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RSB Standard for Certification of Smallholder Groups

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Introduction

Group certification is a mean to enable small-scale farmers (smallholders) to access RSB certification. For individual smallholders, third-party certification is not always an economically viable option. The basic understanding of group certification is that a group of farmers joins together to generate the necessary economies of scale to comply with the standard and system requirements. An appointed management unit will take over the responsibility of managing the certification process and putting the necessary systems in place to ensure the compliance of the individual group members under certification to the respective standard requirements. An external certification body will then assess the functioning of the group management system on a regular basis as well as the compliance of individual group members on a sample basis. Part of the responsibility of the group management is to conduct internal inspections of the certified members for monitoring their compliance with the standard.

Note: As of February 1, 2014, the System Operating Entity (SOE) is the RSB Secretariat.

Main changes from the previous version (Version 1.0)

- a) Correction of errors and inconsistencies with RSB-STD-20-001-v.3.0 RSB Standard for Traceability of RSB Certified Material (Chain of Custody) and RSB-DOC-10-002-v.2.1 Glossary of Terms.

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A. The aim of this standard

This standard describes the RSB requirements for certification of smallholder groups.

B. What this standard covers

The scope of certification of smallholder groups includes the group members' farms and biomaterial production plots on which biomaterials are produced and for which there is an agreement between the smallholder group members and group management to include them in the scope of the certification. Operations which trade products of the smallholder group members can be included in the scope of certification.

Micro and small biomaterial feedstock processors' operations (less than 50,000 MT of biomaterial feedstock processed in a year) or biomaterial producers (less than 10M liters per year) that process feedstock from group members can be included in the scope of certification.

The scope of certification can only be adjusted during an external audit. Changes in the scope of certification are reported prior to each external audit to the certification body and RSB (information should at least include the name of the member, production plot number, size of land, estimated annual production and result of initial inspection).

C. Version and date

Version 1.1 of the ***RSB Standard for Certification of Smallholder Groups*** becomes effective on April 10, 2015.

D. Note on using this standard

All parts of this standard are considered to be normative, including its aim, scope, effective date, notes on its use, references, terms and definitions, requirements and annexes, unless we say otherwise. When putting this standard in place you shall make sure that you meet all of the requirements specified in this standard, and any other measures necessary to achieve its aim.

Note on RSB EU RED Standard:

This version of the RSB Standard for Certification of Smallholder Groups is currently not included in the RSB EU RED Standard, which is recognised by the European Commission. The RSB Secretariat will investigate how the RSB Standard for Certification of Smallholder Groups could be recognized by the European Commission.

E. Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the terms and definitions given in RSB-STD-10-001 *RSB Glossary of Terms* will apply¹.

Agro-chemicals: Chemicals used in agriculture such as fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, hormones and other inputs. (Oxford dictionary)

Appeals: A process for requests to change a formal decision that has been made.

Audit: A systematic examination of the extent to which a product or process fulfils specified requirements (term used in ISO/IEC Guide 65). In the context of the RSB certification systems, evaluation refers to the systematic examination against the applicable requirements of the RSB principles & criteria and the RSB standards. External audits are conducted by auditors of a contracted certification body.

Biomaterial: Bio-products derived from biomass, i.e. material from biological origin produced through agricultural processes and forestry, as well as by-products and residues from the food, feed, timber, paper and other industries. Bio-products include plastics, textiles, pharmaceuticals, packaging, compostable/biodegradable tableware, cosmetics, nutritional supplements, food, feed and many others

Biomaterial feedstock: The biodegradable fraction of products, co-products, by-products waste and residues from agriculture, forestry and related industries including fisheries and aquaculture, as well as the biodegradable fraction of industrial processes and municipal waste.

Certification: Certification, or conformity evaluation (also conformity assessment), is the process by which a body, that is known to be competent and credible, issues a certificate that a particular business or product will comply with a particular standard. The competence and credibility of a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)² is normally assured when it is accredited by an independent Accreditation Body.

Certification claim: A reference made towards a product or entity to be certified to the RSB standard.

Chain of custody: The path taken by raw materials, processed materials, finished products, and co-products from the crop harvesting site to the user through each stage of processing, transformation, manufacturing, storage and transport along the supply chain, where progress to the next stage of the supply chain involves a change of legal/physical control of the materials or the products.

Conservation value: Biological, social, ecological or cultural features of a delineated area which justify the implementation of conservation measures. E.g. biodiversity.

Conversion factor: the relation between product entering and product leaving an internal processing step controlled by the participating operator

Corrective action request: Formal request for a change in practice to address a non-conformity identified and ensure compliance with RSB the standards.

Farm: A unit of agricultural production including the land where agricultural production takes

¹ The following definitions will ultimately be integrated in the general RSB Glossary (RSB-STD-10-001 Version 3.0)

² **Conformity Assessment Body (CAB):** also referred to as **Certification Body (CB)**, **Registration Body (RB)** or **Certifier**

place and infrastructure related to the operation of that land.

Group certification: Group certification is a modality of certification where RSB allows a group of biomaterial producers to join together under a single RSB certificate organised under a common management system. The scope of smallholder group certification includes the group members' farms and biomaterial production plots on which biomaterials are produced, and for which there is an agreement between the smallholder group members and group management. Operations which trade products of the smallholder group members can be included in the scope of certification.

Group management: The entity responsible for the certification process of a group of farmers, possibly including small-scale processors. It applies for certification, represents the group members towards the RSB and a certification body and finally holds the RSB certificate.

Group member: A smallholder farmer who participates in the group based on a formal agreement with the group management.

Identification code: A sequence of numbers, letters or signs used as a unique reference to a batch or unit of separately packed, stored or processed product (e.g. sack, pack, net, load, batch).

Initial inspections: The first internal inspection of group members' farms, taking place before those farms can be included in the scope of certification.

Internal inspections: First party evaluation of the compliance of group members' farms with the RSB standard requirements conducted by the staff of the group management.

Internal inspectors: Group management staff conducting internal inspections and initial internal inspections.

Internal management system: A set of procedures of which the group serve to ensure compliance with the RSB standard requirements.

Internal risk class: A number on a given scale expressing the level of risk of non-compliance with the RSB standard requirements.

Micro and small-scale biomass feedstock processors: Operations processing not more than 50,000 metric tons of biomass feedstock per year.

Micro and small-scale biofuel and biomaterial producers: Operations producing not more than 10 million liters of biofuels or 50'000 MT of biomaterials per year.

Non-conformities: failure to comply with one or more requirements specified in the RSB standards and/or the RSB certification systems

Operations: A company or individual active in the production, processing or handling of biomaterial feedstock.

Procedures: A specified way to carry out an activity or process.

Processing: The act of transforming a product

Processing operation: The area and facilities where processing of biomaterial feedstock and biomaterials take place

Production plot: The particular plot of land where agricultural production takes place

RSB member code: A number assigned by the RSB to certified operators or smallholder groups.

Sanctions: An action taken by the group management towards group members as a result of a non-compliance to the RSB standard requirements.

Scope of certification: The comprehensive description of all aspects of the operations under the control of a participating operator which are affected by the implementation of the RSB standards and RSB certification systems, including reference to the RSB standards applicable to the aspects of the operations under the control of the participating operator.

Smallholder: Feedstock Producers (e.g. farmers) whose total amount of land does not exceed 75 ha.

Note: The RSB will continue to explore possible options for the definition of smallholders, based on additional parameters such as the use of family labor, access to technology, income, etc.

F. Requirements

1. Group Management

1. 1. The group management shall be an organization or an individual representing the group and its members for the purpose of certification to the RSB Standard.
1. 2. The group management shall be responsible for the compliance with the RSB standards and certification requirements by all group member farms and production plots included in the scope of certification.
1. 3. Group management shall develop an organizational chart with the roles and responsibilities which include at least an overall responsible manager and defines responsibilities for internal inspection and training.
1. 4. The staff of the group management shall possess the necessary capacities to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Training shall be provided to the staff of the group management where necessary.
1. 5. Group management shall be responsible for informing all members in an appropriate way (written by providing guidelines or procedures or verbal by active extension services) about the RSB standards and certification requirements.
1. 6. Group Management shall ensure that all members have access to member specific information as well as the applicable RSB standards and certification requirements.
1. 7. Group management shall respond adequately to questions or feedback raised by members.
1. 8. The group management shall communicate to members and obtain agreement by members on the use and distribution of any benefit derived from RSB certification.
1. 9. The group management shall establish an Internal Management System (content is outlined under Section 3).
1. 10. The group management shall ensure that any common benefit is fairly shared among all the group members.

2. Group Members

2. 1. Group members are biomaterial feedstock producers or micro or small-scale processing operations and shall have signed each, by way of signature or practical alternative (e.g. in the case of illiterate members), a contract or agreement with the group management.
2. 2. Group management shall make sure that group members understand the implications of the contract or agreement. The agreement shall contain at least:
 2. 2. 1. a commitment by the group member to fulfill the applicable parts of the RSB standards and certification requirements for the farms included in the scope of certification;
 2. 2. 2. a commitment by the group member to provide the group management with required information;
 2. 2. 3. acceptance by the group member of internal and external inspections;
 2. 2. 4. an obligation for the group member to report intentional or unintentional

- non-conformities;
- 2. 2. 5. a commitment by the group manager to support the member to fulfill the applicable part of the RSB standards and certification requirements for the farms included in the scope of certification; and
- 2. 2. 6. the right of members or group management to terminate membership according to pre-defined rules as documented in the Internal Management System (see Section 3).

3. Internal Management System (IMS)

- 3. 1. The group management shall implement an internal management system (IMS) to ensure the compliance of the group and its members with the RSB standards and certification requirements.
- 3. 2. The IMS shall consist of a set of procedures aiming to bring the group and all its members to compliance with this standard and the RSB Principles and Criteria for Smallholder Groups.
- 3. 3. The effective implementation of the IMS shall be monitored through internal inspections. Internal inspectors shall be selected by the group management upon consultation with group members.

4. Internal Inspections

Prior to inspection by auditors, internal inspections shall be conducted by group management to assess compliance against the relevant RSB standards and certification requirements.

- 4. 1. When setting up the internal management system and defining the scope of certification, internal inspectors shall carry out an initial inspection of all farms and production plots against the RSB standard and requirements.
- 4. 2. Inspections shall take place at different times of the year and not be so regular as to become predictable.
- 4. 3. The schedule of internal inspections shall be designed by the responsible person in group management and shall take into consideration the risk of non-compliance of members' farms
- 4. 4. Internal inspectors shall be independent and free of any conflict of interest vis-à-vis the group management or group members.
- 4. 5. New group members' farms and / or production plots shall always be internally inspected before they can be included in the scope of certification
- 4. 6. In case of a non-compliance observed, group management shall issue a corrective action request (CAR) to the responsible group member containing timelines for correction and sanctions where the CAR is not followed up adequately. Where corrective action request are not followed up sanctions shall apply according to the procedures outlined in the Internal Management System (See section 3).
- 4. 7. Group members shall have the right to appeal findings of non-compliance.

5. Continuous Improvement

5. 1. Group management shall assess annually the need for awareness and training activities of group management and group members to ensure compliance against the relevant RSB standards and certification requirements. Possible sources to assess the need are:
 5. 1. 1. internal inspection findings;
 5. 1. 2. external audit findings;
 5. 1. 3. updated social and environmental impact assessment;
 5. 1. 4. complaints and appeals;
 5. 1. 5. review of market requirements.
5. 2. Based upon the assessment, the group management shall make an annual plan for awareness and training activities to group management staff and group members with the objective to ensure that they possess the necessary capacities to comply with the RSB standards and certification requirements. Where group members are not directly managing all aspects of their farms or where otherwise relevant, trainings should include farm workers.
5. 3. Group management shall organize and facilitate the necessary trainings. Where the expertise and capacities for trainings are not present in the group management, external parties shall be addressed to provide the necessary trainings.

6. Record-keeping

6. 1. Up to date records shall be maintained by group management, including at least the following:
 6. 1. 1. contracts or agreements between the group and individual group members;
 6. 1. 2. group member list (details see 6.2);
 6. 1. 3. maps or description of all farms and production plots included in the scope of certification;
 6. 1. 4. records for selling, buying, processing and transporting certified and non-certified products;
 6. 1. 5. yearly production volumes of the whole group for the previous year, estimations for current year and estimations for next year;
 6. 1. 6. internal inspection reports;
 6. 1. 7. non-conformities, sanctions and corrective action requests arising from both internal inspections and external audits;
 6. 1. 8. training records; and
 6. 1. 9. complaints and appeals.
6. 2. Group management shall have a written or digital list with all group members. This document shall be updated as necessary (at least annually) and shall include at least the following information:

For biomaterial feedstock producers:

6. 2 1. name of the member;
6. 2 2. a code assigned to each individual production plot included in the scope of certification;
6. 2 3. the location and size of each individual production plot;
6. 2 4. volume of certified production per production plot; yield records from the previous year and yield estimates for the current and next year;
6. 2 5. certification status;
6. 2 6. dates of internal inspections;
6. 2 7. trainings attended; and
6. 2 8. current internal risk class
6. 3 For processing operations:
 6. 3 1. name of the processing facility;
 6. 3 2. name of the owner and manager of the processing facility;
 6. 3 3. a code assigned to each processing facility;
 6. 3 4. the location and size of each individual production facility;
 6. 3 5. volume of processed products; records from the previous year and estimates for the current and next year;
 6. 3 6. certification status;
 6. 3 7. trainings attended; and
 6. 3 8. current internal risk class
6. 4. Records will be stored and kept for 5 years by the group management in a central place, either electronically or in an archive/document system or both and accessible to group members.

7. Chain of Custody

Chain of custody requirements in a certified group apply on the level of the farm and the group management. Where trading and/or processing occurs within the operations of the group, additional requirements apply.

Requirements for groups which are not trading or processing at an aggregated level:

7. 1. Group management shall estimate production and sales volumes for the individual group members/production plots in the scope of certification on an annual basis for the current and upcoming year. Estimates shall be realistic and based on previous farm records.
7. 2. Group members shall maintain records of the realized annual production figures as well as production estimates for the current and upcoming year. Production estimates should be maintained separately for separate production plots or areas of production under different conditions (e.g. age of perennial crop, crop cycle, location of production plot).
7. 3. Where production estimates strongly differentiate from previous figures, group members shall justify the changes in production estimates towards group management.

7. 4. Group members shall maintain records of all sales of all certified products. The record of sales could be an invoice by the producer or a receipt from the buyer. Records include at least:
 7. 4. 1. Date of sales transaction
 7. 4. 2. Unique number of the delivery note (e.g. Bill of lading, or invoice #)
 7. 4. 3. The name of the group member
 7. 4. 4. Type of product and quality specification where applicable
 7. 4. 5. Volume of product sold
 7. 4. 6. The group's RSB participant code and the sub-code of the member
 7. 4. 7. Valid RSB Certificate number, Certification Body and Chain of custody model employed
 7. 4. 7. The name and address of the buyer and its RSB participant code (if applicable)
 7. 4. 8. Reference to the transportation agent where transport is outsourced
 7. 4. 9. Where certified and uncertified products are mixed before delivery, the amount of certified product contained in the delivered volume
 7. 4. 10. Reference to the greenhouse gas intensity of the product (calculated with the RSB GHG Calculator)
 7. 4. 11. Country of origin
 7. 4. 12. Where certified and uncertified products are mixed, this is indicated by a reference on the sales document, in accordance with the group's chain of custody procedures (e.g. 'mass balance')
7. 5. The only RSB compliance claim that group members shall make is the RSB participant code and their individual sub-code on the sales document. Group members shall not use the RSB trademark.
7. 6. Group management shall ensure traceability of the RSB certified product from the members' farm until the moment when the customer directly or indirectly takes legal and physical control of the RSB compliant product.
7. 7. Group management maintains a system to monitor production and sales of the biomaterial feedstock produced by group members. Related procedures are developed and communicated to group members.
7. 8. The group management's monitoring system shall ensure that sales of certified product do not exceed the certified production of individual group members. The information to be included in the monitoring system contains at least the information on producers' sales documents, as well as group members' production estimates.

7. 9. Receipts of every sale shall be kept for at least five years either by group members or by the group management.

Additional requirements for Groups that trade RSB certified products at an aggregated level:

7. 10. The entity within the group responsible for buying certified and / or uncertified products from its members or other third-parties:
7. 10. 1. shall have a system in place to monitor all purchases and sales of certified and uncertified products to ensure that the amount of certified product purchased does not exceed the sales of certified product;
7. 10. 2. shall maintain a list of certified and uncertified suppliers and the products sourced from them;
7. 10. 3. shall record purchases from each supplier including purchased volumes of certified and uncertified product and whether it has been mixed with uncertified product or not. The record of purchase includes a unique identification code for each batch of the purchased certified and uncertified product;
7. 10. 4. shall establish purchasing records for certified products to be in line with the information on the sales document (outlined in 7.4.1.to 12.);
7. 10. 5. shall verify the validity of the suppliers certification claim on the sales document during internal inspections for purchases from group members.
7. 11. The entity within the group responsible for buying certified and / or uncertified product shall identify and document for any and all RSB compliant products forwarded to a customer the following information:
7. 11. 1. name and address of the customer of the RSB compliant product;
7. 11. 2. name and address of the first processing site within the customer's operation, to which the RSB compliant product is forwarded;
7. 11. 3. date when the RSB compliant product is forwarded;
7. 11. 4. type and quantity of the RSB compliant product forwarded;
7. 11. 5. Whether RSB compliant product has been mixed with non-compliant product and the amount of compliant product in the volume delivered;
7. 11. 6. unique identification code of the batch of RSB compliant product forwarded to the customer;
7. 11. 7. the Group's RSB participant code;
7. 11. 8. Valid RSB Certificate number, Certification Body and Chain of custody model employed
7. 11. 9. Reference to the greenhouse gas intensity of the product (Calculated with the RSB GHG Calculator)
7. 11. 10. if applicable, reference to external third parties responsible on behalf of the group for transporting the RSB compliant product;

7. 11. 11. name of the staff person who verified the correctness of the documentation associated with the RSB compliant product and forwarded to the customer.

7. 12. The participating operator shall forward to a customer the information required under point 7.11. 1. to 9. upon request together with the RSB compliant product to the customer.

Additional requirements for Groups that process RSB certified products:

7. 13. Where internal processing of RSB compliant products takes place within the operation of a group, group management shall describe all steps of acquiring, handling, forwarding and internal processing in a written document.

7. 14. The mixing of RSB compliant product with non-certified products shall be considered an internal processing step.

7. 15. For each step of internal processing the group management shall identify and document conversion factors. Reference on how the conversion factors have been determined shall be provided on request.

7. 16. The documentation of internal processing shall include recording the unique identification code of RSB compliant product used in processing. A new code for the processed product is assigned in case product characteristics have changed during internal processing.

8. Communication and Claims

8. 1. Where RSB compliant and non-compliant biomaterials have been mixed within the group's operations, the following certification claim can be made: "The equivalent mass of this biomass/biomaterial product originated from production operations certified for compliance with RSB Standards" or "Product mix contains RSB compliant biomaterial".

8. 2. Where RSB compliant biomaterial are kept separated from non-compliant biomaterial throughout the group's operations, the following certification claim can be made: "This biomaterial product originated from production operations certified for compliance with RSB Standards" or "RSB compliant biomaterial".

8. 3. The group can use the following claim for its off-product communication: "Supporting socially and environmentally responsible production of Biomaterial". The claim shall refer to the RSB website.