

The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

Ensuring that biofuels deliver on their promise of sustainability



The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

We are an international multi-stakeholder initiative developing principles and criteria for sustainable biofuels production that will be:

- **Simple, accessible** and implemented worldwide
- **Generic** to all crops
- **Adaptable** to new information
- **Efficient and cheap** to measure
- **In line with WTO rules**
(use ISEAL code)



How is the RSB organized?

- Founding **Steering Board** composed of international stakeholders from WWF, UNEP, Swiss and Dutch governments, Shell, BP, Toyota, TERI India, Mali Folkecenter, Petrobras, UNICA, and others.
- **New governance structure** and open membership starting in 2009, with ‘chambers’ divided along the following lines: trade unions, small and large farmers, producers, financial institutions, petroleum and transportation industry, food security NGOs, indigenous people’s groups, conservation NGOs, etc. Two members (one North, one South) from each chamber elected to a new Executive Standards Board.
- One **Secretariat** based at EPFL. Part-time staff in South Africa, full-time Americas Coordinator in the US.

Stakeholder-driven

- Innovative **transparent standard-setting** using **BioenergyWiki.net**, to share background information and comments with other participants.
- 270 participants from international organisations, NGOs, private sector and academic institutions from 38 countries helped draft ‘Version Zero’.
- **15+ Regional stakeholder meetings** held already in Brazil, Mali, USA, Brussels, Bogotá, Kuala Lumpur, Mozambique, Buenos Aires, and Santo Domingo to gather feedback on Version Zero.



Version Zero - RSB Standard

	Direct	Indirect
National Law (especially land, labor, water rights)	✓	
Community Consultation (especially to determine land rights, social & environmental impact, idle land, resolve grievances)	✓	
Social – biofuels should benefit rural communities and workers	✓	
should not contribute to food insecurity	✓	✓
GHG - significantly better over lifecycle than fossil fuel	✓	✓
Environmental – conserve and protect soil, water, air	✓	
conserve and protect high conservation values	✓	✓
Technology – (esp. biotech) should be used responsibly and transparently, contribute to income or sustainability	✓	
Economic Efficiency - economically viable, continuous improvement	✓	

Meta-standard concept



- Many certifications already exist or are under development for biofuel crops (palm, sugar, soy).
 - Most standards were created for the food industry, so they focus on on-farm sustainable agriculture, and not climate change or ‘macro’ effects (e.g. land use change and food security).
- To minimize verification burden, aim is to recognize other certifications as covering most elements of the RSB meta-standard, then add on information about GHG emissions and macro effects.

UK Meta-standard: Illustration

Environmental/ social principle	SAN/ RA	RSPO	LEAF	EUREP -GAP	SAI	FSC
Conservation of Carbon	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow
Conservation of Biodiversity	Qualifying standard				Red	Blue
Soil conservation					Red	
Sustainable water use					Red	
Workers rights					Green	
Land rights					Red	

How can the RSB fill in the holes?

- None of the existing sustainability certification schemes address indirect impacts
- BUT the RSB cannot ignore them . . . enough evidence exists to say that there might be negative indirect effects for some crops and production systems
- BUT the RSB requires consensus for decision-making . . . and there is none
- We are trying to globalise the level of dialogue and to drive consensus wherever possible. In November, 2008 we hosted a scientific workshop in São Paulo with 63 experts from 17 countries to see if any consensus already exists . . .

Some consensus?

Disclaimer: These are some broad conclusions from the Brazil meeting and the hundreds of comments we've received at the Secretariat – not yet discussed or endorsed by the RSB!

- The producer should not be punished – she does not control the end use of her product
- The producer could be rewarded for activities with low risks of indirect impacts, for instance:
 - Yield improvements (either on her own farm or investing in someone else's, e.g. cattle intensification). Would need to prove 'additionality' and balance environmental impacts of intensification.
 - Using land that does not conflict with conservation needs nor short-term production of other crops ('degraded', 'idle, etc.)
 - Using residues and waste (carefully defined)

Preliminary thoughts – how a certification system might address indirect impacts

Same disclaimer!

- All of these low-risk activities could be measured through a third-party audit.
- Could we perhaps also make some generic statements about crops, yields, and/or production systems that are high-risk?
- Members of the RSB could be required over time to get the high-risk fuels out of their supply chains and buy more low-risk fuels, making a market for better practices.

But don't forget

- It will take us a long time to reach consensus on generic statements of risk, or default values of iLUC – RSB will continue to globalize this dialogue.
- If everyone accounted for their direct effects, we wouldn't have this problem . . .

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels - Draft Scorecard Concept

Overall Energy and Greenhouse Gas Efficiency	Conservation of Natural Resources		Social Concerns		Indirect LUC	
Total score for product life-cycle (well-to-wheel)	biodiversity	water use	Food security	Working conditions		
Considerable reduction of ecol./ social footprint	Low GHG emissions, maximize carbon sequestration (e.g. low-till)	Biodiversity corridors	No sig. impact on local water quality or quantity	Use of degraded or idle land, waste, yield improvements	Best-practice wages and working conditions	Invest in cattle intensification in Brazil
Small or no reduction on ecol./ social footprint	10-90% GHG emissions as compared to fossil fuel	Buffer zones	Moderate impact on local water quality, quality	Using land that competes w/food production in the short term		
No or negative impact on ecol./ social footprint	High N ₂ O emissions from fertilizers, conversion of high carbon-stock land	Deforestation., habitat encroachment.	Water pollution, significant reduction in water availability		Hazardous or illegal working conditions	

Timeline

- ‘Version Zero’ published August, 2008
- Global stakeholder feedback gathered through March 31, 2009.
- Transition to new governance structures and approve Version One by June 2009.
- Encourage/foster crop-specific better practice definitions (e.g. jatropha)
- Develop generic indicators, benchmark against existing standards
- Collaborate with other partners to measure & mitigate indirect effects
- Coordinate pilot testing of draft standards in real supply chains in 2009



Contact



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