

## GLOBAL COFFEE PLATFORM

### FAQ – Coffee SR Code & Equivalence Mechanism Review (2026)

*(Version 1.0. March 2026)*

#### **1. Why is GCP doing a review of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (Coffee SR Code) and the Equivalence Mechanism (EM)?**

**A:** In line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice, continuous improvement and GCP's 2030 Goal, GCP is undertaking a planned review in 2026 to ensure they remain credible, future-proof, and aligned with emerging sector priorities, including regenerative agriculture, relevant regulatory frameworks, and strengthened due diligence expectations. This review aims to ensure that the Coffee SR Code and EM remain fit for purpose, technically robust, and aligned with regulatory and market trends.

#### **2. How is GCP doing the review of the Coffee SR Code and the EM?**

**A:** The review is being led by GCP Secretariat, the GCP Technical Committee (see Q3) and an Advisory Task Force (see Q7), in line with their mandates to guide the strategic direction and technical rigor of the process. Their work is supported by a structured methodology that includes analyzing the current Coffee SR Code and EM, assessing coherence with market developments and sustainability trends, and reviewing evidence from monitoring of GCP recognized sustainability schemes and past EM assessments. As part of the process, GCP will also engage its membership and further stakeholders through targeted consultations (such as surveys, interviews, and webinars) to ensure diverse perspectives inform the revision. The overall approach is designed to be transparent, technically sound, and aligned with good international practices. See [GCP Website Page on the Coffee SR Code + EM Review](#) for more information and opportunities for engagement.

#### **3. What is the Technical Committee (TC) and who is part of it?**

**A:** The Technical Committee (TC) is a permanent standing committee and part of the GCP Governance. The TC is responsible for the technical review, development and review draft revisions and prepares technical recommendations for consideration by the GCP Board. The TC is revisions and providing technical oversight of the [Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism review](#).

GCP Technical Committee members:

- Jeremy Lefroy (Chair) (Café Africa)
- Álvaro Gaitan (Cenicafé)

- Anneke Fermont (Volcafé)
- Cesar Candiano (Research)
- Karugu Wa Macharia (Kenya Coffee Platform -KCP)
- Kedar Nepal (4C Services)
- Miguel Gamboa (Rainforest Alliance)

#### **4. What is the Advisory Task Force (ATF) and who is part of it?**

**A:** The Advisory Task Force (ATF) is an ad-hoc (non-permanent) committee assembled to provide additional expertise and strategic advice to the Technical Committee during the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism review. The ATF brings diverse downstream perspectives and high-level sector expertise to help inform the work of the Technical Committee. Advisory Task Force members are:

- Allie Strauss (KDP)
- Brooke Cantrell (Westrock Coffee)
- Carolin Ehrensperger (NKG)
- Francesca Pellis (illy)
- Nadia Hoarau-Mwaura (JDE Peet's)
- Raja Saoud (ofi)
- Stefan Canz (Nestlé)

#### **5. What is the timeline for the Coffee SR Code and EM review?**

**A:** The review process began in late 2025 with a “Laying the Groundwork” phase, which focused on strategic scoping, defining governance and processes, and gathering initial input from stakeholders, including GCP-recognized sustainability schemes. This phase also included analytical work to consolidate lessons learned and inform the review. The process includes consultation and development throughout 2026. This will include a formal consultation period mid-year, with iterations and refinements based on stakeholder input. GCP expects to complete the review and approval process toward the end of 2026, followed by publication of the revised tools early 2027 and the start of a transition period (2027-2028) to support implementation. See [GCP Website Page on the Coffee SR Code + EM Review](#) for more information and timeline.

#### **6. What is the value proposition of the revised tools?**

**A:** The review aims to ensure continued relevance of the tool for the coffee sector through alignment and harmonization for efficient and effective collective action to drive impact. This establishes shared understanding, aligns the diverse stakeholders on goals, and translates into actionable changes. The revised tools are expected to strengthen market credibility, alignment with global standards, improved interoperability with company programs, enable better measurement of progress and outcomes,

alignment with GCP RegenCoffee Guidance and promote consistency with emerging regulatory frameworks.

## **7. Are these tools driving sustainability performance and farmer prosperity?**

**A:** This is a core question of the review, which has started with looking at the [GCP Theory of Change](#) to answer the question “what is supposed to happen”. The review examines the relevance, coherence and effectiveness in achieving the objectives, and contribution to farmer prosperity. The assessment phase also explores any unintended consequences, usability, opportunities and areas for improvement. Currently the evidence shows that GCP and its members are achieving the intended **outputs** of common language for coordination and alignment, through the EM tool.

This has created confidence in GCP recognized schemes and market efficiencies. However, there is no evidence at this point that the tools have achieved the intended longer-term **outcomes** of improved sustainability performance or farmer prosperity.

Further research is needed including consistent data reporting requirements of GCP recognized schemes to understand the impacts of implementation of these sustainability schemes, particularly schemes with a 2<sup>nd</sup> party assurance system.

## **8. What happens if improvement areas are found during the review? Could currently GCP-recognized schemes be dropped after the review?**

**A:** The purpose of the review is to support continuous improvement and ensure that the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism remain relevant in the evolving external environment. If areas for improvement are identified, updated requirements and guidance will be developed with stakeholder input, including currently recognized schemes. GCP’s approach is to provide clarity, transition timelines, and support to enable GCP-recognized schemes and interested schemes to align with updated tools. The review aims for continuous improvement and adding value to the sector, not penalizing schemes.

## **9. How is GCP communicating the Coffee SR Code and EM review to members and external stakeholders?**

**A:** As part of the “Laying the Groundwork” phase, GCP conducted a stakeholder mapping and developed a stakeholder engagement plan. GCP is actively communicating the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism review to members and stakeholders as part of its 2026 Member Services & Engagement Plan. Messaging highlights the Sustainable Sourcing Approach with its three integrated tools (Coffee SR Code, Equivalence Mechanism, and Sustainable Coffee Purchases Report) and has been/will be shared through multiple channels, including the virtual Member Assembly (Dec 2025), GCP10 Learning and Dialogue webinars (e.g. Feb 2026), website updates, Member Brief, GCP Espresso (newsletter), direct

communications to sustainability schemes, and Country Platforms. Members are invited to participate in consultations and engagement opportunities to provide input during the review process.

**10. What is happening with the current version of the Coffee SR Code and the EM during the review process?**

**A:** The Coffee SR Code and the Equivalence Mechanism are a public available reference framework and remain available for all coffee stakeholders including sustainability schemes. GCP will pause EM assessments (new or re-assessments) during the review period. Schemes already recognized under the EM maintain their status during this period, and transition plans with timelines will be communicated before the revised EM will be implemented.

**11. What happens if a recognized scheme's status is due for renewal during the review?**

**A:** During the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism review, GCP is putting measures in place to ensure continuity and confidence for sustainability schemes and for companies using those schemes in their purchasing. If a scheme's recognition period is due to end during the review period, GCP will apply an interim process to maintain oversight and continuity until the updated tools are released. This includes targeted due diligence checks to confirm that key elements such as governance, implementation of the agreed monitoring log, and any significant changes to the scheme remain aligned with GCP's expectations. Schemes that successfully complete this interim process will continue to be considered recognized as equivalent against the (current version) of the Coffee SR Code and their respective assurance system classification during the review period. This approach is designed to support uninterrupted use of recognized schemes by roasters, retailers, and other buyers, while maintaining the credibility and integrity of GCP's Sustainable Sourcing Approach.

**12. How is GCP managing scheme owners' interest in Equivalence Mechanism assessment?**

**A:** GCP is in active communication with sustainability schemes that have expressed interest in participating in the Equivalence Mechanism process. Considering the ongoing Coffee SR Code and EM review, GCP has informed interested scheme owners that new EM assessments are paused during the review period. Interested schemes are being encouraged to engage in the review process through consultations and other engagement opportunities, so they can stay informed about potential future changes and better prepare for alignment with the updated tools. Once the updated Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism are published, GCP will communicate next steps and timelines for the resumption of EM assessments. This approach is intended to ensure transparency, efficiency, and a clear pathway for schemes interested in future recognition.

**13. When will the next Equivalence Mechanism assessment rounds occur after the review?**

**A:** New assessment rounds will resume following the review of the Coffee SR Code and the Equivalence Mechanism. The timing will depend on the degree of changes and to be agreed upon transition periods that ensure credibility, practicability and confidence by schemes.

**14. Will there be a period where some schemes are equivalent to the current versions of the Coffee SR Code and the EM, while others are equivalent to the updated versions of both tools?**

**A:** Yes. There will be a situation similar to the transition from the Baseline Coffee Code (BCC) to the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (Coffee SR Code). Stakeholders and markets need transparency and consistency so this will be considered in transition plans with transparency for all stakeholders, as well as in communication and reports.

**15. How is GCP promoting market uptake of sustainable coffees if there are no new EM assessments done in 2026?**

**A:** The current pause of new EM assessments is not a suspension of GCP's approach, but the strategic opportunity to ensure the Coffee SR Code and EM remain credible, aligned with global best practice, and fit-for-purpose for the next years. During the review, GCP continues to strongly promote members' efforts towards sustainable sourcing through e.g. the Collective Reporting by roasters and retailers that culminates with the publication of the annual Sustainable Coffee Purchases Report, the continued validity of currently recognized schemes (including regular monitoring, and reporting by scheme owners), and member engagement. The EM assessment pause supports long-term credibility and strengthening of the market for sustainable coffee.

**16. How does RegenCoffee fit into the Coffee SR Code and EM review?**

**A:** GCP published the RegenCoffee Guidance in September 2025 to support global alignment on regenerative agriculture concepts and practices for coffee production. As part of the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism review, GCP is considering how current and proposed Coffee SR Code practices align with regenerative outcomes, based on the mapping and insights developed through the RegenCoffee Guidance. This helps ensure that the revised tools reflect evolving expectations around regenerative agriculture, while remaining practical and relevant for coffee producers and the wider sector.

**17. Are GCP's Pesticide Lists being reviewed and updated during the Coffee SR Code and EM Review?**

**A:** Yes. The GCP Pesticide Lists are an integral part of the Coffee SR Code and will therefore be reviewed and updated as part of the overall revision process. As part of this work, the Technical Committee may establish a dedicated subgroup to focus specifically on pesticide-related topics, including alignment with evolving regulatory, scientific, and market expectations.

**18. What impact is the Coffee SR Code and EM review expected to have?**

**A:** The review is intended to strengthen the relevance, credibility, and effectiveness of GCP’s tools in supporting sustainable coffee production and sourcing. The revised Coffee SR Code is expected to provide an updated and robust framework that supports greater alignment and harmonization across the sector, including across national and regional approaches, and strengthens shared understanding of foundational sustainability expectations.

At the same time, the review is examining how the Coffee SR Code and the Equivalence Mechanism contribute in practice to sustainability outcomes and farmer prosperity. This includes assessing relevance, usability, and coherence, and identifying opportunities to strengthen how the tools support positive change at farm level and across supply chains.

It is important to note that the Coffee SR Code and the EM serve different but complementary purposes. The Coffee SR Code is not only used for benchmarking sustainability schemes through the EM. It also serves broader objectives, including supporting alignment and harmonization of sustainability approaches, informing national curricula and sector initiatives, and providing a common reference of sustainability for the coffee sector. The Equivalence Mechanism builds on the Coffee SR Code by assessing how sustainability schemes align with it and how they are implemented and assured.

**19. What is the difference between being recognized as equivalent to the Coffee SR Code as a 2nd Party or 3rd Party assurance system?**

**A:** Currently, GCP recognizes sustainability schemes based on the independence of their assurance systems: [2nd Party and 3rd Party assurance system](#). Based on various emerging regulations, especially in the EU, and stakeholder expectations for clearer differentiation, this classification is subject to change through the review process.

**20. To what degree is GCP considering green claims legislation such as the EU Empowering Consumers Directive and other national legislation around green claims in the review?**

**A:** GCP understands that sustainability claims are important for transparency and accountability to communicate to stakeholders, including consumers, on sustainability progress. The operational requirements (in the EM) include several requirements, i.e. assurance, data and claims that consider the evolving green claims regulatory developments. Recognizing the importance of this issue, GCP is working on a position paper on the EmpCo for members.