

ResponsibleSteel: Key Learnings from Recognition Process

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- We started aiming to do 5 recognition assessments.
- 2 assessments were put on hold: 1 due to capacity issues, the other due to differences of opinion on what makes a credible programme.
- Differences of opinion not only became obvious in relation to standard-setting but also in relation to assurance and governance mechanisms, as well as claims that may be used by participating entities. The importance and the value of well-defined and comprehensive assurance mechanisms, of stakeholder-balanced governance, and of the risks associated with false and misleading claims does not seem to be commonly understood.
- Interpretations of the set bars can vary widely and reflect the differing approaches that the programmes take.
- Defining a recognition assessment methodology that is specific enough to carve out the differences between programmes is a challenge.
- One should decide early on whether the purpose is recognition against a specified benchmark or whether the purpose is to establish whether programmes are equivalent. The 2 types of assessments require distinct underlying methodologies.
- Recognition assessments are very time-consuming and intense processes.
- Finding an individual to carry out the recognition assessments that is independent of all involved programmes and free of conflict of interest, but that has a thorough understanding of the issues associated with recognition prove impossible, so the assessments were carried out by ResponsibleSteel instead.
- The discussions with the programmes were highly valued by all involved and led to a number of important changes in 3 of the assessed programmes.

- Exchanging views and discussing the challenges associated with ESG verification programmes through a structured process provided valuable learnings and identified areas for programme evolution for all.
- Recognition is not a one-off exercise. MoUs will be drawn up to guide collaboration with the recognised programmes going forward.
- To ensure that recently made changes are implemented as promised and that improvements are made where needs have been identified, ResponsibleSteel will seek to be an active stakeholder in the programmes. Being a certification programme that comes with promises on responsible sourcing, recognising improvement programmes comes with risks that need to be monitored and managed.