

Revision of the RSB Principles & Criteria

RSB-STD-01-001

Consultation 1

September 2021

1. Background

More than 90 diverse organisations have united to create the RSB and what was once a vision to ensure biofuel sustainability has grown into a sustainability standard for all bio-based and circular materials and fuels that is used globally for certification, risk mitigation in project development, sustainable feedstock assessments and bioeconomy roadmaps.

The implementation of the RSB Standard contributes to food security, rural development and the protection of ecosystems. The RSB's unique membership body is made up of sector pioneers, business leaders, academics, government, NGOs and UN agencies that have approved the 12 sustainability Principles & Criteria (P&C) of the standard and are actively driving the sustainable circular- and bio-based economy 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 Code Compliant¹ 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 Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice² and includes consultation with the public and RSB members, followed by the approval by the RSB Assembly of Delegates. Following these requirements, a revision of the RSB Principles and Criteria is now planned to begin in 2021.

¹ <https://www.isealliance.org/get-involved/resources/iseal-code-compliant-requirements>

² https://www.isealliance.org/sites/default/files/resource/2017-11/ISEAL_Standard_Setting_Code_v6_Dec_2014.pdf

3. Scope: What do the RSB Principles and Criteria cover?

The RSB P&C is the standard that sets out core sustainability requirements and best practices for the production of alternative fuels and materials, to ensure that those who apply the RSB standard operate in an environmentally, socially and economically responsible way.

The scope of the RSB P&C is global and covers all RSB certification schemes: RSB Global, RSB EU RED, RSB CORSIA and RSB Japan FIT. It is therefore applicable in a broad range of sector contexts including aviation, shipping, construction, packaging, textiles, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and many more. The RSB P&C are applied on a risk basis by all primary biomass (farm / forest) producers and industrial operators. In addition, some select criteria are also applicable at the farm level for agricultural residue feedstock production.

The scope of this Standard Revision process will cover the full content and application of the RSB P&C RSB-STD-01-001. You may find the current version of the RSB P&C [here](#).

4. Objectives of the RSB P&C Standard Revision

What was once a vision to ensure biofuel sustainability has grown into a global sustainability standard for all bio-based and circular materials and fuels. How to define a material or fuel as sustainable is set out in RSB's Principles and Criteria, a set of requirements developed by hundreds of organisations from across business, civil society and academia to create a robust and credible sustainability framework which is acknowledged as best-in-class by organisations including WWF, Blue Angel, IUCN, and many more.

Today, we see rapid evolution in the global bio-based and circular economy. During the past 18 months, advances in climate mitigation commitments across all sectors have been made as businesses re-evaluate the sustainability of their business models and align their climate commitments with the Paris Agreement. At the same time, policy makers are defining ambitious regional and sector-specific frameworks for sustainability and climate change mitigation, the finance sector is exploring new sustainable finance models, and multilateral organisations are looking for new ways to invest significant funds that create multiple positive impacts and resilient futures. To all of these endeavours, RSB's robust sustainability framework is frequently highlighted as a flagship model for sustainable production, and used as a basis for investment to mitigate sustainability risks.

In light of scientific and market developments, the RSB Principles & Criteria are now in the process of being updated and further improved to support their application as businesses, policy-makers and others seek to apply them to address new challenges and create innovative solutions that shift global economies away from extractive to restorative, creating positive impacts for people and nature. As a central focus, RSB proposes to review the P&C through a climate smart lens, with the ambition to facilitate feedstock producers and their supply chains to increase productivity, enhance resilience and reduce GHG emissions.

The purpose of this first Consultation is to define the topics that will be addressed in detail during a second consultation.

5. Timeline of the revision

This revision process follows the requirements for core standards revision under the *RSB Procedure for Development and Modification of Standards* (RSB-STD-15-001), which is aligned with the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code of Good Practice³.

RSB will carry out this standard revision in a two-phased consultation approach.

Current phase: **Consultation 1** will identify which key topics to address. For example, opportunities exist to focus on both the content and the application of the RSB P&C, yet due to the broad nature and application of the P&C it is important to determine through this consultation which key items should form part of the review, so as to ensure a focused approach that truly benefits RSB stakeholders. **The output of consultation 1 will be a list of topics for revision.**

Consultation 2 will provide the review of those topics decided upon during consultation 1. **The output of consultation 2 will be a revised version of the RSB P&C.**

CONSULTATION 1: 2021

- **RSB General Standards Working Group (GSWG)**
Consultation: August 11th – August 25th 2021
- 1st revision of topics prepared by the Secretariat
- **Public Consultation: September 6th – November 5th 2021**
- 2nd revision of topics prepared by the Secretariat
- **RSB Assembly of Delegates discussion: November 15th 2021**
- Consultation 2 prepared by the Secretariat

CONSULTATION 2: 2022 (dates subject to change)

- **GSWG Consultation: January 2022**
- 1st revision of RSB P&C prepared by the Secretariat
- **RSB Chamber consultations: February/March 2022**
- 2nd revision of RSB P&C prepared by the Secretariat
- **Public Consultation: April/May 2022**
- 3rd revision of RSB P&C prepared by the Secretariat
- **Possible 2nd Public Consultation: July 2022**
- **RSB Chamber Consultations October 2022**
- **RSB Assembly of Delegates approval of the Standard: November 2022**

³ https://www.isealalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource/2017-11/ISEAL_Standard_Setting_Code_v6_Dec_2014.pdf

6. Scope of the revision: Consultation 1

Consultation 1 focuses on identifying which topics to address and revise through a second consultation stage.

The RSB maintains a close dialogue with its members and certified participating operators, enabling a strong feedback process that helps the RSB Secretariat to understand where opportunities exist to strengthen and improve the RSB Standards. As a result, the RSB Secretariat proposes the following topics for revision:

Topic	Description	Proposal
Coverage of the P&C	<p>1) RSB's P&C through a climate smart lens</p> <p>To ensure that RSB's P&Cs set the framework for robust climate change mitigation and adaptation, the RSB P&Cs will be reviewed through a 'climate smart lens'.</p>	<p>1) RSB's P&C through a climate smart lens</p> <p>With the transition away from a fossil-based economy, businesses across all sectors are seeking alternative materials that can fuel the demand for both energy and material production. Where feedstocks are bio-based, their production has the potential to help solve the climate crisis and create multiple positive impacts to landscapes and communities. At the same time, agriculture and forestry are vulnerable to climatic change, and the production of feedstocks may exacerbate the climate crisis if not sustainably managed.</p> <p>Climate-induced impacts on feedstock production may include, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - soil degradation, leading to reduced long-term yields, poor soil health, reduced biodiversity and increased soil GHG emissions - expansion of cultivated area into conservation areas, to make up for the shortfall in yield - increased reliance on pesticides and fertilisers - increased irrigation demand - vulnerability of feedstock producers to climatic risk, due to e.g. over-reliance on a single crop, changes in local suitability to a crop's production due to climatic change, etc.

		<p>To ensure that the global bioeconomy can be scaled in a way that supports both the transition away from a fossil-based economy, and the climate smart adaptation of feedstock producers, RSB proposes to review all 12 Principles and Criteria through a climate smart lens. Following the World Bank approach to Climate Smart Agriculture, RSB aims to achieve the following three outcomes for feedstock producers and their supply chains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Increased productivity (ii) Enhanced resilience (iii) Reduced GHG emissions <p>We therefore ask for stakeholder recommendations on tools, methodologies and frameworks that could help to embed a climate smart approach within the RSB P&C. In particular, we seek recommendations related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soil Organic Carbon modelling - Climate scenario predictions - Farm-level vulnerability assessment
	<p>2) Stakeholder and RSB Secretariat review of science and standards developments that should be considered in P&C update.</p> <p>Strong, holistic coverage of the P&C will be reviewed, particularly that the P&C are still up-to-date with best practice and best available science. In this endeavour, RSB proposes not to critically assess each criterion individually, but rather to review whether any new scientific, methodological or other understandings have arisen since the last P&C iteration, which warrant</p>	<p>2) Stakeholder and RSB Secretariat review of science and standards developments that should be considered in P&C update.</p> <p>Items to include:</p> <p>P2: Planning, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement Review of RSB Screening Tool to ensure alignment with up-to-date science and risk assessment processes .</p> <p>P3: GHG Review criterion 3b to ensure up-to-date list of acceptable methods Expand criterion 3c to include materials and update GHG emissions reduction thresholds in-line with legislation.</p> <p>P7: Conservation Review of 'no-go' and 'no conversion' areas to ensure alignment with current science and robust standards.</p>

	consideration. This includes identifying any new key gaps.	P11: Use of technology, inputs, and management of waste Review criterion 11d to ensure up-to-date list of banned chemicals and recommendations for IPM, and alignment with current best-practice.
Application of the P&C	With specific focus on industrial operators, the RSB Secretariat proposes to review how demonstration of compliance with the P&C can be achieved in a more efficient manner.	We invite stakeholders to propose which existing assessments, management systems, ratings / scoring systems and other evidences may be used <u>by industrial operators</u> to demonstrate compliance with RSB P&C. In addition, feedback on a simplified method for communicating this to POs and CBs to ensure a more efficient audit and compliance process – for example, through a prescribed and limited list of accepted items, is welcome.
Timeline for achieving compliance	The RSB Secretariat proposes to explore a step-wise approach to P&C implementation, giving operators the opportunity to better-develop compliance mechanisms and then go beyond, to demonstrate positive impacts.	A wide variety of sustainability certification schemes exist in the market place – some (such as RSB) place all applicable requirements as mandatory for certification to be achieved. Others take a staged approach to certification, for example having some minimum requirements as mandatory for initial certification, and then a phased approach to improvements, in order to maintain a certificate. The latter approach may carry the benefit of enabling operators that may not have the resources to commit to certification in the early phase of their sustainability journey, to initiate a commitment to sustainability and set a course for improvement – allowing them to participate in voluntary markets for sustainable products and services, whilst encouraging continuous improvement. RSB welcomes feedback from stakeholders on whether such a staged approach to certification would be beneficial in the transition to a sustainable bio- and circular economy, and on the potential benefits and risks of such an approach.

Please submit your comments in the consultation template by 5th November 2021 to Nicola.noponen@rsb.org