

From evidence to action: what sustainability initiatives can learn from the experience of standards

18 June 2019, The Hague

Sustainability standards have far-reaching direct impacts, from guiding businesses in implementing sustainable practices, to supporting governments and businesses in meeting their sustainability commitments. Standards also have indirect, systemic impacts, like shaping government and private sector policies, raising consumer awareness and much more.

In recent years, a wealth of evidence has emerged about how sustainability standards are driving positive economic, social and environmental impacts: product quality improvements, better incomes, improved labour conditions, biodiversity conservation and more. Business case studies also show reduced operational costs, and improved reputations and market access.

Yet, not all studies are positive, and it is clear that impacts vary across contexts. This research provides learning opportunities for standard systems, but also has broader relevance for other supply chain sustainability initiatives. What can research and evidence tell us (or not) about the factors that limit the impacts of standards? What do these findings mean for standards, businesses and governments?

We welcome leaders from the worlds of sustainability standards, business, government and civil society to join us for a candid conversation about what we know and don't know about the impacts of sustainability standards. Through presentations about the current state of evidence and recent innovations to deepen impacts, we will explore and debate how to improve the effectiveness of market-driven solutions to problems like deforestation, rural poverty, and water stress.

The day will end with a networking reception to celebrate the launch of Evidensia – an online platform to facilitate access to evidence about the impacts of sustainability standards and other supply chain sustainability systems.

The Global Sustainability Standards Symposium is hosted in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

08:30	Registration and coffee
09:00	Welcome and introducing who is in the room
	This day brings together leaders from the worlds of sustainability standards, business, government and civil society to highlight what we know about how standards are using evidence to make a difference, and where we need to go from here. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance and Birgitta Tazelaar, Deputy Director General International Cooperation to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs will open the symposium and highlight the importance of convening all the different actors in the audience to learn from the experience of sustainability standards.
09:20	Keynote speech: Nothing will be perfect. Doing nothing is not an option.
	The breadth of sustainability issues to address and integrate into sustainability systems can be daunting. How do we decide where to start and how to prioritise resources? How do we commit to imperfect action over doing nothing? In all this, evidence is key to informing how we learn and improve. As Samuel Beckett famously wrote, "Try again. Fail again. Fail Better." Arjen Boekhold of Game Changer Unltd. and formerly of Tony's Chocolonely will share his experience and ideas.

9:40	The evidence state of play
	<p>Kristin Komives, Impacts Director, ISEAL Alliance and Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager Impacts and Evidence, ISEAL Alliance will dig into what stakeholders mean and what researchers mean when we talk about evidence about sustainability impacts. They will provide an overview of the types and coverage of evidence that is available, what topics are addressed in major synthesis research, which geographies they cover and where this information can be found. They will identify where there are gaps in evidence and potential for new research.</p>
10:10	Improving performance: what makes supply chain initiatives most effective?
	<p>Hear from researchers on what insights are emerging about the conditions under which standards can perform better at increasing the uptake of good practices, and about the factors that affect the performance of supply chain initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Gillian Petrokofsky, Researcher, Department of Zoology, Oxford University • Dr. Axel Marx, Deputy Director, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, University of Leuven • Fabiana di Lorenzo, Responsible Sourcing Senior Manager, Levin sources • Prof. Dr. Ruerd Ruben, Research Coordinator, Wageningen University & Research • Stephanie Barrientos, Professor of Global Development, University of Manchester <p><i>Moderated by Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager, Impacts and Evidence, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>
11:30	Coffee and networking
12:00	Standards, certification and beyond: how standards work to drive sustainability
	<p>Adoption of good agricultural and business practices, cross-sector collaboration, and informing government policy are just some of the ways that standard setting organisations can deliver impacts. Through a series of short presentations of specific case studies, we will paint a picture of the different pathways through which standards can advance contributions to sustainable development goals.</p> <p>Presentations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan Willem Molenaar, Senior Consultant, Aidenvironment • Rafael Seixas, Membership Manager, Bonsucro • Andreas Kratz, Director Products, Programs & Policy, Fairtrade International • Hannah Koep-Andrieu, Policy Adviser, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) • Maria Puustinen, Senior Specialist, Sustainability and Quality Development, UPM Biofuels <p><i>Moderated by Norma Tregurtha, Director, Policy and Partnerships, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>
13:00	<p>Lunch and topic tables – discover recent research and collaborations trying to address systemic challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liliana Gamba, Senior Project Coordinator Sustainability Standards at WWF Germany and Tina Beuchelt, Senior Researcher, Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn: <i>Addressing food security in sustainability standards</i> • Lorenza Jachia, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE: <i>Standards for the SDGs</i> • Julia Lernoud, Data and Information Manager, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and Gregory Sampson, Lead Solution Architect, International Trade Centre: <i>State of Sustainable Markets 2019: From report to interactive dashboards</i>
14:00	BREAKOUT SESSIONS: Different ways of working: how are standards and supply chain initiatives collaborating at scale to deliver impacts on the issues that matter?
	<p>Landscape approaches—distraction, or sustainability at scale?</p> <p>From deforestation to water stewardship, landscape-level sustainability interventions promise to address critical sustainability issues at scales that make sense. But how do we know if impacts are being achieved? What data can we collect at a landscape scale and what does it tell us about changes on the ground? This session will explore how landscape approaches can work together with traditional certification to provide a better picture of performance. We will hear from standards and landscape initiatives about what they are doing to build broad enabling environments that aim to speed up sustainable development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Pendlington, Global Sustainable Sourcing Director, Mars Wrigley • Sophie Higman, Global Lead Production Landscape Programme, Proforest • Sophie Persey, Senior Manager, Landscape Standard, Rainforest Alliance <p><i>Moderated by Patrick Mallet, Director Innovations, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>

	<p>Supporting and enabling living wage and living income commitments:</p> <p>Many companies have made bold commitments to deforestation free supply chains. Sustainability standards are the most-widely used mechanism for supporting implementation of these commitments. Where do things stand on living wage and living income commitments? In this interactive session, we will hear about companies that have or are working towards commitments on these topics and about the challenges they face in making and sustaining these commitments. We will learn what standards systems are doing to support ambitious corporate goals to increase wages and improve farmer incomes, and we will explore what more can be done by standards and other actors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kristina Areskog Bjurling, Sustainability Manager, Axfood • Anne van Lakerveld, International Verification Coordinator, Fair Wear Foundation • Carla Romeu Dalmau, Senior Manager on Living Wage and Living Income, IDH the Sustainable Trade Initiative • Noura Hanna, Global Lead on Livelihood and Worker’s Rights, Rainforest Alliance • Stina Nilsson, Senior Manager Engagement, Sustainability <p><i>Moderated by Kristin Komives, Impacts Director, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>
	<p>Driving uptake of sustainability standards: barriers and how to overcome them:</p> <p>This session will focus on the factors that are driving the uptake of sustainability initiatives, what is holding them back and how those barriers can be overcome. Which entities are being reached and how can this reach grow? What are businesses and government doing to increase uptake and reach of sustainability standards?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Jungmann, Sustainability Manager, Albert Heijn • Eva Oskam, Policy coordinator sustainable production and trade, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs • Sylvia Wisniewski, Managing Director, Finance in Motion • Julia Lernoud, Data and Information Manager, Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) • Dr Emma Keller, Head of Food Commodities, WWF-UK <p><i>Moderated by Norma Tregurtha, Director, Policy and Partnerships, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>
15:15	Coffee and networking
15:45	Addressing challenges through data-driven innovation
	<p>As the foundation of good evidence, good data and information are crucial to informing the way standards systems, companies and governments develop new practices, strategies and policies. We will explore how good data is being used to make multi-stakeholder initiatives more effective at improving their systems to drive credible progress and continual improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Binion, Head of Impact, Research and Learning, Fair Trade USA • Kelli Jerome, Executive Director, GEO Foundation • Nicolas Guichoux, Chief Program Officer, Marine Stewardship Council • Sabrina Müller, Lead Manager Sustainability (Product & Market), Tchibo • Liesl Truscott, European & Materials Strategy Director, Textile Exchange <p><i>Moderated by Joshua Wickerham, Manager, Policy and Outreach, ISEAL Alliance</i></p>
16:50	Keynote speech: The long game
	<p>Throughout the day, we will have heard about the knowledge that now exists on the impacts of standards and the gaps that remain. We will have gained insight into the strengths and limitations of standard systems for driving particular types of impacts and about the enabling conditions for standards’ effectiveness. In this speech, Darrel Webber, CEO, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, will provide a perspective on where we are and where we need to go.</p>
17:05	Closing remarks from Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance
17:10	Commitment to evidence, commitment to action: Evidensia launch
	<p>In this session we will highlight the importance of sustainability initiatives measuring and monitoring impacts. We will close the conference with the official launch of Evidensia, the exciting new website where you can find information on the impacts of standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager Impacts and Evidence, ISEAL Alliance • Laura Jungmann, Sustainability Manager, Albert Heijn • Dr. Gillian Petrokofsky, Co-ordinator and James Martin Fellow, Biodiversity Institute, Oxford University • Sylvia Wisniewski, Managing Director, Finance in Motion • Simon Cooper, Global Communications Lead, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
17:30 –18:30	Networking reception and opportunity to explore Evidensia