

# BioFuel for Thought

Newsletter of the  
Roundtable on  
Sustainable Biofuels



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## Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of the RSB Newsletter “Biofuel for Thought”. The second half of 2010 has seen the completion and approval of Version 2 of the RSB Standard, which was developed after the pilot testing phase we organized throughout the year. Version 2 embodies more than three years of consultation and consensus-building among hundreds of stakeholders worldwide, who converged towards the willingness to ensure sustainable biofuel production through the development of a credible and robust standard. With the valuable contribution of members, partner organizations, and auditing firms, who agreed to be our “guinea pigs”, we finally added practicality to the list of unique features of the RSB Standard and related tools and guidelines.

And guess what: we are now ready to move onto implementation! A little more than four years since a group of idealists pitched the RSB story in a meeting room of the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), a complete and operational certification system will soon allow biofuels operators to claim compliance with what is being increasingly recognized as one of the most credible voluntary schemes for sustainable biofuels, based entirely as it is on multi-stakeholder consensus.

Four years are little in one person’s life, but these four years have been intense in consensus reaching efforts and rich in learning and experience. The opportunity to interact with such a diverse and fascinating group of stakeholders such as the RSB partners re-

mains the most valuable memory that the RSB staff and members will keep of this period.

This issue will take you through the highlights of Version 2 and the RSB certification system, including the governance of RSB Services, our soon-to-launch sister organization in charge of the concrete implementation of the RSB Standard. It also includes an update on the RSB Tool, a user-friendly application that allows you to calculate your life-cycle GHG performance instantaneously!

A new section is also added to this Newsletter, in which RSB Members are invited to share their success stories and worthwhile experiences.

As a primer in this section, please embark with the RSB Secretariat and two RSB members to South Dakota in the heart of the American Midwest to meet with corn farmers and POET, the largest biofuel producer in the world, and a long-time member of the RSB.

2011 will undoubtedly be a year of many new activities for the RSB, and we look forward to achieving several new milestones along with you over the coming months. So bear with us through our website and newsletter: the best is still to come! And celebrate with us the new logo of the organization.

As always,

Alwin Kopse, Executive Secretary RSB



**“The RSB and its Steering Board believes that Version 2 is easier to understand for all users and it has now been approved for use in certification.”**



Sugarcane. © RSB

**“RSB Services will become the business facing branch of the RSB family by building a sustainable and robust framework for the implementation and enforcement of the RSB certification system.”**

## Summary of Version 2 of the RSB Standard and the Screening Tool

Version 2 of the RSB Standard was released in November 2010. Version One was edited and improved to accommodate: a) the additional work carried out concerning the requirements for the Greenhouse Gas Emissions under Principle 3; b) the feedback collected through pilot testing of Version One in 2010; c) additional clarity that was required to ensure that the Standard is user-friendly for participating operators (POs); and d) standardizing of nomenclature and removal of duplications. The RSB and its Steering Board believes that Version 2 is easier to understand for all users and it has now been approved for use in certification.

Principle 2 and its criteria set out the socio-ecological management system that POs are required to implement. This process is called the RSB Impact Assessment Process. The first step in this assessment procedure, which is required by all POs, is to carry out a screening exercise. This process enables the PO to determine the extent and scope of the environmental and social impact assessment that it may have to complete. The screening exercise also helps to establish whether or not any specialized impact assessments are required. The screening exercise is supported by a tool developed



Worker cutting sugarcane.  
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by the RSB which guides POs and assists them in their analysis of the potential socio-ecological impacts that their biofuel operations may have.

## RSB Services - Functioning and Governance

*RSB Services* will be the organization in charge of the implementation and management of the RSB Standard. In the RSB certification system, it is referred to as the “System Operating Entity”. In 2010, the RSB Secretariat worked with [AccountAbility Ltd](#) to deliver recommendations to the RSB Board regarding the governance of *RSB Services*. The functioning and governance of *RSB Services* was approved by the Steering Board during its last in-person meeting in November 2010.

*RSB Services* will become the business facing branch of the RSB family by building a sustainable and robust framework for the implementation and enforcement of the RSB certification system. Its focus will be to enhance the uptake of the certification system by biofuel stakeholders while supporting and monitoring accreditation and certification bodies. *RSB Services* will also manage claims, licensing fees and brand-related activities.

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The current RSB organisation we all know will remain in charge of the development of the RSB Standards, and will continue to be called *RSB*.

*RSB Services* and the *RSB* are two separate and independent organizations having the necessary links to ensure mutual trust, strategic alignment and the excellent performance of the RSB family. *RSB Services* is a start-up enterprise and aims to be financially self-sufficient, with different person-

nel than that of current RSB Secretariat.

*RSB Services* is expected to have an entrepreneurial Chief Executive Officer (CEO) responsible to an RSB Services Board, which will include members of the RSB Board, the private sector, and civil society, and the CEO will be supported by an efficient secretariat. In addition, an Advisory Group of up to 12 experts will provide advice on implementing the Standard.

Summary of the Certification Process

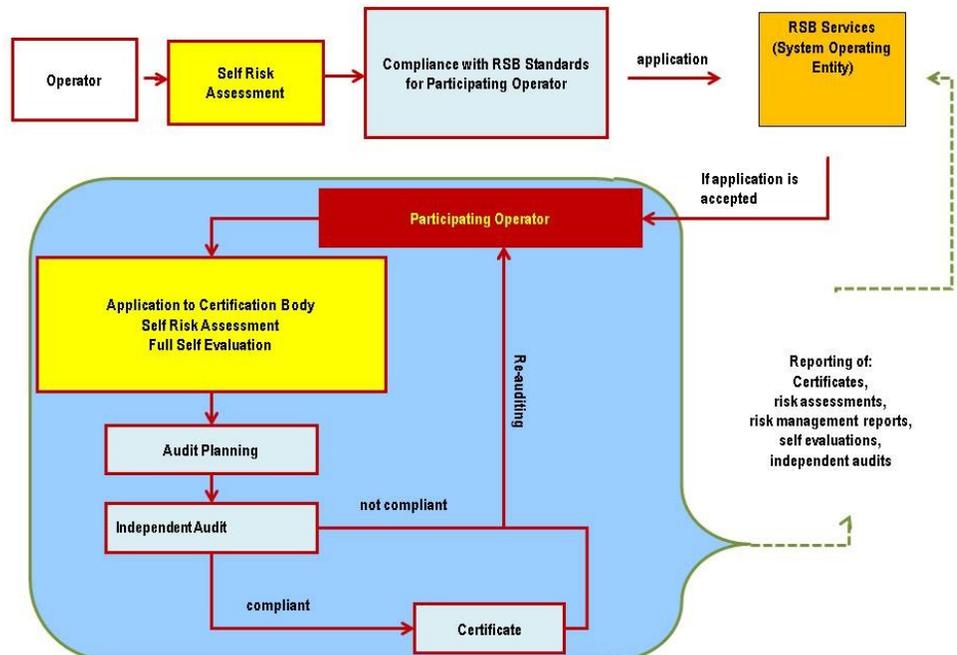
The operators that achieve compliance with the RSB Standards will be certified through a third-party system. The certification system is now ready for the first operators seeking to be certified against RSB Standards and the *RSB Services* will open for business very soon. In parallel, we are still in the process of being recognized by the European Commission, so we will provide notice regarding progress on offering RSB EU RED certification later in 2011.

Operators that wish to be RSB certified should submit an application to RSB Services in accordance with the RSB's Participating Operator Standard (RSB-STD-30-001). This application process requires an operator to evaluate its own operations against the RSB Principles & Criteria as well as to perform a self risk-assessment. These two steps will help the operator assess its own level of readiness before engaging in the certification process. The name of the



Sunflower. © Rachel Kramer

**“The certification system is now ready for the first operators seeking to be certified against RSB Standards and the *RSB Services* will open for business very soon.”**



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**“Certification agencies are welcomed to contact us in relation to the accreditation process to learn more about training of auditors.”**



Palm fruit. © RSB

**“The online tool will be freely available to anyone who wishes to use it and it will provide an entry door to the RSB certification system.”**

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applicant will be listed publicly during a 2-week period to allow for any stakeholder to comment. After the notification period, the information will be reviewed by RSB Services, which will allocate a unique number to the operator, designating that it has become a “participating operator”, as well as a risk class category based on the information provided by the operator. The participating operator will then be provided with a list of RSB accredited certification organizations from which to choose. The first part of the audit will involve an evaluation of the accuracy of the information provided, to ensure that the audit was planned correctly according to the risk class; thereafter, the process will evaluate the compliance of the PO with the Standards.



Sugarcane. © RSB

Certification agencies are welcomed to contact us in relation to the accreditation process to learn more about training of auditors. We welcome operators and certification organizations to contact us for further details.

## GHG Tool and Methodology



The RSB is coming close to releasing the beta-version of the RSB Tool, made possible by the financial contribution of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and developed in cooperation with the [Swiss Federal Institute of Technology \(EMPA\)](#) as well as the [Technical University of Berlin \(HTW Berlin\)](#). Nozymes also contributed financially to make this Tool a reality. The online tool will be freely

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**“The RSB Tool beta-version will be re-released in March 2011 and will be tested initially on some of the RSB pilot projects. If you have a suggested operator who would like to test the tool, do not hesitate to contact us.”**



*E-85 pump.  
© istockphoto.com/  
Jim Parkin*

available to anyone who wishes to use it and it will provide an entry door to the RSB certification system. It allows for operators or interested parties to conduct a self risk-assessment according to the RSB Standard for Risk Management (RSB-STD-60-001), as well as a self-evaluation against the RSB Principles & Criteria (RSB-STD-01-001) and Indicators (RSB-IND-01-001).

In addition, the RSB Tool calculates lifecycle GHG emissions of biofuels according to different methodologies, including the RSB Methodology (RSB-GUI-01-003-01) and the

EU RED methodology, for a variety of pathways.

Finally, the Tool directs operators to the [RSB website](#) to obtain more information on the RSB Standard and it provides information for operators who are interested in applying for certification.

The RSB Tool beta-version will be released in March 2011 and will be tested initially on some of the RSB pilot projects. If you have a suggested operator who would like to test the tool, do not hesitate to contact us.

## Certification Management System

The RSB plans to use a software system that will facilitate and support implementation of the RSB certification system. Such a Certification Management System (CMS) will also integrate a Traceability System (TS), and a Certificate Trading System (CTS) at a later stage. The TS will manage the four chain-of-custody models of the RSB. The CTS will manage the Book & Claim chain-of-custody (CoC) model once this is implemented as an RSB CoC model. The CMS will be used by RSB participating operators and by certification bodies to manage all aspects of certification.



*Sunflower. © Rachel Kramer*

## New section: Sharing Experience

In this section, the RSB Secretariat would like to share the valuable achievements and experience of RSB members through brief summaries. This can include a new technology being developed or implemented by your organization, an award or a prize received by your organization, your participation in an outstanding project, and any

other topic that is worth sharing, in relation with biofuels and sustainability.

To share your story, please contact the Secretariat ([rsb@epfl.ch](mailto:rsb@epfl.ch)). It will be the editor's responsibility to choose the stories to be published.

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### Field Experience: RSB Trip to “Corn Country” – South Dakota, USA

In late October 2010, members of the RSB Secretariat and members of the RSB ventured to Sioux Falls, South Dakota in the heart of the American Midwest to meet with corn farmers and POET, the largest biofuel producer in the world and long-time member of the RSB. On the first day, RSB Steering Board Chair Barbara Bramble met with a local farmer, who also serves as the president of the local grain elevator cooperative. We learned about how farmers sell their agricultural products in the Midwest, and recognized chain-of-custody considerations that would need to be taken into account. The RSB delegation also had the opportunity to tour an ethanol plant, recently purchased with the intention for it to be retrofitted for butanol production.

On the next day, farmer Paul Shubeck and his wife Carol graciously accepted the RSB delegation into their home and onto their land to talk about the importance of environmental sustainability in their agricultural production practices. As it turned out, Paul was critical to passage of the Wetlands Conservation Reserve Program, an historic USDA program which provides incentives to farmers to protect and restore wetlands on their lands. Paul took the delegation on a tour of his farm and the surrounding lands where the RSB delegation saw examples of prairie pothole ecosystems, a critical habitat for waterfowl in the Midwest United States.

After the trip to Shubeck Farm, the RSB delegation visited POET’s Chancellor plant, a 100 million gallon per year ethanol plant with a biomass-fired boiler that also captures and burns methane gas from the Sioux City landfill. Unfortunately, the plant was on an annual shutdown at the time of the visit, but the scale and type of operations was obvious. Afterwards, the group

was fortunate enough to visit POET’s functioning pilot scale cellulosic ethanol plant, called Project Liberty. Project Liberty aims to convert the corn stover and residues from the corn harvest from the same farmers POET works with for traditional ethanol production, for cellulosic production.

Overall, the trip was a great opportunity to learn first-hand about the realities of corn ethanol production in the United States and establishing contacts with a few Midwestern corn farms and ethanol producers.



*Sugarcane.*  
© istockphoto.com/  
AndrewWood

**“We learned about how farmers sell their agricultural products in the Midwest, and recognized chain of custody considerations that would need to be taken.”**



*RSB Steering Board Chair Barbara Bramble in South Dakota, USA*

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## Sustainability Standards Transparency Initiative

We are busy working to transform our “benchmarking” effort into a broader “Sustainability Standard Transparency Initiative,” which will produce not merely a transparent methodology of comparison of sustainability certification initiatives and regulatory approaches but will result in a deeper understanding of the different approaches that are being pursued in the sus-



Cassava farm. © istockphoto.com/Pailoolom

tainability standards movement. In connection with this effort, we will be conducting field tests of the standards comparison tools under development. A recent field test in Colombia was carried out successfully. The goal of this initiative is to set up an independently functioning tool for the comparison of different sustainability standards, including the way they are implemented, and sustainability regulations in different countries, for the benefit of the standard systems, procurement agencies and companies. We look forward to working with project partners, including Bonsucro, FSC, GIZ, ISEAL, Rainforest Alliance, the RSPO, and the RTRS on this important project.

## Where Can I Meet the RSB Team?

[2011 Sustainable Biodiesel Summit](#). Pittsboro, NC (5 March)

[2011 AIChE Spring Meeting](#). RSB is hosting a special session in collaboration with the US DOE to review and discuss the RSB's new certification system. Chicago, IL (16 March 2011)

[World Biofuels Market 2011](#). RSB is a partner of WBM 2011 and encourages you to attend this major event. The RSB will host a side-event on the 23rd of March; more information available soon! Rotterdam, the Netherlands (22-24 March).

[Advanced Biofuels Leadership Conference](#). Washington DC. Governing Board Chair Barbara Bramble will present the new RSB certification system. (19-21 April 2011)



Castor plant. © istockphoto.com/  
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## ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE BIOFUELS

EPFL - Energy Center  
Station 5 | 1015 Lausanne  
Switzerland

Email: [rsb@epfl.ch](mailto:rsb@epfl.ch)  
Telephone:  
+41 21 693 00 45  
Fax:  
+41 21 693 00 00

**We're on the Web!**  
[www.rsb.org](http://www.rsb.org)



**RSB**  
ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE BIOFUELS

The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels is an international initiative coordinated by the Energy Center of the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Lausanne, Switzerland. RSB brings together farmers, companies, non-governmental organizations, experts, governments, and inter-governmental agencies concerned with ensuring the sustainability of biofuels production and processing.

The RSB has developed a third-party certification system for biofuels sustainability standards, encompassing environmental, social and economic principles and criteria through an open, transparent, and multi-stakeholder process. Participation in the RSB is open to any organization working in a field relevant to biofuels sustainability.

#### RSB Secretariat Staff:

Alwin Kopse - Executive Secretary  
Annie Sugrue - Senior Advisor, Social Affairs  
Maryline Guiramand - Senior Advisor, Implementation  
Victoria Junquera - Manager, Science & Technology  
Sébastien Haye - Manager, Environmental Affairs  
Matt Rudolf - Regional Manager, Americas  
Elisabeth Bato - Administration  
Samira Ben Mansour - Administration

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