



# Grievance Systems at Rainforest Alliance

Thriving Together Webinar Series

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# Introductions



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# Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Why are grievance mechanisms important?**
- **Overview of the Rainforest Alliance's grievance systems**
- **Operation-level grievance mechanisms**
  - Independent research on effectiveness and next steps
- **Certification Body grievance mechanisms**
- **The Rainforest Alliance's Grievance Procedure**
  - Current functioning, future directions
- **Questions & Answers**

# Overview of our grievance system

**GRIEVANCE SYSTEMS**  
An Integral Part of Due Diligence

As more and more countries enact laws on human rights and environmental due diligence (EHDG), companies are increasingly putting due diligence systems in place in their supply chains. At the Rainforest Alliance, we believe that strong due diligence systems are critical to avoid functioning as a grievance system, and critically achieve our mission of creating a world where people and nature thrive together.

In agricultural supply chains, the greatest risks of human rights violations and environmental degradation happen in farm and agricultural processing operations. Our system is designed to ensure that allegations of human rights abuses or environmental degradation are identified and remediated at the most direct level—the farm or certified operation—whenever possible.

Our grievance system includes 3 levels:

1. Certificate Holders (farm, group, or supply chain actor) own grievance mechanisms
2. Certification Body grievance mechanisms
3. Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure (if grievance may be submitted via a form on our [Question and Complaints page](#))

All farms, farm groups, and supply chain actors that are part of the Rainforest Alliance Certification Program are required under our [Sustainable Agriculture Practices Standard](#) to have a grievance mechanism in place. If their own operations, the requirements align with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Conventions for Multinational Enterprises. For Rainforest, we require that the grievance mechanism take steps to be accessible and trusted by all actors, including vulnerable people like women and migrants.

Independent third-party certification bodies (CBs) verify through audits that farms, farm groups, or supply chain actors leading or seeking certification meet these grievance mechanism requirements.

Farmers, workers, community members, and others can submit grievances via the grievance mechanism of the farm, farm group, or supply chain actor. Most grievances are handled and resolved at this level. Independent bodies provide services and referral mechanisms where appropriate. The Rainforest Alliance requires that any grievances related to human rights issues be remediated per the process and steps in our [Sustainable Agriculture Practices Standard](#).



Mandatory for all RA Certificate Holders

Mandatory for all RA Certification Bodies

Mandatory for RA under ISEAL rules

# Operation level grievance mechanisms

Farms, farm groups, and supply chain certificate holders

## 1.5.1

A [grievance mechanism](#) is in place that enables individuals, workers, communities, and/or civil society, including whistle-blowers, to raise complaints related to the [certificate holder's](#) business activities. Complaints can relate to any part of the Standard, including technical, social, or economic issues. The [grievance](#) mechanism may be provided by the certificate holder or by a third party. The grievance mechanism includes at least the following elements:

- A grievance committee (see 1.1.5).
- The grievance mechanism allows for submissions in any language and is accessible to persons who cannot read or do not have access to the internet.
- Anonymous grievances are accepted, and [confidentiality](#) is respected.
- Human and labor rights grievances are [remediated](#) in accordance with the Remediation Protocol.
- Grievances and follow up actions are documented, and shared with the affected persons within a reasonable timeframe.
- Submitters of grievances are protected against employment/membership termination, retribution, or threats as a consequence of using the grievance mechanism.

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resource-item/2020-sustainable-agriculture-standard-farm-requirements/>

# Operation level grievance mechanisms

Farms, farm groups, and supply chain certificate holders



## Key findings:

- Most CHs at early stage of maturity
- Most GMs fall short of being fully accessible, trusted, transparent, and providing access to remedy (confirms 2021-2022 audit findings)
- Most common complaints are about working conditions and commercial issues
- Many GMs do not receive any complaints, signaling trust issues
- Engagement with trade unions is a key issue in design and implementation

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Rainforest-Alliance-Examines-Grievance-Mechanisms-through-Independent-Study.pdf>

# GM Maturity Framework

## Stage 1

### Initiate

By the end of this Stage, the CH will have taken the foundational steps to set up an effective grievance mechanism.



## Stage 2

### Embed

By the end of this stage, the CH has strengthened its capacity and has rolled out the grievance mechanism to reach a coverage that fits the size of its operations.



## Stage 3

### Consolidate

By the end of this Stage, the functioning of the grievance mechanism is aligned with the core principles set out in the RA grievance mechanism requirement.



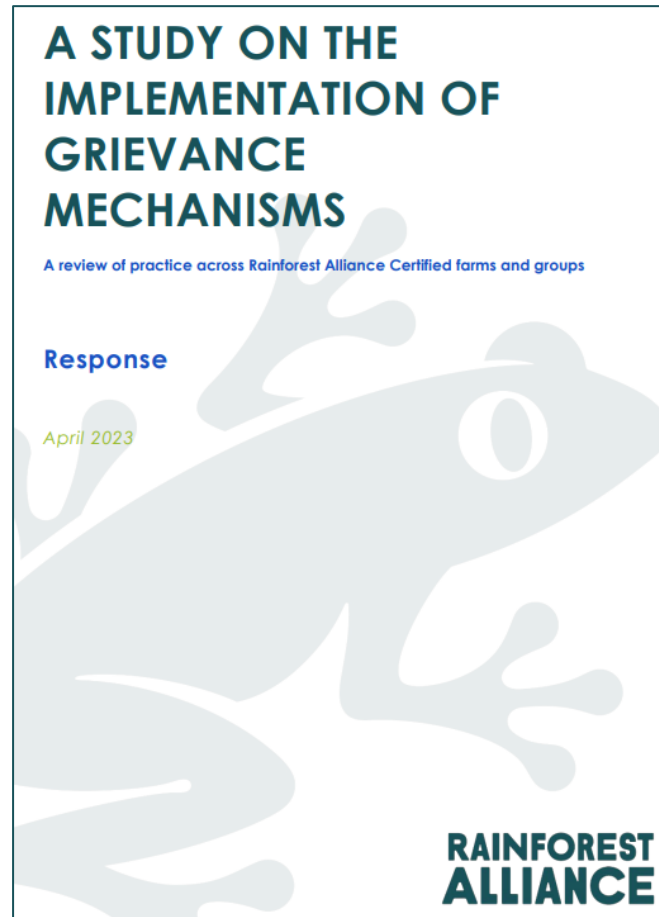
## Stage 4

### Lead

After taking action at this Stage, the CH's mechanism will be considered a leading example of a functioning effective grievance mechanism.

# Operation level grievance mechanisms

Farms, farm groups, and supply chain certificate holders



## Next steps:

- Clarify standard requirements
- Update guidance documents
- Provide more in-depth training to CHs and auditors
- Develop/improve worker-facing materials to better communicate GM availability and functioning
- Expand trade union engagement efforts

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Study-on-the-Implementation-of-Grievance-Mechanisms.pdf>



# Operation level grievance mechanisms

Farms, farm groups, and supply chain certificate holders



## Package includes:

- Slide deck and trainers' guide for meeting with management (2 hr.)
- Slide deck and trainers' guide for training sessions with Grievance Committee (1-2 days, adaptable)
- Pre-training quiz and post-training knowledge test
- Case studies and exercises
- Handouts to be shared with rightsholders to raise awareness about the GM

## Next step:

- Training delivery to Kenya and Tanzania tea estates

# Certification Body grievance procedure

For grievances based on the services provided by the CB to the certificate holder

## Documented grievance submission and management procedures

(in compliance with ISO 17065)

1. Accessible
2. Keep confidentiality
3. Time bound
4. Capacity to manage
5. Anonymous grievances
6. Continuous improvement:
  - a. Record actions
  - b. Analyse all grievances



# Rainforest Alliance Grievance Procedure

## RAINFOREST ALLIANCE PROCEDURE

### Grievance

Version 3.1



### Grievance Procedure

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resource-item/grievance-procedure/>

### Key points:

- Grievances and Appeal Procedure
- Receiving Grievances (Online form, informal form)
- Grievance Inbox
- Timeframes and process
- Grievances registry and summary
- ISEAL Assessment Tool
- Areas of improvement

### Benchmarking:

- Grievance Procedure has been benchmarked by The Remedy Project and we have used ISEAL GMs tool to self-benchmark
- Raising awareness among small farmers and workers; and more detailed reporting



# Online Form

## ONLINE GRIEVANCE FORM

Please consult our [grievance procedure](#) before you fill out the online form below.

### Your name \*

### Organization you represent \*

### Your email address \*

### Your telephone number

### Subject of your grievance \*

Please note whether it concerns Rainforest Alliance or UTZ Certification

### Description \*

Please describe the grievance you would like to submit in max 1800 characters. Include the name of the farm or group, localization, and product.

0 of 1800 max characters

### Parties involved \*

Which parties (besides yourself) are involved in this grievance?

### Steps taken \*

Please describe what you have done so far to resolve the grievance.

### Upload

Drop files here or

SELECT FILES

Accepted file types: jpg, gif, png, pdf, word, excel, doc, docx, xlsx, csv, Max. file size: 128 MB.

SUBMIT

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/certification/questions-and-complaints/>

# Scope

The Grievance Procedure is open to anyone who has a grievance against a Rainforest Alliance certified producer or supply chain actor, a certification body (CB), or the Rainforest Alliance itself, regarding the standards setting procedures or operations of the certification program. The grievance must be about compliance with the Rainforest Alliance standards, rules, policies, and procedures directly related to the Rainforest Alliance certification programs.

# Grievance Inbox

## ▼ Grievances

Archief

Archive

Concepten

> Gespreksgeschiedenis

Ongewenste e-mail

## ▼ Postvak IN

5

### ▼ 1 Eligible Grievances

> 2020

> 2021

> 2022

> 2023

> 2 Non-Eligible Grievances

> 3 Pending Grievances

4 Withdrawn Grievances

> 5 N/A Grievances

Templates

Postvak UIT

Verwijderde items

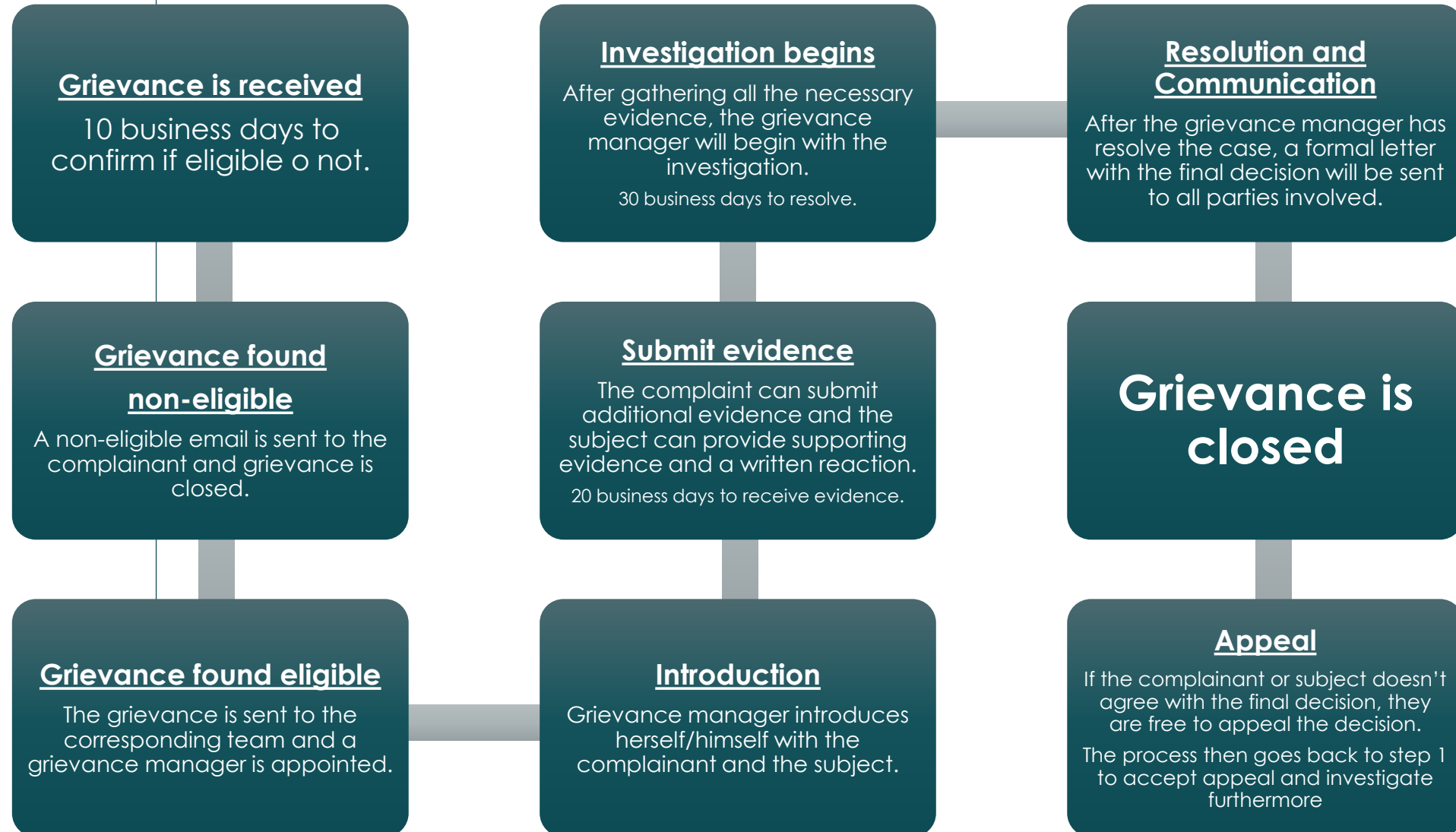
Verzonden items

After the complainant has submitted the online form, the grievance will enter the inbox and from here we will review the information to establish if the case is eligible or non-eligible.

If “Eligible” the case will be sent to the corresponding team so they can perform an investigation and find a resolution.

If “Non-eligible”, the complainant will be informed, and the case will be closed.

# Timeframe Compliance





OPEN

Grievance Manager

Staff to be informed

Grievance Form

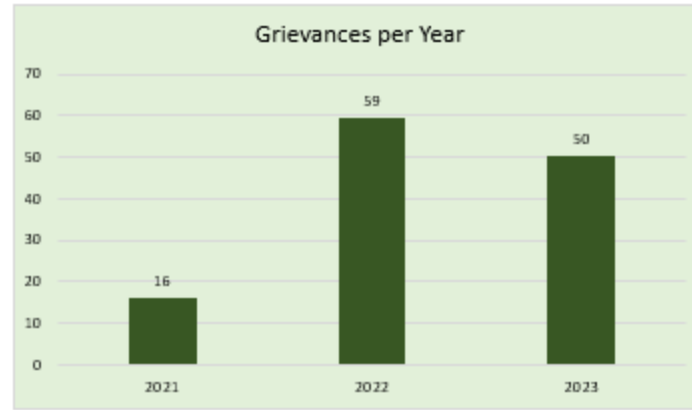
<b>Your name</b>
<b>Organization you represent</b>
<b>Your email address</b>
<b>Your telephone number</b>
<b>Subject of your grievance</b>
<b>Description</b>
<b>Parties involved</b>
<b>Steps taken</b>

# Timeframe Compliance

## Timeline to manage the grievance

Step	Action	Actual Date	Deadline
1	Grievance received - 10 working days to confirm if eligible or not.	Jul 4, 2023	Jul 18, 2023
2	Grievance found eligible - 10 working days for the following steps. ↓	Aug 2, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
3	Confluence page created.	Aug 2, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
4	Grievance sent to the corresponding team.	Aug 2, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
5	Grievance manager appointed.	Aug 2, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
6	Contact the complainant and inform who the grievance manager (GM) is.	Aug 10, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
7	Contact the subject of grievance and inform about the complaint, also invite to submit a written reaction and supporting evidence - 10 working days to submit information.	Aug 10, 2023	Aug 16, 2023
8	Following the receipt of first evidence, the GM will determine if further information is needed from either parties - 10 working days to submit.		Aug 30, 2023
9	After receiving supporting evidence the GM will begin with the investigation.		Sep 13, 2023
10	The GM will complete the investigation and inform the parties involved the understanding of the situation and a proposed resolution (informal resolution by mutual accord) - 30 working days to complete.  Record in template the Proposed solution. For formal resolution = validated by S&A senior manager (or escalated).		Oct 25, 2023
11	Send formal letter with resolution to Grievance Inbox so they can send the final communication. GM will be in cc. Communication will include they have 30 days to appeal the decision.		Oct 25, 2023
12	Change grievance status to close.		Oct 25, 2023





Region	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
Africa	8
Asia	4
Global	2
Latin Ameri	7
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

Country	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
Brazil	4
Cocoa	1
Colombia	2
Ecuador	1
Ghana	2
Global	2
India	2
Ivory Coast	1
Sri Lanka	2
Tanzania	1
Uganda	1
(blank)	1
Congo	1
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

Complainant	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
Auditor	1
Certificate Holder	12
Certification Body	1
Government Authority	1
Individual / Consumer	1
Worker	4
Media	1
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

Grievance Subject	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
Certificate Holder	10
Certification Body	8
Rainforest Alliance	3
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

Certification Type	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
-	12
Group of Farms	5
Single Farm	1
Supply Chain	1
(blank)	2
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

Eligible or Non-Eligible	
Row Labels	Count of ELIGIBLE
2021	16
2022	59
2023	50
No	29
Yes	21
(blank)	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>125</b>

# ISEAL Self-Assessment Tool



## ISEAL Effective Grievance Mechanisms Self-Assessment Tool

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE GM		YES/NO			
STRUCTURE OF GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS AND MEMBERS REQUIREMENTS	VSS level grievance mechanisms in place for use by members	Yes			
	place for use by members and external stakeholders (including local communities, NGOs, employees, governments, etc.)	Yes			
	the VSS level grievance mechanisms to stakeholders	Yes			
	Require members to have their own grievance mechanisms	Yes			
	Require members to have their own grievance mechanisms aligned to the UNGP effectiveness criteria	No			
	their own grievance mechanisms to stakeholders	Yes			
UNGP EFFECTIVENESS CRITERION	DESCRIPTION OF THE CRITERION	BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS	YES (1)/NO (0)	EVIDENCE (REFERENCE/EXPLANATION)	NOTES
1. LEGITIMATE	A legitimate grievance mechanism is one that enables trust from stakeholder groups for whose use they are intended; and is accountable for the fair conduct of grievance processes.	A specific department or person (or an external company) is accountable for managing grievances and is qualified to do so	1	QMS officer Ricardo Escobar is responsible for managing the GM and all the S&A members who manage grievances are qualified.	
		Operates independently of interested parties	0		
		Establishes a formal process for consulting with rights holders about the design and improvement of the mechanism and acts on those findings	0	Since the first email exchange, the GM sends emails confirming the reception and when a grievance is transferred to a grievance manager, he/she gets in touch with all the parties involved to gather more information and act on those	
		Information is provided about the grievance mechanisms in various places beyond the website, e.g. members' websites, posters in factories etc.	0	No. The Grievance Mechanism is posted only in our RA website and there is no other place the mechanism is posted or informs about our information.	
		Multiple access points are provided beyond the website, e.g. phonedlines, local contact points etc., and complaints are allowed to be raised verbally.	0	No, unfortunately the RA website is the only place the Grievance Form is located. Discussion have taken place about the implementation to have the grievance	

# ISEAL Self-Assessment Tool

1. Legitimate
2. Accessible
3. Predictable
4. Equitable
5. Transparent
6. Rights-Compatible
7. Source of continuous learning
8. Based on Engagement and Dialogue

# Areas of Improvement

- Grievance process categorization (desk review, investigation audit by the Rainforest Alliance, investigation audit by CB)
- Easy submission through the ChatBox
- New Grievance and Appeals document version
- Translate the document procedure and form to more languages

**CERTIFICATION  
PROGRAM  
GRIEVANCES IN 2022**

Type of grievances	No.
Audit Procedure	18
Certificate Holder	6
Certification Body	1
Certification Status	3
Document Management	1
Fraud	1
Misuse of Trademarks	1
Rainforest Alliance	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>

Grievances per region	No.
Africa	14
Latin America	12
Asia	5
Global	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>


# Questions & Complaints

The Rainforest Alliance welcomes feedback, questions and complaints related to our interventions from all stakeholders as this information helps inform our continued efforts to promote positive change in agriculture. Please contact our teams in case of questions, and how you can file a complaint according to our [grievance procedure](#).

RA Standard: [customersuccess@ra.org](mailto:customersuccess@ra.org)


CBs: [cbmanagement@ra.org](mailto:cbmanagement@ra.org)

# Innovation on grievance mechanisms




GLOBAL FUND TO END MODERN SLAVERY

*Nossa Voz* Helpline:  
A Grievance Mechanism for Coffee Workers in Minas Gerais, Brazil



*Nossa Voz* is implemented in partnership with Brazil's National Confederation of Rural Workers (CONTAR) and ELEVATE's technical assistance.



**ELEVATE**  
AN LRQA COMPANY

***“Making grievances feasible for smallholder farming households: Development of a cross-company grievance mechanism for the cocoa sector in Côte d’Ivoire”***

May 2023-February 2024

Funder: GIZ

GISCO implementing partners:  
Rainforest Alliance, Nestlé, Ferrero, Mondelez, Fairtrade Germany, Stiftung der Deutschen Kakao- und Schokoladenwirtschaft, INKOTA, Hamburger Stiftung für Wirtschaftsethik



# RAINFOREST ALLIANCE

[rainforest-alliance.org](https://rainforest-alliance.org)

The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.