



4C and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations

Position paper

As an independent, stakeholder-driven, internationally recognized sustainability standard for the entire coffee sector, 4C aims at anchoring sustainability in the coffee supply chains across environmental, social, and economic dimensions. 4C is a credible and robust system, applying innovative audit risk assessment procedures, and is strengthened by a comprehensive integrity program. 4C brings real impact on the ground, enabling continuous improvement and enhancing smallholder livelihoods, and supports companies in achieving and keeping their sustainability commitments.

This vision is aligned with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDGs). Through various channels, 4C contributes to all SDGs, yet some linkages are stronger than the other as depicted in Figure 1. These contribution channels include ensuring implementation of sustainability requirements of the 4C Code of Conduct, developing and conducting versatile sustainability projects, and supporting sustainability dialogue in the coffee sector.



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Through the strict requirements of the 4C Code of Conduct, 4C certification contributes to most of the SDGs, presented in Figure 1. This is also confirmed by independent ITC benchmarking between voluntary sustainability standards and SDGs.¹ For instance, 4C fosters progress towards SDG 1 (*End poverty in all its forms*

checklist can be integrated into the auditing procedure upon request to address the issues and further increase food security level in developing regions.⁴ 4C further addresses SDG 3 (*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*)⁵, SDG 4 (*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong*



Figure 1. 4C's contribution to SDGs

everywhere)² by improving coffee producers' livelihoods and SDG 2 (*End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*)³ by endorsing good practices to enhance food quality and soil fertility. In addition to that, an extended food security

learning opportunities for all)⁶, SDG 5 (*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*)⁷, SDG 6 (*Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*)⁸ and SDG 7 (*Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all*)⁹.

¹ ITC (2020) *Linking Voluntary Standards to Sustainable Development Goals*. Download [here](#)

² See Principle 1.3, 2.1, 2.2

³ See Principle 1.1, 1.4, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

⁴ In cooperation with the Food Security Standard, developed by the WWF, Welthungerhilfe, and ZEF. More information [here](#).

⁵ See Principle 2.2, 3.2, 3.5

⁶ See Principle 1.1, 1.2, 2.1

⁷ See Principle 2.1

⁸ Principle 2.2, 3.4

⁹ Principle 3.6



The 4C certification also contributes to SDG 8 (*Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all*)¹⁰ by enhancing working conditions, ensuring labor rights as well as thoroughly addressing child labor issues. Furthermore, 4C promotes the achievement of SDG 9 (*Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*)¹¹, SDG 10 (*Reduce inequality within and among countries*)¹², SDG 11 (*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*)¹³ and SDG 12 (*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*)¹⁴ via its requirements regarding the responsible management of natural resources and waste. Through the principles and underlying criteria of the 4C Code of Conduct, 4C also contributes to SDG 13 (*Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*)¹⁵, SDG 14 (*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*)¹⁶, SDG 15 (*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt*

biodiversity loss)¹⁷ and SDG 16 (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*)¹⁸. Direct contribution to some of the SDGs has its boundaries within the framework of the standard, yet the scope of activities undertaken by the users of the 4C System to comply with the 4C Code of Conduct greatly amplifies overall contribution in the end.

More than just a certification, 4C implements multiple projects to proactively increase impact on the ground. For instance, one of the current projects aims at improving working and living conditions for coffee smallholders in Colombia and promoting climate-smart coffee production. This project contributes in particular to SDG 8 through increasing youth employability and supporting income diversification, as well as SDG 1 and SDG 13. A further contribution to SDG 13 is enabled via another project in Vietnam with the purpose of calculation and reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in coffee production. Forthcoming project activities will be devoted to biodiversity improvement and

¹⁰ Principle 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.3

¹¹ Principle 1.3, 3.6

¹² Principle 2.1

¹³ Principle 2.2

¹⁴ Principle 2.2, 3.2, 3.4

¹⁵ Principle 3.1

¹⁶ Principle 3.4, 3.5

¹⁷ Principle 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4

¹⁸ Principle 1.1, 2.1, 3.4



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women empowerment, strengthening 4C's role in progress towards SDG 15 and SDG 5 respectively. In general, partnerships represent an important pillar of 4C sustainability projects' implementation. 4C engages in partnerships with the public and private sector, as well as NGOs. One example is 4C's partnership with Melitta Europa and DEG in Colombia. This way 4C contributes to SDG 17 (*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*).

Last but not least, 4C is supporting sustainability dialogue among coffee stakeholders around the world through the organization of 4C Regional Stakeholder and 4C Global Sustainability Conferences, as well as initiating a series of publicly available online seminars which cover numerous sustainability challenges in the coffee sector, thus, addressing multiple SDG themes, such as deforestation and biodiversity loss, reducing carbon footprint and social issues.

Alignment with the SDGs is a backbone for 4C's vision.

It is achieved through various channels that 4C uses to foster sustainability in the coffee sector. 4C will continue to strive for more impact and increased contribution to the global progress towards the achievement of SDGs.

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