

## TOPS Initiative to Promote Sustainable Tourism

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Wednesday, September 28th marked a special day for the Rainforest Alliance. In the beautiful, colonial town of Antigua, Guatemala, the new TOPS initiative was launched. TOPS stands for Tour Operators Promoting Sustainability and unites **Rainforest Alliance Verified™** inbound tour operators in Latin America and the Caribbean with international outbound tour operators, creating a global network that aims to promote and support sustainable tourism practices.

The event brought together tour operators and Rainforest Alliance staff members from all over the world. Inspiring speeches were given by Rainforest Alliance President Tensie Whelan (you can watch below) and sustainable tourism vice president Ronald Sanabria and presentations were given by marketing and sustainable tourism experts. The entire event was covered live on Twitter (posts can be viewed at **#TOPS**).

"The long-term aim is to help the industry become socially and environmentally responsible as well as profitable, encouraging tourism practices that protect ecosystems, and improve the lives of individuals and communities," explained Ronald Sanabria.

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Presentation held by the Vice President of Sustainable Tourism, Ronald Sanabria.

To become a TOPS member, interested tour operators must comply with the following conditions:

**Inbound operators:**

- Apply for Rainforest Alliance verification
- Comply with at least 50 percent of the program's requirements
- Commit to reaching a minimum of 70 percent compliance by the following year.

**Outbound operators:**

- Sign a memorandum of understanding with the Rainforest Alliance
- At least 30 percent of their suppliers must be sustainable
- That figure must increase to a minimum of 50 percent by the following year.



Tour operators joined from Latin America, Europe and the United States. More information on benefits and entry requirements can be found in the [official press release](#).

Launched one day after [World Tourism Day](#), this network marks another significant step forward in uniting the industry to promote a more sustainable way of traveling.