



Simplified HCV Approach for Independent Smallholders in the RSPO - Introduction Document (Phases 1 & 2)

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Preamble:

This document is **only** applicable in cases of Group Certification, as outlined in the Group Certification document (RSPO-GUI-T06-008).

This Simplified HCV Approach is to be implemented by Group Managers, with safeguards for extra checks by independent parties in certain situations.

Smallholders in the context of this document refers to those farmers with plantations < 50ha where the mill has no management control over either the land or operations undertaken by smallholder farmers. Hence, this document is applicable to all those farmers with < 50ha of plantations that are eligible to use Section 3 of the Group Certification document. See also the Frequently Asked Questions document on the Guidance for Group Certification document: <http://www.rspo.org/smallholders/smallholders-key-documents>

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1. Introduction

The RSPO recognises that smallholders face challenges in complying with the Principles and Criteria of the RSPO standard, including RSPO's requirements to maintain High Conservation Values (HCVs), see box 1.

Therefore, a **Simplified HCV Approach** has been developed to help farmers implement these requirements, and comply with the New Planting Procedures (NPP).

This approach recognises that the probabilities of HCVs being present, and impacted on, differ between existing plantings (Criterion 5.2) and new plantings (Criterion 7.3). In existing plantations, natural vegetation has already been cleared for oil palm. Traditional forest use has ceased, and most originally present plants and animals are no longer there. Consequently, *the risk of damaging HCVs in established plantings is considered to be low.*

HCVs are more likely to occur in natural habitats, so where such lands are cleared for new plantings of oil palm (Criterion 7.3), *risks to HCVs are higher.* For new plantings, the risk of damaging HCVs depends on the:

- **Probability of HCV presence:** the more likely that HCVs are present, the higher the risk of negative impacts from planting oil palm on that site. While biological HCVs (1-3) depend on the type, size and quality of natural habitats (e.g. forest) and of species present at a site, HCVs 4-6 relate to the dependence of local communities on the site for subsistence or cultural identity.
- **Size/scale of expansion:** Large scale oil palm development is likely to have more impact on HCVs than small scale expansion – by reducing the amount of natural habitat more, and increasing the risks increase that HCVs present in patches of natural vegetation in the landscape are negatively affected¹.

These factors determine which HCV procedure is required for new plantings (explained in more detail in the Phase 3 7.3 procedures document).

2. Overview

This document introduces the Simplified HCV approach and explains whether you need to use the 5.2 or 7.3 procedures. The approach:

- Uses a specialised HCV for smallholder smartphone app with web dashboard, to collect and aggregate data on farmer group members and their plots for both existing plantations and proposed new plantings,
- Is designed to be implemented by the Group Manager as far as possible, but with the need for mandatory independent review in medium risk situations and assessment by an Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS)-licensed assessor in high risk situations,

Box 1- What are HCVs?

The RSPO requires growers to identify, maintain and enhance HCVs in their operations. An HCV is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance. There are six HCV categories: HCV 1-3 are biological HCVs focused on biodiversity, species, ecosystems and landscapes (often globally important species and sites). HCV 4-6 are social HCVs focussed on environmental services, natural resource use by communities and cultural values. The latter are most often important at a local level, e.g. critical for livelihoods.

The presence of HCVs 1-3 can be inferred through the presence of good quality, relatively large areas of natural habitats, whilst HCVs 4-6 are identified through participative methods with local communities. For more information about HCVs please see these 'Introduction to HCVs' interactive slides:

<http://slides.com/proforest/deck-3> (Credit: Proforest).

¹ Intensity is also normally considered in risk assessments but is not explicitly included here because it is assumed that the vast majority oil palm plantations are uniform, high 'intensity' as monoculture plantations.

- Provides guidance on how to manage and maintain HCVs, and in medium risk situations identifies precautionary 'no-go' areas that cannot be developed,
- Serves as one-stop shop guidance for Group Managers on how to address RSPO requirements on HCVs for their group members.

Group Managers (GMs) may delegate specific tasks and responsibilities to lead farmers or other designated representatives, but the GM (referred to as 'you' in the following) always has overall responsibility. Note that data collection during Phases 2 and 3 must be carried out by someone other than the farmer whose land is being assessed.

The overall process for smallholders eligible to use the Simplified HCV approach consists of four phases:

- 1. Phase 1 – Initial communication with members about HCV requirements**
 - Introduce the HCV concept and procedures to your group members (see also box 1 and section 3).
- 2. Phase 2 – Field visit to collect basic information**
 - Visit and register all farmers in your group and collect the information necessary to determine if 5.2 or 7.3 procedures apply. The app will guide you to the details (see also section 4).
 - ***You only need do this initial registration once. When you have completed it OR if you have already registered a farmer you need to skip to the 7.3 procedures then you can skip straight to Phase 3.***
- 3. Phase 3 – Complete plot level 5.2 or 7.3 surveys**
 - Collect data on all plots of your members (as well as any communal land) using the appropriate app survey (either 5.2 or 7.3). Note that you may have to use different surveys for different plots, even if owned by the same farmer. Repeat phase 3 for all proposed expansion of oil palm.
 - Phase 3 can be part of the same site visit started in Phase 2 or can be conducted later.
 - Upload the data onto a web-based 'dashboard'. This dashboard aggregates the data and guides you through the remaining steps, including how to finalise and export a report.
- 4. Phase 4 –Management of HCVs**

Make sure farmers apply required management practices as specified in the report, including not converting 'no-go' areas, and that members do not clear land for new plantings without your prior approval. For 7.3 situations this applies only after NPP approval.

3. Where do I start?

There are three options for when to start the process:

1. You are starting the process of certification as a new group and this Simplified HCV approach is new for all members. In that case, you start with Phase 1; or
2. You have new members in the group. You need to start at Phase 1 for the new members. It is not necessary to repeat this Phase 1 for existing members that have already completed it.
3. You have already completed the 5.2 HCV approach (for all members with existing plantations and they are in the process of getting certified or already certified). You are conducting the HCV approach only for those farmers of the group that have indicated they now want to expand with new plantations → start the process at Phase 3, as presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 below presents a schematic overview of the four phases and the various steps that form part of the Simplified HCV approach.

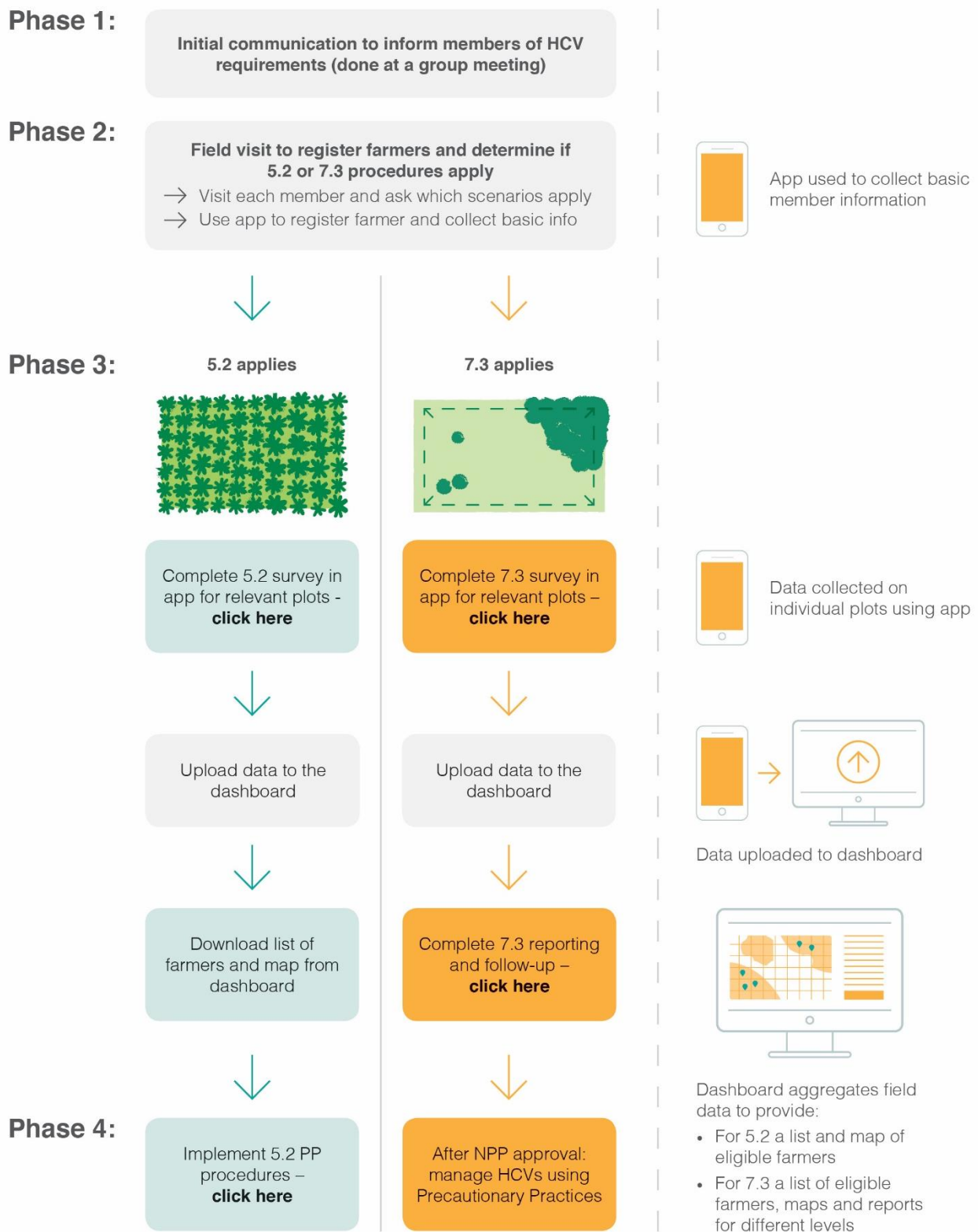


Figure 1. Overview of the structure of the Simplified HCV approach and the phases and steps involved

Sections 3 and 4 below provide further guidance on Phases 1 and 2. You can find further guidance on the procedures for Phase 3 in the respective Procedure Documents for farmers with existing plantations (5.2 situations) or for farmers that are expanding with new plantings (7.3 situations). An overview of the different guidance documents is found in Annex 1.

4. Phase 1: Initial communication on HCVs

All members of your group need to have a basic understanding of HCVs. As the GM, you are expected to inform your members of their obligations, and what they need to do to meet RSPO requirements on HCVs.

The first step is to schedule and invite members to a meeting. The objective is that, after the meeting, group members are:

- aware of what HCVs are, why they are important and how they link to ecosystem services like pollination, clean water and prevention of erosion and landslides. Use visual materials where available (<http://slides.com/proforest/deck-3>).
- willing to collaborate and provide relevant information on their farms and plots to the GM and to auditors. In particular, members must be aware that:
 - Photos of plots may need to be taken;
 - Any extension of their lands or acquisition of new plots must be declared to you as GM;
 - Members must consult with you and get your approval before any clearing for new plantings/expansion of oil palm. This includes plantings on former agricultural land (but not renewal of old oil palms);
 - Group members who fail to comply with any of the above obligations risk being expelled from the group.
- engaged and committed to collaborate on identification and long-term management of HCVs.
- informed enough to explain the importance of HCVs to other relevant stakeholders, like non-farmer community members who can help manage and implement precautionary practices.

Tip – Same person to lead communications and data collection

If you contact your group members to explain and start to communicate about HCVs, it is recommended that the same person that is leading this communication is also the one that is in charge of later on collecting the field data from the same farmers. This is to ensure continuity.

As a GM you may consider training a group of 'lead farmers'/data collectors.

Meetings should be limited to 20-30 people to encourage active and interactive participation, so you may need to convene a series of meetings or workshops to cover all members. If there are too many members for you to meet in person, you can train a subset of Lead Farmers, e.g. one or two from each village, to run meetings with different sub groups. Allow time for questions and discussion, and try to address any concerns from members about HCV assessment and management. Keep records of all conducted meetings or one-to-one conversations, and the names of participants. Explain that there will be other meetings about managing HCVs and about what to do if farmers want to clear land for new plantings of oil palm.

5. Phase 2: Field visit to collect basic information

After you have communicated the importance of HCVs to your group members, you must visit each member and collect the information necessary for selecting the right HCV procedures. You can use the app to organise and store this information as well as for collecting further data on individual plots (Phase 3).

Box 2. What if you don't have access to a smartphone or tablet?

The Simplified HCV approach is easier to follow if you have access to a smartphone or tablet, but if this is not possible, you can use the 'offline' paper templates, as follows:

- **For Phase 2 field visits and farmer registration, use the table provided in Annex 2 of this document**
- **For Phases 3 and 4 for 7.3 situations, use the table provided in Annex 2 of the Phase 3-4 manual.**

Preparation for the site visits – download the App

To set up the app, request a username and a password from RSPO by email. Use these to login to the dashboard at <http://rspo.alphapod.com/dashboard/login>. Generate a Group Code by clicking first on the "Manage Data Collectors" tab, then on "Generate group code". Add all intended data collectors (you and any other designated representatives) by either typing your and their email addresses into the "Insert email" section, or by uploading a list of email addresses in an excel file using the "Template" available to download on the page. Notify data collectors that they have been registered, and send them the "Group Code", which they will need to login to the app.

Then download the app:

- 1) Make sure phones or tablets are connected to the internet, or with mobile data access. *Caution: doing this using mobile data might incur charges or use up your data allowance.*
- 2) Use the device to go to Google Play Store, search for "RSPO HCV", and download the app.

Box 3. App specifications

The app is designed to run on most Android 5.0 phones and tablets with the following specifications. An iOS (Apple) version of the app is in development.

All data collectors also need to download a HCV 1-3

Probability map for the location of their members:

- 1) Open the app and login using your email address and the Group Code. Then click on 'Manage maps'.
- 2) Move the map to the area where your members are located. Make sure the area shown on your phone/tablet includes all smallholder group members - zoom in or out as required.
- 3) Once you have captured the right area on your screen, click 'Download Area' and give the map a name that will allow you to identify it. You will see a notification indicating the size of the download – if you do not have enough space you can zoom in to a smaller area or delete files from your device. It may take up to 30 minutes to download the map, depending on the connection. The map is fully installed when the orange bar is complete.
- 4) Verify that the map is downloaded by clicking on 'Downloaded Area', checking that the map is listed there. If not, try to download the map again!
- 5) You are now ready to proceed with the site visits!

Conducting site visits

The main purpose is to collect basic information and to determine which procedures apply for the farmers' plot(s). The steps are completed using the app, as follows:

1. **Register the farmer and collect basic information:** Open the app and select "Start Survey", then "Create Farmer Profile". This leads to a short survey where you can enter member name, farmer ID and address. Complete the survey for each farmer that you visit.
2. **Determine what procedures apply:**
 - Show group members the four possible scenarios presented in Figure 2 below (or use the figure in the app under "Need help to know which survey to fill up?"). Find out which scenario is most

relevant to the situation of each member. Criterion 5.2 HCV procedures apply to areas/plots with existing oil palm plantations, while Criterion 7.3 HCV procedures apply to any areas or plots planned or proposed for expansion of new oil palms.

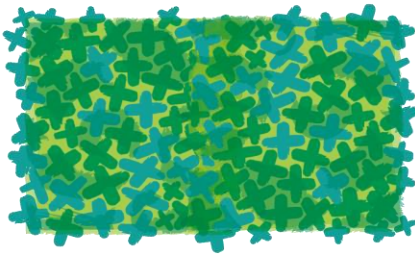
- Remind group members currently meeting Scenario 4, that anyone who wants to clear new areas for planting oil palm must report to you, get your permission and have the 7.3 survey completed before doing so. Note that, while it is the responsibility of each group member to inform you if they want to expand, you should also check regularly and proactively with group members to see if their plans have changed.

You should now you should have an understanding of the situation of each member and be able to proceed to Phase 3, applying 5.2 or 7.3 procedures as relevant for each member and plot. You may do this either as part of this first field visit, or return to do so at a later occasion – but remember that the 7.3 surveys must be completed and the NPP completed before any land clearance.

- ➔ **For guidance on Phases 3 and 4 for 5.2 situations proceed to the 5.2 Precautionary Practices guidance document ([click here](#)).**
- ➔ **For guidance on Phases 3 and 4 for 7.3 situations proceed to the HCV procedures for new plantations (HCV_SH_7_3_01; [click here](#)).**

Scenario 1.

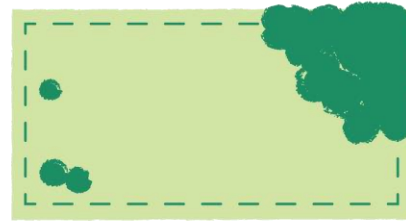
Group member's land is all under existing palm



5.2 applies.
Proceed to 5.2 survey and
Precautionary Practices

Scenario 2.

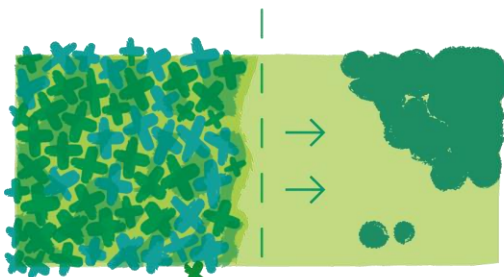
None of member's land is under palm but the members wants to expand a new planting



7.3 applies.
Proceed to 7.3 survey

Scenario 3.

Group member's land includes some existing palm AND other land that they wish to expand new plantings onto



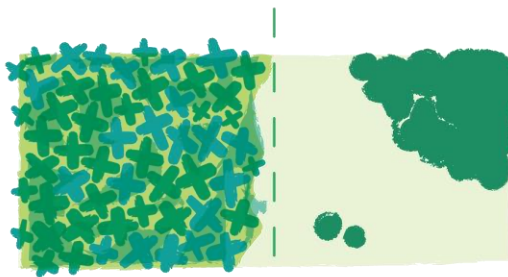
5.2 applies.
Proceed to 5.2 survey
and Precautionary
Practices



7.3 applies.
Proceed to 7.3
survey

Scenario 4.

Group member's land includes some existing palm AND other land but there are no current plans to expand new plantings onto that other land



5.2 applies.
Proceed to 5.2 survey
and Precautionary
Practices



BUT remember to tell the member that if they decide at any point to expand new plantings onto the other land they must first tell the GM because they will need to follow the **7.3 approach**

Note: for replanting of existing palms 5.2 Precautionary Practices approach applies

Figure 2. Possible scenarios for group members

6. Annex 1

Glossary of all documents and procedures under the Simplified HCV Approach.

Document name	Content of the documents	Weblink
HCV_SH_01: Introduction and Overview (Phases 1 and 2) – this document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication on HCV with group members (Phase 1 step 1) • Site visit and determining whether 5.2 or 7.3 procedures apply 	Introduction document: (RSPO website link) Web dashboard: Available for download at Google Store as ‘RSPO HCV App’
Procedures for HCV in existing plantations (5.2 Phase 3)	Phase 3 – HCV for Existing Plantation (5.2) guidance	https://www.rspo.org/smallholders/smallholders-key-documents
HCV_SH_7_3_01: 7.3 HCV procedures for new plantations (7.3 Phase 3 & Phase 4)	7.3 Phases 3-4: 7.3 Procedures, including three levels of 7.3 procedures	7.3 HCV Procedure document:
HCV_SH_7_3_02: 7.3 HCV offline analysis and reporting template – offline/paper version	7.3 Phases 3-4: Offline analysis and reporting template 7.3. <i>Version for GMs without access to smartphone or tablet.</i>	7.3 offline template
Management and monitoring AFTER plantation expansion/establishment: 5.2 Precautionary Practices approach	Phase 4 - Existing HCV for Existing Plantation (5.2) guidance	See brief guidance in the 7.3 Phase 3 procedures and then refer to 5.2 Precautionary Practices document: https://www.rspo.org/smallholders/smallholders-key-documents
HCV_SH_7_3_03: HCV 1-3 probability maps: methodology and consultation	Group managers do not need to refer to this document. Technical details about the methods followed to develop the HCV 1-3 probability maps.	HCV_SH_7_3_03

7. Annex 2

Offline/paper template for farmer registration – complete one row per farmer. **Only for GMs not using the smartphone/tablet app.**

Is it communal land or individual/family land?	If communal land: how many farmers use the land?	Farmer name (First names and Last name)	Farmer ID of member	Farmer address (where they live, not necessarily where their farm plots are)