GUIDANCE A

How to use the Management Capacity Assessment Tool

Version 1

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More information?

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How to use the Management Assessment Capacity Tool

1. Purpose

Farming is not just a way of life; it is also a business, and a successful business needs management. The Rainforest Alliance wants to see certified farms managed in an efficient, transparent, inclusive, and economically viable manner. The purpose of the Management Capacity Assessment Tool is for group management to evaluate the capacity and systems of the business in several key management areas, and not just the Internal Management System (IMS). **Therefore, the assessment needs to be done at the level of the management of the group, not just the IMS!**

The assessment is not to be seen as an exam, but serves as a starting point for improvement in areas where weaknesses are identified. It is a "self-assessment". That is, it is carried out by the organization, usually in a joint meeting with the all the leadership and management of the group/organisation. The auditor will not check that the answers given are correct, but instead will mainly focus on whether the assessment was done in a truthful way and that the results have been incorporated in the group's management plan. There is no obligation to show "sensitive" information (such as financial statements or audit reports) to an auditor. No supporting documents for the Management Capacity Assessment need to be submitted to the Certification Body (CB) before an audit. In any case, Auditors must always treat as confidential any information seen or received during an audit.

2. Design of the tool

The tool consists of an Excel document with 10 sheets. The first sheet is the cover page, the second is for entering general information on the group carrying out the assessment, and the third sheet is a summary of the results. The remaining sheets give the questions for the seven topics covered in the tool

To use the tool effectively, you will need a computer for entering the results and showing the summary results.

3. Instructions for use

a. You must gather the persons who make up the leadership/management of the group. It is advisable that the accountant or financial managers also attend. The leadership could also decide to invite some representation of the members, for example, lead farmers.

b. Ideally, select one person from among the participants to facilitate the discussion. Preferably, a person outside of the leadership/management of the group can be asked to play the role of facilitator.

c. Starting with the first topic, read the first question and all the answers. Make sure all participants understand the question and answers and have a similar understanding between them. Then look at the four options, moving from level 0 to level 3. and discuss for each - are we at this leve?l (yes/no). If the group is split between two levels, select the lowest level.

d. There could be a situation in which the group finds that the topic addressed in the question is not applicable to their situation. In that case, do not select any of the answer options. Instead, write "*Not applicable*" in the column with the heading "*Supporting documents/evidence*" and give an explanation in the column headed "*Comments/explanations*". It is important to know that during the audit, the external auditor will use the explanation given to check whether the selection of "*Not applicable*" was justified or not.

e. If the group's decision can be supported by documentation, add the name of this document in the column "*Supporting documents/evidence*". This will help the group when reviewing the same questions in the following year and assist the auditor in understanding how the group arrived at this particular answer. Any comments/explanations can be added in the column "*Comments/explanations*".


f. Continue this process with the other questions in the first topic. Then go on to the next topic and start the series of questions.

g. The facilitator should try to engage all participants in the discussion and not let one person dominate the discussion or determine the answers.

h. Once all questions on the different topics have been answered, make a joint analysis of the results; then ask the group if they are satisfied with the results. It is not a problem if some disagree. This disagreement can be stated in the tool or recorded in minutes of the meeting.

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i. The final step is to look at the results of the assessment. Is the score for each of the seven topics higher than 1.0? The average scores of the analysis for the different topics are also summarized in the spider diagram in the Summary sheet. Use this diagram to identify the topics with the lowest score. For these topics, consider the following points: what actions could the group take to improve on these topics? Are some of these actions already being addressed? The actions identified are then to be included in the Management Plan required under the Rainforest Alliance Standard (Requirement 1.3.2).

EXAMPLE:

In this example, the topics "Member engagement and membership planning," "Sales and Marketing," and "Internal Management System" have the lowest score (1.0) and should be prioritized for improvement.
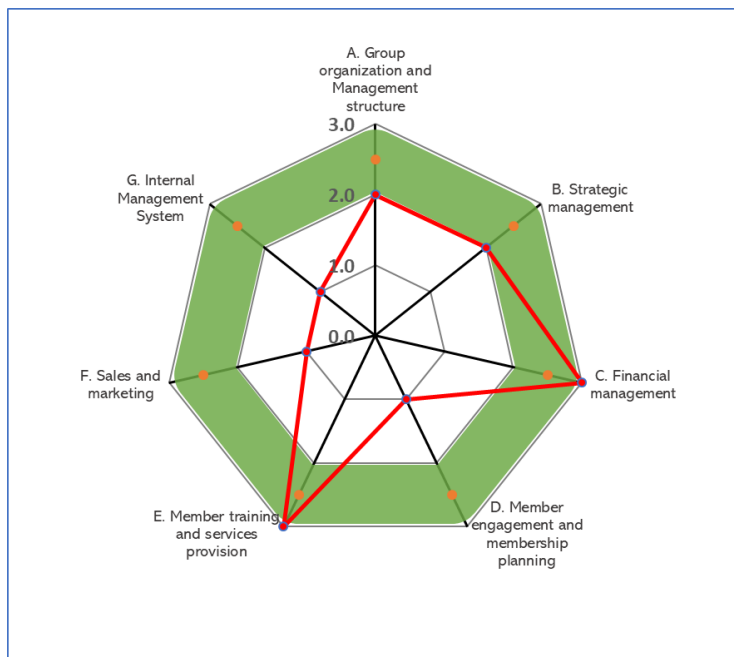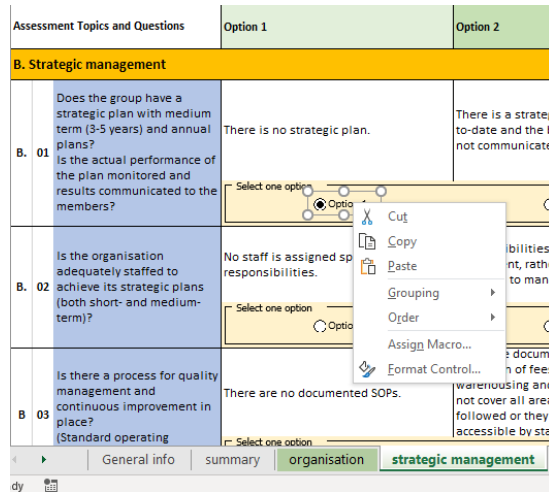
Troubleshooting

How to set all options for a particular question to "unchecked"?
This can happen if a group has selected a particular option but then still decides to leave the question unanswered because they find it non-applicable for their situation. To do that, follow this advice:

- Right-click on the option to uncheck (click the text, not the button itself!)

- Select "Form*at Control*," and then go to "*Control*."
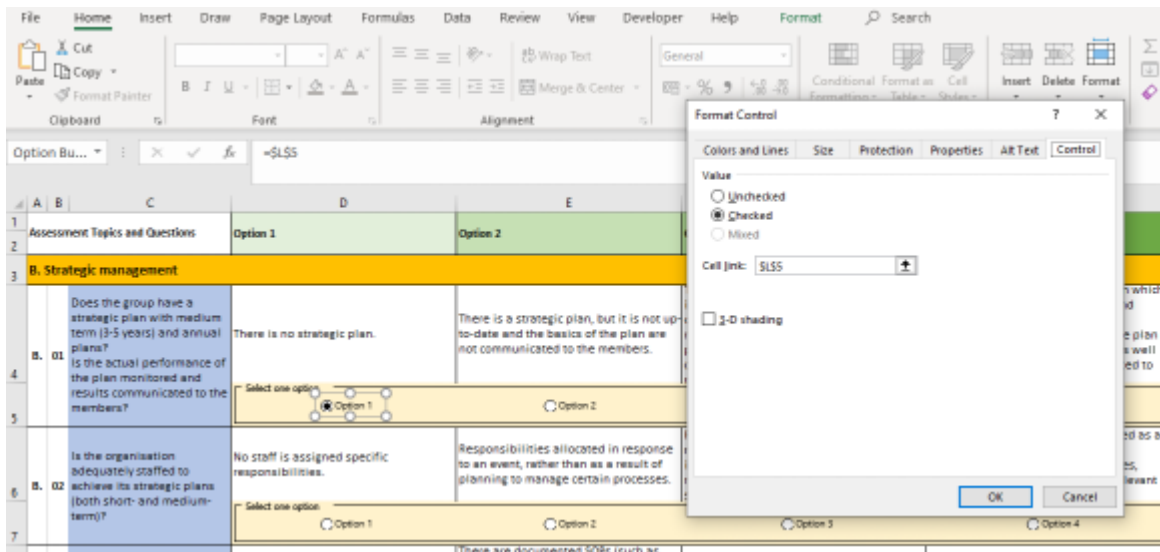
- Then select "*Unchecked*" and click "*OK*."