



Fair Rubber Standard – Version 3.3

General Guidance to the Criterion 3.4.9

December 2024

Definition: “Degradation”

Changes within a natural ecosystem that significantly and negatively affect its species composition, structure, and/or function and reduce the ecosystem’s capacity to supply products, support biodiversity, and/or deliver ecosystem services.

(Accountability Framework Initiative, Definitions, <https://accountability-framework.org/use-the-accountability-framework/definitions/degradation/>)

Definition: “No Conversion”

Commodity production, sourcing, or financial investments that do not cause or contribute to the conversion of natural ecosystems (as defined by the Accountability Framework).

- No-conversion refers to no gross conversion of natural ecosystems, which the Accountability Framework specifies as the appropriate policy and goal on this topic for companies and supply chains.
- The terms ‘no-conversion’ and ‘conversion-free’ are used in favour of ‘zero-conversion’ because ‘zero’ can imply an absolutist approach that may be at odds with the need to sometimes accommodate minimal levels of conversion at the site level in the interest of facilitating optimal conservation and production outcomes (see definition for minimal level [of deforestation or conversion]).

(Accountability Framework Initiative, Definitions, <https://accountability-framework.org/use-the-accountability-framework/definitions/>)

Definition: “Natural Forest”

A forest that is a natural ecosystem.

- Natural forests possess many or most of the characteristics of a forest native to the given site, including species composition, structure, and ecological function. Natural forests include:
 1. Primary forests that have not been subject to major human impacts in recent history.
 2. Regenerated (second-growth) forests that were subject to major impacts in the past (for instance by agriculture, livestock raising, tree plantations, or intensive logging), but where the main causes of impact have ceased or greatly diminished and the ecosystem has attained much of the species composition, structure, and ecological function of prior or other contemporary natural ecosystems.
 3. Managed natural forests where much of the ecosystem’s composition, structure, and ecological function exist in the presence of activities such as:
 - Harvesting of timber or other forest products, including management to promote high-value species.
 - Low intensity, small-scale cultivation within the forest, such as less-intensive forms of swidden agriculture in a forest mosaic.
 4. Forests that have been partially degraded by anthropogenic or natural causes (e.g. harvesting, fire, climate change, invasive species, or others) but where the land has not been converted to another use and where degradation does not result in the sustained reduction of tree cover below the thresholds that define a forest or sustained loss of other main elements of ecosystem composition, structure, and ecological function.



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- The categories ‘natural forest’ and ‘tree plantation’ are mutually exclusive, though in some cases the distinction may be nuanced. Please see the [Operational Guidance on Applying the Definitions Related to Deforestation and Conversion](#) for further discussion of boundary cases.
- For the purpose of no-deforestation supply chains, the focus is on preventing the conversion of natural forests.

(Accountability Framework Initiative, Definitions, <https://accountability-framework.org/use-the-accountability-framework/definitions/>)

Definition: “Natural Ecosystem”

An ecosystem that substantially resembles — in terms of species composition, structure, and ecological function — one that is or would be found in a given area in the absence of major human impacts. This includes human-managed ecosystems where much of the natural species composition, structure, and ecological function are present.

- Natural ecosystems include:
 1. Largely ‘pristine’ natural ecosystems that have not been subject to major human impacts in recent history.
 2. Regenerated natural ecosystems that were subject to major impacts in the past (for instance by agriculture, livestock raising, tree plantations, or intensive logging), but where the main causes of impact have ceased or greatly diminished and the ecosystem has attained species composition, structure, and ecological function similar to prior or other contemporary natural ecosystems.
 3. Managed natural ecosystems (including many ecosystems that could be referred to as ‘semi-natural’) where much of the ecosystem’s composition, structure, and ecological function are present; this includes managed natural forests as well as native grasslands or rangelands that are, or have historically been, grazed by livestock.
 4. Natural ecosystems that have been partially degraded by anthropogenic or natural causes (e.g. harvesting, fire, climate change, invasive species, or others), but where the land has not been converted to another use and where much of the ecosystem’s composition, structure, and ecological function remain present or are expected to regenerate naturally or by management for ecological restoration.

(Accountability Framework Initiative, Definitions, <https://accountability-framework.org/use-the-accountability-framework/definitions/>)

Further Remarks:

- Other land uses can refer to things such as housing for workers, larger commercial infrastructure or similar.
- Means of verification:

Geolocation data is available for 100% of your rubber farms or plantation as GPS location points or GPS polygons for plots larger than four hectares. Geolocation refers to the exact location of a piece of land, identified using latitude and longitude coordinates. For smaller plots, this means providing at least one point with coordinates accurate to six decimal places. For larger plots over four hectares, the geolocation must include multiple points to outline the entire boundary of the land (polygons).

You identify and prioritize which other farm units should be polygon mapped, based upon area risk of deforestation. You use the data to further inform your procedures to prevent deforestation.



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- Further documents for support can be satellite images, deforestation data, historical photographs and documentation, legal declarations and statements, use records or similar.
- An exception is allowed for the so-called Jungle Rubber, which was created several decades ago. Here, the clearing of a minimal level (following the Accountability Framework Initiative, Definition of Minimal Level, <https://accountability-framework.org/use-the-accountability-framework/definitions/>) is permitted if the producer has a plan for restoration of the area with rubber trees and other tree species and provides evidence of its implementation.
- For information on degradation documents of support can be the management plans, monitoring procedures for forest composition and forest dynamics or interviews with relevant staff. There are also various forest degradation monitoring tools, e.g. the Forest Landscape Integrity Index (FLII), developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society and partners and available at the Global Forest Watch Platform (<https://www.forestintegrity.com/home>) and Trends Earth developed by Conservation International. Available online at: <http://trends.earth> (e.g. in Indonesia).