



- ✓ **Produced by Women**
- ✓ **Sustainably Wild Harvested**
- ✓ **Fair Wage**
- ✓ **Lab tested free of pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals, yeasts and molds**
- ✓ **Carbon Neutral**

Certification Standard Outline: March 2014

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Justification:

Sustainable management strategies for rainforest management must meet the economic, social, ecological and cultural needs of both present and future generations. Consumers increasingly demand proof of sustainable management and natural/organic production of products, and some of the more discerning buyers demand participation of small producers and local communities and proof of fair compensation and distribution of profits.

Certifications exist that could be adapted to address sustainability and consumer demands yet these certifications are too expensive for most Maya Nut producer groups.

Maya Nut is a labor-intensive wild-harvested rainforest product with high production costs¹. Maya Nut Institute has worked for 25 years to empower rural women producers to earn fair wages for their work. While this maximizes economic benefits to producers, it reduces the profit margin to intermediaries and distributors. Because of the small profit margin, novelty of the product, and consumers' habituation to cheap tropical commodities (coffee, sugar, bananas, etc.

¹ Production costs of many tropical commodities are high, but their production offsets the real cost of production by way of heavy reliance on child labor, unfair wages paid to workers, and sanctioned and unsanctioned land-grabbing. Maya Nut production does not rely on these "subsidies" and therefore its price reflects the real cost of production incurred by the producers.

harvested by people and children working for “slave wages”, it is not economically feasible for Maya Nut producers to pay for expensive “Brand Name” certifications. In response to this, we have created an Integrated Self-Certification Program which is affordable to producers and will not notably increase costs to consumers.

Maya Nut Certified™ at this stage is designed to certify producers. Eventually we hope to develop a certification for Maya Nut intermediaries, distributors and companies. This certification guarantees a natural, sustainable, fair trade, women’s product to consumers. If producers were to finance these certifications individually via conventional certification programs, to obtain 3 of the key certifications (Organic, Fair Trade, Sustainable Wild Harvested) would cost upward of \$18,000 in the first year and an average of \$5,000 every year thereafter. Because none of the producer groups currently operating has this capital available, we devised a participatory, integrated self-certification. Certification is an effective tool to motivate and reward Maya Nut producer groups that adhere to the highest socioeconomic and environmental standards. For consumers this certification serves to guarantee sustainability, fair trade, gender equity and production without the use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers.

Table 1: Cost of Conventional Certification

CERTIFICATION	CERTIFYING AGENCY	INITIAL COST	ANNUAL COST
Fair Trade	FloCert	\$6,000-\$8000	\$2,000
Organic	MayaCert	\$4,000-\$5,000	\$2,000
Sustainable	FairWild or Dept. of Forestry	\$4000-\$6,5000	\$1000 every 5 years
Women’s product	Does not exist	Does not exist	Does not exist
TOTAL		\$11,000-\$17,500	\$4,000

The criteria for Maya Nut Certified™ were established in June 2011 in the communities of El Guayabo and Marañones, in the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve, Honduras with the participation of Maya Nut producers from Honduras (El Guayabo, Gracias a Dios), Nicaragua (Versailles, San Pedro and Cinco Pinos, Chinandega) and El Salvador (Plan de Amayo, Sonsonate). The process was facilitated by the director of Maya Nut Institute, Erika Vohman and the technical team of the PRORENA Program, of the GIZ in Honduras, Fredy Rodriguez, Christine Woda and Alejandra Osorto. In December 2012 and again in January 2013 these criteria were validated and revised by the team.

Our standard is based on sustainable management, harvesting, processing, and commercialization of Maya Nut. The Maya Nut Certified™ criteria integrate relevant mechanisms, norms, indicators and attributes of existing and accepted standards including:

- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

- Utz Certified
- FairWild
- Rainforest Alliance
- National Council of Women’s Business Enterprise
- Café de Mujer (Coffee from Women)
- Wild Harvested standard of USDA
- International Standard for Sustainable Wild Collection of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (ISS-MAP, IUCN)
- Certified Naturally Grown
- Organic Certification standards of the USDA, MayaCert and Oregon Tilth
- Fair Trade Labelling Organization (FLO-Cert)
- International Standards Organizaton (ISO)

The Maya Nut Certified™ standard is applicable to Maya Nut harvested from natural forests, forest patches, riparian areas, individual trees interspersed in coffee or other agricultural plantations and agroforestry systems. Monoculture plantations and producer groups or individuals that depend on hired/contract labor do not qualify for Maya Nut Certified™ certification. Maya Nut producers who harvest from agroforestry plantations that apply chemical fertilizers or pesticides during any part of the year do not qualify for Maya Nut Certified™ certification.

The certification and verification process:

Maya Nut Certified™ certification is currently offered by Maya Nut Institute, Colorado, United States to cooperatives, associations, women’s groups, individuals and businesses producing Maya Nut.

The certification process is voluntary and should be initiated by the producers though it is permissible for a buyer to instigate and finance certification for a producer group. The group requesting certification should understand the criteria and take steps to compliance before initiating the certification process. Once all criteria are met by the applicant, they should register online and pay the registration fee of \$100.

The decision to certify the applicant organization is made by Maya Nut Certified™ based on an evaluation of compliance with criteria, using the indicators outlined in the application. The applicant is expected to cooperate with the evaluation and provide the necessary documentation, access to business records, profit and loss statements, business expense sheets, and full access to harvesters, drying areas, processing and storage sites and harvest sites by certification inspectors. Evaluations are conducted on a peer to peer basis, meaning that Maya Nut Certified™ producers evaluate new applicants to verify compliance. Once certified, the applicant is granted the right to use the Maya Nut Certified™ seal for marketing purposes and

will be listed on the Maya Nut Certified™ website as a source of Certified products. The certified producers must agree to voluntarily travel to inspect new applicants when necessary. The applicant group assumes responsibility for travel costs, lodging (in their homes if necessary) and food for the inspectors.

Failure to meet one or more of the criteria will disqualify the applicant. The decision to disqualify an applicant is made by Maya Nut Certified™ based on the evaluation report filed by the inspectors. Maya Nut Certified™ reserves the right to conduct lab analyses on products seeking certification.

Maya Nut Certified™ context:

Maya Nut Certified™ aims to complement not replace or supplant other certifications, workers' rights laws, and best practices for manufacturing or forest management regulations. Maya Nut Certified™ criteria should always be implemented in conjunction with local and international laws and the guidelines of other certifications the group is seeking to obtain. Potential conflicts with local and international laws and agreements between producer countries will be managed and mitigated by Maya Nut Certified™ whenever possible. This standard was developed based on the realities of harvest, processing and commercialization of Maya Nut in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras, all of which have had producers participating in the establishment and ratification of the criteria presented here. We hope that this standard is applicable in all countries where Maya Nut certification may be a tool to improve livelihoods and rainforest management. Nevertheless, if necessary (for example, in cases of differences in national legislation, culture or customs) it may be possible to adapt this standard to local conditions as long as the basic criteria can be met. Proposed changes to the standard should be submitted to Maya Nut Certified™ for approval and annexation.

Transparency: Maya Nut Certified™ is based on the philosophy of maximum transparency and diffusion of our work. To this end, Maya Nut Certified™ will publish the certification standard on our website along with evaluation reports of all certified groups, always respecting industrial privacy and the intellectual property of the applicants. Maya Nut Institute is committed to publicizing and promoting the Maya Nut Certified™ program and to implementing activities to improve public knowledge of and demand for Maya Nut Certified™ products. This is in line with the mission of the Maya Nut Institute to continually seek balance between people, food and forests, by ensuring that Maya Nut commercialization is fair and just, benefits women and never jeopardizes forest health and community wellbeing.

Objectives of Maya Nut Certified™:

1. Seek balance between use and conservation of forest resources
2. Motivate forest protection through fair and dignified income-generating opportunities for rural women and their families.

3. Ensure participation and decision making of and by rural and indigenous women
4. Ensure economic benefits from Maya Nut production and sales accrue to rural women by minimizing the participation/roles of intermediaries and maximizing participation and roles of producers in the value chain
5. Ensure that Maya Nut bearing Maya Nut Certified™ seal is produced with zero application of chemicals and zero child labor throughout the entire chain of custody, from harvest to final sale.

Criteria of Maya Nut Certified™

Maya Nut Certification is based on meeting the following essential criteria within 3 years of initiating the certification process.

- 1: Compliance with local/national laws and with Maya Nut Certified™ criteria
- 2: Legal ownership or right to harvest granted by landowner to access Maya Nut trees.
- 3: Fair trade prices paid for purchase of green/fresh seed, dry seed, and other products. Fair wages paid to workers (at least minimum wage plus benefits).
- 4: Indigenous rights and intellectual property are respected
- 5: Women from local communities are the primary beneficiaries of Maya Nut harvest and sales
- 6: Quality and hygiene meet Maya Nut Certified standards
- 7: Sustainably wild-harvested from natural forest, forest patches or wild trees based on a Management Plan or Harvest Plan.
8. Natural production, without application or contact with chemicals during any part of the chain of custody. Never genetically modified.
9. Local consumption of Maya Nut. 10% of all Maya Nut sales will be used to purchase and distribute processed Maya Nut to local schools as part of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests Maya Nut school lunch program.

Criterion #1: Compliance with local/national laws and with Maya Nut Certified™ criteria

- Ensure that Maya Nut production and commercialization complies with national legislation as well as international treaties of which the producing country is a signatory.
- Harvest and commercialization of Maya Nut does not violate any national laws
- Harvest and commercialization of Maya Nut respects international agreements, including treaty 169 of the Organization of International Trade regarding indigenous rights,

International Labour Organization convention #182 (preventing child labor) and the CBD (Convention on Biodiversity).

- Maya Nut harvesting is conducted in predetermined areas and when those areas are not owned by the harvesters, they have written permission from the owner (private land) or government (public land) to harvest and sell Maya Nut from said parcels.
- Processing plants conform to national legislation regarding hygiene, worker health and safety.
- The applicant organization knows and applies the standard Best Practices in Manufacturing established in their country.

Criterion# 2: Land use rights and access to harvest sites are guaranteed

To ensure that land use rights, access to and use of forest resources are clearly defined, documented and legally established.

1. Harvesters have a legal, written right to sustainably harvest Maya Nut (If they don't own the land/forest, they must have long term access or a renewable access right signed by the owner or government entity governing the area)
2. The certified agents constantly monitor and take steps to protect their rights to access and manage their harvest area.
3. Consensus building activities (meetings, committees, etc.) with stakeholders are used to prevent or resolve conflicts between or among resource users. In cases of loss of income or damage to the resource caused by harvesting Maya Nut, stakeholders will be compensated on par with losses to mitigate conflicts.
4. In case of major and/or unresolvable controversy regarding land use rights or forest access, the application will be suspended until controversy is resolved.

Criterion # 3: Fair wages paid to workers and providers of green/fresh and dried seed.

Guarantee that the applicant respects minimum fair established pricing for green/fresh seed and dried seed when purchasing from harvesters or selling to other groups for processing and that fair (minimum or better) wages are paid to workers. The fair established prices are established based on production costs, plus a profit margin for the harvester, seed dryer, and processing plant. The fair price should be reviewed every 2 years by a 3rd party or Maya Nut Certified™ and published and adjusted for all certified producers.

1. Harvesters calculate production costs using the format provided
2. Processors/producers calculate production costs using the format provided

3. Workers in processing plants are paid minimum wage or better
4. Harvesters and processors sell their products at the fair minimum established price (cost of production + % profit).
5. Harvesters, processors and businesses selling Maya Nut for less than the established fair minimum price will lose their certification.

Criterion # 4: Respect for indigenous and local rights

Ensure that indigenous and local rights to administer and manage their lands and natural resources are recognized and respected.

1. In indigenous territories, indigenous communities must be in agreement with Maya Nut harvest practices and related forest management.
2. Maya Nut harvest and management must not affect indigenous rights, land tenure, or intellectual property or cultural heritage.
3. Sites with special cultural, religious, ecological or economic significance for local communities are exempt from Maya Nut harvesting where conflicts currently or potentially exist.
4. In indigenous territories, indigenous women represent at least 50% of the women beneficiaries of Maya Nut commercialization.

Criterion # 5: Women beneficiaries

Guarantee that Maya Nut drying, processing, packing and sales are predominantly carried out by and compensated to local women and youth (people under 30 years old).

1. At least 70% of Maya Nut related activities are planned, implemented and managed by local women and youth, who also receive the majority of remuneration for these activities and assume the risks of said activities.
2. 100% of the members of the board of directors of the producer group are women and youth.
3. At least 70% of the paid positions in the business are held by women and youth.

Criterion # 6: Quality and hygiene guaranteed

All certified groups apply the international standards and Best Practices in Manufacturing for Maya Nut during harvest and processing to ensure highest quality products.

1. Harvesters do not collect germinated seeds, seeds with the pulp on them, or seeds with physical damage from animals, fungus, mold or other defects.

2. Seeds found less than 2m from animal feces or 10m from human feces are left in the forest.
3. New bags are used for each lot harvested
4. Equipment for posharvest handling, drying and packaging (buckets, pans, tables, drying racks, etc.) are washed and disinfected before and after use.
5. Processing areas (drying, roasting, selection, milling and storage) are constructed following national laws for sanitary processing plants.
6. Use of chemical repellents or poison to control pests is not permitted under any circumstances.
7. Postharvest handling and management is conducted in a way to minimize mold and fungal growth and cross contamination. This is done using proper drying equipment, storage silos and other recommended equipment.
8. Certified producer groups must implement Best Practices in Maya Nut Production established by Maya Nut Institute and published on the website (www.MayaNutInstitute.org)
9. Certified producer groups must apply the International Maya Nut Standard established by Maya Nut Institute and published on the website (www.MayaNutInstitute.org)

Criterion # 7: Natural production without use of chemicals or genetic modification

Guarantee that certified Maya Nut is wild harvested from forests and is never subjected to application of any pesticide, fertilizer or other chemical. Guarantee that during the entire chain of custody, certified Maya Nut is never exposed to chemical contamination. Guarantee that certified Maya Nut is not genetically modified in any way.

1. No application of chemical pest control or fertilizers is permitted on certified Maya Nut products or in harvest sites.
2. Where chemicals are applied to agricultural production sites interfacing with Maya Nut harvest sites, a border of 10 meters is respected between the chemical application and the border of the Maya Nut harvest site.
3. Every lot of Maya Nut harvested is packed in a new bag
4. It is not permitted to dry Maya Nut seed on galvanized metal surfaces or other surfaces that are not easily cleaned with boiling water or that may contaminate the end product
5. Where silos are used to store dry Maya Nut, said silos are for exclusive use with Maya Nut and storage of other crops is not permitted

6. When Maya Nut is transported in vehicles, these should be previously inspected and washed, to avoid contamination. If other crops are transported in the same vehicle as Maya Nut, those products should be certified “natural” or “organic”
7. Processing is done only in plants where organic or natural products are processed, or with equipment reserved specifically for processing organic or natural products.

Criterion # 8: Sustainable Forest Management

Maya Nut harvesting should be carried out using a Sustainable Harvest Plan or a Sustainable Management Plan to ensure the long term healthy ecosystem function of the harvested forests.

1. Maya Nut harvesting should be carried out under the auspices of a Management Plan following the guidelines of Maya Nut Institute and the local forest management agencies.
2. Implement a system of long term impact monitoring for environmental and economic sustainability.
3. Sustainable harvest plans are reviewed every 5 years to incorporate results of long-term monitoring and new understanding of Maya Nut ecology and management of nontimber forest products and to incorporate new community or business needs or adaptations.
4. Maya Nut producers are trained to implement their own forest management plans, including systems of long term monitoring and silvicultural management techniques.

Criterion # 9: Local consumption of Maya Nut guaranteed by distribution of Maya Nut school lunches through Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests Program

1. 10% of every lot sold is returned to the community in the form of Maya Nut SuperCereal to be served in schools of the producer communities
2. Healthy Kids, Healthy Forests is financed 100% by Maya Nut sales including delivery of Maya Nut products to schools and training for mothers and children in the benefits of Maya Nut