

Workshop Summary: Towards Harmonization for Biofuel Sustainability Standards

17 – 18 February 2010 **London**







Workshop Summary

1.1. Background

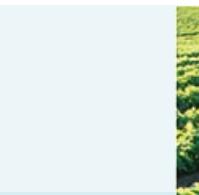
Civil society, governments and even some businesses have expectations that biofuels should be produced in a sustainable manner. A range of sectors and interested parties are looking for opportunities to leverage the full potential of certification as one tool for achieving sustainability in biofuels markets. Because of the diversity of feedstocks that are and may be used for biofuels, one barrier to delivering on the full potential of certification in the biofuels value chain is the existence of multiple but similar and potentially overlapping certification systems that could be applied to the same unit of raw material production (e.g. schemes for specific crops, for generic sustainable agriculture, organic production, social accountability, fair-trade and for biofuels). Increasingly carbon certification is also being considered in these contexts. This diversity of options for certified biofuels creates challenges both for the biofuel producers as well as companies throughout the supply chain; they may be delivering into multiple markets with varying demands and thus incur higher costs for achieving multiple certifications.

Based on earlier work in this area, IUCN and Shell decided to convene members Standards-setting bodies and biofuels supply chain actors to identify opportunities for creating synergies and efficiencies between several of the most prominent schemes relevant for biofuel production.

The discussions built on the outcomes of other workshops held on similar topics in the preceding months¹, and moved towards specific actions for collaborative work between the standards setting organizations and networks. The workshop was co-convened by IUCN and Shell with support from the Packard Foundation and facilitation and planning support from ProForest and Sam Keam (independent consultant).

¹ A project entitled 'Removing barriers to the Implementation of more sustainable biofuels', which is managed through a partnership between IUCN and Shell, which included a workshop held in Gland, Switzerland in May 2009, ISEAL and the Rainforest Alliance brought together multi-stakeholder standards-setting organizations and focused on identifying key areas for further work and collaboration between biomass standards and certification in November 2009.

The Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Environment Program held a workshop 'Assessing Challenges for Implementation of Biofuels Sustainability Criteria' in Washington January in 2010.



1.2. Aims and objectives

The aim of the workshop was to convene multi-stakeholder standard-setting initiatives, particularly executive directors and representatives of organizations on the executive boards, or organizations working closely to support them, to:

- Seek opportunities for common approaches to address specific issues within sustainability standards, such as conservation of biodiversity for new plantings and expansion, environmental impact assessment, GHG methodologies and legal requirements.
- Explore potential synergies in approaches to accreditation systems, chain of custody, group certification, capacity building and auditor training.

The workshop was designed to provide a platform for substantive discussions and brainstorming on technical issues, to identify the most promising approaches for collaboration, and to develop plans for moving forward based on the understanding and experience of participants.

1.3. Participants

The workshop was extremely well attended, with demand to participate exceeding available capacity. During the course of the 1.5 day event, there were 44 participants representing a range of standards-setting organizations, supply chain actors and civil-society groups:

Secretariat and Board representatives: Better Sugar Cane (BSI), Council for Sustainable Biomass Production (CSBP), Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS), Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB), Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) , the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN).

Major biofuels producers or distributors: BP, Greenergy, Neste and Shell

Global agricultural commodities traders and producers: Cargill, Dreyfus and IOI- Loders Croklaan

Major NGOs working on conservation or responsible trade: Conservation International, HCV Resource Network, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), IUCN Netherlands Committee, National Wildlife Federation, Rainforest Alliance, Solidaridad, UNEP, Wetlands International and WWF International.

National biodiesel or single-crop supply chain organizations: Acsoja (Argentinean soy sector association), CARBIO (Argentine Biofuels Chamber), UNICA (Brazilian sugar cane industry association),

Support organizations: Ecofys, GTZ, ISEAL, Leading Standards, The Packard Foundation and ProForest.



1.4. Synopsis

The core of the workshop was a series of round-table working groups held in parallel, discussing key issues for possible collaboration between standard-setting and certification schemes. Participants played an active role in determining the list of possible topics for discussion and selecting the topics for discussion. There were two broad groupings of topics:

- a) **Standards-related issues.** The topics selected for discussion were: **expansion and conversion** (including protection of biodiversity in expansion) **environmental and social impact assessment**, **GHG methodologies and indirect land use change**. (The topic of legal requirements in standards was also listed but not prioritized for these discussions).
- b) **Certification systems - related issues.** The topics selected for discussion were **Benchmarking/ Mutual Recognition/Harmonization, Chain of Custody and Producer Capacity Building**. (Topics also listed, but not prioritized for these discussions were accreditation mechanisms, auditor training, group certification, national interpretations and conflict resolution.)

Each breakout group was asked to discuss:

- Current status/issues re. this topic in each sustainability standard/scheme
- The ideal scenario (where do we want to get to with this issue?)
- What is needed to get there
- Actions for the participants

2 Nb. Although no official representation from RSPO was present, there were representatives from organizations who sit on the RSPO board.



1.5. Overview of outcomes and next steps

Participants indicated in the closing discussions that the meeting had provided a so-far unique opportunity for biofuels supply chain actors to engage with multiple standards-setting organizations on technical issues. A constructive atmosphere facilitated formal and informal collaboration between schemes and actors. The discussions were focused and productive, with many participants commenting on the shared sense of moving toward agreeing common actions and initiating collaboration. Participants identified a number of specific opportunities to work together and build on existing work, including the following actions:

- Commitment by Board members of the standards-setting schemes to seek formal mandates from their executive boards for the organizations to engage in greater active collaboration and information sharing between schemes.
- Commitment to share work between certification schemes, and particularly with those currently under development, including
 - Approaches to environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) for existing producers
 - Process-based approaches for conservation of biodiversity, and mitigation of social impacts for new plantations and expansion
 - Guidelines for land stewardship best practice
 - Group certification
- Development of a joint advocacy plan on Indirect Land Use Change for regulators and other industry stakeholders
- Collaboration on developing GHG approaches, noting that ISEAL has secured funding and support to convene a GHG working group with GTZ
- Establishment of cross-scheme working groups on specific standards issues e.g. Biodiversity/HCV
- Establishment of a process by ISEAL to address benchmarking in a broader context
- Endorsement of the HCV Resource Network's endeavours to engage more with agricultural biofuels standards-setting organizations.
- Collective work between schemes on the mass balance chain of custody, approach after the publication of the EU Communication due at the end of March 2009 (which is expected to provide clarification on the regulatory requirements for mass balance)

The organisers, with the help of other stakeholders, are exploring funding and resourcing options to ensure that the workshop actions are delivered.



