

RSPO

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

Minutes of Meeting

RSPO Communications & Claims Standing Committee (C&C SC)

Date: December 10th, 2013

Venue : Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam

Time : CET 9.30am – 17.30pm

ATTENDANCE LIST

Stakeholder Group	Members	Organization
Consumer Goods Manufacturer	Jan Kees Vis	Unilever
Association member	Eddy Esselink	MVO
Processors & Traders	Yves Augrandjean	IOI Loders Crocklaan
Processors & Traders	Inke van der Sluijs	Product Board MVO
Processors & Traders	Caroline Sikking (Chair)	Cargill
Retailer	Andrea Bolhuis	Royal Ahold
Service provider	Andy Green	BM TRADA
Service provider	Bob Norman	GreenPalm
Trader	Judith Murdoch	AAK
Social NGO	Sabina Voogd	Oxfam
Environmental NGO	Carrie Svingen	WWF
RSPO Secretariat	Joycelyn Lee	RSPO Secretariat
RSPO Secretariat	Danielle Morley	RSPO Secretariat
Service provider	Giovanni Colombo	H+K Strategies, Brussels
Service provider	Joanna Hasson Dwek	H+K Strategies, Brussels
Apologies		
Bank	Olaf Brugman	Rabobank
Consumer Goods Manufacturer	Tiina Tuominen	Neste Oil
Retailer	Agnes Pondaven	Carrefour
Retailer	Belinda Howell	Retailers Palm Oil Group
Grower	Leela Barrock	Sime Darby Malaysia

1. INFLUENCER/CONSUMER OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

- ✓ Katherine The-White and her team from Futureeye presented their initial report on the influencer/consumer outreach campaign, for discussion and feedback with the SC C&C members.
- ✓ The report included main conclusions from on the social maturity and outrage analysis around RSPO and CSPO, and identified the important gaps in RSPO reaching social expectations. The report also looked at the way RSPO is portrayed and perceived by society, and whether its communications strategy and messages are accurate in light of the emergence of social values, and changing expectations.
- ✓ Members agreed that from one company to another, the importance of perceptions change. According to traders, the perception of retailers is crucial because they influence consumers.
- ✓ Some governments, such as the Dutch one, appreciate initiatives such as the RSPO.
- ✓ RSPO's inability to deliver on its expectations and its constant reactive state are important problems.
- ✓ Futureeye explained that the general public expects the RSPO to be the solution, and its credibility is therefore eroded by a narrative which is focused on promotion, qualitative achievements and by responding on hazards issues which it cannot fix. The RSPO should at least acknowledge certain problems and taking responsibility for them, rather than just promoting its achievements. This will help to regain trust and convey a message of honesty.
- ✓ Members agreed that RSPO is now seen as the fixer, but that it shouldn't necessarily be it, and that this role was given to RSPO by others through their expectations. Also, the RSPO should not claim it has the capacity to transform the market by itself, if it isn't capable of doing so, as it creates unmet expectations and frustration. It should instead ask others to help and do their part, because alone it will not be able to do it.
- ✓ Transparency is also a sensitive issue. When a complaint case is open, the amount of information which RSPO can disclose about its members is limited. The risk is that others will enforce transparency on RSPO if it doesn't do it itself.
- ✓ This raises the question as to what extent the RSPO has the license to name and shame its members, and whether and when it should take strong action, for instance by expelling them. For Futureeye, RSPO's past focus on getting more members has curtailed RSPO's capacity to be tougher on non-compliant members. At the same time, some members stressed the need to keep engaging with industry audiences to increase membership.
- ✓ It is important to acknowledge that some of these issues are beyond the communications domain and touch upon fundamental governance points, which cannot be addressed by the Secretariat alone. The question is how can we get the members to give the Secretariat a mandate which allows it to move and act timely and effectively?
- ✓ Since the establishment of RSPO, there has been a deliberate prioritisation of messages, whereby the RSPO focused on acquiring new members and increasing the uptake of CSPO. These were essentially B2B messages focusing on the supply chain.
- ✓ Today the RSPO is expected to paint a more realistic picture about the problems it faces, in line with what is expected by RSPO members and other external stakeholders. It should also talk about the complexity it faces, and should avoid creating a 'power gap' by saying that it has more power than it actually does. This gives the impression that RSPO is ineffective because it refuses to respond. In turn, this generates a loss of trust and a perception of dishonesty.

- ✓ Various perception scenarios were discussed: members agreed that RSPO is currently essentially in the *protest scenario* where RSPO is the problem and certification is attacked instead of the broader issue. It should aim at reaching the *social license to operate scenarios*, whereby the broader complexity is acknowledged and communicated.
- ✓ The issue of mistrust between the different parties and layers in the supply chain, and the need for RSPO to be more transparent, was also raised.
- ✓ RSPO's main message should be that RSPO constitutes a journey towards CSPO and that RSPO cannot do it alone.
- ✓ Consumers are the ultimate target of the Futureeye messaging work, particularly in light of the approaching food labelling deadline in Europe.
- ✓ However, members agreed that in Europe consumers are not actively engaged on palm oil sustainability issues (price is their main concern) and they are mostly influenced by vocal NGOs, who in turn influence media. The importance of focusing on the NGOs and the media, which currently are the main antagonistic players, was the main hypothesis guiding the Futureeye work. Futureeye highlighted that consumers do not hold a nuanced opinion on palm oil, but a rather basic one.
- ✓ Although it is outside of the scope of work of Futureeye, it was emphasised that any messages and research on engagement strategy should also focus on the growers, as they are key audience for RSPO.
- ✓ Futureeye should also develop more understanding of supply chain issues, because RSPO will need to continue to reach out to industries in the supply chain (especially in the food and feed sector) to achieve greater uptake of CSPO.
- ✓ Interviewees should also include sceptical and critical voices, not only active and supportive members. The pool of contacts should be broadened.
- ✓ The process leading to choose Futureeye and approve its project proposal was explained by Joyce and Danielle. This has been an opportunity to review RSPO's communications strategy and make a pause to think about it more thoroughly, as also recommended by Anne Gabriel.

ACTIONS:

- RSPO should develop a set of messages which are friendly and easy to use by members.
- SC C&C members should have an opportunity to review this initial Futureeye report and provide feedback in the next month.
- January: Futureeye will be undertaking interviews with consumers based in London (but of different nationalities) to understand their perception of palm oil.
- January: Futureeye will conduct interviews with members, industries and other stakeholders. Danielle will circulate the list of interviewees so that each SC C&C member can provide a recommendation for additional companies/organisations to interview (members or non-members).
- March: messaging workshop with consumer brands and retailers. Possible dates for the workshops are 12 and 13 March, or 25 and 26 February in London. This will be confirmed by Danielle Morley. But before this, all SC C&C members should answer the Doodle invite they have received for the workshop.
- Futureeye will deliver its final report in March/April, including recommendations for messaging.

2. OPENING

- ✓ Chair, Caroline Sikking opened the second part of the meeting and welcomed all participants.

- ✓ The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the last meeting (Call) on September 24th 2013.
- ✓ Members provided initial feedback on the Futureeye presentation. It was agreed that such ground work was necessary before any full-blown communications campaign. It was agreed that the draft report could be sent by SC C&C members to colleagues internally, but not to any external contacts, especially to those who might be interviewed.

3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW RSPO STAFF AND SECRETARIAT UPDATE

- ✓ Joyce and Danielle provided a general view of their observations since taking up their role, and the foreseen priority areas for the coming months.
- ✓ The RSPO is foreseeing more proactive media outreach, both in Asia and in Europe. RSPO will talk more about the small-holder stories which can bring a more human and concrete angle to the palm oil debate.
- ✓ China is the main priority. Darrel will spend a month in China next year and Secretariat wants to increase RSPO's local presence to open an office. The first step will probably be to appoint a communications officer.
- ✓ RSPO's activities in India are under review and will probably be reduced to a maintenance level. India could be put on hold until RSPO is ready to be more active and present on the ground.
- ✓ The idea of the RSPO being in more direct contact with the marketing/sales team of its members, so as to support them in using CSPO was raised. RSPO should consider the development of a marketing strategy to promote CSPO uptake.
- ✓ Joyce recommended a website revamp.
- ✓ Issue management and crisis communications are also important, and the Secretariat will work on it with the support of H+K – also to be prepared to deal with issues which might come up at the next RTs.
- ✓ RT11 was a successful event but it was agreed that there were too many open sessions, and the topics for the sessions were not clear enough in the programme.
- ✓ RSPO should ensure coordination between its European RT and the global RT so that members can better decide which one to attend.
- ✓ RSPO's collaboration with ISEAL will be explored, also to reach full membership.
- ✓ RSPO is currently developing an impact assessment of its work on the ground, the first of its kind.
- ✓ Sabina will change role within Oxfam, and will be replaced by her colleague Sandra.

ACTIONS:

- The RSPO is currently updating its supply chain certification guidelines. Once this has been completed, the SC C&C shall review the communications and claims guidelines and its communications tools.
- RSPO Secretariat will provide a summary of positive stories of engagement and collaboration. Joyce to follow-up with Eddy on this particular point.
- The next RT will take place in November (21-23 tbc) in Kuala Lumpur.
- RSPO and H+K will discuss how to build a crisis communications plan.

Outlook in Europe

- RSPO has been reactively and proactively addressing the recent crisis caused by the forest fires and the ensuing NGO criticism, through its:
 - Written responses and interviews
 - The development of RSPO positioning and statements on key issues
 - The dissemination of press releases around key RSPO developments
 - The organisation of an online debate with Greenpeace.
- It foresees as a consequence a number of challenges in communications which will need to be addressed, but also several successes which can be capitalised on.
- Moving forward, the RSPO will need to complete its influencer research and prepare its outreach plan, define its position in Europe, and embark in a more proactive engagement with the media, NGOs, industry stakeholders and other KOLs.

RSPO's positioning

- RSPO should acknowledge the levels of commitment which emerged after the P&C review and the launch of POIG, and develop a position that takes into consideration the current debates around palm oil's sustainability in Europe. RSPO should avoid creating a disconnect between its messages and the perceptions of its target stakeholders.
- It was agreed that any discussion on the levels of sustainability commitment of RSPO members should be addressed more openly and it should not happen outside RSPO, which is what is currently happening with Greenpeace. Instead these issues should be part of a RSPO hosted and led conversation.
- The P&C should not be seen as the minimum common denominator, but rather as the most solid certification scheme which exists, still today, and which offers a space in which different members can place themselves at different levels of sustainability performance.
- It was agreed that RSPO should be bold about its market transformation ambition, and explain why only a mainstream and standard based solution can save the world.
- SC C&C members discussed also what messages RSPO should adopt regarding the various types of certification systems, and it was expressed that B&C and Mass Balance should not be considered as a lesser good option than SG, and especially not communicated as such.
- The idea of asking members to indicate, together with their Time Bound Plans, what certification system they want to achieve was discussed, but this could lead companies to adopt too ambitious targets with the risk of not being sufficiently credible.

Proposed activities 2013-2014

- European media monitoring and proactive media engagement, allowing for an organised and targeted media outreach cycle
- Development of a targeted communications and outreach calendar around key RSPO developments, important developments or policy developments
- European Roundtable (to take place on 2,3 or 4 June in Paris), subject to budget discussions.
 - Suggested theme: trust and credibility
 - Key note speakers: academics, vocal KOLs, policy-makers
 - Target audience: to include controversial audience
 - To include the smallholders and human story
- Support of RSPO taking part in local events and national commitments
- RSPO participation in ESPOAG event
- Ongoing activities:

- European helpdesk
- Secretariat services
- Reactive media support
- Recommendations and support on speaking opportunities

ACTIONS:

- RSPO Secretariat to follow up with Judith on the development of useful tools to promote RSPO.
- RSPO secretariat to enquire with EB about financing of European Roundtable.
- H+K shall submit a ballpark figure for the organisation of the June summit
- H+K to develop a concept overview and draft programme of European Roundtable for discussion within the SC C&C
- Inke will be responsible for the organisation of a half day training on supply chain guidelines before the summit in Paris
- Joyce to talk to Darrel about the possibility of organising an EB meeting before or after the summit in Paris

5. Discussion on next C&C meeting

DECISIONS:

- ✓ Call on 1st April 2014 at 10.30am-12.30pm (already scheduled)

ACTIONS:

- ✓ Planning discussion on European Roundtable in London around the consumer workshop in February or March
- ✓ C&C Call in March following consumer workshop in London
- ✓ C&C half day meeting before or after the European Roundtable

6. All other Business

- The impact of the Trade and Traceability Committee on the SC C&C should be identified by a small team. To be further discussed.
- Greenpalm is currently reviewing its core messages and will welcome the input of RSPO. Joyce will follow-up with Bob Norman.
- Secretariat and H+K to discuss crisis communications support.
- Growers should be a part of the C&C.

*** Meeting adjourned ***