

Extract from the Bio Suisse Standards

Clearing high conservation value areas

Based on part I and the Bio Suisse mission statement

Bio Suisse prohibits the clearing of high conservation value areas for agricultural use. Such areas include virgin forests and primary forests, high-value secondary forests, steppes, savannahs and high-mountain vegetation (as per definition below). Bio Suisse certification of organic projects on sites that were originally high conservation value areas is therefore precluded. Sites cleared before 1994 are exempted from this prohibition.

Definition of 'high conservation value areas'

High conservation value areas include:

- primary forests and virgin forests
- secondary forests older than 15 years
- areas containing a high degree of globally, regionally or nationally significant biological diversity (e.g., endemic or endangered species, refuges)
- areas containing large landscape-level ecosystems of global, regional or national significance. These areas may be located within the bounds of a farming operation or they may encompass it. In such areas, viable populations of most, if not all, native species still exist in their natural ranges and numbers.
- areas that are located in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- areas that play a critical protective role (e.g., headwaters conservation, erosion control)
- areas fundamental to meeting the basic needs of local communities (e.g., for subsistence farming, or for their health)
- areas critical to the cultural traditions and identity of local communities (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance, identified as such in cooperation with the local communities).