

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Interpretation of the Internal Audit Requirements of the RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard

1. To whom does the interpretation of the internal audit requirements of the RSPO ISH Standard apply?

It applies to independent smallholders who are certified against the RSPO ISH Standard 2019.

2. When did the interpretation of the internal audit requirements of the RSPO ISH Standard come into effect?

It came into effect on 2 November 2021 after the posting of the [announcement](#) on the RSPO website.

3. For how long the interpretation of the internal audit requirements of the RSPO ISH Standard will remain in effect?

It will remain in effect until a revised version of the RSPO ISH Standard 2019 or a new interpretation is available.

4. What happens to the previously raised non-conformances on ICS B1.1 MS B?

The non-conformances raised before the effective date (2 November 2021) must be addressed as per the requirements in the RSPO Certification Systems for Principles and Criteria and RSPO ISH Standard 2020.

5. Will a national or local interpretation (if available in a specific country or region) supersede this interpretation?

Yes. A national interpretation will supersede this interpretation and function in the standard manner in which it applies to all the requirements within the RSPO ISH Standard that are reviewed as part of the process to develop a national or local interpretation.

6. The Interpretation of the internal audit requirements emphasised on a minimum of 33% of the group members being audited internally for the consecutive annual surveillances of the certificate. What is the reasoning behind the minimum value assigned?

The minimum value was proposed based on the highest requirement from other schemes as the highest benchmark.

- 7. For the calculation of the minimum of 33% of the group members being audited internally, should decimals be rounded up or down?**

Decimals should be rounded up.

- 8. For existing ISH group members (with low-risk results), there is a possibility that the members have only one internal audit during the initial certification (IC), as the sample size only consists of 33% of the group members. Is this acceptable?**

No, this is not acceptable, as the minimum 33% of the group members being audited internally is only applicable for the consecutive annual surveillances once 100% of the requirements have been achieved. During the IC, the ISH Group will be required to comply with the first requirement in the interpretation whereby at least 50% of the members shall go through an internal audit, as mentioned below:

"This effectively provides a two-year allowance to comply with the requirements of ICS B1.1 MS B. At least 50% of the ISH group members (new and existing) shall be audited during the first year."

- 9. Will a grace period be implemented for the usage of the standardised risk assessment for the consecutive annual surveillances of the certificate?**

A grace period of six (6) months will be implemented.

- 10. In the internal audit interpretation of the ISH Standard document, it is mentioned "for the consecutive annual surveillances of the certificate, the group manager shall carry out a risk assessment". What does consecutive annual surveillance mean?**

The consecutive annual surveillance (i.e. ASA 2 or ASA 3) refers to audits that are being carried out once new or existing ISH groups have fulfilled the 100% internal audit requirements within the two-year allowance to comply with the requirements of ICS B1.1 MS B.



11. In the internal audit interpretation of the ISH Standard document, it is mentioned “for the consecutive annual surveillances of the certificate, the group manager shall carry out a risk assessment”. When does the risk assessment need to be carried out?

The risk assessment needs to be carried out once 100% of the ISH group members have gone through the internal audit process.

12. How does the internal audit interpretation apply to a new ISH group that has been certified according to the RSPO ISH Standard 2019?

Compliance against the requirements of ICS B1.1 MS B shall be shown by completing an internal audit for all group members by the first annual surveillance audit (i.e. ASA 1). This requirement ensures that a 2-year period is provided for 100% of the group members to be audited. During the initial certification (Milestone B requirements), a minimum of 50% of the ISH group members must be internally audited.

13. How does the internal audit interpretation apply to an existing ISH Group that has been certified according to the RSPO ISH Standard 2019?

Compliance against the requirements of ICS B1.1 MS B shall be shown by completing an internal audit for all group members by the **second annual surveillance audit** . This requirement ensures that a 2-year allowance is provided for 100% of the group members to be audited. During the initial certification (Milestone B requirements), a minimum of 50% of the ISH group members must be internally audited.

14. What is defined as the second annual surveillance audit (ASA) ?

The second annual surveillance audit is defined as the third assessment conducted on the group manager (excluding special audit, scope extension) within the 5-year certification cycle.



15. At least 50% of the ISH group members (new and existing) shall be audited during the first year. What does this mean?

An internal audit for at least 50% of the ISH group members (either existing or new groups) must be carried out during the first year to show compliance towards Milestone B requirements within the RSPO ISH Standard 2019.

16. If an existing ISH group carried out an ASA in August 2020 in compliance with the RSPO ISH Standard 2019, does the internal audit interpretation apply to the group?

The interpretation comes into effect after the posting of the [announcement](#) on the RSPO website on 2 November 2021. Any audits carried out before the announcement must follow the requirements laid out in the RSPO ISH Standard.

17. If an existing ISH group carried out an ASA in December 2020 in compliance with the RSPO ISH Standard 2019, does the internal audit interpretation apply to the group?

The interpretation comes into effect after the posting of the [announcement](#) on the RSPO website on 2 November 2021. Any audits carried out after the announcement shall follow the requirements laid out in the internal audit interpretation document. Therefore, the existing ISH group will be required to ensure that at least 50% of its members have gone through an internal audit before the external audit for ASA 1 is carried out.

18. If an existing ISH group carried out an ASA in August 2020 in compliance with the RSPO Management System Requirements and Guidance for Group Certification of FFB Production to the RSPO ISH Standard, does the internal audit interpretation apply to the group?

The interpretation is applicable when the ISH group proceeds to the next ASA, as the group will be required to transition to the RSPO ISH Standard 2019.