



RSB Assurance Public System Report

November 2016

Table of Contents

1. Assurance System Structure	2
2. Stakeholder Involvement	2
3. Personnel Competence.....	3
4. Assessment	3
5. Oversight / Accreditation	4
6. On-going Scrutiny	5
Annex	
1. Review and Revision process.....	5
2. Annex: Standards assessed through the RSB Assurance System	6

1. Assurance System Structure

Biomass-based materials and biofuels are increasingly used to reduce society's dependence on fossil resources and mitigate climate change. However, biomass production and processing pose various environmental and social issues, which the RSB Standard addresses. The RSB Assurance System has been put in place to ensure a robust and comprehensive implementation of the RSB Standard.

The RSB Assurance System¹ ensures that regular audits are carried out by independent and competent Certification Bodies (CB) in line with the international standards ISO 19011 and ISO 17065. ISO 19011 provides guidance on the management of an audit program, on the planning and conducting of an audit as well as on the competence and evaluation of auditors and audit teams. In addition, Certification Bodies working with the RSB comply with the international standard ISO 17065 to ensure that they operate in a competent, consistent and impartial manner. CBs also implement risk management systems in order to minimize risks which could compromise a comprehensive and consistent implementation of the RSB standard. The RSB Assurance System is fully in line with the ISEAL Assurance Code which was developed by ISEAL as a Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards and which is considered industry best practice.

The list of CBs approved to work with RSB is publicly available and can be found at <http://rsb.org/certification/certification-bodies/>.

2. Stakeholder Involvement

Meaningful and comprehensive engagement of interested or affected stakeholders is an integral component of the evaluation process. Stakeholder consultation takes place prior to, concurrent with, and following field evaluations. An important component of the RSB Standard, Principle 2 "Planning, Monitoring and Continuous Improvement", requires operators to conduct a gender sensitive stakeholder consultation. Free, Prior & Informed Consent (FPIC) provides the process conditions for any stakeholder engagement while consensus is the decision-making tool to be applied in all cases. The RSB Standard requires operators to invite all relevant stakeholders including all locally-affected stakeholders, local leaders, representatives of community and indigenous peoples' groups, to participate in a meaningful consultative process. Special attention should be given to ensure that women, youth, elders, indigenous and vulnerable people can participate meaningfully in meetings and negotiations. In addition to the consultation by the operator, the Certification Bodies carry out a stakeholder consultation before going on-site. CBs are required to make sure that stakeholders have the opportunity to present their comments to the auditors in the local language and under the terms of confidentiality. Information and comments given by consulted stakeholders are investigated, evaluated and verified objectively and meaningfully.

¹ As described in [RSB-PRO-70-001 Requirements for Certification Bodies and Auditors](#)

3. Personnel Competence

Certification Bodies working with the RSB implement their audit program in compliance with the international standard ISO 19011, which provides a robust framework for ensuring adequate auditor competence. In addition, the RSB Procedure *Requirements for CBs and Auditors* sets detailed requirements for the competence of auditors, including their academic background, work experience and training. RSB CBs differentiate between the scopes agriculture/forestry, industrial processes and trade when evaluating auditors. Furthermore, CBs are responsible for ensuring continuous training as well as organizing regular auditors' exchanges of experience.

The composition of the audit team depends on the results of the screening (see chapter 4). Where the screening reveals that a special impact assessment needs to be conducted, the audit team includes either an environmental or a social expert, competent in the area that was identified by the screening (e.g. if the screening triggers a soil impact assessment, a soil expert has to be included in the audit team). Whenever the audit includes an evaluation of a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) calculation, a member of the audit team fulfills special requirements for GHG experts.

The CBs' compliance with the RSB requirements regarding personnel competence is overseen by the Accreditation Body ASI as part of the general accreditation assessment (see chapter 5).

4. Assessment

The assessment process follows the steps: a) preparation b) audit c) audit report d) review e) certification decision and f) issuing the certificate.

As a part of the audit preparation the operator conducts a self-risk assessment, a screening exercise and a self-evaluation. Audit frequency as well as audit intensity varies according to the risk class defined by the risk assessment (validated by the Certification Body). The audit schedule allows for three different risk categories: low, medium and high. The certificate validity for low risk operations is 5 years, for medium risk operations 3 years and for low risk operations 2 years.

The RSB has developed the screening exercise to help operators and auditors to identify a) the social and environmental aspects relevant to their operation which will need to be more closely monitored and b) when a more detail study or assessment of a particular aspect is required. If the operators potential impact is significant in a particular area, the screening exercise indicates the need for independent social or environmental experts to conduct a detailed assessment and implement mitigation and monitoring activities. The screening exercise therefore also supports auditors in setting the focus of the audit.

The RSB certification scheme differentiates two types of audits: Main audits and surveillance audits. Main audits are conducted whenever a certificate will be issued, whereas surveillance audits are required on an annual basis within the certificate validity. Main audits consist of a comprehensive evaluation against all RSB Standards applicable for the scope of certification. Surveillance audits include an assessment against a limited number of RSB Standards (e.g. traceability standard and GHG calculation). Surveillance audits may be conducted either onsite or desk-based following a risk-based decision taken by the CB.

Areas where an operator does not meet the requirements of the RSB standard are designated as 'non-compliances' which are graded in two categories: 'minor' non-compliance and 'major' non-compliance. Situations that are defined as major non-compliance are described in RSB-PRO-70-001 *Requirements for Certification Bodies and Auditors*. In the case of any outstanding major non-compliance, a certificate cannot be issued. If non-compliances occur, operators are asked to assess the root causes and define corrective action measures including a timeline for implementation. The

certification body is responsible for evaluating that the corrective actions are implemented in a timely manner (i.e. 90 days for major non-compliances and 12 months for minor non-compliances). In the case that non-conformities are not addressed according to the corrective action plan, upon finding evidence of misuse, misrepresentations or fraudulent claims or occurrence of a severe major non-conformity, the RSB Assurance System requires CBs to suspend the certificate. All non-compliances, their classification as major or minor, the actions undertaken to address non-compliances, as well as the evaluation of these activities are included in a Public Audit Summary which is available online for all certified operators.²

5. Oversight / Accreditation

The RSB has implemented a third-party oversight mechanism by which an independent Accreditation Body is responsible to recognize and monitor Certification Bodies. The recognition of the Accreditation Body is based on the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011:2004 and on the RSB Procedure RSB-PRO-75-001 *General requirements for Accreditation Bodies*. Stakeholder consultations are carried out as part of the accreditation evaluation. This means, a representative range of stakeholders is consulted and stakeholder comments are investigated, evaluated and verified objectively and meaningfully.

RSB has recognized Accreditation Services International (ASI)³ as the sole provider of accreditation services to the RSB certification system. ASI is also the provider of accreditation services to other certification programs such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). As an international organization with a focus on environmental and social sustainability, ASI's expertise ensures that audits towards the RSB system are conducted with competence and consistency, regardless of where around the world they take place.

RSB's oversight body, ASI, is a member of ISEAL who has been peer-reviewed for being compliant with ISO 17011.

The accreditation of Certification Bodies is based on the *RSB Procedure Requirements for CBs and Auditors*. This procedure describes the requirements for Certification Bodies to become accredited to perform audits, issue RSB certificates, and ensure the continuous monitoring of RSB Participating Operators. The requirements include inter alia

- Ensuring compliance with international standards ISO/IEC 17065:2012, ISO 19011:2011 and ISO/IEC 14064-3
- Developing, documenting and implementing a risk management system
- Implementing a grievance mechanism
- Specifications for documentation, records and public information
- Ensuring auditor qualification and implementing an appropriate knowledge management system
- Ensuring adequate evaluation of operators, procedures to issue certificates as well as dealing with non-compliances.

The accreditation process follows the RSB Procedure 75-001 *General requirements for accreditation bodies*⁴. The accreditation body evaluates the certification body's competence, including its overall systems and procedures, its staffing levels, competence and experience, and its reporting ability to provide certification services under the RSB certification system.

^{2,4} <http://rsb.org/certification/participating-operators/>

³ <http://www.accreditation-services.com/>

⁴ <http://rsb.org/pdfs/standards/Procedures/RSB-PRO-75-001-vers.3.0-General%20requirements%20for%20accreditation%20bodies.pdf>

Certification Bodies are monitored continuously by the ASI surveillance activities that are performed in accordance with the *ASI Procedure for Surveillance and Sampling*.⁵ At least once per year, ASI conducts a performance review for each certification body and adjusts the annual assessment and sampling plan based on its results. ASI's default annual assessment rate of each accredited Certification Body specifies

- One office assessment of the accredited head office, and
- Office assessments at 1/5 of all affiliate offices, and
- One representative witness assessment of a certification activity, and
- A representative number of witness assessments. The sample is defined based on the risk class of the Certification Body and varies between 3% for low risk and 9% for high risk

Samples are selected based on level of risk and include risk factors such as countries that ASI had identified as high risk areas, or complaints that have been raised.

6. On-going Scrutiny

All RSB certified operators acquiring, handling or forwarding RSB certified material are required to implement an effective and transparent chain of custody tracking system in line with the RSB Standard for Traceability⁶ which ensures that RSB certified material is tracked from the farm (primary biomass) or from the point of origin (waste/residues) to the final user.

Fraudulent claims or irregularities are detected through continuous surveillance by the Certification Bodies, which audit a representative sample of all sites listed in the scope of certification as well as a representative sample of RSB compliance claims made by the operator. In addition, RSB has a grievance procedure for complaints against the standards system, which is publicly available⁷. Cases of misuse, misrepresentation or fraudulent claims are non-conformities that lead to the suspension of the certificate. In addition, the accreditation body is required to include a representative sample of RSB compliance claims in the accreditation evaluation (see section (i) on Accreditation for Certification Bodies). The representative sample of RSB compliance claims is based on the risk class of the certification body and varies between 10% and 25% of all compliance claims made by the operators certified by the certification body.

Review and Revision process

This public system report will be reviewed annually. For more information, please contact the RSB Secretariat:

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⁵ <http://www.accreditation-services.com/resources/document-library/download-info/asi-pro-20-105-asi-surveillance-sampling-procedure>

⁶ <http://rsb.org/pdfs/standards/RSB%20EU%20RED%202016/RSB-STD-11-001-20-001%20-%20Over.%203.5%20Consolidated%20RSB%20EU%20RED%20Std%20for%20Traceability.pdf>

⁷ <http://rsb.org/sustainability/standard-documents/>

Annex: Standards assessed through the RSB Assurance System

Document Name	Reference Code Global Version	Reference Code EU version
RSB Principles & Criteria	RSB-STD-01-001	RSB-STD-11-001-01-001
RSB Standard for certification of biofuels based on end-of-life-products, residues and by-products	RSB-STD-01-010	RSB-STD-11-001-01-010
RSB GHG Calculation Methodology	RSB-STD-01-003-01	n.a.
RSB Standard for Certification of Bio-Products	RSB-STD-02-001	n.a.
RSB Chain of Custody Standard	RSB-STD-20-001	RSB-STD-11-001-20-001
RSB Standard for Operators taking part in RSB Certification Systems (Participating Operators)	RSB-STD-30-001	RSB-STD-11-001-30-001
RSB Standard for risk management	RSB-STD-60-001	RSB-STD-11-001-60-001
RSB Procedure on communication and claims	RSB-PRO-50-001	RSB-PRO-11-001-50-001
RSB Standard for EU market access	n.a.	RSB-STD-11-001
RSB Low iLUC Risk Biomass Criteria and Indicators	RSB-STD-04-001	n.a.
RSB Principles and Criteria for Smallholder Groups	RSB-STD-03-001	n.a.
RSB Standard for Certification of Smallholder Groups	RSB-STD-03-002	n.a.