

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Group Certification of FFB Production 2022

1. To whom does the RSPO Management System Requirements for Group Certification of FFB Production 2022 (hereinafter referred to as “Group Certification”) apply?

This document is applicable to smallholders (Independent and/or Scheme) and medium growers who are seeking RSPO Principles & Criteria (P&C) certification of their FFB through the legal formation of a group. A central organisation or an individual, known as the Group Manager, shall be appointed to manage the group.

2. When did the Group Certification 2022 come into effect?

It came into effect on 18 November 2022 after the posting of the announcement on the RSPO website.

3. For how long will the Group Certification 2022 remain in effect?

It will remain in effect until a revised version of the Group Certification 2022 is available.

4. Which group does not apply to the Group Certification 2022?

This document is NOT applicable to any group of independent smallholders pursuing the RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard; mills with their own plantations (under one management control) and growers with land holdings larger than 500 ha to apply the RSPO P&C independently and directly; and independent mills to apply the RSPO Supply Chain Certification (SCC).

However, a representative from a mill with their own plantations and/or independent mills and/or grower can be appointed as Group Manager of a group of smallholders (Independent or Scheme) and/or medium growers seeking P&C certification through this Group Certification approach.

5. Why is a group of independent smallholders NOT eligible for the Group Certification model?

The formation of smallholder groups is covered in the RSPO ISH Standard, an essential step in the Internal Control System requirements towards certification.

6. What kind of support can the group members receive to better incorporate compliance against the Group Certification 2022?

Through the RSPO Smallholder Trainer Academy, the RSPO provides capacity building programmes which include training on group formation and group strengthening activities. Scheme smallholder groups will also receive various types of support from RSPO members of other sectors as part of the requirement against Principle 5 of the RSPO P&C and Shared Responsibility (SR) framework. Scheme smallholder groups are encouraged to reach out to their linked companies for support first. Nonetheless, the RSPO Smallholder Support Fund (RSSF) may provide an opportunity for financial support for oil palm smallholders to help improve for certification. RSSF however, is currently prioritised for independent smallholders.

7. How does Group Certification 2022 help independent smallholders and scheme smallholders to fully comply with the P&C certification?

The RSPO Certification Systems 2020 requires members (mill-with-supply base) to implement a time-bound plan to ensure that all independent smallholders and scheme smallholders supplying a mill that is P&C certified must be certified within three years of the mill obtaining its own certificate. Group certification also serves to provide RSPO members (mill-with-supply base) with more options in supporting smallholders towards RSPO Certification.

8. In the Group Certification 2022 document, the Unit of Certification refers to the Group Manager and ALL individual group members, covering combined plots of each individual group member that are under oil palm production, including areas set aside for High Conservation Value (HCV), High Carbon Stock (HCS) and livelihoods. What do livelihoods mean in this case?

Livelihood covers the area where there is a settlement on the plots, including areas or sites of cultural and religious significance as well as essential basic resources for the communities.

9. In the Element 3: Internal Control System - Operation (E3.1.3) of the document, it is said that the Group Manager and the internal auditors shall jointly declare no conflict of interest for the internal audit process. How is no conflict of interest demonstrated?

E3.1.3 is a precautionary approach requiring the Group Manager and internal auditors to declare or disclose both potentially perceived and actual conflicts of interest for maintaining the integrity of unbiased professional judgement or impartiality when performing internal audits for the group. The group ICS shall have a process to identify, analyse, evaluate, treat, monitor and document the risks related to conflicts of interests arising from provision of certification, including any conflicts arising from its relationships on an ongoing basis. Where there are any threats to impartiality, the group manager shall document and demonstrate how it eliminates or minimises such threats and document any residual risk.

10. For the calculation on the sampling size to conduct risk assessment, should the decimals be rounded up or down?

The sample size is always rounded up. Rounding up is done at the final step in the calculation.

11. How does obtaining a Group P&C Certificate differ from obtaining an individual P&C Certificate?

The Group Certification model is where a single certificate is awarded to a group of participating individual farmers or growers managed through a central management known as a Group Manager.

An individual P&C Certification is where a single certificate is awarded to a commercial operations or company, where a set of management structures is established.

12. RSPO members (mill-with-supply base) are encouraged to support independent smallholders supplying to its mill. If the independent smallholder groups want to be certified against the P&C Standard, how can the mills give support to the independent smallholder groups in different group member combinations?

Option A1: Include independent smallholders in the single P&C Certificate

A single P&C Certificate will be issued, listing all smallholders (Independent and Scheme) within the certificate as the supply base of the mill.

Option A2: Include independent smallholders in an existing group of scheme smallholders for P&C Group Certification.

- The mill will obtain its own P&C Certificate for its own mill and plantations;
- Support the group of smallholders (Independent and Scheme) in obtaining their Group P&C Certificate through group certification, wherein the RSPO member can be the Group Manager or be appointed by this group.

Option A3: Group all independent smallholders for P&C Group Certification.

- The mill can be appointed as Group Manager
- The group will obtain its own P&C Certificate

13. RSPO members (mill-with-supply base) are encouraged to support independent smallholders supplying to its mill. If the independent smallholder groups want to be certified against the RSPO ISH Standard, how can the mills give support to the ISH groups in different group member combinations?

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The RSPO member (mill-with-supply base) can support independent smallholders for a separate ISH Standard Certification by being the group manager of the group pursuing ISH Certification.