Global Coffee Platform

Baseline Coffee Code revision

Frequently Asked Questions / FAQ

Date: 1 March 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How was the proposal of the Baseline Coffee Code v3.0 for consultation developed?

The Baseline Coffee Code revision project started in October 2020. The research part included an assessment of sustainability landscape and other frameworks. The process has been supported by the GCP Technical Committee and an Advisory Task Force that include actors of all segments in the supply chain as well as NGOs. All details about the project scope, the Technical Committee and the Advisory Task Force can be found here.

2. Is the Baseline Coffee Code a verification or certification standard?

The Baseline Coffee Code -BCC- is a reference framework rather than a standard that measures field level sustainability of green coffee production and primary processing. There are many credible sustainability standards that already have robust implementation and the Baseline Coffee Code is not meant to compete or replace these but serve as the reference point for baseline sustainability.

3. What is the difference between the Baseline Coffee Code and the 4C Code of Conduct?

Both the Baseline Coffee Code and the 4C Code of Conduct have their origins in the Common Code for the Coffee Community that was launched in 2004 as result of broad, inclusive and participatory development within the global coffee sector, and maintained by the 4C Association. In 2016, upon the evolvement of the Global Coffee Platform, the 4C Code and its verification system was transferred to Coffee Advisory Services (renamed later to 4C Services) and is now a fully-fledge sustainability certification standard. GCP has continued to own and periodically revise the Baseline Coffee Code.

4. How will the BCC be implemented?

GCP does not implement the BCC but offers it as a sustainability reference for different user:

- Coffee producers as a reference to assess their own practices and identify areas for improvement
- Governments in coffee producing countries and Country Platforms as a reference that underpins their national coffee sustainability strategies and plans (e.g. used for the development of National Sustainability Curriculum and extension services programs)
- Traders, roasters and retailers as a reference and foundation for corporate sustainability strategies, responsible sourcing and origin programs
- Combined with the Operational Criteria under the GCP Equivalence Mechanism, the BCC can be used by sustainability schemes (standards, codes, programs) and/or supply chain actors to assess those schemes/programs against the Principles and Practices outlined in the BCC for credibility purposes or/and to be eligible for the GCP Reporting on Sustainable Coffee Purchases
- Financial institutions and funds as a reference for baseline sustainability in the coffee sector which can inform eligibility criteria for investments
- Donor agencies and NGO's as a reference for baseline sustainability in the coffee sector which can inform programming and investment support

5. What is the difference between the BCC and the GCP Equivalence Mechanism?

The Baseline Coffee Code is a sector wide reference of the foundations of sustainability in the economic, social and environmental dimensions for green coffee production and primary processing worldwide.

The Equivalence Mechanism is a framework developed by GCP to assess whether a sustainability scheme can be recognized as equivalent to the Baseline Coffee Code. This process evaluates whether the Principles and the Practices in the BCC (Sustainability Criteria) are included in those schemes as well as how those Practices are implemented in practice (Operational Criteria). Operational Criteria includes topics like data, assurance and claims. In other words, the Equivalence Mechanism is comprised of the Sustainability Criteria plus the Operational Criteria. For more information on the GCP Equivalence Mechanism, see this link.

6. What is the relationship between the BCC and the GCP Reporting on Sustainable Purchases?

The GCP Reporting on Sustainable Purchases includes purchases from roasters and retailers under sustainability schemes/programs that are considered equivalent to the BCC and have been assessed under the GCP Equivalence Mechanism. To date, there are 10 schemes/programs eligible. For more information on the schemes that are recognized as equivalent to the BCC see here.

7. How does the Baseline Coffee Code address the topic of prosperous and living income?

Reaching a prosperous and living income requires a combination of multiple strategies. The BCC serves as a stepping stone towards a living and prosperous income. Efforts and investments can be built upon the BCC, also in combination with other tools/strategies currently offered by GCP and beyond.

8. How relevant is this work if it focuses around baseline/foundation practices and if it does not cover some important elements of sustainability at farm level, or along the supply chain?

Sustainability is an evolving concept. The Baseline Coffee Code revision is an invitation to align on an advanced, shared understanding of baseline sustainability and a key opportunity to reach more coffee farmers who are currently not able to access important sustainability practices at baseline level, while inspiring innovations and investments at farm level and in other segments of the coffee supply chain. Therefore, the BCC is complementary to other tools and strategies to drive coffee sustainability forward.

9. How is the BCC connected to the Coffee Data Standard?

The Baseline Coffee Code is an outcomes-focused reference framework organized around the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social and environmental, recognizing that these dimensions are interrelated and interdependent. The BCC is connected to the GCP Goals (farmers economic prosperity, improved livelihoods and well-being, conservation of nature) and the Sustainable Development Goals, for each dimension an overall aim is described.

The focus on outcomes in the implementation of the Principles, Practices and Measures proposed in the BCC will support the alignment in measurement via the Coffee Data Standard or other tools and monitoring towards individual and collective sustainability commitments and SDGs.