IISD will facilitate the development of the upcoming action plan, with inputs and review from the workshop participants and sector stakeholders. The participating stakeholders have agreed to support the action plan’s prioritization and implementation through individual and collective action. The action plan will cover recommendations for different actors in the coffee sector, including the public and private sectors, among others. Specific actions, roles, and responsibilities will be confirmed by the stakeholders during the review process.



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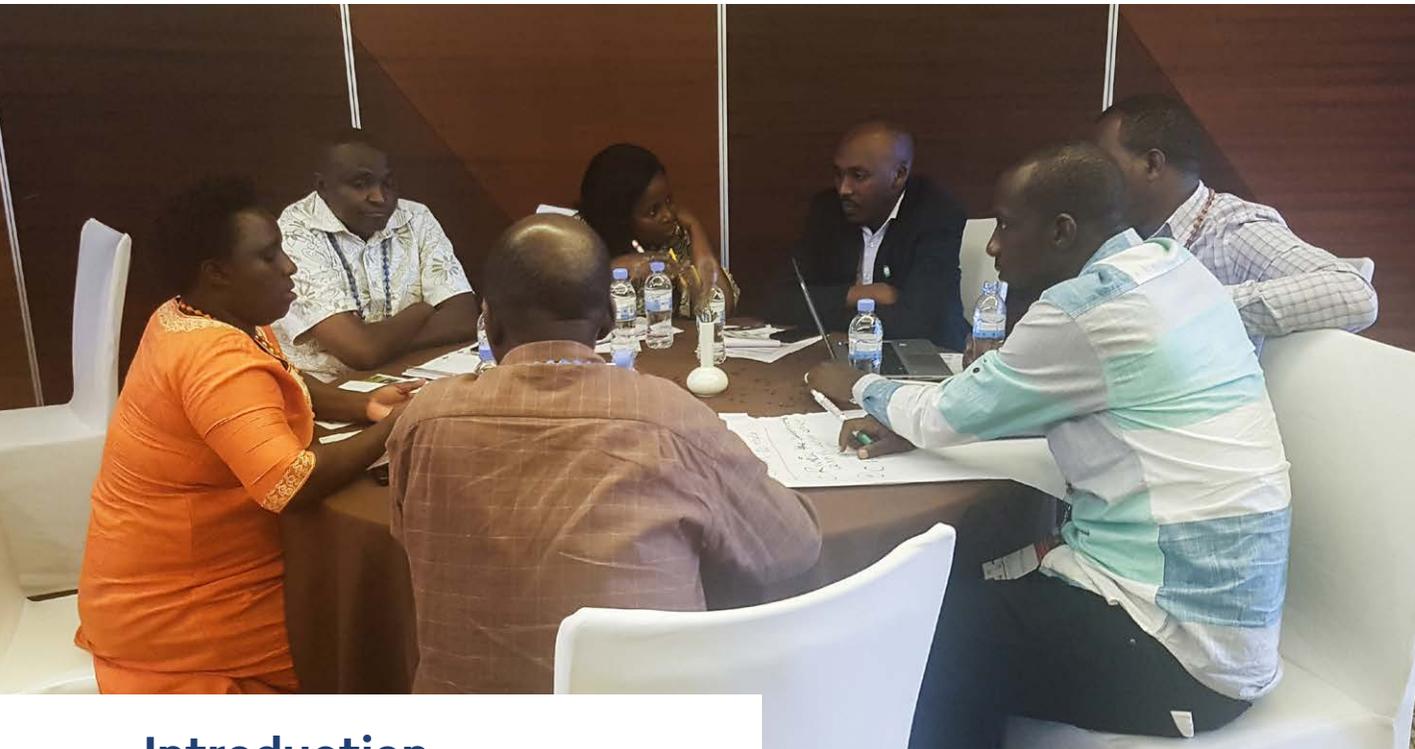
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGLC	African Great Lakes Region Coffee Support Program	KFC	Kenya Flower Council	SCAN	Sustainable Commodity Assistance Network
CB	certification body	MINAGRI	Ministry of Agriculture of Rwanda	SG RC	Sustainable Growers' Relationship Coffee program
CEPAR	Coffee Exporters and Processors Association of Rwanda	MSU	Michigan State University	SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
COSA	Committee on Sustainability Assessment	NAEB	National Agricultural Export Development Board	SPS	sanitary and phytosanitary measures
CWS	coffee washing station	NIRDA	National Industrial Research and Development Agency	SSI	State of Sustainability Initiatives Program
FAST	Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade	NCCR	National Cooperatives Confederation of Rwanda	TA	Technical Assistance
FOSS	Flowers and Ornaments Sustainability Standards (Kenya)	PO	producer organization	UNFSS	United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards
FT	Fair Trade	PTD	potato taste defect	VSC	Voluntary Sustainability Certification
FtF	Farmer to Farmer (training)	QMS	Quality Management Systems	VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices	RA	Rainforest Alliance	WCR	World Coffee Research
GCMP	Global Coffee Monitoring Program	RAB	Rwanda Agriculture Board	WTO	World Trade Organization
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development	RCCF	Rwanda Coffee Cooperatives' Federation		
IMS	Internal Management System	ROAM	Rwanda Organic Agriculture Movement		
IPAR	Institute of Policy Analysis and Research	ROI	return on investment		
ITC	International Trade Centre	RSB	Rwanda Standards Board		
		RTC	Rwanda Trading Company		



Introduction

Rwanda's coffee sector accounts for 24 per cent of domestic agricultural production. About 400,000 small-scale farmers (representing 80 per cent of the country's farmers) produce an average of 267,000 to 420,000 bags per year, which accounts for 16,000 to 21,000 metric tons of Rwanda's Arabica coffee annually, representing 0.2 per cent of the world's coffee exports and ranking 40th globally (National Agricultural Export Development Board [NAEB], 2019). Coffee destined for the export market accounts for 95 per cent of Rwandan-produced coffee, while the remaining 5 per cent is sold on the domestic market (NAEB, 2017).

NAEB has invested in increasing coffee production, focusing on specialty coffee to boost export revenues for farmers and foreign exchange earnings for government programs. In addition, NAEB is currently upgrading old plantations and promoting modern techniques to increase yield and quality, from the current yield of 700 kgs of green coffee per hectare. (NAEB, n.d.)

In 2017, Rwandan coffee earned USD 57.481 million in foreign exchange (Chathamhouse, n.d.). The five leading destination markets for the coffee are Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Uganda, the United

Kingdom and the United States. The United States is the leading market for fully washed and higher grades of coffee, while Switzerland is the largest market for semi-washed coffee (FAO, n.d.).

The industry is dominated by a few medium-sized to large traders and exporters, such as IMPEXCOR, Dorman's, Rwanda Trading Company (RTC), and RWACOF, many of which are linked to larger international trading houses. The value chain is heavily vertically integrated, limiting smallholder processors and exporters with weak bargaining power.

Over time, standards have become a powerful communications tool between buyers and suppliers, establishing a language that they can use to specify requirements and demonstrate products' adherence or compliance, known otherwise as "fitness for use."

Broadly speaking, there are two categories of standards. Technical standards are often used for public regulations to safeguard public safety and the environment. At the international level, rules on measures relating to food safety and animal and plant health are established through the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement).

Other standards target production, processing and trading practices along the supply chain, with an emphasis on the production stage, along with improving traceability throughout the supply chain. They address certain needs that are codified into criteria on what qualifies as acceptable, i.e., guidelines for standards-compliant actions. These criteria relate to safety, responsible resource



management, limits on contamination, protection of workers' rights and environmental stewardship. These standards are not legally required nor mandatory and are therefore referred to as voluntary. Collectively they are grouped as Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSSs) or Voluntary Sustainability Certifications (VSCs).

Currently, at least 35 per cent of coffee produced globally is certified or verified under voluntary standards. Over the years 2010–2016, certified/verified coffee production increased at a 24 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) (forthcoming publication, IISD 2019). In the Rwandan coffee sector, specifically, there are at least 24 private standards addressing sustainability. In 2016, it was

estimated that 32.3 per cent of Rwandan coffee was standards-compliant (ITC, 2019).

The certification/verification schemes seen in the Rwandan coffee sector are as follows with a detail of production volumes in 2016 (Lernoud et al., 2018):

- Fair Trade International – 2,670 metric tons
- Rainforest Alliance – 3,897 metric tons
- Organic – 90 metric tons
- 4C – 2,428 metric tons (verification system)

Unfortunately, supply still exceeds demand for certified products, making it difficult for producers to access higher-value markets, cover the investments needed to achieve certification, and access the

necessary financing to cover fixed and variable certification costs. As shown above, the Rwandan coffee sector is actively involved in certification, with support from both public and private entities. While these developments have yielded benefits, challenges still remain from, among others, fixed and variable costs associated with certification; market access and uptake; applicability of standards to local situations and capacities; clear understanding on the costs, benefits and impacts of certification; and their value as a development tool to meet national and sector strategies. The needs assessments and workshop activities expanded on these challenges and provided related recommendations, which this document describes in detail.





Objectives

The workshop's objectives were to:

- Present the issue of VSC in the Rwandan coffee sector and internationally.
- Discuss challenges and opportunities related to VSC in the sector and identify the related information and capacity-building needs.
- Discuss the importance of impact data collection, the types of data needed, and the value of sharing information and data.

- Advance an action plan for moving this work forward, with multistakeholder coordination to develop and implement it.

The meeting agenda can be found in Annex 3.

The workshop was co-facilitated by NAEB, Sustainable Growers and IISD, with active participation from over 30 key stakeholders from across the sector.

The workshop was structured in multiple parts: an opening session, a presentation of needs assessment results, testimonials from stakeholders, high-level

panel discussions, a working group brainstorming session and a closing session. The format brought together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as researchers and representatives from farmer cooperatives.

The following report documents the event discussions, the challenges identified and related recommendations.



Opening Session

Dr. Celestin Gatarayiha (NAEB)

Dr. Gatarayiha welcomed participants and opened the event with the following remarks: “Certification is an important component of the coffee sector. As such, I would like to thank all participants for making the time to discuss sustainability and certification in Rwanda.”

Dr. Gatarayiha then stressed that coffee production and quality marketing go hand-in-hand with sustainability and certification. Achieving certification is challenging, but attainable. He discussed how

NAEB and the Government of Rwanda support farmers and cooperatives in obtaining certification, for example by providing training and other forms of support that assist farmers in complying with certification processes. NAEB views their responsibility to farmers as providing them with the necessary skills to ensure the standards of the farming process while obtaining certification.

In identifying challenges, Dr. Gatarayiha noted that farmers and cooperatives often struggle with the requirement of these certifications being renewed annually. In most instances farmers are provided with

support from the private sector or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to cover the initial certification costs. However, it is imperative that farmers and cooperatives learn to sustain themselves, including by being able to cover annual payments independently so that they can remain certified.

Given the compliance costs and the annual certification fees, he noted that farmers question how certification improves their ability to sell their product on the market. For instance, they ask how certification can guarantee a good price for their product, while questioning what other gains certification can provide, showing a lack of awareness of certification’s potential benefits.

Dr. Gatarayiha said farmers who are certified should be able to sell their product at a higher price on the market relative to those without certification. To ensure that all farmers and cooperatives are certified, they need the right incentives to do so. Approximately 80 per cent of Rwandan coffee farmers are small-scale producers. NAEB therefore encourages small-scale farmers to consider joining cooperatives, given that their plots of land are limited in size, which hinders their coffee-growing capacity. At least 0.5 hectares of land are required to grow an adequate amount of coffee. About 20 per cent of farmers work within a cooperative, making it easier to achieve certification and obtain decent profits. As such, NAEB considers cooperatives to be the most efficient means for farmers to attain certification and thus charge a higher price for their coffee.

NAEB introduced the zoning program, which advocates for farmers to make a continuous effort to ensure the quality of their land, rather than just



during the March-June coffee season. The zoning program also provides an environment to facilitate certification and ensure sustainability. Through these efforts, NAEB has developed a better relationship with farmers, and trains them on building their skills and their knowledge on achieving certification.

Dr. Gatarayihya concluded by remarking that this workshop has invited farmers' participation to help build their awareness of how certification and sustainability are beneficial. The workshop is also meant to show farmers how to go about obtaining certification, while providing them with a platform to discuss the challenges they are facing. NAEB expressed its gratitude to the organizers, particularly IISD and the Swedish government, and all other workshop partners and participants, given how the event is helping the Rwandan coffee sector and its farmers.

Mr. Christopher Wunderlich (IISD)

Mr. Wunderlich also thanked the participants; the event partners, NAEB and Sustainable Growers; and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), whose support made this workshop and the Advisory Services program on Standards at IISD a reality. He stated that the workshop's purpose is to identify the benefits and challenges of certification, and to develop actions to address those challenges. He then presented IISD, which is an independent think tank established in 1990 and headquartered in Winnipeg, Canada. Among numerous programs to support sustainable development, the IISD program behind this workshop, the State of Sustainability Initiatives (<https://www.iisd.org/ssi/>), has a focus on Voluntary Sustainability Certifications. IISD has

helped establish four complementary programs that look specifically at VSC under the following themes, and would be of interest to the participants:

- Impact Assessment: Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA)
- Finance: Finance Alliance for Sustainable Trade (FAST)
- Policy: United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS)
- Technical Assistance: Sustainable Commodity Assistance Network (SCAN)

This event is part of a four-year program (2018–2021) that IISD is developing and implementing with SIDA's support. The program is designed to provide market information and capacity-building support to countries on sustainable agriculture and VSCs. IISD's SSI program provides information on market-related developments, including production and consumption performance of certified commodities, trade flows and trends, as well as on the governance structures, implementation processes and criteria defined by voluntary standards programs.

The information and capacity-building support that IISD is providing through this project is designed to be responsive to stakeholder needs while being more user-friendly. Developing the appropriate support requires understanding the challenges related to standards and then delivering support in a way that ensures its effective use. IISD views certification as a potential tool for supporting the achievement of sustainable development objectives, as it directly impacts the livelihoods of coffee producers and other supply chain actors, the domestic economy,



social development, and local and national environmental conditions.

IISD is also working with local stakeholders to better understand how certification is experienced at the grassroots level and along the value chain, and thus identify where there are opportunities to further develop VSC as an effective tool or adapt it to better meet supply chain needs, such as the reduction of transaction costs. IISD can bring the constraints and challenges identified to the standards bodies themselves and other related stakeholders, and can thereby advocate for improving VSC at the international level and thus support Rwandan producers.

Mr. Wunderlich then presented some basic facts about standards at the global and national level. He continued by stating that good information requires robust, credible data that is cost-effective to collect, analyze and disseminate. He noted that coffee is a business, meaning there will always be challenges with accessing or sharing information, but that doing so is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders can make informed, fact-based decisions. These decisions should aim to improve the conditions of coffee production, processing and trading for all involved. Furthermore, from a strictly business perspective, many companies are treating certification as a valuable supply and risk management tool, driving the rapid market growth of VSCs (see statistics from presentation on VSC drivers).

Mr. Wunderlich concluded that IISD looks forward to continuing its work with key stakeholders in the Rwandan coffee sector to identify these risks and address them through a multistakeholder approach,

making VSCs more useful for achieving sustainable development objectives.

Ms. Jane Ngige (Standards expert and former CEO Kenya Flower Council [KFC] and Coordinator Kenya Horticultural Council [KHC])

Ms. Ngige provided fundamental and practical information on standards from her extensive field experience. She also made some bold and ambitious recommendations for the Rwandan coffee sector to consider, given the goal of engaging with and benefiting from VSCs at the national and regional levels.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE KENYAN FLOWER SECTOR

Ms. Ngige began by stating that the challenges facing the Rwandan coffee industry are similar to other agricultural cash crop value chains in developing countries. Coffee (and to a large extent fresh produce—which includes cut flowers and the fruit, vegetable and herbs for export industry) is exotic in Africa. The knowledge and research currently available on production, harvesting, post-harvest handling, processing, aggregation, storage, packaging, logistics and marketing are mostly acquired externally, particularly for small-scale growers.

She noted that the Kenyan flower industry invested in creating a comprehensive industry standard, known as the Kenya Flower Council (KFC) Code of Practice – KFC Silver (also known as Flowers and

Ornamentals Sustainability Standards, or FOSS). This process produced immense industry gains. An independent assessment by the International Trade Centre (ITC) found that the standard was one of the most robust in the world in 2016, propelling it to international recognition. Compliance with the KFC Silver standard has become a branding tool, opening up highly competitive markets.





Importantly, certification is conducted in-house, given that KFC is an accredited certification body. This is a shared service for all members, paid for by their subscription fees. The KFC standard meets all the requirements of 13 other industry standards. The KFC is also independently benchmarked to an international standard, known as the GLOBAL GAP (Good Agricultural Practices). The KFC was one of the first certification bodies to carry out audits with multiple certifications (multi audits), substantially reducing audit costs (see [KFC site](#) for a full overview).

FOCUSING ON GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES (GAP) FOR RWANDA

As an international standard, GLOBAL GAP is relatively accommodating, making it possible to incorporate that standard into an enriched Rwanda GAP Scheme. The latter encompasses the national legislation on social welfare, labour regulations, health and safety, and environmental stewardship. It also weaves in cultural, national and regional needs, making it an even richer scheme.

A Rwanda GAP as a national scheme should be complemented by a comprehensive quality management system (or systems), containing criteria for service providers such as trainers and certification bodies. It must also incorporate specific market needs. Ultimately, the objective should be to establish a strong Rwanda GAP, capable of governing any agricultural value chain. Specific value chain criteria and sub-criteria would then be drawn from the national Rwanda GAP.

The question of who would own the Rwanda GAP scheme is one that stakeholders need to address collectively. From the outset, the government and farmers, through their cooperative federation, would own it jointly. Most importantly, a mechanism would have to be designed to guide the scheme's implementation and ensure its long-term administration.

This process requires good governance. The government should ensure that a level playing field is maintained and that requisite standards are met, given that products sold internationally have a direct impact on the country's image. Farmers, particularly smallholders, must also be empowered by developing greater awareness and receiving training on productivity and quality improvement. They must comprehend the contractual arrangements they have with input suppliers, including service suppliers, as well as with the collectors, mills and buyers. This is key for obtaining favourable trade arrangements with key destinations, along with opening export markets.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

Challenges remain and new ones will emerge. It is important to keep communication channels open at all times and to engage with and discuss matters concerning the sector with all key stakeholders. This will help ensure inclusiveness and allow for consensus building.

While there are several immediate challenges, these are not insurmountable. Each challenge must be identified and analyzed in terms of the level of risk posed and the actions that need to be prioritized. To achieve this, the industry, working closely with

government, must have access to adequate resources to develop and execute a sustainable business plan that addresses the short, medium and long terms. This plan should focus on product quality and productivity measures, environmental stewardship, sustainable resource use, good human resource practices and other core considerations. While these steps will be time-consuming and challenging to implement at first, executing them successfully will help ensure positive and productive industry growth, while improving the industry's image.

Another significant challenge is the limited level of involvement that African countries currently have in private and or public standard-setting forums, relegating suppliers to the status of "standards takers." Strengthening capacities could be a good place to start and work upwards.

In conclusion, Ms. Ngige said that these challenges demonstrate how understanding the potential of Rwanda GAP at the national and regional level is important not just for the coffee sector, but also for other agricultural value chains. It is therefore useful to consider an all-encompassing Rwanda GAP, with subcategories for specific value chains.

If this were achieved, Rwanda would need to consider whether it would like to influence the future of regional and relevant international agricultural product standards. Considering these questions could lead to seeking and amalgamating value chain management knowledge, buttressed with technology and skills development, with the goal of improving productivity at the farm, subsector, national and regional levels.



Results of Needs Assessment (IISD)

IISD conducted a needs assessment in the second half of 2018 with key stakeholders in Rwandan coffee, conducting interviews and surveys of over 40 key stakeholders to understand the challenges, opportunities and needs related to VSCs in the sector. Below is a summary of survey responses:

What are the benefits of VSCs?

- Improving market access; increasing the number of buyers and building stable commercial relationships with them; communicating the value of sustainability
- Ensuring higher prices and premiums; ensuring price stability and addressing fluctuations
- Improving farmer livelihoods and well-being
- Improving record keeping, including ability to measure profit; facilitating effective management and planning

- Improving quality and quantity (yield); ensuring consistent supply of sustainable product; implementing Best Agriculture Practices (BAPs)
- Improving environmental and biodiversity conservation along the entire supply chain; improving farmers' mindset on environment conservation
- Promoting social responsibility; improving rights of employees at coffee washing stations (CWS)

What are the challenges of VSCs?

- High certification costs, such as money, time, labour, and annual audit/fee, without a guaranteed return on investment (ROI)
- Difficulty in achieving compliance at farm level (production and administration); not all criteria are applicable or appropriate for local situation
- Lack of buyers for certified product
- Lack of farmer capacity and training to properly interpret and implement certification requirements, leading to failure and frustration
- Lack of stakeholder coordination and organization along entire value chain
- Volatile prices, which make it harder to realize benefits

Information and Support Needs: Policy-makers

- Information on benefits and impacts of VSCs, including on whether these are really addressing complex sustainability issues; good communication with farmers to explain value and benefits of VSCs



- Information on farmers' investment and support needs to achieve certification
- One-on-one discussions with policy-makers on certification issues, in particular support measures and/or incentives
- Public meetings with policy-makers to discuss and implement measures to support sustainable supply chains
- Media engagement on certification issues
- General: Information on essential points to gain certification

Information and Support Needs: Farmers

- Information on benefits
- Better understanding of which certified products are or will be in demand, as well as the size of the actual market for those products and how that market can best be accessed
- Opportunity to discuss farming and environmental challenges both among themselves (Farmer to Farmer – FtF) and with policy-makers to find solutions
- Support in selecting suitable certification, finding buyers (common use of VSC)
- Targeted Technical Assistance (TA) on achieving VSC:
 - Participatory approaches; farmer field schools; modules on implementing VSCs
- Participation in the NCCR's Voluntary Sustainable Certification (VSC) mobilization meeting
- Collaboration with companies that have a certification mandate

Information and Support Needs: Private Sector

- Information on long-term benefits of sourcing from certified suppliers
- Training on VSC's positive impacts
- Information on how premiums are delivered to farmers
- Better transparency and investment in farmers
- Discussions on price with producers (based on investments from certification)
- Respect for certificate owned by producers
- Dialogue between traders (buyers and sellers), producers, and public sector about international certifications

How can policy-makers use VSCs?

- Enact laws and decrees promoting standards compliance (i.e., Climate Smart Practices)
- Identify and communicate to farmers the link between VSC and development strategies/goals, e.g., poverty eradication; conservation; improved well-being and livelihoods
- Subsidize certification costs and provide technical assistance/capacity-building support
- Support quality and environmental improvements and marketing of certified coffee
- Plan for using data on certified products sold/exported and importance of certified products in increasing income

How can VSCs be used to reduce poverty among smallholders?

- Mechanism to bring private and public incentives to farmers, e.g., second payments
- Engage buyers to offer good prices and fair premiums for certified coffee
- Provide good training, which increases yield and quality, and work on attaining higher prices
- Support reducing audit costs
- Provide production guidelines that respect international best practice for obtaining certification

Mr. Wunderlich then presented some of the concrete tools to address challenges that were discussed during the consultation, as well as stakeholder comments, which confirmed support for these actions.



Tools	Comments
1. Multi-certification Internal Management System (IMS)	Very important, since each VSC has different requirements/processes (one respondent said not useful)
2. National (benchmarked) sustainability standards	Important to build overall process, according to all respondents
3. Benchmarking national/sector strategies to VSCs	Valuable tool, in tandem with supporting public institutions to establish links with programs that support farmers' VSC compliance
4. Comprehensive Incentive Package	Very important, according to all respondents (*but should build on Conservation International's Conservation Agreements Tool)
5. Manuals translated into local language	Very important, according to all respondents
6. Radio station (training/ info sharing)	*Not clear since question was combined with translating manuals discussion (but during event respondents said this was valuable)

Additional Tools

(recommended by the stakeholders in the surveys)

1. Incorporate information on VSCs in agronomy programs at universities and/ or vocational training institutions
2. Develop and employ evaluation tools for periodic monitoring of certification practices' implementation
3. Develop and implement a training program for facilitators on certification standards monitoring and evaluation
4. Create an online portal that shows which steps are critical for achieving certification, along with providing market information

Mr. Wunderlich pointed out that many stakeholders supported the idea of coordination among them, such as through a platform, to address these issues collectively. This would help particularly in:

- Identifying and addressing challenges
- Communicating along the supply chain the value of VSCs (especially to producers and policy-makers)
- Identifying and informing about certification processes, costs and impacts.

He closed the session by providing some information sources on VSCs:

- IISD State of Sustainability Initiatives: <https://www.iisd.org/ssi/> (*data, analysis and reports on market impacts, trends and structure of the VSC programs*)
- International Trade Centre – Sustainability Map/Standards Map: <https://www.sustainabilitymap.org/home> (*comprehensive information on VSCs covering numerous aspects, and linked to the SSI, COSA and ISEAL data mentioned here, among others*)
- Committee on Sustainability Assessment: <https://thecosa.org/> (*global impact assessment of VSCs at field level, with universally accepted indicator sets*)
- ISEAL Alliance: <https://www.isealalliance.org/> (*trade association of VSCs with recommendations on improving their impacts*)



Testimonials From Certified Producers

Producers were then invited to share their experiences and views on certification. The speakers included members of cooperatives that work with Sustainable Growers at different levels of certification.

Jean-Claude Bamporiki – COCAGI Cooperative Farmer

Mr. Bamporiki introduced COCAGI, informing us that they have been Fairtrade-certified for the past 13 years and have also been Rainforest-certified for the past three years. This year, they will be audited for

organic certification. The market that they work with is what prompted COCAGI to pursue certification, along with the push to be sustainable. Since 2006 they have worked alongside two buyers that purchase their product.

Despite being Rainforest-certified, they have struggled to sell their coffee to the market. Buyers tend to be looking for organic certification, which is why they are now working toward achieving that objective.

Mr. Bamporiki stated that certification has yielded some key benefits for COCAGI producers, primarily

through the regular training they receive on certification requirements. Their farmers are also very competitive, always looking to excel, and Mr. Bamporiki noted that they are already leading in the region. Other benefits, he highlighted, were that farmers are taken care of, since certification calls for following up on their living situations, which also provides useful reassurance to their buyers.

Producers face some significant challenges, such as paying audit fees and keeping the necessary records. Most certification requires complying with standards that they believe they are already fulfilling, but producers struggle with record keeping and providing the necessary documentation, making compliance hard to prove.

At COCAGI, he said, they know that many farmers within the coffee value chain do not recognize the value of certification, leading to activities feeling forced and work being done at the last minute prior to the audit, which yields poor results in the long run. For this reason, COCAGI recommends that the private sector and the Government of Rwanda increase support to farmers to facilitate compliance and certification, thus making them more sustainable.

Marc Rwemerande – KOPAKAKI DUTEGURE Cooperative

Mr. Rwemerande informed participants that KOPAKAKI is Fairtrade- and Rainforest-certified, which has provided the cooperative with improved access to the market: last harvest, for example, all of their production was sold as certified. Certification allows for high-quality production, as farmers follow the rules as stipulated with best practice.



As a cooperative, however, they lack the means to pay the auditing fees, but say that they still recognize the importance of certification.

Murerkatete Joie Claire – KOAKAKE Cooperative

Ms. Murerkatete of KOAKAKE cooperative stated that they have been Fairtrade-certified since 2004 and Rainforest- and Utz-certified since 2017, but have still struggled to find a market for their product.

She said that the cooperative struggles with the high price of the auditing fees, which are charged annually. Despite being certified, they still have difficulty finding buyers for their coffee. Moreover, certification bodies are not easily available or accessible, nor do producer group leaders have enough information about the certification bodies or certification process. They ultimately have to access the service from afar, making it more expensive.

At KOAKAKE, she concluded, they are presently working toward being organic-certified by 2020. However, the cooperative would like the Government of Rwanda to push their neighbours to do the same, as otherwise the use of chemicals by neighbouring farmers could hamper KOAKAKE's farmers' ability to remain organic.

Key Takeaways From Testimonials

- The producer groups have been certified for several years and tend to have multiple certifications; some are entering into new schemes.
- They see benefits in having access to trainings; experiencing organizational and farm management improvements; raising coffee quality; and demonstrating improvements in the living situation of producers.
- Producer organizations generally have difficulty selling their certified product.
- The annual cost of certification is a serious obstacle for them.
- The number and availability of certification bodies are limited, making it difficult for producer groups to access and afford audits.
- The documentation required by certification is a significant challenge, and one that they often lack the capacity to provide, thus limiting their ability to demonstrate compliance.
- Producer groups request more support on information about standards, as well as the value of certification. They would also like training on compliance and support in covering certification costs.
- They recommend promoting certification with neighbouring farms (in particular organic) to avoid becoming non-compliant because of unacceptable practices on other farms.





Panel Discussion: Sustainability and VSC in Rwanda – Stakeholders Perspectives

The following are key points presented by the multistakeholder expert panel.

Dr. Celestin Gatarayiha (NAEB – Head of Coffee Division) – public sector

Benefits and affordability need to be assessed when going into certification. Farmers or cooperatives need to choose the certification according to their farming context. Farmers also need to be informed that practices concerning certification are similar, which

makes it easier to comply with one or all of them at the same time.

A fundamental challenge is when compliance is not universal, especially in instances where a farmer's immediate neighbour does not comply with standards, which has implications for the whole group. Working from the group context has benefits, including on how they can approach sustainable production: farmers can work consistently in ensuring the farm's quality, rather than just prior to an audit, which in turn leads to higher-quality products. Other certification advantages, aside from being able to charge higher

prices for products, include better soil quality and other farm benefits. Certification needs a strong market, however, so that these products can be sold, thus supporting farmers' livelihoods.

Ms. Brooke Cantrell (RTC – Chief Impact Officer) – private sector

The Rwanda Trading Company considers itself an equitable long-term partner of the coffee sector, and recognizes the importance of the price of coffee. In looking at the company's experiences with certification and the impact on business, she referred to several statistics. Between 2015 and 2018, the RTC helped with the certification of 19,534 farmers in Rwanda and exported 5.5 million lbs. of coffee during that time, forming an investment of USD 472,000 from the Rwanda Trading Company. These statistics confirm that the RTC should continue focusing on helping farmers become certified, which also coincides with the company's own certification strategy of influencing interested buyers looking to buy only certified product.

Sustainability equates to the long-term viability of the supply chain. At the farming level the RTC has learned that farmers need a reason to stay within the coffee sector, particularly given that economic stability is far from assured, and farmers may ultimately decide to enter another agricultural sector. This concern makes sustainability of utmost importance. RTC found that certification has a dramatic impact on the washing stations, from quality and organizational improvements to changes in waste and energy management.



She also noted the importance of data collection, given its impact on the production, processing and trading methods used in Rwanda, which can be agreed on by everyone in the sector. In improving the conditions of the Rwandan coffee sector, events such as this workshop, bringing together various members of the supply chain, provide a valuable learning opportunity that can help improve the sector's conditions. Opportunities for collective action that RTC plans to support include:

- Data collection
- Data transparency, which is why she shared some of RTC's internal statistics at the workshop
- Environmental stewardship

Mr. Jean-Marie Irakabaho (Posada Ltd. – Managing Director) – certification

Rwandan coffee farmers have three core considerations: (i) social responsibility, treating farmers, workers, consumers and other stakeholders with respect; (ii) the economy, given that coffee is a cash crop, and Rwanda needs to address the high cost of coffee production; and (iii) the environment, given that the 301 coffee washing stations in Rwanda are an important natural resource that will provide the end product.

When considering certification, farmers/cooperatives should consider sending their audit application to more than one body at a time. Having more than one quotation influences the decision-making process, allowing farmers the time to make thoughtful decisions on which certification to pursue.

Ms. Theopiste Nyiramahoro (RCCF – President) – smallholder producers

Smallholder farmers struggle with the high costs of certification and consultancy fees, and even when they do invest money and time to attain certification, they often still end up selling very little coffee as certified. Coffee prices are clearly another challenge. Public and private sectors need to be able to influence farmers' mindsets and make them aware of the value of compliance so that they can benefit from certification in the long run. One example of such support is from the zoning program implemented by NAEB. However, still having a neighbouring farm that does not comply with organic farming techniques can make it difficult to remain organic themselves.

From a smallholder perspective, there should be a collective effort to overcome the challenges that farmers face in becoming certified. Farmers should have better access to certification boards and should work alongside the Rwanda Coffee Cooperative Federation (RCCF) to achieve their goals. Furthermore, there are farmers/cooperatives that have coffee washing stations. The private sector alongside the RCCF should support these farmers, as this significantly improves the quality of coffee being produced.

Mr. Jean-Aime Niyonkuru (Sustainable Growers – Regional Manager, eastern province) – extension

The challenges to extension services in Rwanda are firstly data collection, which is what the auditing of certification focuses on. Farmers are not necessarily informed that certification is important both in its own right, but also in what comes with it, such as how it requires an overall improvement in farming practices and processes. Farmers must be taught how to collect data for certification, while also being made aware of how this will support their business.

Extensionists tend to focus primarily on the market, but various other aspects must also be effective, including the environment, farming systems and the management of cooperatives. This has a direct impact on processes. When good practices are applied throughout the season, rather than sporadically or just before audit processes take place, this can yield valuable benefits for product quality and quantity.

Market studies should be undertaken to help determine which certification farmers should choose. The private sector and the Government of Rwanda should also evaluate the cost of auditing, going beyond just out-of-pocket payments to also assess the costs of accessing training and equipment (e.g., Sustainable Growers' RCW model). Farmers and cooperatives should be equipped with the skills to continue the training and pass that knowledge on to others. This will minimize the gap between the price of a cup of coffee relative to what the coffee farmer receives in producing that cup of coffee.



Mr. Longin Muhizi (CEPAR-Operations manager Dorman's Coffee) – exporters

Mr. Longin provided an overview of standards, describing their benefits and challenges and then outlining the following recommendations:

- Revise auditing certification fees
- Extend the validity period of certification to ensure farmers can recover from the investments made before having to pursue recertification
- Develop local standards in collaboration with local stakeholders
- Standard owners should consider harmonizing criteria and limit the updating of standards
- Certified coffee should be actively marketed
- Set premiums should indicate what the farmer receives in relation to what the exporter receives
- Train local independent auditors to understand the local context
- Translate training manuals to Kinyarwanda

Key Takeaways from Panel Session

- Producers need credible information on costs, benefits, and market opportunities/trends of the different VSCs, so they can select the appropriate one for their situation.
 - It is important for producers to work in organizations to access and benefit from certification.
 - The benefits of certification go beyond direct monetary gains, also yielding improvements for farms, ecosystems and business development.
 - The private and public sectors are investing in certification and supporting producer compliance, and this can and should be expanded.
 - Product quality and quantity improvements, as well as environmental, social and economic gains, are realized when certification is applied consistently and over time.
 - Data collection throughout the supply chain is important and will affect the production, processing and trading methods used in Rwanda, all of which can be agreed on by everyone in the sector.
 - Producers should be taught to gather data for certification, and to understand data's value and impact on their overall livelihoods and businesses.
- Producers need to work with different certification bodies to negotiate the best deals.
 - Auditing periods should be extended and costs reduced.
 - Local standards should be developed to reflect local situations, local auditors should be trained to understand the local context, and related manuals should be translated into the local language (Kinyarwanda).



Working Groups (5)

Following the panel session, the participants formed working groups to expand on the issue of challenges and information/support needed to maximize benefits. The following are the results presented by each working group.

GROUP 1

The challenges that are faced in Rwanda when it comes to Voluntary Sustainability Certification:

- High cost of certification audits.
- Lack of market due to a limited demand for certified coffee.

- Limited knowledge concerning certification, which is exacerbated by manuals not being translated into the local language of Kinyarwanda. This leads to information being presented, but not understood.
- Lack of local standards coupled with limited access to local auditors.

Considering these challenges, we suggest the following solutions:

- Certifying bodies should revise the costs involved in paying certification fees. They should meet with farmers, which the Government of Rwanda can facilitate.

- Certifying bodies should collaborate with farmers, which would help in agreeing on a minimum price for certification.
- Awareness should be improved on certification's importance. Translating manuals into Kinyarwanda can help.
- Local capacity should be developed and increased so that there are more qualified auditors. Rwanda currently has two, which is insufficient.

GROUP 2

Challenges:

- Lack of awareness and skills on certification and standards
- Market price below the cost of production of coffee
- High certification costs in audit
- Fluctuation in international prices, meaning that a price above the cost of production is not guaranteed

Solutions:

- Bring on board local promoters of certification to provide adequate information
- Increase transparency between actors in the coffee value chain, and create an environment for that dialogue to occur
- Farmers need to identify different forms of support within the sector to find the funding to pay for auditing, along with reducing the costs they have to pay
- Set up a stability fund, which will allow for openly discussing pricing challenges



GROUP 3

Challenges:

- High auditing cost coupled with a lack of local auditing bodies
- Certification is valid for a very short period of time, i.e., one year
- Constant fluctuation of coffee prices, and no guarantee that certification will yield market access
- Lack of coffee-related skills by both extensionists and farmers
- Certification is not included in school curricula

Solutions:

- Put in place enough local certifying bodies.
- Increase the period a certificate is valid—possibly to three years—and enable coffee cooperatives and companies to establish local auditing systems.
- The Government of Rwanda, through the RDB and NAEB, should actively market certified coffee to ensure better prices, such as by using e-commerce. Rwandan coffee should also be promoted locally, and a coffee drinking culture should be encouraged domestically.
- Provide training to coffee extensionists.
- Add certification and emphasize its importance in school curricula.

GROUP 4

Challenges:

- The cost of compliance is very high.
- The sector is dominated by weak organization with very little capacity and a majority are smallholder groups.
- Poor quality of extension services.
- Lack of high-quality certified input, e.g., soil and seeds.

Solutions:

- Promote group certification and develop internal management certification audits
- Organize weak groups into a sustainable governance structure
- Support government institutions and the private sector to harmonize messages, and to do so in Kinyarwanda so that messages are understood
- The private sector should invest in certified production, as this will improve coffee quality. This will be in line with international best practices and will reduce production costs.

GROUP 5

Challenges:

- Extend timeframe in which farmers and cooperatives are certified. Getting certification can take farmers years to achieve, and annual certification is too costly and time-consuming.
- Older farmers dominate the Rwandan coffee industry.
- Limited amount of auditing bodies.

Solutions:

- Shorten certification time frame for farmers' benefit
- Engage with young people and women so that they too can contribute to the coffee business
- Increase the limited amount of auditing groups, which should influence investment in more trainings



Key Takeaways From Working Groups on Challenges and Solutions

Challenges	Solutions
High audit costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct open dialogue with actors (including standards bodies to reduce costs) • Promote group certification and develop internal management certification audits • Lobby to have certification be valid for more than one year • Identify other funding sources to support certification costs (private and/or public)
Lack of knowledge about certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more information to producers and institutions • Translate manuals into local languages
Insufficient number of trained extensionists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit more extensionists and improve their certification-related capacity • Train local promoters on certification requirements and processes • Integrate certification into schools' curricula
Lack of local auditing bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train more auditors • Allow producer groups and local businesses to build auditing services, which would also mean that there is more local knowledge in auditing
Lack of market uptake of product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government should support marketing initiatives of certified coffee
Sector dominated by older men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for women and young people • Add VSC information to school curricula to build young people's interest
Fluctuating coffee prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand dialogue between actors to establish price • Create stability fund to address certification costs and price fluctuations



Summary of Benefits and Challenges of VSCs in the Rwandan Coffee Sector by Specific Themes

Governance: Producers say there is a certain level of pride and sense of ownership over the certification process, and state that they see improvements at the production and mill level. However, they are standards takers, with little influence over the structure or compliance requirements of the VSCs. There is no or very limited dialogue with the standards bodies, leading to cost inefficiencies and information not being presented in a manner or language that is locally appropriate. Without sufficient control, stakeholders, especially smallholders, are unable to properly understand the requirements, which limits their perception of the full value the programs may offer.

Economic Viability: Costs, in particular fixed annual costs, are a major challenge for producers. They question whether the return on investment (ROI) is sufficient to justify certification. The price volatility of the international markets, with fluctuating prices that have recently seen severe declines, makes it even more difficult to view certification as economically viable for producers. This is partly due to certification generally being viewed as a mechanism to access higher-value markets and/or price premiums. Given the economic situation of many smallholders and other supply chain actors, this view is understandable. Costs

must be reduced, and there must be a clearer understanding of the real value of certification, incorporating a cost-benefit analysis and an examination of the broader social, environmental and economic development benefits.

Concurrently, crop diversification at the farm level, where possible, is important to diversify income and nutritional sources. Identifying appropriate and viable alternative products (i.e., to coffee) to access other international and/or national markets is essential. Proper diversification can and should address household consumption and food security needs, and when properly implemented can boost income and help mitigate production and price fluctuation risks.

Information Access: Throughout the supply chain there is a clear need to provide credible, targeted information. All actors want more information on certification's costs, benefits and impacts. From a producer perspective, there is a need to justify the investment and understand how it can support family and community livelihoods and living situations. The private sector wants to understand how certification can manage supply chain risks, especially supply risks. The public sector is interested in how certification can address the coffee sector's and country's development objectives, and how it can support national and sector development strategies. This information needs to be presented in an accessible, credible manner that fits the local context, including language requirements.

Institutional Support: The public sector, especially NAEB, is actively supporting producer certification, which is also an area of interest for the private



sector. However, there do not appear to be sufficient extension services and incentive packages to support a transition to sustainable production and processing at the scale and effectiveness required, especially after the first year of certification. For certification to function at scale and provide real benefits, there is a need for targeted, effective training and support for smallholders. Supporting producers to organize in cooperatives or farmer associations and building local capacity, such as by promoters and farmer-to farmer-trainings, will be fundamental. Both the public and private sector are involved in the process, and this involvement must expand.

Market Access: This is an increasingly challenging issue. Demand for certified product is a major driver of certification, leading to high expectations from producers. However, producers are not always able to sell the certified product and so are frustrated because they had expected that certification would guarantee access to those markets, at a higher price, with concrete premiums. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized that access to information is a problem that must be addressed. For instance, producers needed to know how certification does and does not work in practice, along with being able to analyze which VSC would be best for their situation. They also need to know which VSC has a market that they can access and can absorb the product volumes they have available.

Poverty Alleviation: Stakeholders felt that certification could help address poverty issues, by first and foremost improving the quality and quantity of their product, and thereby selling at a higher price. However, these markets are not guaranteed, and price fluctuations and declining prices make

this a serious challenge. Targeted support, through training and information sharing, as well as potential access to additional services, longer-term commercial relationships, and the capacity building that certification, when properly implemented, can help address poverty. The more recent emphasis on women and young people in certification in the coffee sector could yield opportunities for these groups, along with communities as a whole.

Furthermore, there is a need to prepare for risks and environmental, economic and social volatility. They also need to prepare for supply and demand fluctuations, weather instability, pest and disease infestation, political unrest and end-market demand changes, among other impacts. The planning and improved management structures brought through certification can help mitigate the impacts of these fluctuations. As mentioned above, production diversification can also be critical. Together with production and management improvements, this can help stabilize these fluctuations and limit their impacts, thus providing a steadier income, as well as a base to plan and secure improved social welfare, standard of living and food security.



Value and Importance of Impact Assessment and Data Sharing

The workshop then looked at credible data-collecting methodologies and the value of gathering and sharing data, with presentations from three researchers.

Feed the Future – Africa Great Lakes Region Coffee Support Program (AGLC) – Andrew Gerard (Michigan State University) – presented via Skype

The AGLC project was undertaken by Michigan State University with local support from the University of Rwanda and the Institute for Policy

Analysis and Research (IPAR). The AGLC looked into addressing two challenges affecting coffee production in Rwanda and the East African region: low productivity and the harm caused by the antestia bug or the potato taste defect (PTD), which have plagued coffee crops. The research aimed to control PTD and increase coffee yields. Great emphasis was placed on implementing the most effective farming practices and creating farmer level incentives to invest in and improve farming practices.

A baseline study survey was conducted of 1,024 coffee farmers from four Rwandan districts: Rutsiro, Huye, Kirehe and Gakenke. Qualitative data

included 25 key informant interviews, along with focus group discussions with over 100 farmers. During the research, farmers were trained on antestia control along with good agricultural practices. Radio, which is influential in Rwandan society, was used to disseminate messages on what constitutes good agricultural practices and how to implement them. The project engaged with both the private and public sector coffee leaders to identify policy questions and constraints and through this engagement find possible solutions.

The top five outcomes of the AGLC program were:

- The establishment of accurate farmer costs of coffee production to inform the price debate appropriately.
- The development of proposed methods to improve coffee quality differentiation that will increase the amount that farmers can charge for coffee. These methods would also influence buyers' confidence in product quality.
- The identification of farmers that could benefit from greater support, which was offered mainly to female-headed households. They were provided with greater access to fertilizer and pesticides.
- The identification of the possible cause of PTD, in collaboration with RAB, and the proposal of antestia bug control approaches.
- The identification of investment opportunities geared toward the long-term sustainability of Rwanda's coffee sector.

The research identified challenges that farmers currently face, which have been exacerbated by the decline in the Rwandan coffee sector over the last 25



years. This decline has greatly affected coffee quality and quantity domestically, with recent research finding that Rwanda has the lowest levels of coffee production globally. Buyers still rate Rwandan coffee as the best internationally, and this show of confidence should serve as an incentive to coffee farmers and draw more investment into the sector.

The research uncovered that:

- How we measure key variables matters to policy decisions.
- It is important to monitor key variables in a consistent manner.
- Stakeholder feedback on variable choices and measurement approaches are critical.
- Sharing data and findings can build trust between value chain actors.

Joseph Mutabazi (Sustainable Growers)

Data and data collection are important components of how Sustainable Growers (SG), through their work with coffee farmers, affects the quality and quantity of coffee produced in Rwanda. Sustainable Growers has been operating in Rwanda since 2013 and is active in four provinces, where they have trained over 30,000 female farmers. They also work alongside 80 cooperatives, of which 77 are located in Rwanda, with the other three located in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As an organization, SG provides market access for cooperative programs. SG also partners with the Government of Rwanda to align rural development strategies so that these promote the Made in Rwanda brand. SG provides farmers with training programs to improve their output, including:

- Coffee best agricultural practices
- Cupping and home roasting
- Cooperative and leadership management
- Storytelling for leadership
- Gender mainstreaming

In supporting farmers in attaining certification, SG noted that between 2014 and 2018 their yield increased by 69 per cent, while coffee-related income grew by 79 per cent. One cooperative, MAYOGI Coffee, improved production levels

from no green coffee in 2017 to 368 bags in 2018. This success led to their winning a Presidential Award, along with finishing as first runner-up in the Cup of Excellence ceremony with a cupping score of 90.06. This information is available because of the impact data collection that SG established, which is an important component of SG's work.

Technology should be considered as a data collection tool, and farmers should be educated on how to use it so that it positively influences their approach to farming.

The research methods that impact measurement and market access are as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer baseline data collection • Agricultural training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative baseline assessment • Cooperative development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer end-line data collection • Improved farm management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative end-line assessment • Better market access

Despite the importance of data collection and the impact that it can have on how the coffee sector achieves its goals, there are many challenges to research. There are also solutions to these challenges, as described below:

Challenges	Recommendations
Too much data can overwhelm the research process	Choose indicators carefully and think beyond the survey to what reports you need
Limited functionality/strength of data collection apps	Be careful in the selection process – consider user-friendliness
No/poor network connection in rural areas (GPS failure, etc.)	Identify the best network and start the GPS processes as soon as you commence research
Seasonal data collectors may negatively affect the quality of data	Make use of permanent staff for data collection, build capacity by providing them with training
Good monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems take time to develop	Take about one to two years to develop an M&E process



Pascal Gakwaya Kalisa (World Coffee Research)

World Coffee Research (WCR) aims to grow, protect and enhance supplies of quality coffee while improving farmer livelihoods. To achieve this, WCR undertakes “upstream agricultural research” that enables farmers to improve yields, profitability and quality.

The Global Coffee Monitoring Program (GCMP) was established by WCR as a network of hundreds of on-farm technology trials. This program was developed in response to the current risks faced by coffee production, along with the importance of data collection in mitigating these risks. The most important asset that a farmer holds is the soil used to plant a variety of coffee. However, the varieties in coffee that most farmers use globally are outdated and deplete the soil. WCR’s goal is to guide farmers to success through improved data collection.

WCR provides data for free through this online catalogue: <https://varieties.worldcoffeeresearch.org/>

WCR continues to emphasize the importance of research and development (R&D) within the agricultural sector. A sustainable coffee sector is not possible without agricultural R&D, given that innovation is essential for certification, extension services and other sustainable investments to deliver on their promises. Hard research is essential, along with participatory research that contributes to the understanding of the Rwandan coffee sector. WCR says that interest in information can build trust, and thus help determine what qualifies as best practice. There are clear challenges in information sharing, which must be addressed within Rwanda through a multistakeholder approach.



Conclusion and Next Steps

The workshop concluded with remarks from the Country Director of Sustainable Growers, Jean d’Amour Nzarulinda, who stressed the reality of certification in the field and that it is an issue being demanded by buyers internationally. He stressed that it was important to fully understand certification, including its benefits and challenges, and that this workshop had been an excellent opportunity to have representatives from the sector identify challenges and make concrete recommendations. He urged farmers to learn more about certification and how to use it properly, and for government and the private sector to work together to make certification valuable for producers, the supply chain and the entire sector.

He concluded by offering Sustainable Growers continued support to help producers achieve certification and pledged to work with the coffee stakeholders participating in the workshop and other key stakeholders to build a more sustainable coffee sector.

Mr. Wunderlich then outlined the next steps (with projected delivery dates) for the work, stating that:

- This workshop report, documenting participant contributions and recommendations, will be disseminated to them, including the presentations in PDF format (go to link in Annex II below).



- IISD will prepare a draft action plan based on the needs assessment and the workshop's results. The plan will contain recommendations for concrete (collective) actions to address the challenges identified. The draft will be shared with the participants of the workshop and other key stakeholders for their review and to develop consensus on the final version.

(Date: May 2019)

- IISD will then present the final agreed action plan to stakeholders either through a virtual or in-person meeting, where participants will confirm their roles, responsibilities and specific next steps for implementation.

(Date: June, depending on format and stakeholders' availability)

He also reiterated that most stakeholders expressed support during the consultations for a multistakeholder platform as a mechanism to address these issues collectively, in particular to:

- Identify and address challenges
- Communicate along the supply chain the value of VSC, especially to producers and policy-makers
- Identify and inform about certification processes, costs and impacts

IISD will therefore present the basis for this platform, which will include workshop participants, to revise, validate and implement the plan.



Closing Remarks: Mr. Augustin Katarwa (NCCR Chairman)

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank IISD for arranging this workshop, and SIDA for their generous support. I would also like to thank Sustainable Growers for the effort put into arranging this event today. And most importantly I would like to thank the active coordination and participation of NAEB for this event. It has provided us with the opportunity to share information and provide support to coffee growers to improve the quality of the product that we have here in Rwanda.

An older generation of farmers dominates the coffee sector in Rwanda; I think it prudent that we encourage an increase in female farmers and youth to get engaged in the coffee sector of Rwanda to enable it to grow. Women and youth can bring to the coffee sector new tools in the form of technology that will increase the quality of Rwandan coffee produced.”



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Annex 1. List of Participants

Brooke Cantrell	Rwanda Trading Company	Katabarwa Augustin	NCCR
Lise Chantal	ROAM	Nkunzimana Jean	MISOZI
Irakabaho Jean-Marie	POSADA	Kayitesi Marie- Laetitie	CEPAR/SAKE FARM
Jean-Aime Niyonkuru	Sustainable Growers Rwanda	Gatarayiha Celestin	NAEB
Bamporiki Jean-Claude	COCAGI	Rwemerande Marc	KOPAKAKI DUTEGURE
Murekatete Joie Claire	KOAKA	Mushumba Jean de Dieu	ABAKANGUKIYE
Niyonzima Jpierre	Private	Jane Ngige	IISD
Hakizimana Valentin	Rwanda Trading Company	Fabien Twahirwa	Sustainable Growers Rwanda
Byishimo Emmanuel	Rwanda Trading Company	Martin Ngendo	Sustainable Growers Rwanda
Joanne Mugema	Kahawatu	Nyiramahoro Theopiste	RCCF
Richard Nuwagaba	Sustainable Growers Rwanda	Arcade Ntihinyurwa	RWASHOSCCO
Mikhaila Musoni	Private	Matabaro Eric	Control Union
Jean d'Amour Nzarulinda	Sustainable Growers Rwanda	Chris Wunderlich	IISD
John Karuru	Rwanda Trading Company		
Grace Irakiza	NIRDA		
Pascal Gakwaya Kalisa	WCR		
Longin Muhizi	Dormans		
Christine Condo	Sustainable Growers Rwanda		

Annex 2. Link to Dropbox folder with presentations and working group results

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9bhqaxr99ah2hoy/AAA3WLRsYy9F5oeR7aJNDOzPa?dl=0>



Annex 3. Questionnaire: Needs Assessment on Voluntary Sustainability Standards and Certification in Rwanda (focus on Coffee Sector)

This questionnaire is designed to ascertain your views on the information and support needs of policy-makers and other key stakeholders regarding sustainability certification. Your responses will be the basis of the discussion during the planned workshop (February 28, 2019 in Kigali) and the action plan to provide the information and support needed to make sustainability certification a more effective development tool in achieving national strategic plans, while avoiding the negative aspects of VSCs.

The following seven questions are designed to identify your experience, concerns, and the information/support needs of key stakeholders related to VSCs. The questions are only a guide: please provide any additional comments you believe important.

Please reply in the righthand column of the table below and send your responses by Friday, February 15, 2019 to: Chris Wunderlich: cwunderlich@agrofuturo.org

Questions:	Your Responses:
Your Name:	
Your Title:	
1. In your experience, what are the benefits of Voluntary Sustainability Certification (VSC)?	
2. What are the challenges or negative aspects of VSCs?	
3. What information and/or support needs regarding VSCs do the following actors/groups have and what are the most effective ways to communicate to each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-makers (public sector)? • Farmers? • Specifically smallholder farmers and farmer groups? • Private sector (buyers, traders, etc.)? 	
4. How can policy-makers use VSC as a tool to meet national/sector development plans?	



Questions:	Your Responses:	Questions:	Your Responses:
<p>5. In meetings with Rwandan stakeholders, some actions and tools were recommended to address challenges with VSCs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple Certification Internal Management System • National (benchmarked) Sustainability Standard • Comprehensive incentive package based on conditional compliance agreements • Manuals translated into local language and radio broadcasts on sustainable agriculture <p>What is your opinion of each of these potential tools? Are they valuable to you and/or the farmers you work with? Would you participate in their development (i.e., providing input, validation, etc.)? What other tools would you recommend developing?</p>		<p>6. In the specific case of the Coffee Sector in Rwanda, how can VSC be used and/or improved to reduce poverty among smallholder farmers and farmer groups?</p> <p>7. It was also suggested that a platform of key stakeholders would be valuable to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share information on data and data collection methodologies (to better understand the impacts of sustainable agriculture and VSCs – what is working and what is not working) and 2) Identify bottlenecks and challenges related to VSCs and how to address them collectively. <p>Would you be interested in participating in such a platform? What topics are priorities for you? What could you contribute to this platform?</p>	



Annex 4. Workshop agenda

Time	Activity	Details
8:30-9:00	Introduction	Opening and presentation of agenda
9:00-9:15	Sustainability Standards- National and Regional	Presentation on Kenyan and East African experience (Ms. Jane Ngige – Standards expert, former co-coordinator, Kenya Horticulture Council)
9:15-9:30	Initial Needs Assessment	Results from needs assessment on VSC in coffee sector (IISD)
9:30-10:00	Experience Sharing: Certification in Rwanda	Testimonials by certified producers
10:00-10:45	Sustainability and VSC in Rwanda: Stakeholder Perspectives (Panel session)	Challenges, opportunities (Moderator IISD) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Sector - (NAEB – Dr. Celestin Gatarayiha) • Private sector (RTC – Brooke Cantrell) • Certification (Posada Ltd: Jean-Marie Irakabahu) • Smallholder producer (RCCF: Theopiste Nyiramahoro) • Extension (Sustainable Growers: Jean-Aime Niyonkuru) • Exporters (CEPAR: Longin Muhizi)
10:45-11:15		Coffee Break
11:15-12:00	Working groups	Challenges and information needed to maximize benefits and address VSC challenges

Time	Activity	Details
12:00-12:30	Results from working groups	Groups present results
12:30-13:30		Lunch
13:30-14:15	Impact data on VSC	Value and examples of impact assessment (GCMP – Pascal Gakwaya Kalisa, Sustainable Growers – Joseph Mutabazi, MSU- Andrew Gerard)
14:15-14:30	Next steps on data collection/ sharing	Sharing and harmonizing consistent methodologies
14:30-14:45		Coffee Break
14:45-15:15	Next steps Sustainable Coffee and VSC	Responses and next steps to address challenges and opportunities as the basis for a joint action plan (Facilitated by: NAEB, IISD, Sustainable Growers)
15:15-15:30	Closing remarks	Sustainable Growers, NCCR, NAEB

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