



SMALLHOLDER CASE STUDY

CANA SUSTENTÁVEL

Making RSB Certification achievable and valuable for smallholders

RSB's best-in-class certification can open new markets and opportunities for smallholder farmers all over the world. To assist farmers in certifying agricultural areas of less than 75 hectares, RSB has developed a unique smallholder certification that allows groups of smallholders to join together to achieve certification using a stepwise approach that allows these farmers to manage sustainability issues as a group and to be supported to make improvements in management, environmental and social practices.

The Partnership

The “Cana Sustentável” (Sustainable Sugar Cane) project is a partnership between RSB and Socicana – Association of Sugar Cane suppliers of Guariba (Associação dos Fornecedores de Cana de Guariba), São Paulo state, Brazil. The smallholder group chosen for the study is a group of sugar cane growers, composed of 11 small properties (belonging to 17 farmers), with each farm having a total area of less than 75 hectares.

The farms are located in the region of Taquaritinga, São Paulo state, Brazil. The area included in the scope of the study comprised 653 ha (total area), with 466 ha of sugar cane plantations.

The Smallholder Approach

The study is based on data collected during the early stage of the “Cana Sustentável” project. Two RSB consultants carried out initial inspections in April 2016. The data collection included mixed methods: semi-structured interviews with farmers and their family members (when present), interviews with Socicana team, on-site visit using RSB smallholder standard as checklist. After implementation of actions to address the issues identified in the initial inspection, the group was evaluated (by sampling, 4 farmers were audited) against RSB smallholder standards by independent auditors (RSB accredited Certification Body).

The comparison of issues observed in the initial stage (before the “Cana Sustentável” Program) and those raised during the certification audit indicated that the Socicana group was able to address the main requirements for the “year zero” of RSB standard for smallholder groups and prepare adequate plans to correct the deviations identified in the initial inspection.

During the period from March to September 2016, the Association worked on the implementation of a management system aligned with RSB standard for group management. Socicana prepared new procedures and forms, trained their team on the new system, developed a work book to be used by farmers to collect and record relevant production data and costs, organised the chain of custody system, among others. In parallel, the association “translated” the RSB P&Cs into a series of practical measures and plans which could be adopted at small farm level.

IMPACT AREAS

RSB PRINCIPLES	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES PLANNED/IMPLEMENTED BY THE GROUP FOR RSB CERTIFICATION
 <p>Principle 1: Legality</p>  <p>Principle 4: Human and Labour Rights</p>	<p>The association’s legal department identified the farmers’ specific requirements for information, searched for responses and the Socicana technical team provided guidance to producers (e.g. to understand the requirements for adequate pesticide storage areas to comply with safety standards)</p>
 <p>Principle 2: Planning, Monitoring and Continuous improvement</p>	<p>The association produced a workbook (“Caderno de campo”) and provided training to farmers for data collection about each stage of sugar cane production, including operations, inputs and costs. The association will assist the farmers in analysing their results.</p>
 <p>Principle 3: Greenhouse Gas Emissions</p>	<p>The workbook prepared for data collection helped to obtain actual data for the farms (for example: amount of fertilisers and pesticides applied, diesel consumption, sugar cane yield)</p>
 <p>Principle 7: Conservation</p>  <p>Principle 9: Water</p>  <p>Principle 10: Air</p>	<p>Satellite images were analysed for each farm. Farms boundaries were identified in the images to verify any land use change.</p> <p>The association prepared an “Environmental Management Plan” for the group, covering topics related to biodiversity, restoration of preservation areas, and other environmental measures applied at farm level.</p> <p>The Association technical team provided guidance to farmers regarding inorganic wastes disposal.</p>

CONCLUSION

By providing in-depth technical support and guidance, the Cana Sustentável Smallholder Certification project has helped smallholder farmers to make improvements in their management and sustainability practices - showing industry that smallholders can be a valuable additions to sustainable supply chains.

Working with smallholders and providing technical support showed that the RSB certification process has helped the farmers to find solutions for some old, chronic problems and supported them to implement better practices.

Long-held perceptions within the industry in Brazil - that including smallholders in sugarcane supply chains is high-risk - have been shown to be unsubstantiated. This small sample has highlighted the potential within the smallholder community to respond to challenges, overcome sustainability issues and to become a valuable part of the supply chain - in Brazil and beyond.

A success that can be replicated worldwide to support sustainable production and small farmers

RSB certification can be used as a framework to build trust: improving relationships between farmers and their associations, as well as between the farmers' associations and the market (food, biofuels, bioplastics, cosmetics, among other industries).

It can also further integrate smallholders and other independent farmers into the supply chain, helping to mitigate risks and strengthen the supply chain as a whole. On the other hand, downstream organisations will find value in the RSB approach in their sustainability/outreach programs for farmers. RSB's smallholder approach can enhance the positive impact of these programmes by ensuring long-term, positive outcomes across the management, environmental and social issues covered by the RSB Principles & Criteria.

The lessons learned from this case can be replicated with other smallholder groups around the world.

