

Progress Report Assurance Task Force

Period: 1/2017

Contents

1. Background.....	2
2. Objective of Assurance Task Force.....	5
3. Activities Undertaken by Assurance Task Force and Progress.....	5

1. Background

All RSPO members which co-sponsored this resolution, was accepted by the GA 13 (November 2015, KL) mandating the Secretariat, acting in coordination with members and in accordance with ISEAL procedures, to:

- Develop clear, mandatory guidelines on the minimum acceptable quality of HCV assessments;
- Develop clear, mandatory guidelines on assessments of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in the New Planting Procedure (NPP);
- Develop and institute a transparent and robust system for monitoring the quality of assessments;
- Monitor the quality and performance of Auditors and pursue suspensions or sanctions against underperforming or persistent offenders;
- Monitor RSPO members' adherence to required procedures and report all members that omit submitting NPP notifications, before clearing lands, to the Complaints Panel.

At the same time, a report 'Who Watches the Watchmen' was published by Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) and Grassroots, criticising the RSPO assurance system and claims of the following failings were made:

Failings Sector	Weaknesses
Oversight of Certification Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual assessments by ASI on Certification Bodies' competence were not clearly and publicly disclosed. ● This creates a lack of transparency over rulings and removes some degree of liability in the form of reputational damage.
Poor technical knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weaknesses in auditor's understanding of the Standard, particularly related to social criteria are identified. ● The depth of these weaknesses is striking and verification of flawed assessments persist, more than two years after the appointment of ASI.
Weak guidance on SEIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 2015 NPP draft states that SEIAs conducted for the NPP must be "comprehensive, participatory and led by an independent consultant compliant with national standards". ● The guidelines are weak, ambiguous and provide

Failings Sector	Weaknesses
	<p>inadequate publicly available guidance on the mandatory methodology.</p>
<p>Weak consultation in the NPP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comments from Public Consultation in the 2015 NPP draft remain passive and simplistic. ● RSPO is responsible for sharing assessment summaries at the local (or plantation) level with companies. ● The local communities and affected stakeholders poses a challenge as the content of the public notification only available in English. ● Public comments are referred back to the plantation company even when there is evidence of substantive violations.
<p>Weak guidelines for post-NPP monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No sufficient guidance provided in the 2015 NPP draft on how the implementation of SEIA and HCV assessments will be monitored. ● Monitoring and verification of NPP implementation in annual compliance assessments or re-certification assessments is unclear. ● RSPO states certified areas are assessed annually and uncertified holdings will be assessed once every five years.
<p>Weak guidelines on FPIC verification</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guidelines on requirements and verifications on FPIC are confusing and misleading and can potentially be exploited by growers and Certification Bodies. ● Some statements in the NPP suggest that Certification Bodies can verify "consent" where agreements have still not been made which, other than being illogical, raises questions and concern as to whether communities are giving consent.
<p>Fraudulent behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RSPO should maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards auditors who knowingly verify false statements in assessments and an aggressive approach to identifying this matter is clearly not yet in place.
<p>Evasion of the NPP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The RSPO lacks mechanisms to identify non-compliance by members who fail to self-report. ● The RSPO needs to establish proactive mechanisms to identify non-compliance with the NPP.

Failings Sector	Weaknesses
Weaknesses in the Complaints System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Complaints System has failed to properly address the complicity of auditors in non-compliances that lead to complaints. • Measures are not taken against auditors even when the failings of auditors are highlighted in the complaints. • The most important flaw in the complaints system is that, in most cases, complaints only arise after considerable harm has already been done.

The RSPO BoG then endorsed the formation of an Assurance Task Force to implement Resolution 6h/2015 and to address observations made, amongst others, in the said report, by EIA and Grassroots. The Assurance Task Force comprises of the following three layers:

STEERING GROUP (MEMBER OF BOARD OF GOVERNORS)

Edi Suhardi	Hugo Byrnes	Paul Wolvekamp (Facilitator)	Anne Rosenbarger	Ian Hay
Stephen Watson	Jonathan Horrell	Daryll Delgado	Audrey Lee	

TASK FORCE MEMBERS (RSPO SECRETARIAT)

Senniah Appalasamy (Certification Manager)	Jan Van Driel (Head of Certification)	Salahudin Yaacob (Technical Director)	Julia Majail (Smallholder Programme Manager)
Eileen Chiang (Certification Executive)	William Siow (HCV Manager)	Kamini Visvananthan (Social Manager)	Javin Tan (GHG Manager)

TASK FORCE COUNTERPARTS

Laszlo Mathe (ASI)	Paulina Villalpando (HCVRN)
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REFERENCE PANEL (EXPERTS)

Daniel Seligman (Columbia Research Group)	Jago Wadly (EIA)	Marcus Colchester (FPP)	Andrew Ng (Grassroot)
Grant Rosoman (Available for feedback - Greenpeace)	Eric Wakker (Aidenvironment)	CB Representative	Faizal Parish (GEC)

2. Objective of Assurance Task Force

The objective of the Task Force (TF) is to drive the implementation of Resolution 6h, as stipulated by the Terms of Reference (ToR), to upgrade/enhance the effectiveness of RSPO’s assurance program. The assurance system covers assessments (HCV, SEIA, GHG), verification (NPP), audits (CB) and oversight (including ASI accreditation).

The TF is assigned to identify all necessary steps and take action accordingly to ensure robust assessment, verification and certification against the RSPO standard and roles required from all parties, notably certifying bodies and lead auditors, assessors and growers.

3. Activities Undertaken by Assurance Task Force and Progress

The TF had its meeting in Bangkok on 9 Nov 2016 and has agreed to implement specific designated activities. The progress of these activities is as per below:

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)
1	To develop clear mandatory minimum guideline on assessment of FPIC in NPP process. Provide training for growers and CB based on the minimum guidelines.	Marcus Colchester and Patrick Anderson (FPP)	FPP prepared a guideline on FPIC for the NPP process. After possible incorporation of feedback from CBs, the document will be posted on the RSPO website. Patrick Anderson from FPP participated at the CB workshop in January 2017 and presented a brief concept/ ideas for the training. A workshop has been held with the participants (auditors, trainers, ASI and RSPO Secretariat staff) as part of gathering ideas/comments on the proposal. Status: Completed FPP is now preparing the training module and will be submitting it to the RSPO Secretariat for verification and comments. The trainings are now scheduled to be done in the upcoming CB workshop which will be held in May 2017. Status: Plan on May 2017

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)								
2	<p>(i) To provide the summary of the compliance report by end of December 2016 to be published on ASI and RSPO websites</p> <p>(ii) Monitor quality and performance of Auditors and pursue suspensions or sanctions against underperforming or persistent offenders</p> <p>(iii) ASI and HCVRN will move towards a harmonised complaints management system</p> <p>(iv) ASI and HCVRN: Publicly accessible RSPO Lead Auditors registry.</p>	Laszlo Mathe (ASI)	<p>(i) A) The RSPO Integrity Report (including the section on compliance assessments) was published in the first week of March 2017, on ASI website.</p> <p>B) The RSPO Integrity Report was forwarded to Reference Panel.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p> <p>(ii) Ongoing process. Two (2) CBs are currently under suspension. CBs under suspension are required to address the non-compliances raised by ASI (the results of the witness audits and compliance audits are published on the ASI website). Failure to do so within a stipulated timeframe will result in termination of the accreditation.</p> <p>List of Accredited CBs:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Scope</th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>P&C only</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SCCS only</td> <td>13 (new: NEPCon OU and SCS Global Services)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P&C and SCCS</td> <td>9 (new: NaturaCert)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(iii) T.B.D.</p> <p>(iv) ASI: The registry is ready and some of the CBs have started to update the information. ASI will get back to RSPO Secretariat with regards to making this public because of a possible breach with the German data protection legislation.</p> <p>Status: Update from ASI is pending</p>	Scope		P&C only	3	SCCS only	13 (new: NEPCon OU and SCS Global Services)	P&C and SCCS	9 (new: NaturaCert)
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3	<p>(i) To provide a summary report on the HCV ALS and quality control of the HCV assessment reports. This</p>	Paulina Villalpando (HCVRN)	<p>HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) Progress Report for the RSPO Assurance Taskforce (Resolution 6H) was shared with Reference Panel on 21st March 2017.</p>								

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)						
	<p>needs to be submitted by mid December 2016.</p> <p>(ii) A list of minimum requirements for assessments used</p>		<p>Status of HCV assessor licensed:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Assessor Licensed (between October 2014 – December 2016)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Provisional Licences Issued</td> <td> 79 provisional licences issued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed: 70 • Not renewed: 9 </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Full licenses issued</td> <td>8 full licences</td> </tr> </table> <p>(ii) The information is available on HCV ALS Progress Report for the RSPO Assurance Taskforce – page 2 and HCVRN website (https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/documents-and-guidance)</p> <p>Status: Completed</p> <p>Salahudin Yaacob now is a member of HCVRN management committee. RSPO Secretariat have discussed with HCVRN to provide training to the CB, growers and assessors.</p> <p>Status: HCVRN in the progress of developing training module</p>	Assessor Licensed (between October 2014 – December 2016)		Provisional Licences Issued	79 provisional licences issued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed: 70 • Not renewed: 9 	Full licenses issued	8 full licences
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4	To develop a minimal guidance for social audit and training for CB auditors and growers and CBs.	Daryll Delgado (Verite)/Kamini/RSP O Sec.	<p>Verite has agreed to develop social auditing training modules and conduct training for the growers and CB auditors (Target: Q3, 2017).</p> <p>Verite participated at the CB workshop in January 2017 and had a full day session with the CBs and trainers.</p> <p>Timeline (2017)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Task</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1st & 2nd Q</td> <td>Assessment of level of compliance; labour standards and protocols guidance document</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3rd Q</td> <td>Labour implementation guidance document; recommendations to training</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period	Task	1 st & 2 nd Q	Assessment of level of compliance; labour standards and protocols guidance document	3rd Q	Labour implementation guidance document; recommendations to training
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5	To develop the minimum guideline and checklist for Partial Certification and then provide training for growers and CB auditors	Eric Wakker (AE)	<p>Eric Wakker (Aidenvironment) participated at the CB workshop in January presenting the concept and gathered input for developing the full training modules for the growers and CBs.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p> <p>The modules will be completed for review by the Secretariat before roll out in Q3 2017.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>				
6	Develop the minimum guidelines for SEIA and NPP components and provide training for growers and CBs based on minimum guidelines	Grassroots	<p>Grassroots is developing guidance for SEIA and will work with the RSPO Secretariat to roll out the training for both CBs and growers.</p> <p>Status: Grassroots will have a consultation with CBs during the CB workshop in May 2017.</p>				
7	<p>Provide capacity building to CB/Auditor: To provide training for lead auditors and team members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Quality of the training (training documents are in the revising process). (b) Improve CBs capacity (auditors and team members) – CBs invited an external expert to join their internal training. 	SY/JVD/SA (RSPO Sec.)	<p>Revised training document (Procedures for endorsed trainer).</p> <p>Status: Completed</p> <p>Conduct training to the CBs and auditors using the module developed by experts as per the above Timeline: Target – Q2 2017. A one day training on FPIC for Auditors in May 2017.</p> <p>Status: Training date confirmed</p>				
8	Analysis on remuneration of CBs/Auditors. Estimation allocation by growers for CB	SY/JvD	Dr Stephen Preusser has been engaged to carry out this study, with results anticipated by March 2017.				

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)
	audit costs, in proportion to other costs and benefits, related to palm oil production.		Stephen has conducted interviews with CBs (Malaysia and Indonesia) and ASI in early February 2017. The report is completed. Status: Completed
9	RSPO to arrange for capacity building (outreach programme) for growers.	RSPO Secretariat, with input from Reference Panel	Training for growers on FPIC, NPP, HCV, HCS, labour, partial certification etc. Timeline: as of Q2 2017 onwards. The outreach will be implemented after completion of the training modules. Status: Outreach Programme for Malaysia on 25 & 26 April 2017.
10	Ensure stakeholder consultation (RSPO membership and external experts expressing an interest) by engaging the Reference Panel members to assist with minimum guidelines for stakeholder consultation.	ATF	Procedures for stakeholder consultation. Request Eric Wakker (Aidenvironment) to assist with guidelines for stakeholder consultation during P&C audit. Status: Pending
11	Review of complaints mechanism (hosted by resp. RSPO, ASI, HCVRN), accessibility and feedback system	Secretariat (ATF and Impacts Department), ASI and HCVRN	RSPO Secretariat is looking into ways for how to link Complaint System to Assurance system. A mechanism should be in place to trigger investigation/audit that could result in direct action taking place against the unit/member that has demonstrated non compliance. Status: Review of complaint system is on going.
12	Have the SEIAs been properly addressed?	Also refer to Point 7.	Please refer to progress under item 6.
13	Provide concrete guidance to CBs (and growers) to use the proper sources of maps (such as community land maps, peat) as reference.	Peat map ref.: Faizal	Availability of guidance with reference to appropriate maps. Further discussion with Faizal (GEC) and other Reference Panel members/experts to ensure availability of reference to relevant maps.

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)
			<p>RSPO Secretariat will pursue the possibility of having a link on community maps, currently being developed by the Indonesian Mapping Network.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
14	Discuss the list of additional information which will be captured in the CB audit report that is publicly available on RSPO website.	Andrew Ng	<p>Andrew Ng (Grassroots) has made commitment to provide the additional information for CB audit report.</p> <p>Status: Pending</p>
15	To discuss the content of Public Summary Report with CBs during the upcoming CB Workshop (January 2017)	Jan Van Driel (JVD)/RSPO Secretariat	<p>Discussion was held with the CBs at the recent CB workshop.</p> <p>Status: Completed</p>
16	A system to keep track of certificate status (which certificates are suspended/withdrawn/terminated) and the non-compliance(s) reported in the audit report.		<p>On RSPO website.</p> <p>Updated on a daily basis, based on approval from PalmTrace.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
17	To produce option paper on how to de-link CBs and Certificate Holder(s) (CH)/client-company (enhance independence CBs).	SY/RSPO Secretariat	<p>RSPO Secretariat has commissioned a study on this. Full report will be shared with the group once available. The RSPO Secretariat is reviewing the draft report.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
18	Preparation on Jurisdictional Approach & RSPO NEXT – suggested approach by Assurance TF	RSPO Secretariat	<p>One RSPO NEXT audit has been conducted. Result will be published soon.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
19	Monitoring of NPP area. EIA and Grassroots report claimed weaknesses or lack of post-NPP monitoring. The area will be checked only at the time of initial audit which may come 5 years after completion of new plantings.	RSPO Secretariat	<p>RSPO Secretariat is planning to establish a section to carry out annual monitoring of NPP areas.</p> <p>RSPO Secretariat will start the process of engaging a GIS manager who will oversee monitoring of NPP areas.</p>

	Tasks	ATF/RG Member in-charge	Progress (March 2017)
	Any deviation from the NPP plan detected at the time of audit are already considered 'damage done'.		<p>RSPO Secretariat will be working with HCVRN to establish the platform for monitoring of NPP areas.</p> <p>Sanctions will be imposed on company(ies) that deviate from the NPP plan.</p> <p>Sanctions on NPP non submitters have been approved by the BoG and are currently being implemented.</p> <p>Full implementation of the revised NPP document in July 2016 addressed a number of issues raised by the EIA report.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
20	Oversight activities	RSPO Secretariat and ASI	<p>ASI continue to carry out compliance audit on CBs.</p> <p>RSPO Secretariat is planning to request a consultant to conduct investigation audits on the industry focusing on social issues (human rights, labour etc) in Malaysia and Indonesia, identifying the root causes and advise RSPO to ensure member's compliance.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>
21	Quality improvement for CB-hired reviewers	RSPO Secretariat and ASI	<p>RSPO Secretariat is working with ASI to come out with a system for a peer review exercise, particularly focussing on the training of reviewers, to ensure quality and consistency.</p> <p>Status: On Going</p>

Next meeting for the group is being proposed for April 2017

END...



The RSPO is an international non-profit organization formed in 2004 with the objective to promote the growth and use of sustainable oil palm products through credible global standards and engagement of stakeholders.



RSPO will transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm

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