



Simplified HCV Approach for Independent Smallholders in the RSPO

7.3 HCV procedures for new plantings (Phase 3 & 4)

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1. Is this the right document for you?

This document is a Manual explaining the steps in Phases 3 and 4 of the RSPO 7.3 HCV procedures for planned new expansion of palm oil plantings. You must have completed Phases 1 and 2 before using this manual.

This document is **not** applicable for group members in existing plantings with no plans to expand: in that case you must apply the [5.2 Precautionary Practices procedure/guidance](#).

Box 1: If you have already completed a 5.2 certification for your members and you know that they now want to expand then you can skip straight to Phase 3 (this document).

Note: At present, HCV 1-3 probability maps are only available for 5 countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Honduras and Ghana). RSPO is developing maps for more countries, but until these are available you cannot use this methodology outside of the 5 countries listed above and will need to conduct an HCV assessment in line with HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) requirements (see [here](#)). Funding may be available from the RSPO's Smallholder Support Fund to support an ALS assessment (see [here](#)).

2. Steps in Phase 3 of the 7.3 HCV procedures

Phase 3 is about collecting further information on plots allocated for new plantings, for which 7.3 procedures apply. This is the final phase in the 7.3 HCV procedures, prior to NPP submission, and includes the following steps:

- **Step 1: Complete 7.3 field survey**
- **Step 2: Upload data to the dashboard**
- **Step 3: Review data and reporting**
- **Step 4: (Only applicable in Medium level situations) Follow-up: Consultation and/or independent review**

Step 1 is conducted as part of a field visit using the App and can be combined with the Phase 2 field visit or done separately at a later date. This can be done offline without mobile signal or internet connection. The data collected here are used to determine the HCV level, which affects whether or not requirements under Step 4 apply.

Steps 2-4 are desk-based and require an internet connection to upload the data collected in the field to the 'web-dashboard'. The 'web-dashboard' is then used for reviewing and preparing output maps and reports for any group members eligible for the 7.3 procedures. Additional follow-up may be required in Step 4 if the HCV level is medium or high. Once Step 4 is completed the GM can proceed to NPP preparation and submission. Once the NPP is approved the GM must proceed to Phase 4: HCV management for all plots covered in the NPP submission.

Note: if you do not have access to a smartphone or tablet you can still follow the steps outlined in this documents, but for Step 1 complete the survey using the paper survey template in Annex 2, and for Step 3 you need to prepare reports manually following instructions in Annex 2 and using the Excel reporting template available on the RSPO website. Step 4 must be completed, when required, in line with this manual.

2.1. The different levels for 7.3 procedures

The risk of damaging HCVs in new planting situations is not uniformly high. Depending on the probability of HCVs being present in a specific plot, different levels of procedures will apply. Which level applies is dependent on different factors, including HCV 1-3 probability, potential presence of HCV 5-6 and the size/scale of development (see Introduction document for further explanation).

These factors determine which level of HCV procedure is required for new plantings, and are assessed through use of the App that helps you guide through the various questions.

The three HCV levels and required follow up are summarised in Figure 1.

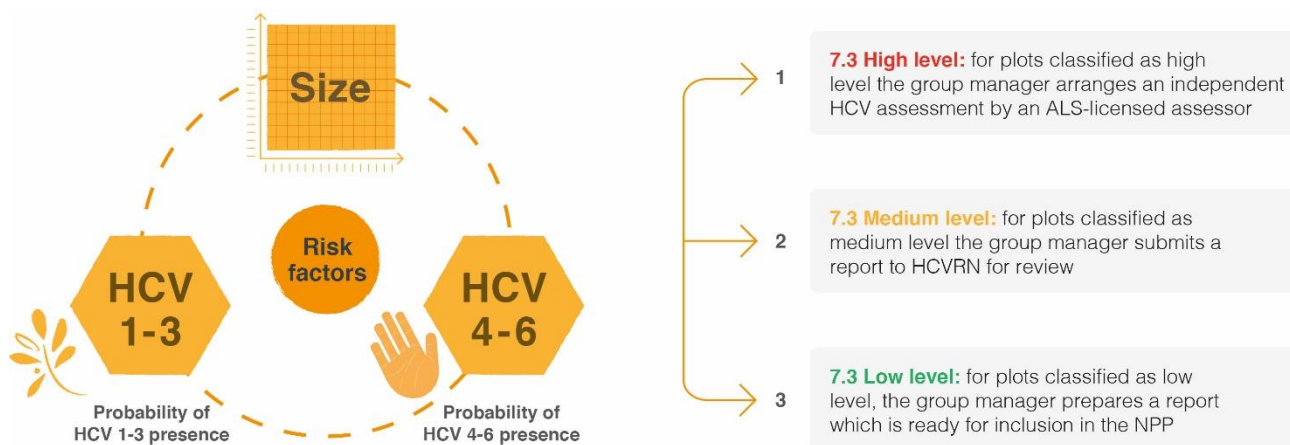



Figure 1. Schematic showing factors affecting the probability of damaging HCVs in cases of new plantings, and different risk levels for new planting situations.

2.2. Step 1: Complete 7.3 field survey

This step must be completed either by you (the GM) or by a designated representative/‘lead farmer’ for all members in your group that are planning to expand with new plantings. From here onwards “you” is used to refer to either the GM or a designated representative. This step can either be a continuation of the site visit started under Phase 2, or can be completed separately at a later time.

You must complete one 7.3 survey in the app for each proposed expansion plot, where a plot is defined as one continuous block of land. For example, if a farmer has three separate plots of land that he/she wants to expand on, you would need to complete the survey three times. If the proposed expansion plots are relatively close together you can complete the survey once as long as you map the full boundaries of the area identified for new plantings. For example, if there are multiple plots within a property that are not currently under palm but with established palm in between them you may decide to map this as one plot but you should exclude the areas with established palms.

To complete the survey for each proposed expansion plot, open and login to the app. Then tap “Start Survey”, select the farmer in question, select “7.3 Survey” and tap next.

Now proceed to answer the questions in the app. For some questions you will see a question mark.  This means there is extra guidance available in the app when you tap on it. The 7.3 survey allows you to do the following:

1. Map the boundaries and calculate the size of the proposed expansion plots of any group members planning new plantings, and
2. Assess the presence of any potential HCVs in the proposed expansion plots based on:
 - i. For HCVs 1-3: the location of the plots on the pre-developed HCV 1-3 probability map, and
 - ii. For HCVs 4-6: by answering simple questions based on conversations with the group member and observations made during the site visit.

Box 2: You will need

Time: 30 - 60 minutes per proposed expansion plot (it will probably take longer the first time you do it!)

Equipment: Your smartphone or tablet with the app installed and set-up, and a compass.

2.2.1. General questions and mapping proposed expansion plots

Once you have begun a 7.3 survey in the app, open the 'General' section and answer all of the questions. You must also mark the plot boundaries by tapping where it says "Tap to mark location of expansion". You can mark the plot in the app either by placing pins, using the pin tool, or by tracking as you walk around the plot. If you or your device places a pin in the wrong place you can delete pins by long-clicking on pins to edit or remove them. Once you have done this the app will automatically calculate the size of the plot.

2.2.2. HCV1-3: Probability of HCV 1-3 presence

Now open the app section called "HCV1-3". Once you have mapped the plot boundary the app will automatically complete the HCV 1-3 probability for the plot by overlaying the location of the plots with the HCV 1-3 Probability Map. The HCV 1-3 Probability maps have already been created and pre-defined (Box 1).

2.2.3. HCV1-3: Additional questions for Medium or High HCV 1-3 areas

Only applicable for plots overlapping medium or high level HCV 1-3 probability areas.

If a proposed expansion plot occurs in a Medium or High HCV 1-3 Probability area then the app will automatically ask you some extra questions and require you to collect some extra data using the app. You will have to collect this by walking around the plot.

Box 3: HCV 1-3 Probability Maps: In many countries, natural habitats have now been mapped accurately using satellite data or other 'remote sensing tools'. Therefore, based on these existing data the RSPO has created **HCV 1-3 Probability Maps** that map areas of **high, medium or low** probability of HCV 1-3 presence (referred to as HCV 1-3 '**probability classes**'). These probabilities are determined based on the presence of protected areas, larger areas of natural forest or other ecosystems, and areas that connect up these larger areas of natural forest or other ecosystems (which animals may use to disperse between the areas). For more information on the maps you can refer to www.rspo.org/geo-rspo.

These extra checks are required because these areas are more likely to contain some HCV 1-3 habitat, such as remaining forest or other natural ecosystems. **These habitats are potential HCV 1-3 areas and are defined as precautionary 'No-Go' areas for expansion under the Simplified HCV approach, and so a few extra checks are needed to make sure these areas are not replaced by new plantings.**

Peat is not considered a 'No-Go' area but also needs to be mapped and any development will need to be done in line with RSPO's Best Management Practices (BMPs) for peat management.

In these medium/high HCV 1-3 probability areas there will be several questions asking if forest, peat or other natural ecosystems occur within the proposed expansion plot. If the answer is yes, then you will need to use the app to:

1. Mark out the boundaries of the forest, natural vegetation or peat, and
2. Take 'ground-truthing' photographs of vegetation or peat in Medium or High HCV 1-3 probability areas.

Marking the boundaries of the forest or natural vegetation:

Firstly, the app will ask if the forest or natural vegetation covers the whole plot. If yes, then you do not need to mark out the boundary as the app will automatically show the forest as covered the whole plot.

If the forest or natural vegetation only covers a part of the plot, then you need to mark the boundaries of the forest/natural vegetation. This is done by tapping on "Forest Area 1" and then "Tap here to mark location of forest". You can then mark the boundaries in the same way as you marked the plot boundaries, either by placing pins or tracking as you walk around the forest/natural vegetation (Figure 2). You will also need to add ground-truthing photos for each 'Forest area' at the same time as mapping the boundary (see instructions

below). You will need to repeat this for each separate block of forest, peat or natural vegetation that occurs within the proposed expansion plot. Add each new area by clicking on the button saying, "Add forest area".

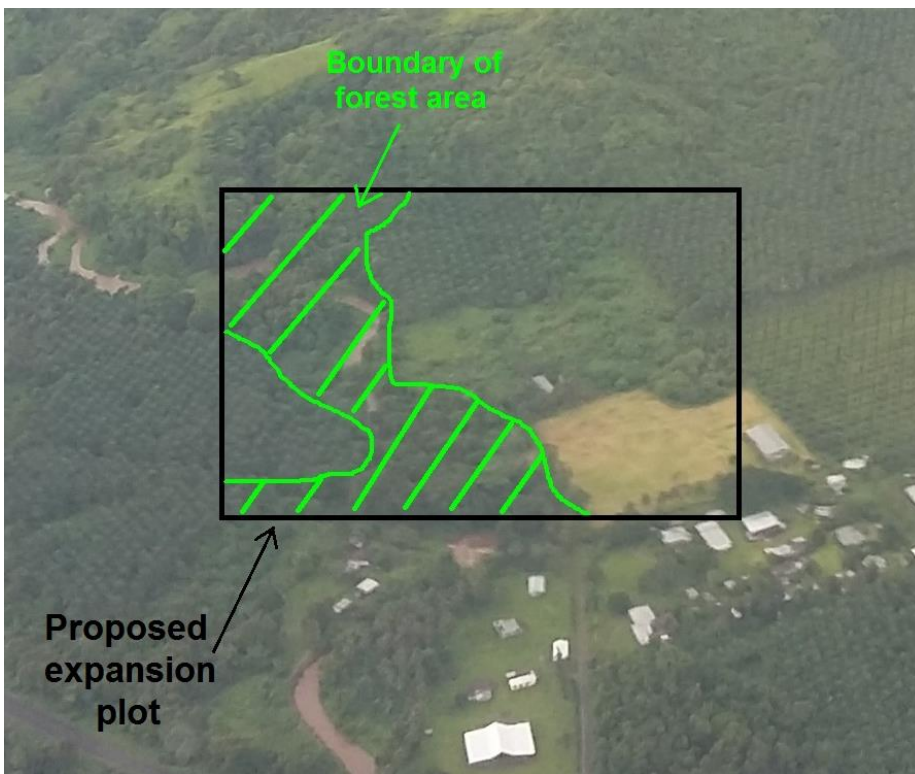


Figure 2. Aerial photograph giving an example of the boundaries of a forest area within a proposed expansion plot.

Agro-forestry areas with a mixture of natural vegetation with rubber, fruit trees, cocoa or other trees should not be included as forest. Re-growth less than 10 years old should not be included as forest. If you are uncertain what should be included as forest you should take a precautionary approach and include areas that appear to be lower/less dense forest as forest (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Example showing a forest patch surrounded by young re-growth. Note that the forest at the left end of the patch should also be included as forest even though it is lower than the forest on the right, because it is clearly part of the larger patch.

Marking the boundaries of any peat soils:

Peat soils are soils containing a lot of organic matter that are often waterlogged for part of the year. They are important for HCV4 because they store, filter and regulate the flow of water, helping to provide clean water and a steady flow of water to rivers throughout the year. Drainage and oil palm development on peat reduces or removes the ability of peat soils to provide these functions. For this reason, peat soils can only be developed if in line with RSPO BMPs on peat.

Due to their particular importance, you are required to map the boundaries of peat soils in proposed expansion plots (only if they occur in the plot). Doing this accurately is complicated, and requires soil scientists or peat soil experts, so you are not expected to produce a perfect map of peat soils or to map peat depth.

Mapping the boundary is done in the same way as for mapping boundaries and forest, either by placing pins or tracking as you walk around the peat area. Example photos of peat soils are provided in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Example of peat soils, with a waterlogged peat soil on the left and soil sample taken from shallow peat on the right.

Take ‘ground-truthing’ photos of the forest, peat or natural vegetation:

You do not need to do this if the forest, peat or natural vegetation covers the whole plot.

‘Ground-truthing’ is when you collect field data to check the accuracy of maps created remotely using satellite imagery or other remote sensing data, in this case the HCV 1-3 Probability Map.

For the 7.3 procedures this ‘ground-truthing’ is done by taking photographs of the vegetation in the Medium or High HCV 1-3 probability areas within the expansion plot (you do not need to take photos in Low HCV 1-3 probability areas).

You need to take the photos at Photo Points every 100 m apart on a grid pattern as shown in Figure 5A – this will make sure that the photos cover as much of the natural vegetation as possible. You can use the scale bar in the app to position each point. The number of photo points will depend on the size of the plot, with approximately 1 photo point per hectare.

At each Photo Point you need to tap on “Add Photo Point” and you will then need to add 5 photographs as follows: one photo facing in each compass direction and one photo looking up directly above your head to show any vegetation/canopy above you (Figure 5B). The app will automatically record the coordinates of where the photos are taken.

The photos will later be used by the independent reviewer to verify the accuracy and boundary of the forest or natural vegetation that you have mapped.

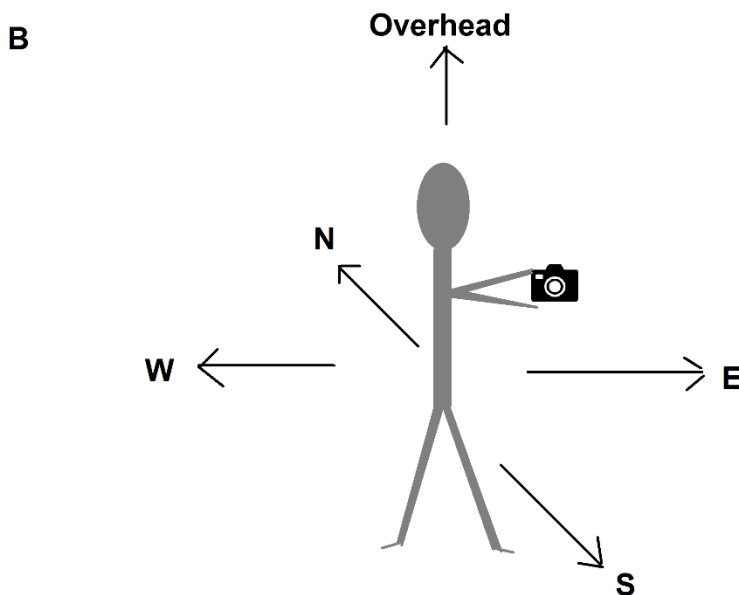
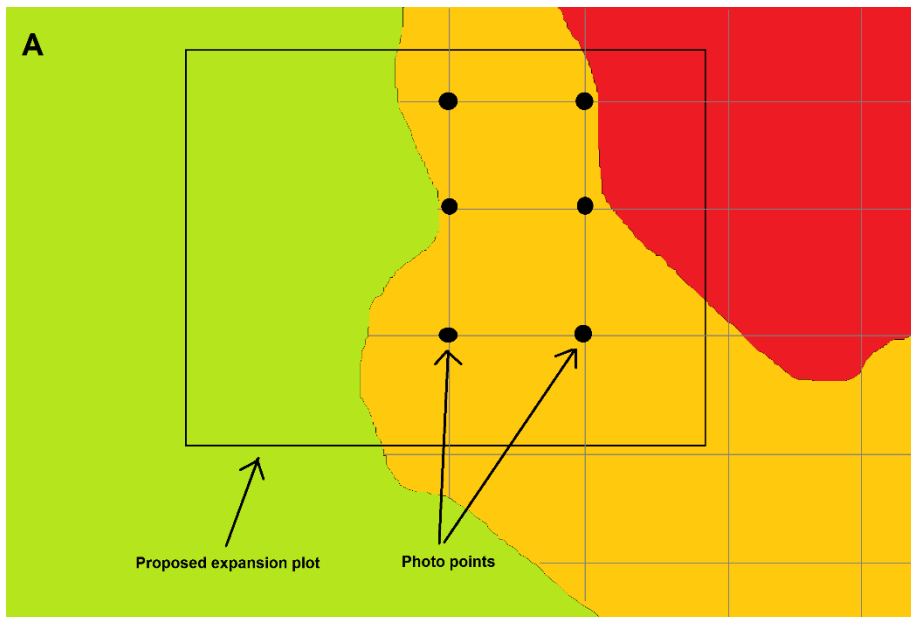


Figure 5. A: illustration of where to take ground-truthing photos (photo points) on a grid. B: illustration of the directions to take the 5 ground-truthing photos at each photo point.

Caution: It is vital that you map the boundaries of any forest/natural vegetation accurately and take the required photos, because these maps and photos will be used and checked by the HCV Resource Network (HCVRN) reviewer. Furthermore, during the NPP verification audit, the certification body may verify that these HCV 'No-Go' areas have been respected. If any group member expands oil palms onto these 'No-Go' areas then they may prevent the whole group getting certified or risk being expelled from the group.

Group members may be disappointed if this 7.3 HCV procedure identifies some or all of their proposed expansion plot as a 'No-Go' area. In these cases, if the member has other land without forest or natural vegetation you can suggest that they consider planting palm there (after following this 7.3 HCV procedure for that area), or if they do not have other land without forest you can consider supporting them to increase yields of their established palms.

2.2.4. HCV4

Now tap on the section called 'HCV4'. HCV4 is about protecting areas or ecosystems that provide protection or services to people. For example, rivers, peat or wetlands for fishing, flood prevention or provision of water; or vegetation on steep slopes that protects the soil from erosion or dangerous landslides.

Members are not allowed to plant in certain areas related to HCV4. These 'no-go' areas are not only covered in the 7.3 HCV procedures but are aligned with other RSPO requirements on riparian buffers and steep slopes. No-go areas include:

- buffer zones around rivers and waterbodies;
- wetlands and peatlands; and
- slopes with a gradient of 25 degrees or greater.

The app survey includes several "Yes-No" questions that help you decide on the presence of no-go areas. You should answer these questions by asking the group member whose plot you are surveying and verify the answers based on the observations you make when walking around the proposed expansion plot. It is not necessary to mark points or polygons of rivers or slopes.

2.2.5. HCV5-6

Now click on the section called "HCV5-6". HCVs 5 and 6 are about the dependence of local communities on natural resources for subsistence or cultural purposes. For example, the use of land for hunting or plant collection; rivers or wetlands for fishing or provision of water; or the presence of sacred sites/trees/groves or cemeteries.

The app survey includes several "Yes-No" questions about the possible presence of HCV 5 or 6 areas. You should answer these questions by asking the group member and verify the answers based on observations you make when walking around the proposed expansion plot, for example, if you observe cultural sites or evidence of hunting or fishing.

You have now completed Step 1 including all necessary field data collection. Make sure that you tap 'Save' after completing the app survey for each group member.

If you have access to an internet connection or decent mobile signal in the field, you can upload the completed surveys to the dashboard by clicking on the 'Submit Survey' button. If you do not have access to internet or a decent mobile signal then proceed to Step 2.

Note: As the GM, you must ensure that any proposed new plantings do not impact the ability of any local people (either from within the group members' community or neighbouring communities) to obtain their basic subsistence or cultural needs. This can be done by answering some basic questions included in the HCV survey.

2.3. Step 2: Submitting surveys to the dashboard

You can now upload the data from all completed field surveys to the dashboard. Your device will automatically Submit surveys when there is a strong enough connection. *Caution: doing this using mobile data might incur charges or use up your data allowance.*

To make sure that the completed surveys have been submitted you can navigate to the home page of the app, tap on "Recent Field Surveys", then tap on each farmer and see if there are any 'Drafts'. If not then they should have been submitted already.

2.4. Step 3: Reviewing data and reporting

This step must now be completed by the Group Manager.

You can now review the aggregated field data and process it to prepare output maps and reports. This is done using the 'dashboard':

1. We recommend switching from your mobile/tablet device to a laptop or computer because it is easier to view the information on the dashboard on a larger screen, although this is not essential,

2. Open a web browser and go to this link: <http://rspo.alphapod.com/dashboard/login>,
3. Login to the dashboard using the username and password that you used previously,
4. Once logged in you will see the 'homepage', from which you can view all of the survey data collected in the field, including both 5.2 and 7.3 data. For Phase 3 of 7.3 you will only need to view the "Manage 7.3 Surveys" page.

Now you can proceed to review the data and start preparing necessary output reports. **Only do this once you have completed all the 7.3 field surveys for all currently identified proposed expansion plots.**

2.4.1. Review of plots where the 7.3 procedures apply

Click on the "Manage 7.3 Surveys" link, this will take you to a list showing all plots for which the 7.3 procedures apply, divided into those classified as Low, Medium or High Level. This list contains details of all the proposed expansion plots that you mapped in Step 1, and summarises basic information including the plot name, farmer name and the HCV level.

The next steps depend on the HCV level of the 7.3 applicable plots, as explained below. You need to work through the low, medium and high level plots as follows.

The dashboard automatically categorises plots as low, medium or high level based on the field survey information. You do not need to divide the plots into these three categories yourself.

2.4.2. Prepare report for Low level plots

Low level plots are those with a low probability of HCV 1-3 or 5-6, although they may still have HCV4 'No-Go' areas. At this point there is no further data collection for low level plots and you can use the dashboard to export a final report on these plots for inclusion in the NPP submission.

Export the low level report by clicking on the 'Low level' tab, selecting the date range of surveys to export and then clicking on "Export Low Level Report". This includes the following information:

- A list of all plots classified as Low level and summary information about these plots, and
- A list of the subset of the Low level plots with HCV4 'No-Go' areas and a summary of the 'No-Go' areas required for each plot (overview of these is given below).

The report is then ready to be included in the NPP submission for these plots only.

The members with HCV4 'No-Go' areas are required to implement these to comply with RSPO requirements, and these 'No-Go' areas may be checked in the field by the CB during the NPP process. You need to clearly communicate to the members about these requirements to make sure they are compliant during clearance of the land before planting and once planting is established.

HCV 4 'No-Go' areas	
Categories for steepness of slopes and No-go areas	
Steep slope: gradient 25 degrees or greater	No planting of oil palm. Natural vegetation must be maintained.

Moderate slope: gradient between 9 and 25 degrees	Soil conservation measures must be applied (including terracing, platforms and use of a cover crop)
Categories for size of waterbodies and No-Go areas*	
River, lake or waterbody, width 1-5 m	No planting of palm within 5 metres
River, lake or waterbody, width 5-10 m	No planting of palm within 10 metres
River, lake or waterbody, width 10-20 m	No planting of palm within 20 metres
River, lake or waterbody, width 20-40 m	No planting of palm within 40 metres
River, lake or waterbody, width 40-50 m	No planting of palm within 50 metres
River, lake or waterbody, width >50 m	No planting of palm within 100 metres
Man-made waterbodies (e.g. ponds and canals)	Oil palm may be planted in buffer zones but within 10m of the waterbody cover crop must be grown and there must be no spraying of chemicals and no fertiliser application.
Wetland 'No-Go' areas	
No planting of oil palm or drainage within 20m of wetland. Natural vegetation must be maintained including in 20m buffer around wetland.	

* If no-go areas currently support natural vegetation group members are expected to maintain this natural vegetation cover.

2.4.3. Prepare report or follow-up for Medium level plots

"Medium level" can be triggered by different combinations of HCV 1-3 probability, HCV 5-6 presence and the size of total expansion across group members. This is summarised in the following table, but remember that the dashboard will automatically categorise plots and prompt you about necessary follow-up so you should not worry too much about these details: all you need to do is follow the steps listed below the table.

	Combination 1	Combination 2	Combination 3
Total size of expansion (across all members)	Up to 500 ha expansion		Up to 100 ha expansion

HCV Probability	HCV1-3: medium HCV5-6: low or potential	HCV1-3: low HCV5-6: potential	HCV1-3: high HCV5-6: low or potential
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To see if any plots are classified as 'Medium level' click on the 'Medium level' tab on the dashboard. Here you will see a summary of any plots classified as 'Medium level'. If no plots are classified as medium then you can skip to section 2.3.4.

If some plots are classified as 'Medium level' then you need to prepare a report or any necessary follow-up in line with the following steps. On the 'Medium level' page you will see the following summary sections:

1. **Plots with HCV 1-4 only, and**
2. **Plots with potential HCV 5-6.**

The next steps depend on which of these categories the Medium level plots fall into:

- If ALL plots have HCV 1-4 only, then you can immediately export the Medium level report by selecting the date range to export and clicking on the "Export medium level report" button. This report must then be submitted to the HCVRN for review, as explained under step 4. Before submitting the report to HCVRN please read the report. It lists which HCVs are present and any 'No-Go' areas or management requirements for each farmer. Once reviewed by the HCVRN and after NPP approval each group member will only be able to develop areas not identified as 'No-Go' and will need to comply with the management requirements,
- If ANY plots have potential HCV 5-6 presence you will need to do additional consultation on these plots before you can prepare the Medium level report. If this applies, you can export a map of these plots by clicking on the button saying "View HCV5-6 Surveys Only", select the date range of surveys to export and then click "Export HCV5-6 Report".

Details on additional consultation and the process for submitting Medium level reports to the HCVRN are given under Step 4.

2.4.4. Prepare report for High level plots

"High level" can be triggered either if the total size of expansion across all members exceeds 500 ha or if proposed expansion in high HV 1-3 probability areas exceeds 100 ha.

	Combination 1	Combination 2
Total size of expansion (across all members)	>500 ha expansion	>100 ha expansion
HCV Probability	HCV 1-3: low or medium HCV 5-6: low or potential	HCV 1-3: high HCV 5-6: low or potential

To see if any plots are classified as 'High level' click on the 'High level' tab on the dashboard where you will see a summary of any plots classified as 'High level'. If no plots have been classified as 'High level' you can skip to Step 4.

If some plots are classified as 'High level' then you will need to organise a full ALS assessment for these plots. This is done as follows:

1. On the dashboard, select the date range to export and then click on "Export High Level Report". You can share this report with the ALS licensed assessor later,

2. Follow the instructions on page 3 of this document to hire an ALS licensed assessor:
https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/new_hcv_als_rs_po_npp_eng_flyer_web-2.pdf
3. If necessary you can apply to the RSPO's RSSF for funding to cover the cost of the ALS assessment:
<https://www.rspo.org/smallholders/rspo-smallholders-support-fund>

2.5. Step 4: Medium level follow-up

The next steps for 'Medium level' plots depends on what potential HCVs are present:

- If ALL plots have HCV 1-4 only, then you can proceed to submit the report to the HCVRN for review. Please skip to section 2.5.2 below, where the steps for this are explained.
- If ANY of the plots have potential HCV 5-6 presence you will need to do additional consultation on these plots before you can prepare the Medium level report. Guidance on this is given in section 2.5.1.

2.5.1. Additional community/village consultation

In Step 3 you should have exported from the dashboard a List and map of potential HCV 5-6 plots. This includes a list of the plots (and members) divided into the following categories. The follow-up required differs for plots in the two categories:

Plots where the member does not have use or ownership rights:

These plots are non-compliant with the RSPO's P&Cs¹ and so cannot be certified until you are able to obtain evidence (acceptable under Criterion 2.2) of ownership or use of the land. Until this evidence is available, these plots should be removed from the NPP process and should not be used to expand new oil palm plantings.

For this 7.3 HCV procedure there are two options for these plots:

1. If you are able to readily obtain acceptable evidence of use/ownership rights, for example a title deed or written use agreement from the land owner, the plot can still be included in the NPP process. You need to provide evidence of this by taking photo of the evidence for all relevant plots and uploading them to the dashboard. This is done as follows:
 - a. First upload the photos from your phone or camera to your laptop,
 - b. Now login to the dashboard and go to "Manage 7.3 Surveys" and click on the "Medium level" tab.
 - c. Click on "View HCV5-6 Surveys Only".
 - d. Then click on the relevant plots and once the plot page has loaded scroll to the bottom of the page. Then select "Upload evidence documents". Then navigate to the folder on your computer with the photo and select upload.
2. If you are not able to readily obtain evidence of use/ownership rights then the plots will need to be removed from the NPP submission. This is done as follows:
 - a. Login to the dashboard and go to the "Medium level tab".
 - b. Click on "View HCV5-6 Surveys Only".
 - c. Then scroll to the relevant plots without evidence of tenure and for each plot click on the red 'Dustbin/trashcan' icon to delete the members from the dashboard. Make sure that you select the correct plot! These members will then be deleted from the report.

¹ Criterion 2.2. requires you to have "evidence of legal ownership or lease, history of land tenure and the actual legal use of the land according to local laws" for members' land.

Plots where the use or ownership is contested in some way, either direct tenure conflict or where people other than the group member or family members either:

- **hunt or collect natural products from the proposed expansion plot, and have not consented to the proposed new planting, or**
- **have sites of cultural or spiritual importance in the proposed expansion plot, and have not consented to the proposed new planting.**

For these plots you will need to conduct some additional consultation with the communities or individuals that are contesting the land use or ownership or that are using the land. The purpose of this is to ensure that these communities or individuals give their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for oil palm development on your members' proposed expansion plots. This means ensuring consent BEFORE any development starts. This is necessary even if your members have legal evidence of tenure, because traditional or customary use rights are not always adequately protected in law. This process can also promote positive relationships between your members and people in the area which helps ensure a 'license to operate' into the future: if this is ignored then it may result in more severe conflict in the future.

There is no single way of conducting this consultation but the following steps are recommended:

1. **Identify third parties that have contesting or overlapping use.** This must be done for all proposed expansion plots with contested or overlapping use. This can be done by asking the members whose land is contested.
2. **Consult third parties to seek consent or resolve dispute.** This can either be done through small meetings with the two parties involved (member and the third party) or in a group consultation meeting (if there are multiple parties involved). For disputes that are particularly contentious it is advised to conduct small meetings with just the parties involved, or if you think this is unsafe it is recommended to resolve the dispute through official government mechanisms or an independent mediator. During the meeting you following general steps can be followed:
 - a. Explain the general purpose of the meeting: explain that the member wants to plant new oil palms on their land and that they want to seek consent/resolve the dispute,
 - b. Show the parties the location of the contested plot: you can use the map exported from the dashboard for this. If the member has evidence of their tenure for the land they should also bring this to the meeting,
 - c. Ask the third party to explain their claim to the plot: what are they using it for, how often do they use it.
 - d. Ask the third party if they will provide consent for the proposed new planting in the plot. If no, can a compromise be reached between the parties? For example, agreement that half of the plot is developed and half is retained for use by the third party?
 - e. Resolving these disputes is often a slow process requiring multiple meetings. Therefore, if this is the case and a dispute cannot be quickly resolved you may decide to remove the plot from the proposed NPP submission to not delay development of other plots.
 - f. If agreement can be reached then you need to keep a record of the meeting including attendees and document the agreement reached. This should include: 1. A meeting attendance sheet with signatures, 2. Photographs of participants (only if they give permission), and 3. A written agreement of consent signed by all parties.
3. **Report agreement or continue dispute resolution process.** Subsequent steps will differ depending on whether an agreement can be reached:
 - a. For plots where agreement can be reached quickly you can include them in the NPP submission by uploading evidence of the consultation to the dashboard:
 - i. Take photographs of the evidence collected in 2f above,
 - ii. Upload the photos from your phone or camera to your laptop,

- iii. Login to the dashboard and go to “Manage 7.3 Surveys” and click on the “Medium level” tab.
 - iv. Click on “View HCV5-6 Surveys Only”.
 - v. Then click on each relevant plot and for each plot scroll to the bottom of the summary and select “Upload evidence documents”. Then navigate to the folder on your computer with the photo and select upload.
- d. Plots where no agreement has been reached cannot be included in the NPP submission, and if members still want to develop on these areas then a formal dispute resolution process will be required (in line with Criterion 2.2 of the RSPO P&C). Remove the plots from the submission as follows:
- i. Login to the dashboard and go to the “Medium level tab”.
 - ii. Click on “View HCV5-6 Surveys Only”.
 - iii. Then scroll to the relevant plots without evidence of tenure and for each plot click on the red ‘Dustbin/trashcan’ icon to delete the members from the dashboard. Make sure that you select the correct plot! These members will then be deleted from the report.

2.5.2. Independent review process

Once you have completed all necessary follow-up (including any required consultation) you can submit the draft Medium level report to the HCVRN for review. The steps to do this are as follows :

1. Export the draft Medium level report from the dashboard,
2. Email the report to qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org requesting a Medium level review,
3. HCVRN reviewer reviews the report and sends feedback in a standard review template,
4. You are then required to respond to the reviewer’s comments in the response template and email your responses back to the reviewer for final approval. You would have XX attempt(s) to respond to and address the reviewers’ comments.
5. Once all comments have been addressed the reviewer signs off the ‘Medium level report’ which is then ready for submission as part of the NPP. For all ‘Medium level reports’ as part of the NPP you will need to include the following:
 - a. The original ‘Medium level report’ exported from the Dashboard,
 - b. The review template (completed by the reviewer),
 - c. The response template (completed by you), and
 - d. The ‘sign-off’ form from the reviewer.

3. Phase 4: NPP preparation and HCV management

Once you have completed any necessary follow-up or reviews the reports (low and/or medium) are ready to be included in the NPP submission, as outlined in the NPP for SH procedure.

After the NPP submission is approved, you can notify your members that they can proceed to development BUT they must comply with the HCV management requirements or ‘No-Go’ areas for their plots as specified in the reports. Management requirements are as follows:

- **HCV1-3:** Forest or natural vegetation identified must not be developed or converted and must be protected as ‘No-Go’ areas. Peat areas are not considered ‘No-Go’ but must be managed in line with RSPO BMPs on peat.
 - o For guidance on managing HCV1-3 ‘No-Go’ areas it is recommended to follow the same ‘Precautionary Practices’ procedures outlined in the 5.2 Precautionary Practices guidance (available [here](#)).
- **HCV4:** HCV4 ‘No-Go’ areas are exactly the same for ‘Medium level’ plots as they are for ‘Low level’ plots. Similarly to the ‘Low level’ report, the ‘Medium level’ report contains a summary of which

members have HCV4 'No-Go' areas. These members are required to implement these to comply with RSPO requirements, and these 'No-Go' areas may be checked in the field by the CB during the NPP process. You need to clearly communicate to the members about these requirements to make sure they are compliant.

- **HCV5-6:** Potential disputes or conflicts about HCV5-6 must be addressed by consultation during Phase 3, before any development happens. After development, it is recommended to follow the 5.2 Precautionary Practices guidance on consultation and HCV5-6.

4. Grievance/complaints mechanism

If you do not agree with the results of the risk analysis for one (or multiple) group members, then you will need to provide evidence to justify your complaint. For example, if the area has been identified as high HCV 1-3 probability on the map but you have evidence such as a photo to show that it is actually agricultural land then you can collate this evidence and send it to the RSPO Secretariat for verification.

5. Annex 1 – Summary of when the different procedures apply

It is not required for Group Managers to study or understand this table in detail because the excel template provided automatically identifies the required procedure. Therefore, this is only provided for reference.



Level	Combinations		
	1	2	2
Low (GM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: low, and • HCV 5-6: low • <500 ha cumulative expansion 	NA	NA
Medium (GM & peer review)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: medium, • HCV 5-6: low or potential, • <500 ha cumulative expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: low, • HCV 5-6: potential, • <500 ha cumulative expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: high, • HCV 5-6: low or potential, • <100 ha cumulative expansion
High (ALS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: low or medium • HCV 5-6: low or potential • >500 ha cumulative expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV 1-3: high • HCV 5-6: low or potential • >100 ha cumulative expansion 	NA

6. Annex 2 – Instructions for users without smartphone or tablet

If you do not have access to a smartphone or tablet you can complete the Simplified 7.3 approach using an offline/paper survey and reporting templates – **these are all available online in this excel [template](#)**. This is done as follows:

Step 1: Field visit.

- Print a paper copy of the “7.3 Survey” tab in the excel document. Use this during the field visit to complete the survey.
- Use a GPS or smartphone application to record the GPS coordinates of each farmer’s proposed expansion plot(s).
- The question in the survey about the HCV1-3 probability must be completed after you have collected the GPS coordinates. You will need access to a computer and an internet connection.

Go to www.rspo.org/geo-rspo, go to ‘Layers’ on the left side:  and turn on the layer ‘HCV 1-3 probability’ then click on the search function on the right side , search for the coordinates of each plot and identify the HCV 1-3 probability for the plot.

Step 2: Submitting the survey.

- If doing the survey offline (without a smartphone/tablet) you cannot submit the survey to the dashboard. Instead, you must input the data collected on paper in Step one into the 7.3 Survey tab of the excel spreadsheet. The sheet will automatically illustrate which 7.3 procedure applies for each plot.

Step 3: Reviewing data and reporting

- Now you must prepare the report information, using tabs 3-5 in the excel template and also collecting any other additional information required.
- Reporting information required for each level is as follows:
 - **Low-level procedure:**
 1. Completed ‘Low-level report’ tab from the excel sheet
 2. Maps of all the eligible plots, showing at least the central point location of the plots overlaid with satellite imagery. These can be created using free software like Google Earth: <https://support.google.com/earth/answer/148142?hl=en>
 3. A list or table of all HCV4 management requirements (see section 2.4.2 above for details).
 - **Medium-level procedure:**
 1. Completed ‘Medium-level report’ tab from the excel sheet
 2. Maps of all the eligible plots, showing at least the central point location of the plots overlaid with satellite imagery. These can be created using free software like Google Earth: <https://support.google.com/earth/answer/148142?hl=en>
 3. Ground-truthing photos for all plots with forest/natural vegetation or peat (see section 2.2.3 for details)
 4. Evidence of consultation/consent for all plots with potential HCV5-6 (see section 2.2.5 for details)
 5. A list or table of all HCV4 management requirements (see section 2.4.2 above for details).
 6. A list or table of all HCV1-3 ‘No-Go’ areas.

7. Letter of approval of report by HCVRN independent review.
- **High-level procedure:**
 1. Completed 'High-level report' tab from the excel sheet
 2. These plots must then undergo an independent HCV assessment by a licensed ALS assessor. The independent assessor will be responsible for meeting ALS reporting requirements.

Step 4: Medium-level follow-up

- Independent review completed for eligible plots as explained in section 2.5 above.