



**GLOBAL COFFEE
PLATFORM**

**COFFEE SUSTAINABILITY
REFERENCE CODE AND
EQUIVALENCE MECHANISM
OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

AUGUST 2026

SYNOPSIS

The Global Coffee Platform (GCP) **thanks all stakeholders** for their participation in the public consultation on the review of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (Coffee SR Code) and the Equivalence Mechanism (EM) Operational requirements. The public consultation took place between 19 May and 19 June 2026. A total of 145 responses were received, comprising 67 responses to the main consultation survey and 78 responses to the technical consultation survey, representing stakeholders from 24 countries. More than 780 comments were submitted across both surveys. Participants represented a broad range of stakeholder groups, including producers, traders, roasters, sustainability schemes, civil society organizations, researchers, service providers and other actors from both coffee-producing and coffee-consuming countries. Approximately half of all respondents were GCP Members, reflecting strong participation from members, but also external validation from the broader coffee sector.

The **objective** of the review was to ensure that both tools remain relevant, credible and fit for purpose in response to evolving sustainability expectations, regulatory developments and implementation experience across the coffee sector.

The consultation **validated** the overall direction of the review confirming that the existing framework remains robust and well accepted, with the proposed revisions focusing primarily on improving clarity, strengthening implementation guidance and clarifying specific requirements, rather than requesting substantial changes to the proposed revisions.

The consultation confirmed **broad support for the main technical changes proposed within the Coffee SR Code**. Stakeholders endorsed the consolidation of risk assessment requirements, the restructuring of the Environmental Dimension, stronger emphasis on soil health and regenerative agriculture within broader soil management approaches. Participants consistently highlighted the value of simplifying and integrating related requirements to improve coherence and reduce duplication. At the same time, they emphasized the importance of maintaining sufficient flexibility to accommodate different production contexts, particularly for smallholder producers.

Stakeholder feedback also validated the **Operational Requirements of the Equivalence Mechanism**. Survey respondents broadly supported the introduction of stronger governance requirements, clearer assurance procedures, enhanced risk-based assurance, standardized KPI reporting and improved interoperability between sustainability systems. Respondents recognized these changes as important steps toward increasing transparency, strengthening credibility and improving consistency across recognized schemes.

The feedback received has been used to refine the proposed revisions where appropriate, while additional recommendations have been identified for future guidance documents and workstreams.

One of the most prominent topics raised during the consultation was the future governance of the **GCP Pesticide Lists**. Stakeholders highlighted the need for greater transparency around the review process, clearer decision-making criteria, realistic transition timelines and science-based decision making that reflects production realities. GCP has already initiated a Technical Task Force under the Technical Committee, for targeted engagement with international experts and producing countries to deliver updated pesticide lists together with a long-term governance mechanism.

Many respondents stressed that successful implementation depends on adequate incentives, technical assistance, investment and capacity building, recognizing that sustainability outcomes require **shared responsibility** across the coffee value chain rather than placing the burden solely on producers.

This document presents an **overview of the consultation process and participation**, and summarizes the input received during the public consultation. This input will inform the development of the final draft that will be put forward for approval by the Board of GCP, the multistakeholder and highest decision body of the Association.

COFFEE SUSTAINABILITY REFERENCE CODE AND EQUIVALENCE MECHANISM OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Summary of Public Consultation



PUBLIC CONSULTATION SUMMARY

2026 COFFEE SR CODE AND EM REVIEW:

GLOBAL CONSENSUS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

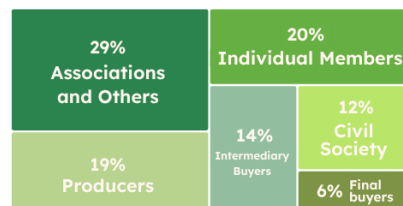
STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

145

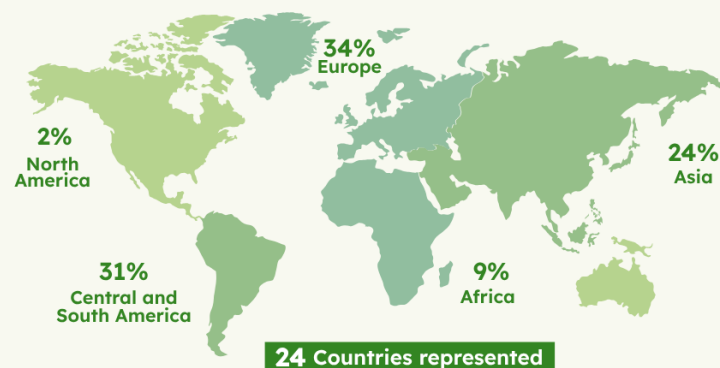
Total Respondents

Data combined from 67 Main
Survey and 78 Technical
Survey responses

Broad Sector Representation



GLOBAL REACH



BUILDING THE CONSENSUS



89%

Back the Regenerative Soil Health Approach

Stakeholders strongly endorsed the move toward outcome-based requirements focusing on soil health and fertility.



82%

Support New Governance & Risk Management

This includes strong backing for scheme-level risk management, dispute resolution, and transparency to align with international good practices.



77%

Validate Environmental Restructuring

Respondents approved the new structure of the Environmental Dimension, which separates soil and water management for better clarity.



76%

Support Consolidated Risk Management

Merging risk assessment requirements into a single structured approach was validated as a major improvement for practical implementation.



74%

Deem the Code "Fit for Purpose"

A broad majority confirms the updates strike the correct balance between ambitious sustainability goals and practical implementation.



73%

Support for Overall Direction

Respondents agreed that the proposed updates significantly improve clarity, structure, and usability.

IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY

53%

Consider Updates Feasible

While over half see the updates as very or mostly feasible, there is a strong call for practical tools and methodologies to support implementation.



Critical Need for Smallholder Support

Stakeholders emphasized that successful implementation requires technical assistance, capacity building, and shared responsibility across the value chain.

1. Background

The Global Coffee Platform (GCP) is leading the 2026 review of the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code (Coffee SR Code) and the Equivalence Mechanism (EM) to ensure both tools remain relevant, credible and fit for purpose in an evolving sustainability landscape. This review responds to changes in the regulatory environment, advances in sustainability practices, and the evolving needs of the global coffee sector, while following GCP's commitment to periodically review and update its normative documents.

The Coffee SR Code establishes a common baseline for sustainable coffee production, providing a globally recognized reference framework for coffee sustainability. The Equivalence Mechanism enables sustainability schemes to demonstrate alignment with the Coffee SR Code through a transparent recognition process, supporting interoperability and reducing duplication across the sector. Together, these tools promote a common understanding of sustainable coffee production and strengthen collaboration among coffee stakeholders.

The review is being carried out through a transparent and inclusive process guided by the GCP Technical Committee and supported by an Advisory Task Force representing different segments of the coffee value chain. Based on learnings from implementation, the landscape analysis, key stakeholder interviews and inputs from GCP recognized schemes, the TC and ATF, an updated revision was drafted. A key conclusion was that overall, no major changes were needed, but more around refinement and some restructuring. In line with ISEAL Code of Good Practice, GCP conducted a public consultation to gather input on the proposed revisions to both the Coffee SR Code and the Operational requirements of the Equivalence Mechanism.

The public consultation was open from 19 May to 19 June 2026. This document summarizes the participation, feedback received, and key findings from the consultation.

2. PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION

The public consultation materials were publicly available on the GCP website. Resources included the consultation draft, the summary of changes, the webinar's slides and a video on the consultation process. Key materials were available in other languages to facilitate access.

The consultation consisted of two online surveys. The online surveys were designed to gather comprehensive stakeholder feedback on the proposed revisions to the Coffee

Sustainability Reference Code (Coffee SR Code) and the Operational requirements of the Equivalence Mechanism (EM).

The **main consultation survey** gathered **high-level feedback** on the overall direction of the revision, the balance between ambition and practical implementation, the future evolution of the Coffee SR Code, and the perceived value of both the existing tools and the proposed updates. It also sought stakeholder views on any substantive changes proposed across the Coffee SR Code and the EM Operational Criteria, including revisions related to risk assessment, environmental outcomes, governance, assurance, data and transparency.

A **separate technical survey** invited stakeholders to provide **more detailed comments on individual requirements** and proposed revisions. The technical consultation survey enabled stakeholders to provide detailed, requirement-specific feedback on any proposed revision to the Coffee SR Code or the EM Operational Criteria. Participants could select individual requirements and submit detailed comments and recommendations, as well as provide broader observations on each dimension of the Coffee SR Code and the overall structure of the Equivalence Mechanism.

A total of 145 surveys were completed.

Both surveys included multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Respondents were also provided with space to submit additional comments and recommendations, which was widely used, resulting in more than 780 comments that informed the refinement of the proposed updates.

Table 1: Participation in Public Consultation (Online Surveys)

67 responses to the Main Consultation Survey
78 responses to the Technical Consultation Survey
780+ comments received across both surveys
24 countries represented
51% of respondents were GCP Members

3. SURVEY RESULTS – SUMMARY (See Annex for Details)

- Effective and inclusive consultation process confirmed by the high level of stakeholder participation, the breadth of representation across stakeholder groups and geographies, and the quality of the feedback received.
- Broad participation across stakeholder categories including producers, traders, roasters, sustainability schemes, civil society, researchers, service providers, and other stakeholders from coffee-producing and coffee-consuming countries.

Main findings:

- Overall support for the proposed direction, updates and changes of the Coffee SR Code and Operational requirements of the Equivalence Mechanism updates.
- Broad agreement that the proposed revisions improve the clarity, coherence and usability of the tools while maintaining their original intent.
- Feedback focused on clarifications, improved wording, and additional guidance rather than substantive changes.
- Strong recognition of the value of the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism as common reference tools, alongside opportunities to strengthen their uptake and implementation.
- Strong support for greater interoperability, transparency, and harmonization across the coffee sector, together with increased emphasis on shared responsibility and outcome-based reporting.

There was clear recognition that successful implementation will require **shared responsibility** across the coffee value chain, including stronger engagement by downstream actors and improved reporting on outcomes and impacts, as broader enablers beyond the scope of the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism requirements. Stakeholders consistently highlighted that incentives, investment, technical support, and capacity building will be essential enablers for implementation, particularly for smallholder producers.

The two surveys together generated both quantitative and qualitative input, providing a comprehensive evidence base for refining the proposed revisions.

4. Conclusion

GCP received extensive and constructive feedback through public consultation, with stakeholders providing both strong overall support for the proposed revisions. The consultation identified clear priorities for the future, including stronger implementation guidance, continued support for smallholders, improved data interoperability and transparency. A recurring theme throughout the consultation was the need for stronger implementation support. Rather than requesting additional requirements, stakeholders consistently called for practical guidance, examples, templates and methodologies that would facilitate consistent interpretation and implementation of the Coffee SR Code.

Relevant feedback has been incorporated into the revised Coffee SR Code and the Operational requirements of the Equivalence Mechanism. Some suggestions were not incorporated where they fell outside the scope of the current revision or were better addressed through other workstreams or governance processes.

Particular attention was given to the GCP Pesticide Lists, reflecting their growing importance as a common sector reference. In response to stakeholder feedback, GCP has established a dedicated pesticide review process, including a technical Pesticide Task Force operating under the Technical Committee, targeted engagement with international and producing-country experts, and a clear work plan to deliver updated interim pesticide lists and a long-term governance mechanism. GCP will also communicate the review timeline, including proposed transitional arrangements, to provide greater transparency, predictability, and confidence across the sector.

The consultation also highlighted several cross-cutting priorities for future work, including the development of practical implementation guidance, strengthened support for smallholders, improved data interoperability and standardization, greater transparency, and continued work on complex topics such as regenerative agriculture, carbon outcomes, and pesticide governance. These results provide a strong mandate for GCP to continue evolving the Coffee SR Code and Equivalence Mechanism while maintaining their role as globally applicable baseline frameworks.

The feedback received has informed the refinement of the proposed revisions that will be presented to GCP's Board for approval.

ANNEX 1. CSRC: Key Takeaways and Targeted Questions

1. Cross-cutting Key Takeaways

Strong support for the proposed revision of the Coffee SR Code, with around 75–90% agreement across all proposed changes, including the consolidated risk assessment, integration of occupational health and safety, environmental restructuring, stronger soil health requirements, and carbon integration. Most remaining respondents supported the direction but requested refinements.

Stakeholders reaffirmed that the Coffee SR Code should remain a practical global baseline, evolving gradually over time rather than becoming more prescriptive. Flexibility across different production contexts (particularly for smallholders) was consistently emphasized.

The strongest message across all topics was the need for better implementation guidance. Respondents repeatedly requested practical tools, templates, examples, methodologies, and clearer guidance to support consistent interpretation and implementation, rather than additional requirements.

Smallholder implementation remains the greatest challenge. Stakeholders stressed that successful implementation would require technical assistance, capacity building, incentives, and shared responsibility across the value chain to avoid placing disproportionate burdens on producers.

Environmental proposals received particularly strong support, especially strengthening soil health and regenerative agriculture, integrating carbon within broader soil management, and improving the overall structure of the Environmental Dimension. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility while providing clearer definitions and implementation guidance.

Stakeholders consistently valued clearer, more integrated requirements, noting that consolidating related topics (particularly risk assessment) improves clarity, coherence, and practical implementation while reducing duplication.

Pesticides emerged as a prominent topic in the consultation. Stakeholders called for greater transparency around the review and governance of the GCP Pesticide Lists, including a clearly communicated review process, timelines, decision-making criteria, and transition arrangements. Respondents also highlighted the need for realistic phase-out timelines, availability of viable alternatives, consistent terminology, and science-based decisions that reflect production realities.

2. Specific Survey Questions

Economic Dimension

Strong support for introducing a consolidated risk assessment requirement



Social Dimension

Very strong support for integrating the health and safety monitoring requirement into the broader occupational health and safety requirement



Environmental Dimension

Strong support for the proposed restructuring of the environmental dimension and Structural Changes (Outcomes & Expected Results)



Very strong support for Soil Health & Regenerative Approach



Agreement with Merging of Organic By-products Requirement



Agreement with Integration of Carbon Sequestration into Soil Health Requirements



ANNEX 2. EM Operational Criteria: Key Takeaways and Targeted Questions

1. Cross-cutting Key Takeaways

Strong overall support for the proposed revisions to the Equivalence Mechanism Operational Criteria, with most proposed changes receiving more than 80% agreement. Across all topics, feedback primarily focused on refining implementation and guidance rather than questioning the proposed direction.

Stakeholders strongly supported strengthening governance, assurance and interoperability, recognizing the importance of increased transparency, robust risk-based assurance, and improved data interoperability to enhance the credibility and consistency of the Equivalence Mechanism.

Implementation guidance emerged as the main area for improvement. Respondents consistently requested clearer guidance, practical examples, standardized methodologies and common definitions to support consistent implementation across schemes while maintaining flexibility.

Broad support was expressed for standardized reporting and greater transparency, provided that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect commercially sensitive and personal information. Respondents also highlighted the importance of harmonizing data definitions and reporting approaches with relevant international frameworks.

Stakeholders supported the gradual development of outcome-level reporting, emphasizing that additional outcome indicators should be piloted and refined before becoming minimum requirements. There was strong recognition that outcome reporting should extend beyond recognized schemes and reflect shared responsibility across the coffee value chain.

Greater transparency in the Equivalence Mechanism was widely supported, with respondents recognizing the value of increased public information on recognized schemes while emphasizing the need to balance transparency with confidentiality and data protection.

2. Specific Survey Questions

Governance

Very strong support for 3 New Governance Requirements on dispute resolution, governance transparency and scheme-level risk management, recognizing their importance in aligning the Equivalence Mechanism with international good practices.



COFFEE SUSTAINABILITY REFERENCE CODE AND EQUIVALENCE MECHANISM OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

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Agreement to remove the producer awareness requirement; however strong stakeholder voices of the critical nature, so recommendation is to NOT delete it.



Assurance

Strong support for strengthening the Equivalence Mechanism's assurance requirements with the introduction of clearer assessment procedures and a standalone risk-based assurance requirement



Very strong support for integrating the exceptions requirement (A7) into the broader assurance framework



Data

Strong support for introducing standardized KPI reporting to GCP with further clarification on implementation, standardized definitions and appropriate data governance



Very strong support for introducing a new Data requirement on interoperability to reduce duplication, improve efficiency and facilitate better alignment across schemes and supply chain actors.



3. General Questions not tied to specific requirements

Implementation Feasibility

The majority of respondents consider the proposed updates feasible to implement, with 53% of respondents indicating they are very or mostly feasible for schemes and other relevant actors.

A further 32% believe implementation is feasible but will require additional guidance, capacity building and practical support, highlighting the importance of strengthening implementation resources alongside the revised requirements.

Very few respondents (3%) considered the proposed updates infeasible without significant changes, indicating broad confidence in the overall practicality of the proposed revisions.

Additional KPIs or Outcome data reporting.

Respondents favoured a phased approach to expanding KPI reporting, with 45% recommending that additional outcome-level KPIs be explored and piloted before becoming minimum requirements.

A further 23% preferred maintaining reporting on basic reach and scale indicators only, reflecting support for a cautious approach that prioritizes implementation feasibility and minimizes reporting burden.

Overall, the results support the gradual evolution of KPI reporting, with stakeholders recognizing the value of additional outcome indicators while emphasizing the need for testing, harmonization and practical implementation before making them mandatory.

Public summary report for EM assessments of Scheme Owners.

Strong support for increasing transparency in the Equivalence Mechanism, with 73% of respondents seeing value in introducing a public summary report for EM assessments.

Confidentiality and data protection emerged as key conditions for implementation, with a significant proportion of respondents supporting the proposal only if appropriate safeguards for commercially sensitive information are in place.