Change of Conformity Assessment Body Policy

Fair Trade USA
Version 1.3.0

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to maintain the integrity of Fair Trade USA certificates issued by one Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) when changed to another approved CAB.

This policy outlines the requirements that a Certificate Holder (CH) must meet to qualify for a Change of Conformity Assessment Body and the associated procedure to implement the change. These requirements apply whether the change is a result of a voluntary decision by the CH or the result of the CAB losing or withdrawing its approved certification status with Fair Trade USA.

This policy might also be applicable in cases where the Conformity Assessment Body goes out of business and/or loses its ISO 17065 accreditation status.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all approved Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) and all operations that have achieved certification under the Agricultural Production Standard (APS) or the Capture Fisheries Standard (CFS). This policy is not applicable to the programs under the Factory Standard for Apparel & Home Goods or the Trade Standard.

As part of the change between CABs, a Certificate Holder may choose to expand or reduce the scope of its certificate. This policy allows changes in the scope of a certificate and outlines what needs to be communicated to Fair Trade USA and the CAB.

This policy provides the minimum criteria for the transfer of certificates. CABs may implement requirements which are more stringent than those contained herein provided that a CH’s freedom to choose a CAB is not unduly or unfairly constrained.

This policy is effective as of January 1, 2019 in the Americas and November 1, 2019 globally.

Related documents

The following documents are referenced in this policy:

- Agricultural Production Standard Audit Application and Capture Fisheries Standard Audit Application
- Change of Conformity Assessment Body Request Form (available on the Fair Trade USA website)
- Audit Report
- Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
Definitions

Change of Conformity Assessment Body: The change of a CAB is defined as the recognition of an existing and valid Fair Trade USA certificate, granted by one Fair Trade USA approved CAB (hereinafter referred to as the current CAB), by another approved CAB (hereinafter referred to as the alternate CAB), for the purpose of issuing its own certificate.

1. Conditions to Issue a Change of Conformity Assessment Body

1.1. Fair Trade USA will grant a Change of Conformity Assessment Body where all of the following conditions are met:

   a) Current Fair Trade USA certificate is valid and active. In cases where a certificate has expired in the past three months, or been voluntarily withdrawn, the alternate CAB may consider such a certificate for transfer at its discretion.
   
   b) Certificate Holder confirms that the certificate is not suspended or under threat of suspension.
   
   c) Outstanding Critical or Major Non-Compliances have been closed with the current CAB, before transfer.

1.2. First requests by Certificate Holder for a Change of Conformity Assessment Body may occur in any year of the certification cycle; subsequent requests are not considered if the Certificate Holder has been granted a Change of Conformity Assessment body within the past three audit years.

1.3. The on-site audit and certification cycle will be based on the Certificate Holder’s standing within the Fair Trade USA system (e.g. if the Certificate Holder is at Year 2 with the current CAB, it is expected that their next audit is assessed against Year 3 criteria).

2. Requesting a Change of Conformity Assessment Body

2.1. If a Certificate Holder meets the conditions above and wishes to change from a current CAB to another Fair Trade USA approved CAB, the Certificate Holder must complete the following steps:

   a) Select and alternate Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).
   
   b) Certificate Holders with short-season products are required to submit their forms and requested documentation 2-3 months before the peak harvest date to allow the sufficient time to plan an audit to be executed it while the majority of the workforce is present and active.
   
      • All other Certificate Holders are recommended to submit forms and all documentation no more than three months prior to and not later than one month after the anniversary of the Certificate Holder’s annual audit, in order to avoid any interruptions in certification coverage.
   
   c) Inform the current CAB of the intent to switch CAB’s and transfer the certificate. CH must use in their communication subject line both their name and “Intent to Switch Conformity Assessment Body”.

2.2. The Certificate Holder must provide all documentation requested in a timely manner. Documentation and information required by Fair Trade USA and the alternate CAB includes:

   a) Completed Audit Application form and Change of CAB Request form (available on the Fair Trade USA website);
b) Current certificate and current certification status, and stage in the current certification cycle;

c) Most recent audit report and CAP form, including any subsequent follow-up audit report and/or any unannounced audit report;

d) Any additional information on non-compliances with the standards, including any NC’s closed with contingencies;

e) If applicable, any documents related to complaints received and action taken (e.g., any complaint related to an allegation process); and

f) If requested, any other relevant documentation regarding the certification and auditing process.

2.3. Fair Trade USA’s Certification team will review the request and submitted documentation and provide a decision within 4 weeks of receiving all necessary documentation and information.

2.4. The decision as to the action required will depend upon the nature and extent of request. Any decision shall be explained to the Certificate Holder and documented, with records maintained by both the current and alternate CAB.

2.5. Upon approval of request by Fair Trade USA Certification team:

   a) Fair Trade USA’s Certification team will send the alternate CAB all relevant documentation, including the Audit Application, current certificate, Change of CAB Request Form, most recent audit report, and CAP form.

   b) Certificate Holder and alternate CAB may proceed to sign a new service agreement and start scheduling an audit.

   c) Alternate CAB may issue a temporary certificate for the interim period, not to exceed nine months, until audit and CAP are successfully closed, and a new certificate is issued.

      • Temporary certificates are issue by the alternate CAB within two weeks of receiving approval of the request from the Fair Trade USA Certification team.

   d) The current CAB may proceed terminating their service agreement with the Certificate Holder upon receiving notification from Fair Trade USA that the Change of CAB request was approved.

3. Terms of Change of Conformity Assessment Body

3.1. To continue producing, fishing, processing, and/or selling product as Fair Trade Certified, the Certificate Holder and sites must maintain their certification until they have been granted a new certificate by the alternate CAB.

3.2. Prior to granting a new certificate, the alternate CAB will conduct a full on-site audit to verify compliance with the Fair Trade USA standard and any other certification requirement (e.g. specific audit requirements, active exceptions to any compliance criteria, action taken against a complaint).

3.3. If no outstanding or potential problems are identified by the alternate CAB, a certificate may be issued in line with the regular Fair Trade USA compliance assessment process.

3.4. Certificates issued to any operation are not transferable to new operation owners. When there is change in ownership of a certified operation, they must apply for and receive a new certificate prior to selling or labeling product as Fair Trade Certified. If this occurs between audits, a new audit shall be
executed. A request for a change of CAB by new ownership would follow the procedure as outlined in this policy.

3.5. Operations certified by a Fair Trade USA approved CAB that goes out of business or loses its FTUSA approval for any reason must apply for certification with another CAB within 60 days of the date of surrender, suspension, or revocation of approval.

4. Change of Conformity Assessment Body Process Map