

Revision of the RSB Standard for the Certification of Bio-Products

Public Summary of the process

February 2018

1. Background

More than 60 diverse organisations that have united to create the RSB and what was once a vision to ensure biofuel sustainability has grown into a global sustainability certification for all biomaterials.

The RSB has members from a worldwide movement of businesses, NGOs, academics, government and UN organisations that all have the same goal of supporting and driving best practice for sustainable biomaterial production.

The RSB Standard contributes to food security, rural development and the protection of ecosystems. Its unique membership body is made up of sector pioneers, business leaders, NGO and UN agencies that have approved the 12 principles of the standard and are actively driving the bioeconomy through innovation, business partnerships and solving social and environmental issues. By applying the RSB Standard a company is actively helping to achieve the UN Sustainable Development goals.

2. RSB Standard Development

As a full member of the *ISEAL Alliance*, RSB reviews standards at least every five years to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting the stated objectives. The review process is fully in line with the ISEAL requirements on standard-setting and includes consultation with the public and RSB members, followed by the approval of the RSB Assembly of Delegates.

3. What does the RSB Standard for the Certification of Bio-Products cover?

The RSB *Standard for the Certification of Bio-Products* is a supplement to the RSB Principles & Criteria and enables producers of bio-chemicals and bio-products supply chains to receive RSB certification and to demonstrate responsible practice throughout the supply chain.

The scope of the current RSB *Standard for the Certification of Bio-Products* is global and covers the full supply chain of Bio-products, including plastics, textiles, pharmaceuticals, packaging, tableware, cosmetics, nutritional supplements, and many others. As part of the standard revision process a scope extension will be discussed to also cover advanced materials from mass balanced processes or fossil based waste materials.

4. Why the standard revision is needed?

The RSB Standard is constantly evolving as our world evolves. As new technology, research and sustainability issues emerge, the RSB works with its stakeholders to adapt the Standard. Based on comments received while implementing the Standard, the RSB Secretariat suggests a focus on the following topics during this revision process:

a) Terminology in the context of Bio-Products

The RSB Secretariat suggests to include terminology as defined in standard CSN EN 16575 (Bio-based products – Vocabulary) to ensure harmonisation in terminology

b) Characteristics of Bio-Products and Advanced Products

The RSB Secretariat asks stakeholders to comment on further options to support the growth of the bio-based economy:

- I. Allow for two further options to determine bio-based content:
 - (1) radiocarbon analysis and elemental analysis (EN 16785-1) and
 - (2) material balance method (EN 16785-2)

The current standard requires operators to determine bio-based carbon content based on ASTM D6866 or CEN/TS 16137. The RSB Secretariat suggests further options that have been developed by CEN TC/411 be allowed.
- II. Address fluctuations of the bio-based content over time

The current standard allows operators to use the annual average when determining bio-carbon content. The RSB Secretariat suggests that the consequences of this approach are specified for the claim that operators are allowed to use (see also 3.)
- III. Option to allow for more flexibility regarding the bio-content of durable goods¹ while keeping a threshold for fast moving consumer goods². The current RSB Standard for Bio-Products requires a bio-carbon content of 25% for all product categories.
- IV. Option to allow for mass balance approaches for the calculation, attribution and declaration for the use of biomass in supply and/or value chains. This also includes products with a physical bio-based content which can potentially be zero with an attributed characteristic (use of sustainable biomass in a production system).

c) Requirements for correct and transparent claims

Based on the results of **b)**, the revision will define requirements to correctly claim bio-content, bio-carbon content and (if applicable) biomass used in the production site (mass balance).

The work will reflect on the results of working group 5 of CEN/TC 411 (EN 16848 “Requirements for B2B communication” and EN 16935 “Requirements for B2C Communication”) and will include:

- Products with a claimed bio-based content which is verifiable with one of the defined methods
- Products with a claimed bio-based content that deviates systematically from the actual bio-based content (i.e. processes with fluctuations over time / statement of a minimum guaranteed bio-based content)
- If applicable, products with an attributed characteristic - but an actual bio-based content which can potentially be zero

¹ Defined as category of consumer goods that are purchased infrequently and last a significant amount of time. They include automobiles, sporting goods, appliances, jewelry, and other categories

² Defined as consumer products that sell quickly and at a relatively low cost, include food and beverage products, personal care products, and other consumables

d) GHG calculation of Bio-products and GHG emission reduction thresholds

Because of methodological challenges, the current RSB Standard does not require final bio-products to achieve a GHG emission saving compared to fossil materials. RSB asks its stakeholders to input on the topics:

- Which fossil reference scenarios should bio-products be compared to?
- How can the Standard address temporary storage of CO₂ and end-of-life scenarios given that country specific waste management options influence the environmental performance of bio-based materials (e.g. landfill, combustion or recycling)

e) Inclusion of fossil based waste feedstocks

With the revision of the RSB Standard for Advanced Fuels in 2017, RSB now accepts the certification of fuels made from fossil based waste materials. RSB will ask its stakeholders about the inclusion of non-biogenic feedstocks also for material production.

5. Description of the Standard Setting Procedure

The revision process follows the *RSB Procedure for Development and Modification of Standards* (RSB-STD-15-001), which is aligned with the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code. The opportunities for stakeholder consultation are in bold.

- **1st Public Consultation: May 25th – July 25th 2017**
- Draft prepared by the Secretariat based on the public consultation
- **2nd Public Consultation: August 10th – September 10th**
- 1st revision prepared by the Secretariat
- **RSB Chamber Consultation: October 2017**
- 2nd revision of the draft prepared by the Secretariat based on the chambers` comments
- **RSB Assembly of Delegates discussion of the Standard: November 2017**
- 3rd revision prepared by the Secretariat
- **Stakeholder consultations: March 26th – May 7th**
- 4th revision prepared by the Secretariat
- **RSB Chamber consultations: September 2018**
- 5th revision prepared by the Secretariat
- **RSB Chamber Consultations October 22th – December 3rd**
- **RSB Assembly of Delegates approval of the Standard: December 2018**

For any comment or suggestion regarding these Terms of Reference or to participate in the ongoing revision of the RSB Standard, please contact:

Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials

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