IMPROVING AUDITS THROUGH A BETTER USE OF GIS TOOLS

**Project duration:** October 2017 to July 2018

Geographic Information System (GIS) tools are not yet used extensively in certification auditing but their potential to improve the audit process is no secret. Led by Accreditation Services International (ASI) and with the support of the ISEAL Innovations Fund, a group of ISEAL members have decided to take a closer look at this potential. ASI Project Manager, Marnie Bammert, explains more about this project and how it will contribute to more efficient and effective auditing.

**Why is this project necessary?**

ISEAL members strive to be drivers of change to make our world more sustainable, and stakeholders rightfully expect them to demonstrate that they are living up to their mission. It should, therefore, come as no surprise to see these certification schemes will want to dig deeper into new technologies that can help improve their systems. When it comes to verifying compliance, GIS tools offer huge potential to make audits more efficient and effective, while supporting certification schemes in strengthening their evidence base.

**What does the project aim to achieve?**

GIS tools are not yet extensively used in auditing. This project seeks to accelerate the process. Together with the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), we will assess and test existing GIS tools to understand which of them are most suitable for auditing, and to what extent.

**How will you go about doing that?**

We will cooperate with auditors and GIS experts from various backgrounds through a series of virtual and in-person workshops, and three field tests in Asia, Europe and South America. The results of the field tests will feed
into a manual and e-learning assets to help build capacity on GIS tools and their application with GIS newcomers and ISEAL members. In addition, we will establish an online platform for a community of auditors to share experience in applying GIS tools, and to foster learning.

ISEAL members who are keen to get engaged in the development of the manual and the e-learning modules should feel welcome to join us.

What lessons have you learned so far?

Creating a strong sense of ownership with the various project partners is important and should happen early on, ideally at the time the project proposal is written. It is also crucial to clearly define and agree on the different roles of the project partners to ensure all parties can contribute according to their capacities. Before grant applicants submit their proposals, they should check that their timeframes are realistic and that the needed human resources will be available at the time of the anticipated project start.

Talking about your project is good too. We presented ours at the 2017 ISEAL Members’ Week. The session resulted in some valuable feedback that will support implementation of the project.

Why did you decide to apply to the ISEAL Innovations Fund?

For us, the focus of the fund this year (‘Sustainability standards as better data managers’) came just at the right time, and so we submitted our proposal!

“Many of us have been using GIS tools in our private lives for quite some time now. Tools like Google Maps, for example, make things like finding the quickest way from A to B really easy. Why not use the simplicity of the added value of GIS in auditing?”

Marnie Bammert, Programme Manager, ASI

Find out more about the ISEAL Innovations Fund at www.isealalliance.org/fund.

The ISEAL Innovations Fund is supported by the following partners: