GLOBAL COFFEE PLATFORM

for a sustainable coffee world

COFFEE SUSTAINABILITY REFERENCE CODE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) | October 2021

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1. How was the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code developed?

The revision of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (previously known as Baseline Coffee Code) started in October 2020. The revision process was supported by the GCP Technical Committee and an Advisory Task Force that included actors of all segments in the supply chain as well as NGOs. The revision included a research component and a public consultation. The research part considered an assessment of sustainability landscape and other frameworks. A 2 mohts public international consultation was carried out, and the input received informed the final version. The final version of the Code was approved by the Board, the multistakeholder and highest decision body of the Global Coffee Platform in July 2021. All details about the project scope, the Technical Committee and the Advisory Task Force can be found here. More information about the results of the consultation can be found here.

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

The Coffee Sustainability Reference Code 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference Code and the 4C Code of Conduct?

Both the Coffee Sustainability Reference 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 is the custodian of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code and periodically revises it.

4. How will the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code be implemented?

GCP does not implement the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code but offers it as a sustainability reference for different users:

- Coffee producers: as a reference to assess their own practices vis-a-vis baseline sustainability principles and practices and identify areas for improvement.

- Managers of producers' groups: as a reference to understand where each individual producer is regarding baseline sustainability practices and identify areas for individual or group improvement. Also, to assess their own performance against principles and practices that are only relevant to groups.

- 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 for corporate sustainability strategies, responsible sourcing and origin programs and for their commitments on responsible/sustainable sourcing.

- Sustainability standards, schemes and programs, and supply chain actors: combined with the Operational Criteria under the GCP Equivalence Mechanism, to assess those schemes/programs against the Principles and Practices set out in the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code for credibility purposes and/or to be eligible for the GCP Reporting on Sustainable Coffee Purchases.

- Regions/governments involved in coffee landscape approaches: to use as the baseline to define sustainable production.

- Financial institutions and investment 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference Code and the GCP Equivalence Mechanism?

The Coffee Sustainability Reference 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference Code. This process evaluates whether the Principles and the Practices in the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (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. If a sustainability scheme has already been recognized as equivalent to the Code in the past, would it need to be assessed again against the revised Coffee Sustainability Reference Code?

Yes. After the publication of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code, a revision of the Equivalence Mechanism will follow. Once a revised Equivalence Mechanism has been published, all schemes that have been recognized until now would be reassessed. The expected date of publication of the Equivalence Mechanism is mid-2022.

7. What is the relationship between the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code and the GCP Collective Reporting on Sustainable Purchases?

The GCP Collective Reporting on Sustainable Purchases includes purchases from roasters and retailers under sustainability schemes/programs that are considered equivalent to the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code 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.

8. How does the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code address the topic of prosperous and living income?

Reaching a prosperous and living income requires a combination of multiple strategies. In general, efforts and investments can be built upon the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code, also in combination with other tools/strategies currently offered by GCP and beyond. In particular, the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code serves as a stepping stone towards a living and prosperous income. Building on the need to understand the main income and costs from coffee production, the revised Code includes a reference about the importance of also understanding the income and cots beyond coffee production at household level.

9. 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference Code invites all actors in the supply chain to use a common language and shared understanding of baseline sustainability. It offers an opportunity to reach more coffee farmers who are currently not able to implement sustainability practices at baseline level, while inspiring innovations and investments at farm level and in other segments of the coffee supply chain. Therefore, the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code is complementary to other tools and strategies to drive coffee sustainability forward.

10. How is the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code connected to the Sustainable Development Goals and Coffee Data Standard?

The Coffee Sustainability Reference 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 Coffee Sustainability Reference Code is connected to the GCP mission to promote farmers' prosperity, improved livelihoods and conservation of nature and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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

Under each dimension of the Code, the respective SDGs that the dimension contributes to, are listed.

Also, the Code includes the Coffee Data Standard indicators that are relevant to the Expected Results.

For more information regarding the GCP Coffee Sustainability Reference Code, please contact: info@globalcoffeeplatform.org.