



CARICOM REGIONAL STANDARD

**Voluntary Sustainability Standard for
cocoa products and chocolate –
Requirements**

DCRS 87:202X



CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

2nd Floor Baobab Tower

Warrens

St. Michael

Barbados

T: 246.622.7670

Website: <http://www.crosq.org>

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Committee representation

This CARICOM Regional Standard was developed by the Regional Technical Sub-Committee and Working Group 1 - Cocoa, hosted by the CARICOM Member State, Trinidad and Tobago, which comprised the following members:

RTSC

Members	Representing
Dr Darin Sukha (Chairperson)	Cocoa Research Centre, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
Ms Amiesha Persaud	Grenada Bureau of Standards
Ms Ashana Baptiste-Paul (Alternate)	Grenada Bureau of Standards
Ms Anuradha Pooran-Ramroop	Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd
Ms Mala Partap (Alternate)	
Ms Ellen Ligteringen	Tan Bun Skrati N.V., Suriname
Ms Jaiwante Samsoondar	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Trinidad and Tobago
Ms Anita Baijoo (Alternate)	
Mr Renold Ramdial (Alternate)	
Mr Jean Chesnel Jean	AYITIKA, Haiti
Ms Jennifer Douglas-Bullock	St Vincent and the Grenadines Bureau of Standards
Mr Zevon Seymour (Alternate)	
Mr Lloyd Pascal	Dominica Export Import Agency
Ms Naomi Bannis-Sampson (Alternate)	Dominica Bureau of Standards
Ms Naiya Kartick-Bulkan	Quai Craft Chocolate, Guyana
Mr Ricky Brumant	Division of Agriculture, Dominica
Mr Franklyn Joseph (Alternate)	
Ms Saskia Augustin	Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards
Ms Shadel Nyack Compton	Belmont Estate, Grenada
Ms Alicia Sarrao (Alternate)	
Ms Shivanie Mahadeo	Guyana National Bureau of Standards
Dr Patrick Chesney (Alternate)	PC Consultants, Guyana
Ms Taletha Laudat	Technical Expert, Dominica
Mr Wilkens-Ader Laroche	Haitian Association for Quality Management,
Mr Etchnightder Esperance (Alternate)	Haiti Bureau of Standards
Ms Nkechi Williams (Technical Secretary)	Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards

Working Group 1 - Cocoa**Members**Ms Anuradha Pooran-Ramroop (**Chairperson**)

Ms Mala Partap (Alternate)

Mr. Brian Sears

Ms Cherisse Brathwaite-Joseph

Mr Craig Paul

Mr Deosaran Jagroo

Ms Cherie Anne Ramlakhan

Ms. Diana Dodson

Ms Ellen Ligteringen

Mr Etchnightder Esperance

Ms Farishna Woodly

Mr Guito Gilot

Mr Jean Chesnel Jean

Ms Judith Rattan

Ms Leidsman Joycelien

Ms Lauren St. Louis

Mr Lloyd Pascal

Mr Mark Renfurm

Mr Marnus Cherry

Ms Naomi Bannis-Sampson

Mr Roy Porter

Ms Shenese Trimmingham

Ms Shivanie Mahadeo

Ms Taletha Laudat

Ms Tessa Boland

Ms Nkechi Williams

Ms Nadita Ramachala

Mr Kenlee Hadai (**Technical Secretary**)**Representing**

Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Ltd

Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana

The Cropper Foundation, Trinidad and Tobago

Taste D Spice, Grenada

The Kairi Chocolate Company Limited, Trinidad and Tobago

Guyana Marketing Company, Guyana

Tan Bun Skrati N.V., Suriname

Haiti Bureau of Standards

Technical Expert, Suriname

Union des Cooperative Cacaoyere du Nord (FECCANIO)

AYITIKA, Haiti

Lifetime Gold Company NV, Suriname

Technical Expert, Suriname

Ministry of Agriculture, Grenada

Dominica Export Import Agency

Consultant, Suriname

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Sustainable Development

Dominica Bureau of Standards

Guyana Food Safety Authority, Guyana

St Vincent and the Grenadines Bureau of Standards

Guyana National Bureau of Standards

Technical Expert, Dominica

Consultant

Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards

Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards

Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards

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Foreword

This CARICOM Regional Standard DCRS 87:202X has been developed under the authority of the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). It was approved as a CARICOM Regional Standard by the CARICOM Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) at its XX Meeting in MM YYYY.

This CARICOM Regional Standard is one of two standards that are outputs of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) Project entitled “Supporting quality and regulatory infrastructure, value chain specific quality infrastructure services and quality culture promotion in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States”. The objective of this project is: ‘to increase the economic and social impact from ACP participation in the multi-lateral trading system’. Specifically, ‘this is expected to be achieved through increased competitiveness of SMEs and their products on the local, regional and international markets, increased ACP consumer safety, and increased contribution of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (OACPS) to the operation of the multi-lateral trading system’. In this case, the development of the Voluntary Sustainability Standard for Cocoa Products and Chocolate is the vehicle to meet the objectives.

This standard establishes a voluntary framework for cocoa products and chocolate that complements the CARICOM Regional Code of Practice, CRCP 12, Cocoa - Good Agricultural Practices and other applicable cocoa quality, food-safety and product standards. Detailed requirements for cocoa cultivation, harvesting, fermentation, drying and bean quality are principally addressed in those complementary documents.

The standard is structured around five interrelated clauses:

- Responsible business, sourcing and operational resilience;
- People, livelihoods and communities;
- Environment and climate resilience;
- Origin, identity, heritage and responsible communication; and
- Evidence, monitoring and sustainability claims.

This framework draws on internationally recognised sustainability principles, including relevant concepts in the ISO 34101 series, while being adapted to the circumstances of CARICOM. In particular, it uses risk-based prioritisation, evidence-based claims and progressive improvement without reproducing the farm-level structure of ISO 34101-2. It also recommends a proportionate implementation scheme for the user.

The overall intent is to support credible sustainability performance and continual improvement while avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens, particularly for micro and small enterprises.

In formulating this standard considerable assistance was derived from the following publications which were still current when this standard was being developed:

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

ISO 14001:2026, *Environmental management systems - Requirements with guidance for use*;

ISO 26000:2010, *Guidance on social responsibility*;

ISO/TS 26030:2019, *Social responsibility and sustainable development — Guidance on using ISO 26000:2010 in the food chain*; and

ISO 37000:2021, *Governance of organizations – Guidance*.

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CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

CRS 34:2018, *Cocoa and chocolate products - Specification*

Rainforest Alliance

Rainforest Alliance Supply Chain Requirements v1.5

Fairtrade International

Fairtrade Standard for Cocoa 27.09.2023 v.2.14

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Introduction

Cocoa has longstanding economic, social and cultural importance within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Caribbean cocoa reflects a rich heritage shaped by Indigenous knowledge, traditional practices and generations of regional cultivation and processing. The Region's cocoa and chocolate sector includes micro and small enterprises, community-based processors, cooperatives and larger manufacturers operating under diverse island and mainland conditions.

Caribbean cocoa and chocolate occupy a distinctive market position based on fine flavour cocoa, origin identity, cultural heritage, biodiversity, smallholder and community-based production, and craft processing. This standard supports the protection and enhancement of these attributes by promoting sustainable practices that strengthen product quality, market differentiation and value creation.

Sustainability in the CARICOM cocoa and chocolate sector requires responsible treatment of people, efficient and responsible use of resources, protection of the environment, resilience to climate and natural hazards, responsible sourcing, credible traceability and truthful communication of sustainability performance. Economic viability and product quality remain necessary enabling conditions, but detailed economic management and cocoa-quality requirements are not the principal subject of this standard where they are already addressed by complementary CARICOM cocoa standards.

CARICOM Member States also face distinctive sustainability challenges, including high energy and input costs, limited economies of scale, exposure to hurricanes, flooding, dry periods with extreme heat and bush fires and infrastructure disruption, variable access to finance, technical services, laboratories and certification. A regional sustainability standard should therefore be rigorous while remaining practical and proportionate.

Production and sale of sustainable products are in keeping with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This standard is expected to meet a number of the UN SDGs including numbers, including:

- SDG 1 - No Poverty
- SDG 2 - Zero Hunger
- SDG 3- Good Health and Well-being
- SDG 5- Gender Equality
- SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13 – Climate Action
- SDG 15 – Life on Land

In this Regional Standard, the following verbal forms are used:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

Information marked as “NOTE” is for guidance in understanding or clarifying the associated requirement.

1 Scope

This standard specifies sustainability requirements for organisations that manufacture, process, handle, package, store or place on the market cocoa products and chocolate within CARICOM Member States.

It addresses the interrelated economic, social, environmental, resilience and integrity dimensions of sustainability in the cocoa industry.

This document is applicable to organisations of different sizes and levels of complexity, including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that are involved in secondary processing of cocoa and chocolate products.

This standard also applies to origin-labelled, single-estate, community-produced, geographical indication-linked and fine flavour cocoa products and chocolate.

This standard does not apply to:

- a) raw, unfermented or unprocessed cocoa beans, wet or dry;
- b) fermented, dried or roasted whole beans; and
- c) other products, food or non-food where the cocoa is used only as a flavouring.

It does not establish detailed requirements for primary cocoa production, harvesting, fermentation, drying or cocoa-bean quality.

NOTE Those matters are addressed in the CARICOM Regional Code of Practice, CRCP 12, Cocoa - Good Agricultural Practices and other applicable cocoa standards.

This standard does not replace applicable legislation or standards for food safety, good manufacturing practices, product composition, quality, labelling, occupational safety or environmental protection.

Organisations using cocoa or cocoa ingredients from outside CARICOM are not automatically excluded from this standard if claims concerning CARICOM origin, single origin, local sourcing, fine flavour, community benefit or other differentiated attributes are made.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this standard. Some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ)

CRCP 5:2010, *Code of practice for general principles of food hygiene*;

CRCP 12, *Cocoa – Good Agricultural Practices*; and

CRS 34:2018, *Cocoa and chocolate – Specification*.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

child labour

work performed by a person under 18 years of age that is prohibited by applicable legislation because of the person's age, or that is harmful to the person's health, safety, morals or development, or interferes with compulsory schooling

Note 1 to entry: Not all work performed by a person under 18 years of age constitutes child labour. Lawful, age-appropriate work that does not harm health or development or interfere with schooling may be permitted in accordance with applicable national legislation.

3.2

claim

statement, symbol, representation or other communication concerning an environmental, social, origin, heritage, sustainability or other attribute of a cocoa product, chocolate or organisation

Note 1 to entry: A claim may be made through labelling, packaging, advertising, websites, certification marks, promotional material or other business-to-business or consumer communication.

Note 2 to entry: Claims are subject to the evidence and substantiation requirements of Clauses 8 and 9.

3.3

climate resilience

capacity of an organisation or value chain to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from climate-related hazards while maintaining or restoring essential functions

Note 1 to entry: In the CARICOM context, climate related hazards may include hurricanes, intense rainfall, flooding, drought, dry periods with extreme heat and bush fires, coastal flooding or saltwater intrusion, landslides, and associated interruptions to power, water, transport and supply chains.

3.4

cocoa product

product obtained from cocoa beans through processing

Note 1 to entry: Cocoa products may include cocoa nibs, cocoa liquor or mass, cocoa butter, cocoa cake and cocoa powder.

Note 2 to entry: Chocolate and chocolate products may be addressed separately where required by applicable product standards or legislation

3.5

continual improvement

recurring activity to enhance sustainability performance

Note 1 to entry: Continual improvement does not require improvement in every sustainability aspect at the same time. Priorities may be established according to significance, risk, resources and opportunities.

3.6

grievance

expression of dissatisfaction or concern related to an organisation's activities, workers, suppliers, community relationships or sustainability performance for which a response or resolution is expected

Note 1 to entry: A grievance mechanism may be formal or simplified according to the size and complexity of the organisation, provided concerns can be raised and addressed without retaliation.

3.7

identity preservation

system of practices and records used to maintain a substantiated identity or characteristic of cocoa or cocoa products through relevant stages of handling, processing, storage and distribution

Note 1 to entry: Identity may relate to geographic origin, estate or community source, variety or clone where substantiated, certification status, or another defined characteristic.

Note 2 to entry: Identity preservation may involve physical segregation, controlled handling, lot identification and documented traceability measures sufficient to maintain the specified identity throughout the relevant stages of the value chain.

3.8

mass balance

traceability approach in which cocoa or cocoa products with a specified characteristic may be physically mixed with cocoa or cocoa products without that characteristic, provided that the quantities entering and leaving the defined system are documented and reconciled according to established rules

Note 1 to entry: Mass balance does not require the specified characteristic to be physically preserved in each individual batch or finished product.

Note 2 to entry: A mass-balance claim should not be represented as physical segregation, identity preservation or physical traceability to a specific origin, farm, estate, community or other source unless this can be independently demonstrated.

Note 3 to entry: Where mass balance is used, the organisation should maintain records sufficient to demonstrate the quantities entering, processed or transferred, and leaving the defined mass-balance system over the applicable reconciliation period.

3.9

micro and small enterprise

enterprise classified as micro or small in accordance with applicable national criteria

Note 1 to entry: Where no applicable national classification is available, the organisation or conformity-assessment programme should document the criteria used.

Note 2 to entry: Micro and small enterprises does not exempt an organisation from applicable mandatory requirements but may justify proportionate procedures, records and evidence.

3.10

organisation

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: For this standard, an organisation may include a sole proprietor, cooperative, association, community enterprise, processor, manufacturer or other legal or operational entity within the cocoa-products and chocolate value chain.

3.11

origin

geographic location from which cocoa or a cocoa product is derived

Note 1 to entry: The geographic level of an origin claim may include country, territory, island, region, community, estate or other clearly defined geographic area.

Note 2 to entry: A claim that a product is manufactured in a location is not equivalent to a claim that the cocoa used in that product originates from that location.

3.12

sustainability performance

measurable or otherwise verifiable results relating to an organisation's environmental, social and economic sustainability and resilience

Note 1 to entry: Sustainability performance may be demonstrated through quantitative indicators, qualitative evidence, completed actions or other appropriate means of verification.

Note 2 to entry: Detailed profitability or product-quality performance is not prescribed in this standard.

3.13

traceability

ability to trace the history, application, location or movement of cocoa, cocoa products or chocolate through specified stages of production, processing and distribution

Note 1 to entry: The level of traceability required depends on applicable legislation, the organisation's activities and the claims made.

Note 2 to entry: Traceability may be maintained using paper-based, electronic, QR-code or other systems, provided the information is reliable and retrievable.

3.14

value chain

sequence of activities or parties that provides or receives value in the form of products or services

Note 1 to entry: For this standard, the value chain may include cocoa suppliers, aggregators, processors, manufacturers, service providers, distributors, retailers and other relevant parties.

3.15

young worker

person under 18 years of age who has attained the applicable minimum legal age for admission to employment or work

Note 1 to entry: The applicable minimum age is determined by national legislation. ILO Convention No. 138 establishes that the general minimum age should not be lower than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in general, not lower than 15 years, subject to the flexibilities provided by the Convention.

4 General requirements and implementation framework

4.1 General requirements

4.1.1 The organisation shall identify the requirements of this standard applicable to its activities, products and position in the cocoa and chocolate value chain.

4.1.2 Implementation shall be proportionate to the nature, scale, complexity, resources and significant sustainability risks of the organisation.

4.1.3 The organisation shall identify significant environmental, social, climate, sourcing and integrity risks relevant to its activities and shall consider opportunities for improving sustainability performance and resilience.

4.1.4 The organization shall prioritise activities to prevent or reduce significant adverse impacts, address legal and other mandatory requirements, and implement practical improvements appropriate to the organisation's circumstances.

4.2 Legal and regulatory compliance

4.2.1 The organisation shall identify and comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements relevant to its operations, workforce, products and environmental impacts.

4.2.2 Where products are intended for export, applicable importing-country and buyer requirements shall be identified where relevant to the organisation's activities and claims.

4.2.3 Evidence of required licences, permits, registrations or approvals shall be maintained where applicable.

4.3 Proportionate and risk-based implementation

4.3.1 Micro and small enterprises may use simplified procedures, checklists, records, photographs, invoices, utility records, supplier declarations and other practical evidence to adequately demonstrate implementation.

NOTE See Annex A for a simplified implementation checklist for micro and small enterprises.

4.3.2 Proportionality shall not be used to justify non-compliance with law, unsafe work, prohibited labour practices, deliberate environmental harm, loss of required traceability or misleading claims.

4.3.3 Where specialised testing or technology is not reasonably accessible within a Member State, the organisation may use recognised regional services or other technically justified means, provided applicable legal requirements are met.

4.3.4 The organisation shall identify relevant interested parties that may significantly affect, or be affected by, its sustainability performance and shall consider their relevant needs or concerns when determining sustainability priorities.

NOTE Relevant interested parties may include workers, cocoa suppliers, farmer organisations, neighbouring communities, customers, regulatory authorities and service providers.

4.4 Sustainability policy and commitment

4.4.1 The organisation shall establish and maintain a sustainability policy or documented commitment appropriate to the nature and scale of its activities.

4.4.2 The policy or commitment shall include, as applicable:

- a) compliance with applicable legal and regulatory requirements;
- b) respect for workers and fundamental labour rights;
- c) protection of workers' health and safety;
- d) prevention or reduction of significant environmental impacts;
- e) responsible use of resources;
- f) climate resilience and preparedness;
- g) responsible sourcing and traceability;
- h) accurate and substantiated sustainability claims; and

- i) continual improvement.

4.4.3 The policy or commitment shall be communicated to persons working for the organisation and made available to relevant interested parties where appropriate.

NOTE For a micro or small enterprise, the sustainability commitment may be a concise statement and not a separate management-system manual.

4.5 Responsibility, competence and worker awareness

4.5.1 Responsibility shall be assigned to workers for implementation of the applicable requirements.

4.5.2 Persons performing activities that can significantly affect sustainability performance shall have appropriate competence through training, experience, instruction or supervision.

4.5.3 Workers shall be informed, in a form and language they can reasonably understand, of significant health, safety, environmental and ethical requirements relevant to their work.

4.6 Prerequisite food safety, product conformity and traceability

4.6.1 Applicable food-safety, hygiene, product composition, labelling and product-quality requirements shall be met as prerequisites to conformity with this standard.

NOTE See CRCP 5: 2010, *Code of Practice for General Principles of Food Hygiene*.

4.6.2 The organisation shall maintain traceability appropriate to its activities, including identification of relevant suppliers, incoming cocoa or cocoa ingredients, production batches and finished products.

4.6.3 Applicable CARICOM Regional Standards for cocoa bean quality, post harvest and fine flavour requirements shall be met.

NOTE These standards include CRS 82, *Cocoa bean quality — Sampling requirements*, CRS 83, *Cocoa bean quality — Specifications* and CRCP 12, *Cocoa - Good Agricultural Practices*. At the time of the publication of this standard, a CARICOM Regional Standard for fine flavour was under development.

4.7 Stakeholder complaints and grievance mechanisms

4.7.1 The organisation shall provide a practical mechanism for workers and, where relevant, suppliers or affected community members to raise complaints or grievances.

4.7.2 The mechanism shall be accessible, shall allow complaints to be considered without retaliation, and shall provide for appropriate review and response.

NOTE For micro and small enterprises, a named contact person and a simple written or electronic record of significant complaints and actions taken may be utilized.

5 Responsible business, sourcing and operational resilience

5.1 General

5.1.1 The organisation shall manage its operations in a manner that supports continuity of responsible production and does not undermine social or environmental requirements.

NOTE 1 This clause does not prescribe profitability, pricing, production targets or detailed quality-management requirements.

NOTE 2 Business viability is relevant to sustainability because an organisation requires sufficient operational capacity and continuity to maintain its environmental and social responsibilities. This standard does not assess profitability or prescribe a particular business model.

NOTE 3 Requirements relating to cocoa productivity, production efficiency, post-harvest quality and related farm-level economic performance are addressed in the CARICOM Regional Code of Practice, CRCP 12, *Cocoa - Good Agricultural Practices*, where applicable.

5.2 Operational viability and resilience

5.2.1 The organisation shall identify significant operational dependencies and vulnerabilities that could materially affect its ability to maintain responsible operations and meet applicable sustainability requirements.

NOTE Operational dependencies and vulnerabilities may include critical utilities, equipment, raw materials, suppliers, transport, communications, technical services and access to essential infrastructure.

5.2.2 The organisation should establish proportionate measures to reduce significant vulnerabilities and maintain or restore essential operations following disruption.

NOTE 1 Measures may include preventive maintenance, alternative suppliers or service providers, appropriate inventory levels, shared facilities, backup utilities or alternative transport arrangements.

NOTE 2 Climate- and natural-hazard-related preparedness is addressed in Clause 7.

5.3 Responsible sourcing and supplier expectations

5.3.1 The organisation shall identify the source of cocoa and cocoa ingredients to the extent necessary for traceability, legal compliance and claims.

5.3.2 Where significant social, environmental or legality risks are identified in the supply chain, the organisation shall take proportionate steps to obtain information, communicate expectations and address the risk.

5.3.3 Supplier requirements shall be proportionate to the organisation's influence and the significance of the risk and should avoid unnecessary exclusion of small suppliers solely because they lack complex documentation.

5.3.4 Actions taken to address supply-chain sustainability risks shall be proportionate to the severity of the risk and the organisation's ability to influence the supplier or other value-chain actor.

NOTE Limited commercial leverage does not remove the responsibility to consider significant sustainability risks but may affect the type and extent of action reasonably available to the organisation.

5.4 Resource efficiency and reduction of avoidable losses

5.4.1 The organisation should identify significant opportunities to reduce unnecessary consumption and avoidable losses of cocoa, ingredients, water, energy, packaging and other material resources.

5.4.2 These opportunities shall not compromise food safety, worker safety, product conformity or environmental protection however the measures should prioritise prevention and reduction at source.

NOTE Resource-efficiency measures may also reduce operating costs; however, demonstration of financial savings is not required by this standard.

5.5 Responsible innovation and appropriate technology

5.5.1 New technologies or process changes intended to improve sustainability shall be assessed for relevant food-safety, worker-safety, environmental and operational implications before implementation.

NOTE Shared facilities, regional technical assistance, cooperative arrangements or service providers may be used for the improvement of sustainability performance or access to new technology.

5.5.2 Selection of appropriate technologies should consider technical suitability, maintenance requirements, available skills, resource efficiency, resilience and the scale of the operation.

NOTE Appropriate technology may include simple, locally maintainable or shared solutions as well as more advanced technologies.

5.6 Local and regional value-chain linkages

5.6.1 The organisation should, where appropriate, consider opportunities to strengthen responsible local and regional value-chain linkages, including sourcing, services, technical expertise, skills development and collaboration.

5.6.2 Local or regional sourcing shall not be represented as inherently more sustainable unless the basis for such a claim can be substantiated.

5.6.3 Claims concerning community benefit, local economic contribution or shared value shall comply with Clause 9.

6 People, livelihoods and communities

6.1 General

6.1.1 The organisation shall respect applicable labour and human-rights requirements and shall manage significant social risks associated with its activities.

Note The implementation of these requirements should be done in a manner appropriate to the specific member state.

6.2 Human rights, dignity and non-discrimination

6.2.1 Workers shall be treated with dignity and shall not be subjected to violence, corporal punishment, intimidation, harassment, abuse or coercion.

6.2.2 Discrimination in recruitment, remuneration, training, promotion or termination on grounds prohibited by applicable law shall not be permitted.

6.3 Employment conditions and worker rights

6.3.1 Employment conditions, wages, working time, leave and other statutory entitlements shall comply with applicable national law.

6.3.2 Workers shall be provided with clear and understandable information on their terms and conditions of employment, including remuneration, working time and other applicable entitlements.

NOTE Information may be provided in written or other appropriate form, taking account of literacy and language needs.

6.3.3 The organisation shall respect lawful freedom of association and collective bargaining.

6.3.4 Workers shall have access to the grievance mechanism in 4.7 without retaliation.

6.4 Child labour, forced labour and protection of young workers

6.4.1 Forced or compulsory labour, human trafficking and illegal forms of child labour shall not be utilized.

6.4.2 Persons below the applicable minimum age for admission to employment or work shall not be employed contrary to applicable national legislation.

6.4.3 Young workers shall not perform hazardous work or other work prohibited for persons under 18 years of age by applicable national legislation.

NOTE ILO Convention No. 138 generally establishes 18 years as the minimum age for hazardous work, while permitting work from 16 years only under specified protective and training conditions.

6.4.4 Where child labour or another credible violation involving a young person is identified, the organisation shall take appropriate corrective or remedial action that prioritises the safety, welfare and education of the affected person.

NOTE Not all work performed by persons under 18 years of age constitutes child labour. The applicable minimum age, nature and conditions of the work, and its potential effect on health, safety and education should be considered in accordance with national legislation and relevant ILO principles.

6.5 Occupational health and safety

6.5.1 The organisation shall identify significant occupational health and safety hazards associated with its activities.

6.5.2 Appropriate controls shall be implemented, including safe work procedures, training or instruction, first-aid and emergency arrangements, and suitable personal protective equipment where required.

6.5.3 Necessary protective equipment for hazardous work shall be provided to workers without charge where required by law or risk assessment.

6.5.4 Workers shall be informed of significant workplace hazards and the measures necessary to protect their health and safety.

6.5.5 Significant incidents and corrective actions shall be recorded and reviewed.

6.6 Skills, training and capacity development

6.6.1 Workers shall receive training, instruction or supervision appropriate to their responsibilities and significant risks.

6.6.2 Organisations should support practical skills development relevant to safe processing, sustainability, traceability, environmental management and resilience.

6.7 Gender equality, inclusion and youth participation

6.7.1 The organisation should promote equitable access to employment, training, skills development and advancement, including for women, youth and other groups that may face barriers to participation.

6.7.2 Where succession or labour availability is a significant value-chain risk, partnerships for apprenticeships, mentoring, internships or technical training should be considered.

6.8 Local livelihoods and community engagement

6.8.1 Where operations have significant effects on neighbouring communities, the organisation should maintain appropriate channels for communication and consideration of material concerns.

6.8.2 Community activities should be proportionate to the organisation's scale and influence and should prioritise genuine, identified needs rather than symbolic actions.

7 Environment and climate resilience

7.1 General

7.1.1 The organisation shall identify and manage significant environmental aspects, impacts and risks arising from its activities.

7.1.2 Priority shall be given to prevention of pollution, responsible use of water and energy, waste reduction, safe management of hazardous materials, climate resilience and protection of surrounding ecosystems.

NOTE The significance of environmental aspects and risks may be determined using a proportionate approach that considers likelihood, severity, legal requirements and the scale of the operation.

7.2 Environmental risk assessment and legal controls

7.2.1 Significant environmental aspects and risks shall be identified considering normal operations, abnormal conditions and reasonably foreseeable emergencies.

7.2.2 Required environmental permits, discharge limits, waste controls and other legal obligations shall be identified and met.

7.3 Water stewardship and wastewater

7.3.1 Significant water uses shall be identified and reasonable measures taken to avoid unnecessary consumption.

7.3.2 Wastewater shall be managed so as to prevent unacceptable contamination of surface water, groundwater, soil or neighbouring property.

7.3.3 Wastewater testing or treatment shall be undertaken where required by law, permit or where necessary to control a significant environmental risk.

NOTE Where suitable accredited laboratory services are not readily available nationally, recognised regional laboratories or other legally acceptable testing arrangements may be used.

7.3.4 Water-reuse measures shall not compromise food safety, worker safety or environmental protection.

7.4 Pollution prevention and hazardous materials

7.4.1 Chemicals, fuels, lubricants, cleaning agents and other hazardous materials shall be identified, labelled, stored, handled and disposed of in a manner that minimises spills, exposure and environmental release.

7.4.2 Appropriate spill-response materials and procedures shall be available where significant spill risks exist.

NOTE Controls may include secondary containment, segregation of incompatible materials, suitable storage areas and readily available spill-response materials, as appropriate to the risks involved.

7.5 Resource efficiency, waste and circularity

7.5.1 The organisation shall identify significant waste streams and apply, where practicable, the hierarchy of prevention, reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery and responsible disposal.

7.5.2 Cocoa shells, cocoa-processing residues, packaging and other by-products should be considered for safe and lawful reuse or valorisation where technically and economically appropriate.

NOTE Valorisation may include use as a secondary material, input or product where food-safety, environmental and legal requirements are met.

7.5.3 Circular-economy technologies shall not be required where equipment, expertise or infrastructure is not reasonably accessible. Regional technical assistance, shared equipment or cooperative solutions may be used.

7.5.4 Waste shall not be disposed of by practices that create unacceptable food-safety, health or environmental risks

7.6 Energy use and lower-impact technologies

7.6.1 Significant energy uses should be identified and monitored at a level appropriate to the operation.

7.6.2 Reasonable opportunities to improve energy efficiency through good operating practices, preventive maintenance, heat recovery, renewable energy or other lower-impact technologies should be considered where feasible.

NOTE Consideration of an opportunity does not require implementation where it is technically unsuitable, financially disproportionate or not reasonably accessible.

7.6.3 Renewable-energy or low-carbon claims shall comply with Clause 9.

7.7 Packaging and materials

7.7.1 Packaging shall meet applicable food-contact, product-protection and legal requirements.

7.7.2 Organisations should consider opportunities to reduce unnecessary packaging and improve reuse, recyclability or material efficiency, taking account of product safety, integrity and available waste-management or recycling systems.

7.8 Biodiversity and surrounding ecosystems

7.8.1 Operations shall not knowingly cause significant adverse impacts on protected areas, waterways or other environmentally sensitive ecosystems and shall comply with applicable legal requirements.

NOTE Environmentally sensitive areas may include protected areas, wetlands, mangroves, riparian zones, coastal ecosystems and other areas recognised under applicable national or local arrangements.

7.8.2 Where facilities are adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas, proportionate controls shall be used to manage wastewater, waste, emissions, lighting, noise or other relevant impacts.

7.9 Climate risk assessment and adaptation

7.9.1 The organisation shall consider significant climate and natural-hazard risks relevant to its location and activities.

7.9.2 Significant climate and natural-hazard risks shall be evaluated in relation to their potential effects on people, facilities, utilities, raw materials, storage, transport, supply chains and the surrounding ecosystem and continuity of operations.

NOTE 1 Relevant CARICOM hazards may include hurricanes, intense rainfall, flooding, drought, extreme heat, bush fires, landslides, coastal flooding or saltwater intrusion, and associated interruption of power, water, transport and supplies.

NOTE 2 See Annex D for an example of a climate resilience and business continuity checklist.

7.9.3 Practical and proportionate adaptation measures shall be identified and implemented for significant risks.

NOTE Measures may include drainage maintenance, protected or raised storage, water storage, backup power, alternative suppliers or transport routes, record backup and protection of critical equipment.

NOTE ISO 14090:2019, *Adaptation to climate change — Principles, requirements and guidelines*.

7.10 Emergency preparedness and business continuity

7.10.1 The organisation shall maintain and periodically review emergency arrangements proportionate to foreseeable hazards and the scale of its operations.

7.10.2 Priority shall be given to protection of people, food safety, environmental protection, traceability and safe restart.

7.10.3 Following a significant event, affected raw materials, packaging, work-in-progress and finished products shall be assessed before use or release.

NOTE Assessment following an event may consider contamination, water or heat exposure, packaging damage, loss of temperature control, pest exposure, traceability integrity and suitability for intended use.

7.10.4 Significant events shall be reviewed to identify lessons and improvement actions.

7.11 Climate mitigation and greenhouse-gas claims

7.11.1 Organisations should consider practical opportunities to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions associated with significant energy, transport and resource use.

7.11.2 Quantitative greenhouse-gas, carbon-neutral, net-zero or similar claims shall be supported by a recognised methodology, clearly defined boundary and evidence appropriate to the claim.

Note The standard does not assume that shorter value chains or local sourcing automatically result in lower greenhouse-gas emissions.

8 Origin, identity, heritage and responsible communication

8.1 General

8.1.1 The organisation shall ensure that claims concerning the origin, identity, heritage or other distinguishing attributes of cocoa and cocoa products are accurate, traceable where applicable, and supported by evidence appropriate to the claim.

8.1.2 Information used to differentiate or communicate the value of cocoa and cocoa products shall not be false, misleading or likely to create an unsupported impression regarding their source, characteristics or associated benefits.

NOTE This clause addresses the integrity and responsible communication of origin, identity, heritage and related attributes. Requirements for cocoa quality, post-harvest practices and fine flavour assessment are outlined in CARICOM Regional Standards for cocoa, CRS 82, Cocoa bean quality — Sampling requirements and CRS 83, Cocoa bean quality — Specifications. At the time of the publication of this standard, a CARICOM Regional Standard for fine flavour was under development.

8.2 Traceability and identity preservation

8.2.1 The organisation shall maintain traceability appropriate to its activities, applicable legal requirements and claims made.

8.2.2 Where identity preservation is required to support an origin, source or other specified attribute, appropriate controls shall be maintained during receipt, storage, processing, packaging and other relevant stages.

8.2.3 Where mass balance or another chain-of-custody approach is used, it shall be clearly distinguished from identity preservation and shall not be represented as physical traceability to a particular source unless this can be demonstrated.

NOTE Traceability systems may be paper-based, electronic, QR-code enabled or use other suitable technologies, provided records are reliable and retrievable

8.3 Origin, source and cocoa-identity information

8.3.1 Claims concerning geographic origin or source shall identify the geographic level relevant to the claim and be supported by appropriate supplier, batch or traceability records.

8.3.2 Claims concerning cocoa variety, clone, hybrid or other cocoa type shall be supported by evidence appropriate to the specificity and certainty of the claim.

8.3.3 Origin and cocoa-identity terminology shall, where applicable, be consistent with relevant CARICOM cocoa standards.

NOTE Evidence supporting cocoa identity may include recognised planting-material or supplier records, documented provenance, morphological information, molecular evidence or other technically justified information. The level of evidence should be appropriate to the precision of the claim.

8.4 Authenticity and prevention of misleading representation

8.4.1 The organisation shall not knowingly misrepresent the origin, identity, composition, certification status or other distinguishing attribute of cocoa or cocoa products.

8.4.2 Where cocoa or cocoa products from different origins or identities are mixed, the resulting product shall not be represented as exclusively originating from, or possessing the identity of, one component unless this can be substantiated.

NOTE Terms such as single origin, estate, community, regional, *Trinitario*, fine flavour or similar differentiating descriptions should be used only where their application can be appropriately substantiated.

8.5 Cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional-product attributes

8.5.1 Where cultural heritage, traditional knowledge or traditional practices are used in product narratives or sustainability communication, their representation shall be respectful, accurate and supported by evidence appropriate to the claim.

8.5.2 Heritage, traditional or cultural claims shall be based on identifiable historical, community, process or product evidence appropriate to the claim.

8.5.3 Organisations shall not imply community endorsement, ownership, participation or benefit where this has not been established.

8.5.4 Organisations should avoid inappropriate appropriation or misleading representation of community traditions, cultural heritage or traditional knowledge.

NOTE Evidence may include documented historical sources, recognised community knowledge, established traditional practices, archival material or other credible evidence appropriate to the claim.

8.6 Responsible differentiation and value communication

8.6.1 Organisations may communicate distinctive origin, heritage, production or other substantiated attributes as a means of responsible product differentiation.

8.6.2 Such communication shall accurately distinguish between the location where a product is manufactured and the origin of the cocoa from which it is produced.

8.6.3 Terms indicating exclusive origin shall be used only where all cocoa content relevant to the claim derives from the stated source.

NOTE Manufacture of chocolate or a cocoa product within a CARICOM Member State does not, by itself, establish that the cocoa used is of CARICOM origin.

8.7 Relationship to complementary cocoa quality standards

8.7.1 Where claims relate to cocoa quality, fine flavour, post-harvest quality or other technical quality attributes, the applicable requirements and recognised methods of relevant CARICOM cocoa standards or other recognised specifications shall apply.

8.7.2 The organisation shall retain evidence appropriate to any such quality-related claim.

NOTE This standard does not establish separate sensory, physical or chemical criteria for determining fine flavour or other cocoa-quality classifications.

9 Evidence, monitoring and sustainability claims

9.1 General

9.1.1 The organisation shall maintain evidence appropriate to its activities, sustainability risks and claims made to demonstrate implementation of applicable requirements of this standard.

9.1.2 Monitoring, documentation and verification shall be proportionate to the nature, scale and complexity of the organisation.

NOTE Evidence may be paper-based or electronic and may include records, invoices, photographs, training records, utility data, supplier information, inspection results, certificates or other reliable information appropriate to the requirement.

9.2 Sustainability objectives and indicators

9.2.1 The organisation shall identify sustainability objectives or priorities appropriate to its significant risks, impacts and opportunities.

9.2.2 Appropriate indicators or other means of assessing progress shall be identified for significant objectives or priorities.

9.2.3 Objectives and indicators shall be reviewed and updated where appropriate.

NOTE 1 Indicators may be quantitative or qualitative. A formal baseline is not required where reliable historical data are unavailable; the organisation may use the earliest reliable information available as a reference point.

NOTE 2 See Annex B for an example of sustainability performance indicators.

9.3 Monitoring and evaluation

9.3.1 The organisation shall periodically monitor progress against its identified sustainability objectives or priorities and applicable requirements of this standard.

9.3.2 The frequency and extent of monitoring shall be appropriate to the significance of the issue and the scale of the organisation.

9.3.3 Monitoring results shall be used, where appropriate, to identify corrective actions or opportunities for improvement.

9.4 Means of verification and evidence

9.4.1 Evidence used to demonstrate conformity or support a claim shall be relevant, sufficiently reliable and appropriate to the requirement or claim being assessed.

NOTE 1 Where this standard requires “appropriate evidence”, the examples provided in Annex B and Annex C may be used as guidance. Equivalent forms of evidence may be accepted where they provide comparable assurance.

NOTE 2 The type and amount of evidence necessary will depend on the nature and specificity of the requirement or claim. More specific or consequential claims generally require stronger evidence.

9.5 Record control and retention

9.5.1 Records necessary to demonstrate conformity or substantiate claims shall be legible, identifiable, retrievable and protected from inappropriate alteration or loss.

9.5.2 Records shall be retained for a period appropriate to applicable legal, contractual, traceability and claim requirements.

NOTE 1 This standard does not prescribe a universal retention period. Organisations should determine retention periods according to the purpose and significance of the record and any applicable legal or market requirement.

NOTE 2 Micro and small enterprises may use paper or simple electronic records.

9.6 General requirements for sustainability claims

9.6.1 Sustainability claims shall be accurate, clear, relevant and capable of substantiation.

9.6.2 Claims shall not be false, misleading, exaggerated or presented in a manner likely to create an unsupported impression of the organisation, product or its sustainability performance.

9.6.3 Evidence supporting a claim shall be available at the time the claim is made and shall be appropriate to the scope and specificity of the claim.

9.6.4 Qualifications or limitations necessary for accurate interpretation of a claim shall be clearly communicated.

NOTE Broad or absolute terms such as sustainable, environmentally friendly, climate friendly or similar expressions can create a wider impression than a specific factual claim and therefore require evidence appropriate to that wider meaning.

9.7 Environmental and climate claims

9.7.1 Environmental and climate claims shall clearly identify, where relevant, the environmental attribute, activity, product, organisational boundary or period to which the claim applies.

9.7.2 Quantitative greenhouse-gas, carbon-neutral, net-zero or similar claims shall comply with the requirements of 7.11 and be supported by an appropriate recognised methodology.

NOTE Local or regional sourcing, shorter transport distance, renewable-energy use or recyclable packaging should not, by themselves, be presented as demonstrating overall environmental sustainability unless the broader claim can be substantiated.

9.8 Social and community claims

9.8.1 Claims concerning community support, empowerment, livelihood improvement, social investment or similar benefits shall identify the nature of the benefit and be supported by appropriate objective evidence.

9.8.2 The organisation shall not claim or imply that it supports, empowers, invests in or generates additional benefits for a community, farmer group, cooperative or supplier solely on the basis of an ordinary commercial purchase.

NOTE Additional benefits may include technical assistance, capacity building, infrastructure, premium or incentive arrangements, long-term business-development support, benefit-sharing or risk-sharing.

9.8.3 Such claims shall be made only where an identifiable benefit beyond normal payment for goods or services is provided and verifiable evidence is maintained.

NOTE Evidence may include documented training, technical assistance, infrastructure support, premiums or incentives, benefit-sharing arrangements, long-term development activities or other identifiable benefits beyond the normal commercial transaction.

9.9 Origin, heritage and identity claims

9.9.1 Origin, heritage, traditional knowledge and cocoa-identity claims shall comply with Clause 8 and shall be supported by evidence appropriate to the claim.

9.10 Conformity and certification claims

9.10.1 An organisation shall not claim conformity with this standard unless all applicable mandatory requirements have been satisfied.

9.10.2 Participation in progressive implementation or achievement of a maturity level shall not, by itself, be represented as full conformity or certification.

9.10.3 Certification, verification or other third-party assurance claims shall accurately identify their scope and status.

NOTE Terms, marks or statements that could reasonably be interpreted as certification shall not be used where only self-assessment, participation or progress towards conformity has occurred.

9.11 Review, complaints and corrective action

9.11.1 The organisation shall review credible concerns or complaints relating to its sustainability claims or demonstrated conformity.

9.11.2 Where a claim or conformity statement is found to be inaccurate or inadequately supported, appropriate corrective action shall be taken.

9.11.3 Corrective action should address both the inaccurate communication and, where relevant, its underlying cause.

NOTE Corrective action may include correcting or withdrawing a claim, updating information, strengthening evidence or controls, and taking measures to prevent recurrence.

10.0 Conformity and staged implementation

10.1 Conformity with this standard requires fulfilment of all applicable mandatory requirements.

10.2 Progressive implementation may be used to support continual improvement but shall not be represented as full conformity where applicable mandatory requirements have not been met.

10.3 The progressive implementation framework may comprise three indicative stages:

a) **Foundation** — essential systems, controls and practices are established and significant sustainability risks are being addressed – See Annex E.2.1;

b) **Improving** — applicable requirements are implemented more systematically, relevant performance is monitored and improvement can be demonstrated – See Annex E.2.2; and

c) **Advanced — full implementation** — applicable requirements are fully implemented, relevant

sustainability practices are integrated into operations and sustained improvement can be demonstrated – See Annex E.2.3.

10.4 Progression between stages shall be based on evidence that the relevant activities have been implemented and the expected outputs associated with the stage have been achieved. The stages shall not be represented as certification grades or levels of conformity.

NOTE 1 The implementation stages do not prescribe fixed implementation periods.

NOTE 2 First-, second- and third-party assessment approaches are independent of the implementation stages and may be used at different stages for different purposes. See Annex E.

NOTE 3 Conformity with this standard requires fulfilment of all applicable mandatory requirements irrespective of the implementation stage.

Voting Deadline: 23 October 2026

Annex A (Informative)

Simplified implementation checklist for micro and small enterprises

A.1 This annex provides a simplified checklist to assist micro and small enterprises in applying the requirements of this standard using practical systems and evidence appropriate to their scale, activities and risks.

The checklist is an implementation aid and does not replace or modify any applicable requirement of this standard. Completion of the checklist does not, by itself, demonstrate conformity.

Table A.1 – Simplified checklist

No.	Area	Simplified check	Examples of simple evidence
1	Responsibility	A person is identified to coordinate applicable sustainability requirements.	Named person, responsibility list or job description
2	Legal compliance	Applicable licences, permits and legal requirements are identified and addressed.	Licences, permits, registrations, inspection records
3	Traceability	Suppliers, incoming cocoa/relevant ingredients and production batches can be identified.	Supplier, purchase, batch and production records
4	Responsible sourcing	Significant sourcing risks are considered and practical actions are taken where appropriate.	Supplier information, purchase records, supplier communications
5	Worker rights	Workers are treated with dignity and prohibited labour practices are not used.	Employment records, workplace practices, worker feedback
6	Grievances	Workers and other relevant parties can raise concerns without retaliation.	Named contact, grievance log, correspondence
7	Health and safety	Main workplace hazards are identified and appropriate controls, training and PPE are used where required.	Safety checklist, training records, PPE records, incident log
8	Water and wastewater	Significant water uses and wastewater risks are understood and appropriately controlled.	Bills/meter readings, permits, service or test records where applicable
9	Waste and materials	Major waste streams are identified and avoidable waste is reduced, reused, recycled or otherwise responsibly managed where feasible.	Waste records, invoices, photographs, by-product use records
10	Hazardous materials	Chemicals, fuels and other hazardous materials are appropriately labelled, stored, handled and disposed of.	Storage inspection, labels, safety information, disposal records
11	Energy	Significant energy use is understood and practical efficiency measures are considered.	Utility bills, meter readings, maintenance or improvement records
12	Climate and operational resilience	Main climate, natural-hazard and operational disruptions are identified and basic preparedness actions are in place.	Risk checklist, emergency contacts, maintenance/business-continuity records

No.	Area	Simplified check	Examples of simple evidence
13	Community and social claims	Claims of community support or social benefit are supported by evidence beyond ordinary commercial purchases.	Agreements, training/activity records, incentive or investment records
14	Origin, identity and heritage claims	Origin, identity, heritage or traditional claims can be linked to appropriate supporting evidence.	Traceability, source, historical, community or process records
15	Monitoring and improvement	A small number of relevant indicators or actions are reviewed and practical improvement priorities are followed up.	Action list, monitoring records, before/after evidence

Annex B (Informative)

Sustainability performance indicators and means of verification

B.1 This annex provides examples of indicators and evidence that organisations may use to monitor sustainability performance, support claims and demonstrate improvement.

NOTE 1 The indicators are illustrative and are not mandatory performance thresholds.

NOTE 2 Organisations may select alternative indicators where these are more appropriate to their activities, risks and sustainability priorities. Quantitative indicators are not required where suitable qualitative evidence provides useful and reliable information.

Table B.1 - Sustainability performance indicators and possible evidence

Sustainability area	Example indicator	Possible evidence
Responsible sourcing	Share of cocoa/relevant ingredients from identified suppliers; significant sourcing risks addressed	Supplier list, invoices, batch records, supplier communications
Worker safety	Significant incidents and corrective actions; priority hazards controlled	Incident log, inspections, training/PPE records
Training and competence	Workers receiving relevant safety or sustainability instruction/training	Training, supervision or competency records
Inclusion	Participation of women, youth or other relevant groups in opportunities, where applicable	Training, employment or programme records
Grievances	Significant grievances received, addressed and resolved	Grievance log, correspondence, action records
Water	Change in significant water use or implementation of conservation measures	Meter readings, bills, maintenance/action records
Wastewater	Compliance with applicable discharge/treatment requirements and significant risks controlled	Permits, test reports, service/inspection records
Waste and circularity	Major waste streams monitored; reduction, reuse, recycling or lawful valorisation actions	Waste records, invoices, photographs, by-product records
Energy	Change in significant electricity/fuel use or implementation of efficiency measures	Bills, meter readings, maintenance/action records
Climate and operational resilience	Priority risks identified and preparedness measures completed/reviewed	Risk checklist, emergency/business-continuity records, photographs

Sustainability area	Example indicator	Possible evidence
Community benefit	Documented benefits beyond ordinary commercial purchases	Agreements, training, incentive, investment or activity records
Traceability and identity	Batches for which source/movement or specified identity can be demonstrated	Traceability tests, supplier and batch records
Claims	Claims reviewed against evidence appropriate to their scope and specificity	Claims register, evidence file, approvals
Continual improvement	Priority actions completed and their effectiveness reviewed where appropriate	Action plan, monitoring and before/after evidence

Annex C (Informative)

Guidance on sustainability, community, origin and environmental claims

C.1 This annex provides illustrative guidance for communicating sustainability, community, origin, identity, heritage and environmental attributes in a clear and substantiated manner.

The examples are illustrative. Evidence should be proportionate to the specificity, scope and potential significance of the claim.

Quality, fine flavour and other technical cocoa-quality claims should be supported in accordance with applicable CARICOM Regional cocoa standards or other recognised specifications.

Table C.1 – Guidance on claims types

Claim type	Preferable approach	Example evidence	Potentially misleading practice
Factual sourcing	"Cocoa sourced from [named place/cooperative]."	Traceability and purchase records	Implying additional social or environmental benefit from sourcing alone
Origin	"Made with cocoa from [defined origin]."	Supplier and batch traceability	Using manufacturing location as the cocoa origin
Exclusive/single origin	"Made exclusively with cocoa from [defined origin]."	Evidence that all cocoa content relevant to the claim derives from that origin	Using an exclusive/single-origin claim where cocoa from other origins is included
Cocoa identity	A specific variety, clone, hybrid or cocoa type is identified with an appropriate level of certainty.	Recognised planting-material/supplier records, documented provenance, morphological or molecular evidence where appropriate	Presenting uncertain or unverified identity as definitively established
Community/social benefit	"Training and technical assistance provided to [group] during [period]."	Training records, agreements, activity, incentive or investment records	Describing an ordinary commercial purchase as community empowerment, investment or additional benefit
Heritage/traditional knowledge	"Uses a documented traditional process associated with [community/place]."	Historical, community, process or other credible supporting evidence	Unsupported heritage narratives or implying community

Claim type	Preferable approach	Example evidence	Potentially misleading practice
			endorsement, ownership or benefit where not established
Environmental action	"Electricity use reduced by X% over [defined period/basis]."	Meter/bill data and calculation	Using one limited action to imply overall environmental sustainability
Circularity	"Cocoa shells are recovered for [defined lawful use]."	Waste/by-product and destination/use records	Claiming circularity where material is merely transferred without evidence of the stated use
Carbon/GHG	A defined carbon or GHG claim with stated scope/boundary where necessary.	Recognised methodology, calculation and supporting data; verification where required	Assuming local sourcing or shorter transport automatically demonstrates a lower overall carbon footprint
Deforestation/land-use	A clearly scoped claim supported by applicable traceability, geolocation or land-use evidence.	Geolocation/land-use records and verification where required	Using "deforestation-free" without evidence sufficient for the scope and applicable requirements
General sustainability	A specific, qualified statement describing the sustainability performance or attribute being communicated.	Evidence appropriate to the breadth of the claim	Broad or absolute claims such as "100% sustainable" without evidence supporting the full meaning conveyed

Annex D
(Informative)
Climate resilience and business continuity checklist

D.1 General

This annex provides a practical CARICOM-oriented checklist for considering climate, natural-hazard and operational disruptions that may affect people, food safety, facilities, utilities, supplies, traceability and continuity of operations.

Not every hazard will be relevant to every organisation. The checklist should be applied according to location, activities, exposure and reasonably foreseeable risks.

Table D.1 - Climate resilience and business continuity checklist

Hazard/disruption	Potential impact	Preparedness/action to consider	Possible evidence/check
Hurricane/tropical storm	Structural damage; stock/equipment loss; interruption of utilities or access	Roof/building maintenance; secure stock; protect critical equipment/records; emergency contacts	Inspection/maintenance records; photographs; preparedness checklist
Heavy rainfall/flooding	Water ingress; contamination; stock loss; access disruption	Drainage maintenance; raised/protected storage; flood barriers where appropriate; safe shutdown	Drainage/inspection records; photographs; response checklist
Drought/water shortage	Cleaning or production interruption; reduced sanitation capacity	Water efficiency; lawful storage; alternative lawful supply; prioritisation of essential uses	Water plan; storage/maintenance records; supplier contacts
Extreme heat	Worker heat stress; chocolate/storage problems; equipment stress	Ventilation/temperature control; adjusted work practices; protected storage	Temperature records; work instructions; maintenance records
Power interruption	Loss of cooling, processing, lighting or data systems	Safe shutdown; backup power where justified; equipment restart procedures	Emergency procedures; generator/UPS maintenance; test records
Transport/port disruption	Delayed inputs, packaging or exports	Alternative routes/suppliers; inventory planning; customer/supplier communication	Contingency contacts; inventory/supplier records

Hazard/disruption	Potential impact	Preparedness/action to consider	Possible evidence/check
Supply disruption	Cocoa, ingredient, packaging or service shortages	Approved alternatives where appropriate; suitable buffer stocks; alternative suppliers	Approved supplier/alternative lists; inventory records
Communication/data failure	Delayed emergency coordination; loss of access to records	Backup contacts; offline/backup records; alternative communication arrangements	Contact lists; backup records; test/review evidence

D.2 Post-event assessment and safe restart

After a significant event, the organisation should assess conditions before resuming normal operations.

Priority should be given to:

- people and worker safety;
- facility and equipment safety;
- food safety and possible product contamination or damage;
- water exposure, temperature-control loss and packaging integrity;
- utilities, sanitation and environmental risks;
- traceability, records and data integrity;
- condition and suitability of raw materials, work-in-progress and finished products; and
- actions necessary for safe restart and continuity of operations.

Lessons identified after an event should be used to improve preparedness and business-continuity arrangements.

Annex E **(Informative)** **Guidance on staged implementation and assessment of conformity**

E.1 Purpose

This annex provides guidance on staged implementation and assessment of conformity, particularly for micro and small enterprises, cooperatives and producer groups. Conformity requires fulfilment of all applicable mandatory requirements within the defined scope, as specified in Clause 10.

Detailed requirements concerning certification decisions, surveillance, recertification, suspension, withdrawal, complaints, appeals, public registers and control of certification marks should be established separately by the applicable certification scheme and conformity assessment bodies and are therefore outside the scope of this Annex.

NOTE Annex A provides a simplified implementation aid. Completing Annex A alone does not demonstrate conformity.

E.2 Staged implementation – Progressive implementation framework

Progression should be supported by evidence consistent with the stage being entered, without fixed implementation periods. Essential systems are the basic arrangements needed for legal and product prerequisites, prevention or control of significant harm, required traceability and truthful claims. Priority should consider severity, likelihood, exposure, vulnerable people or ecosystems and the consequences of control failure (4.1–4.3 and 7.1–7.2).

Other systems may be developed progressively only where essential safeguards remain effective. Progressive implementation does not remove or modify any applicable mandatory requirements for conformity. Recommended enhancements and optional methods are not automatically mandatory; a control becomes essential where required by law or needed to fulfil another applicable mandatory requirement.

E.2.1 Foundation

Expected outputs can include:

- a) Applicable requirements, significant risks, affected parties and implementation gaps identified, with priority actions and responsibilities recorded (4.1–4.3, 4.5.1 and 9.2.1).
- b) A proportionate sustainability commitment, legal compliance arrangements and risk-critical competence established (4.2, 4.4–4.5 and 6.6.1).
- c) Essential foundation controls established and operating, supported by basic reliable records, for the areas mapped in Table E.1. The mapping applies only to the organisation's activities, relevant risks and claims; it does not expand the scope of the standard.

Table E.1 - Indicative mapping of essential foundation controls

Essential control	Clause references
Food safety, hygiene, product conformity and food-contact packaging	4.6.1; 4.6.3; 7.7.1
Labour rights, child/forced-labour prevention, young-worker protection, safe work, grievances and worker training and instructions	4.7; 6.1–6.5; 6.6.1
Source identification, supplier-risk action, batch traceability and applicable identity/chain-of-custody controls	4.6.2; 5.3; 8.2
Environmental and permit controls; water/wastewater; chemicals/spills; safe waste practices; ecosystem protection	7.1–7.4; 7.5.1; 7.5.4; 7.8
Operational dependencies and vulnerabilities, climate adaptation, emergency response and safe restart	5.1.1; 5.2.1; 7.9–7.10
Resource efficiency and safety measures	5.4.2
Accurate sourcing, origin, social, environmental and conformity claims, with evidence available when made	5.6.2–5.6.3; 7.6.3; 7.11.2; 8.1, 8.3–8.7; 9.6–9.11
Basic records, risk-priority measures, monitoring of essential controls and corrective follow-up	9.1–9.5; 6.4.4; 6.5.5; 9.11.1–9.11.2

The recommendation in 8.5.4 and permission in 8.6.1 remain non-mandatory; any related shall obligations apply when relevant. Significant-risk controls omitted from the table should also receive Foundation priority. Simple records can be sufficient under 4.3.1 and 9.1–9.5.

E.2.2 Improving

Expected outputs can include:

- Foundation safeguards maintained and remaining applicable requirements implemented consistently across relevant activities, including communication and competence (4.4–4.5), supplier follow-up (5.3), operational/environmental controls (Clauses 5–7) and traceability/claims controls (Clause 8).
- Evidence and records completed (9.1, 9.4–9.5), objectives and indicators reviewed, and monitoring extended across significant priorities and applicable requirements (9.2–9.3).
- Implementation gaps closed and findings addressed, including claims-related corrective action (9.11). Recommended improvements can be considered in parallel, for example 5.4.1, 6.6.2–6.8, 7.5.2, 7.6.1–7.6.2, 7.7.2 and 7.11.1, without treating them as universal conformity requirements.

E.2.3 Advanced — full implementation

At the Advanced stage, all applicable mandatory requirements are fulfilled within the defined scope, with sufficient evidence, effective monitoring and review, and demonstrated continual improvement. Progress

towards closing outstanding mandatory gaps does not establish full implementation or justify a conformity claim (9.10.1). Attainment of the Advanced stage does not, by itself, constitute third-party certification.

E.3 Assessment approaches

Assessment approaches are separate from implementation stages. First-, second- and third-party assessment can be used at any stage for defined purposes. The assessment scope, criteria, evidence and conclusions should be clear.

E.3.1 First-party assessment

First-party assessment is conducted by or on behalf of the organisation for its own purposes. Self-assessment or objective internal audit should be used throughout implementation to evaluate progress, conformity and gaps. A group's assessment of participants within its shared management or internal control system can be first-party when evaluating the group's own conformity. This guidance does not establish an additional mandatory internal-audit programme.

E.3.2 Second-party assessment

A Second-party assessment is a conformity assessment activity that is performed by a person or organization that has a user interest in the organization being assessed, or its outputs. This may include the organization's products, processes, services, materials, claims and personnel.

Such parties can include purchasers, customers assessing suppliers, users of products, potential customers seeking to rely on a supplier's management system, or organizations representing those interests.

A second-party assessment can be used to examine supplied cocoa, other ingredients, packaging or services, together with relevant supplier processes, systems and evidence, against specified sourcing, traceability or other requirements (4.6, 5.3, 7.7.1 and 8.2, as applicable).

E.3.3 Third-party assessment

Independent third-party assessment can evaluate selected requirements, identify gaps, assess readiness or assess conformity with this standard. Certification should be sought when the organisation considers that all applicable mandatory requirements within the proposed scope are implemented and sufficiently evidenced. Independent assessment of selected requirements does not itself establish certification.

E.4 Claims concerning implementation and conformity

Claims should be clear, accurate and not misleading, and should clearly identify, the subject of the claim, the requirements addressed, the scope of the operation to which the claim applies, and the assessment used to substantiate the claim (9.6 and 9.10). Substantiated progress, programme participation or assessment of selected requirements can be communicated without implying conformity or certification. Conformity requires mandatory requirements in the standard to be fulfilled; certificates and certification marks should be used only where formally authorised.

E.5 Group and collective assessment

A group assessment should define the group, participating entities, sites, activities, products and applicable requirements within its scope. Evidence should show how shared controls and participant-level practices fulfil the requirements relevant to each participant. Requirements can differ according to activities; membership alone does not demonstrate conformity or exempt a participant from applicable requirements (4.1.1 and 9.10.1).

Internal group assessment is addressed in E.3.1; assessment by a purchaser in E.3.2; and independent third-party assessment in E.3.3. The treatment of sampling, certification decisions and certification scope belongs in the applicable assessment programme or certification scheme. Sampling does not remove the responsibility of included participants to fulfil their applicable requirements.

NOTE Groups and cooperatives can share training, technical assistance, records, traceability, monitoring and internal assessment arrangements.

Voting Deadline: 23 October 2026

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CARICOM REGIONAL ORGANISATION FOR STANDARDS AND QUALITY

The CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) was created as an Inter-Governmental Organisation by the signing of an agreement among fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CROSQ is the regional centre for promoting efficiency and competitive production in goods and services, through the process of standardisation and the verification of quality. It is the successor to the Caribbean Common Market Standards Council (CCMSC), and supports the CARICOM mandate in the expansion of intra-regional and extra-regional trade in goods and services.

CROSQ is mandated to represent the interests of the region in international and hemispheric standards work, to promote the harmonisation of metrology systems and standards, and to increase the pace of development of regional standards for the sustainable production of goods and services in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the enhancement of social and economic development.

CROSQ VISION:

A global leader transforming lives through an innovative and sustainable Quality Infrastructure

CROSQ MISSION:

To transform lives by delivering fit-for-purpose standards, metrology, accreditation and reliable conformity assessment solutions that promote collaboration, enhance trust-in-trade, foster reliability and consistency thereby improving the quality of CARICOM's products and services.

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