

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

An initiative of the EPFL Energy Center

Ensuring that biofuels deliver on their promise of sustainability



Newsletter – January 2009

In this issue: Our **new governance structure**, developing a **certification system**, **regional outreach meetings** from Buenos Aires to Iowa to Brussels, **new staff**, and more!

Dear colleagues in sustainable biofuels,

Thanks to the hundreds of you who participated in our Working Groups and regional stakeholder meetings in Brazil, China, South Africa, and India from June 2007-2008, we were able to publish 'Version Zero' of a global sustainability standard for biofuels last August.

But we haven't stopped moving since! While we are focusing on gathering global stakeholder feedback on Version Zero from now through March, we are also introducing a new governance system and starting to develop a third-party certification system for sustainable biofuels, based on recognizing existing standards in a 'meta-standard' approach. We're also trying to find global consensus on the tough new issues facing the biofuels industry related to indirect land use change, bringing scientists together in global discussions to share the results of their land use and commodity pricing models.

We've also been able to expand our team, which will help us ensure that we can include input from more and more interested parties. We've included here some brief information about our new team, stakeholder outreach activities, and land use change discussions, but as always there's lots more information on our website, <http://EnergyCenter.epfl.ch/Biofuels> and www.bioenergywiki.net.

Happy reading!

The RSB Team (Annie, Charlotte, Claire, Maryline, Matt, and Sebastien)

1) *New governance for the RSB*

On January 6th, the RSB's founding Steering Board validated a new governance system for the RSB. Whereas the first phase of the RSB has focused on the development of the standard itself, since approving Version Zero the Board has worked on creating a new, balanced, multi-stakeholder governance system to ensure equity and representation from all interested parties affected by biofuels' production.

Any interested organization will be invited to join one of **11 Chambers**, each one representing a given stakeholder group (farmers, conservation NGOs, banks, trade unions, etc.) Once formed (by April of this year), each Chamber will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair, who will serve on a new **Standards Board**, bringing together all of the Chambers for decision-making about the RSB. The Chambers and Standards Board will work via consensus, to ensure that all stakeholders' views are represented and respected.

The Standards Board will be the **main decision-making body** for the RSB. It will approve Version One and all future versions of the standard, as well as any regional adaptations and/or crop-specific indicators. It will decide on the RSB strategy and activities, including pilot projects, workshops, and conferences. Finally, it will decide on how to implement the standard, including the criteria for benchmarking existing standards to be accepted under the RSB's 'meta-standard' approach (more on this in the next section), and approving any accreditation or certification options for ensuring that the standard is widely adopted and used.

Any organization that falls into one of the eleven categories can now apply to participate - a formal invitation to join the new Chambers will be sent later in January. The current founding Steering Board will jointly approve Version One of the RSB standard alongside the new Standards Board at a joint meeting in May, so the transition will be a quick one! We hope that all of you will join a Chamber to participate in this important process, the only international multi-stakeholder process developing mainstream sustainability standards for biofuels.

A final thanks to our founding Steering Board Chair, Claude Martin, former Executive Director of WWF International, who expertly guided the Board from its inception in April 2006 through the launch of this new governance phase. **Barbara Bramble** from the National Wildlife Federation in the US will Chair the Steering Board alongside **Richard Sykes** from IPIECA as Vice-Chair during the transition phase to the new Standards Board.

View the [Complete Terms of Reference for the new Standards Board!](#)

2) Decision to create a certification system

In their September 08 meeting, the RSB's Steering Board decided that there was sufficient market interest to warrant developing a certification system, whereby biofuels purchasers could ensure that the product they are purchasing was certified as sustainably produced by a third party. This was not a decision the Board entered into lightly, as developing such a system represents a significant cost to both the standard-setter and the actors in the supply chain, but as an industry which is under strong scrutiny from civil society, the additional level of assurance offered by in deemed crucial by the Board.



Charlotte Opal, presenting Version Zero at the International Biofuel Conference in São Paulo (Nov, 2008)

The Board has always supported the idea of a ‘meta-standard’ system, which relies on existing certification and standards schemes to assure that most RSB principles are met. This reduces the cost and inspection burden on producers (who do not need to get a separate certification for the biofuels market), and ensures that sustainability concerns peculiar to individual crops are addressed by crop-specific sustainability schemes wherever possible, instead of relying on a generic, less-specific standard. The new Standards Board will be responsible for choosing an accreditor to recognize both existing standards and also certification agencies to use the generic standards for crops which don’t already have standards (jatropha, algae, etc.)

Our new Implementation Coordinator, Maryline Guiramand (read all about her later in this newsletter!), will be in charge of developing a benchmarking system for assessing whether or not other standards cover enough aspects of the generic RSB standard, as well as developing the eventual RSB certification system. She’ll be relying on the input of our experts in the Implementation Working Group, as always. The GHG, SOC, and ENV Working Groups will also help develop tools for measure compliance with RSB principles that aren’t often covered in other standards, for instance carbon balance, food security, and ‘indirect’ or macroeconomic impacts of using land for biofuels production.

3) Upcoming regional stakeholder meetings on Version Zero

The next three months will be focused on gathering feedback on Version Zero via in-person multi-stakeholder meetings all around the world – we’ve already held a few in Brazil and Africa (summarized later in this newsletter). For more information about any of the events listed below, please write to rsb@epfl.ch.

January :

28th Southeastern US: Durham, NC

February:

4th Western US: San Francisco, CA (during US National Biodiesel Board annual meetings)

12-13th Caribbean: Port-au-Prince, Haiti (in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank)

17-18th Andean region: Bogota, Colombia (in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank)

27th Side event at Commodity Classic, Grapevine, TX

March:

3-4th Mid-Western US: Ames, Iowa

16th Washington, DC, USA

18-20th Southern Cone, America: Buenos Aires, Argentina (in cooperation with the Bio-Top project and the Argentine National Institute of Agricultural Technology - INTA)

19th Europe: Brussels (following World Biofuels Market, co-sponsored by Daimler)

TBD East Africa and Southeast Asia

In April and May, the outgoing Steering Board and incoming Standards Board will review all of the feedback and suggestions gathered during our regional meetings, from the Bioenergy Wiki, and received at the RSB Secretariat, to create a new 'Version One' by June, 2009.

4) New staff

The RSB Secretariat has grown our team! Please welcome our new colleagues:

4.1 Maryline Guiramand, Implementation Coordinator



Maryline has over 25 years of experience in the field of sustainable development and international trade in the agri-food sector, with a special focus on multi-stakeholder approaches and integrated management systems for sustainability. She leads the Technical Working Group on social issues for the Better Sugarcane Initiative, and previously managed the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform, co-founded by Danone, Nestlé and Unilever to promote sustainable agriculture, from its creation in Geneva in 2002 until its move in 2005. Maryline will be responsible for creating the standards benchmarking system, the certification system, and pilot testing framework for the RSB. Her e-mail address is: [maryline.guiramand "at" epfl.ch](mailto:maryline.guiramand@epfl.ch).

4.2 Matt Rudolf, RSB Americas Coordinator



Matt graduated from the University of Massachusetts and worked briefly in rural public health policy before moving to western Guatemala, where he worked on community-scale biodiesel production and rural electrification. In 2006 he became the first Executive Director of Piedmont Biofuels, a biodiesel cooperative in central North Carolina (USA) using pure B100 biodiesel made from recycled fryer oil. Meanwhile, he helped develop a nationally-recognized biodiesel education program based on best practices and sustainable production. Matt will be responsible for representing the RSB in the Western hemisphere. Matt speaks English and Spanish. E-mail: [matthew.rudolf "at" epfl.ch](mailto:matthew.rudolf@epfl.ch).

We have also hired **Jane Earley** as a part-time consultant to help Matt do outreach to US agriculture stakeholders. Jane is an international trade attorney who specializes in food safety and environmental standards.

4.3 Claire Chappuis, RSB Administrator



Claire studied law at the University of Lausanne, and has eight years of experience in administrative positions in industry and at EPFL. She will be responsible for all of the day-to-day administration for the RSB, including contact management, budgeting, communications, regional stakeholder meeting logistics, and Secretariat travel. Claire speaks fluent French, German, and English, as well as intermediate Spanish. Her e-mail address is: [claire.chappuis "at" epfl.ch](mailto:claire.chappuis@epfl.ch).

December 18th was **Georgios Sarantakos'** last day with the RSB. We wish him all the best for his future plans and are actively looking for a **Scientific Coordinator** to replace him.

Where can I meet the RSB team?

Aside from our regional events, RSB Board members and Secretariat staff will be presenting our work at several upcoming conferences. Please look for us here!

February:

- 1st Sustainable Biodiesel Summit, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 3rd National Biodiesel Board conference, San Francisco, CA, USA
- 25-27th RETECH, Las Vegas, NV, USA

March:

- 16th World Biofuels Market, Brussels, Belgium
- 30th IEA Task 38 Workshop on Land Use Change, Helsinki, Finland

5) 2009 Timeline and Workplan

Please visit our [website](#) to see our [full 2009 Workplan](#). The first half of 2009 will focus on the transition from Version Zero to One and our new governance system. The second half we hope to adopt our 'meta-standard' benchmarking approach, develop a third-party certification system, and approve indicators for the RSB's generic standard.

6) RSB workshop on deforestation and land use change (São Paulo, Brazil – November 20- 21st, 2008)

During the Ministerial meetings of the International Biofuels Conference (Nov 20-21) in São Paulo, the RSB (with significant help from Amazônia Brasileira, UNICA, and the LASEN lab at EPFL) organized a parallel workshop with 63 scientists from 17 countries on the drivers of land use change, and modeling efforts underway to better understand the links among biofuels policies, feedstock prices, and indirect land use change (iLUC).



[View all of the presentations and the meeting summary.](#)

One of our goals for the meeting was to identify global scientific consensus about how much these iLUC impacts could be, and how they might be avoided or mitigated through sustainability standards – this workshop was a first step towards that goal.

According to the participants, key areas on which the RSB should focus include:

- Certification must be related to actions that individual producers or buyers can do.

- Improving yields of energy/non-energy crops (e.g. cattle) will reduce pressure on land, although we should be careful about incenting yield improvements where intensification is already high, as the environmental impact could be negative.
- The RSB should therefore demonstrate in our standards that intensification is possible, and encourage (or even require) intensification in our standards.
- The RSB should categorize projects with high/low risk of having iLUC impacts. High risk projects could compensate with yield 'offsets', i.e. investing in production in low yield developing countries.

There was also a discussion about the policy context for estimating these indirect effects, and possible roles for the RSB:

- There is a window of opportunity to influence policy right now – e.g. the US and California have to estimate iLUC within the next six months
- RSB should be trying to influence policy makers. We could involve the RSB in EU biofuel legislation to introduce technical support.
- RSB should be involved in the calculation of typical and default values.

7) RSB consultations on Version Zero, from Brazil to Mali to Mozambique

Since publishing Version Zero in August, 2008, the RSB has held in-person stakeholder feedback sessions in Brazil, Mozambique, and Mali. Brief summaries of these meetings are provided below; please visit our [“RSB meetings”](#) page to see the full discussions, presentations, and participant lists.

7.1 Brazil (October and November, 2008)

The Brazilian process of national public consultation on Version Zero was organized by the Biofuels Network of Brazilian Civil Society Organizations.

A national consultation was carried out in São Paulo (November 6-7th), in addition to two local consultations (Sept-Nov) in regions of intense expansion of biofuels production, as well as other dialogues pursued in the sidelines of international events. 141 institutions or companies participated in the consultation process.

The major unanimous consensus elements that arose from the consultation were:

- In the context of Principle 3, a minimum amount of reduction in the emissions of GHG for biofuels to be considered sustainable should be established, not only a generic definition such as “significant”.
- With reference to Principle 7, a baseline should be established (in principle, a reference year) as a limit for eligibility for conversion of natural ecosystems (deforestation).
- In addition to the current minimum norms for obligatory compliance, a rating system that permits the identification of more advanced practices should be included. This would allow a process of continual improvement and signaling of best practices.
- Consensus was reached among participants about the importance of balanced governance.

7.2 Mozambique (September 11, 2008, Maputo)

This one-day stakeholder feedback session involved 47 participants from Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana. Feedback included:

- The need for support materials (indicators, definitions, scale distinction, etc.)
- The need for *planning*, particularly because as the certification process deals with projects on an individual basis, it is extremely difficult to account for *cumulative effects*.
- The need for governments to be closely involved.
- When the outgrower or cooperative model is employed, there needs to be a mechanism by which the small farmers get *bulk accreditation*.
- Encourage the use of *marginal land* to minimise implications for food security, but not necessarily in countries with high amounts of available arable land (e.g. Mozambique).
- More generally, issues of food security and land use are country-specific.

7.3 Mali (November 26, 2008, Bamako)

The RSB held a full-day feedback session with participants in the [COMPETE](#) Workshop on Bioenergy Policies in West Africa. This workshop brought together about 80 representatives from 17 countries. Feedback included:

- The standard needs to be interpreted in specific regional contexts.
- Decentralized local authorities & communities are legitimate representatives of local interests and should be consulted.
- No consensus could be reached on whether Africans have the immediate responsibility of coping with GHG emissions.
- Local communities must be involved in the identification of HCV areas and ecosystem services.
- Genetically modified organisms that increase the dependency of developing countries on developed countries and large companies must be banned.
- Regarding food security, the main problem is a lack of manpower, not land. There may not be enough rural workers to grow both food and biofuels, so food production might decrease.
- Growing jatropha cannot bring both the benefits of rehabilitating desert or eroded lands AND sufficient yields for large-scale exports.



Jatropha plantation near Garalo, Mali