

Terms of Reference

Independent Review of the Implementation of the RSPO ISH Standard 2019

1. Background

During the 16th Annual General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), Ordinary Members voted on [Resolution GA16-6f](#) for the adoption of the RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard for the production of sustainable palm oil by independent smallholders. The adopted standard aimed to increase the inclusion of smallholders into the RSPO system through a mechanism which takes into consideration the diversity in challenges and situations faced by smallholders globally, together with their varying needs and concerns while adhering to the key pillars of RSPO's Theory of Change (ToC): Prosperity, People and Planet.

Resolution GA16-6f was adopted inclusive of a requirement for the RSPO Secretariat to continuously monitor and oversee the implementation of the RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard and that a comprehensive review be done annually for the first two years after the adoption of the standard. The annual review was not carried out during the first year due to the limited number of ISH groups transitioning to the RSPO ISH Standard as a twelve (12) month grace period was provided for.

As such, to meet the requirement of Resolution GA16-6f, the RSPO intends to carry out an independent review of the RSPO ISH Standard. This Terms of Reference lays out the scope of work, activities and expected deliverables that is required as part of the Independent Review of the Implementation of the RSPO ISH Standard.

2. Objectives

The key objectives of the independent review of the implementation of RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard (RISS) are to:

- Assess the overall effectiveness of RISS in increasing the inclusion of smallholders into the RSPO system
- Assess the benefits and incentives received by ISH pursuing RISS compliance, in particular the efficacy of the phased approach (Eligibility, Milestone A & Milestone B)
- Assess the level of any constraints to independent smallholders in achieving certification, in particular in terms of costs and the practicality of achieving compliance with RISS
- Provide recommendation on elements of the standard which require amendments for consideration by the relevant task force (for revision of the RSPO ISH Standard 2019)

3. Scopes

The scope of the review should include:

- A. Assess the uptake of RISS across RSPO key producing regions, including assessing the motivation of such uptake.
- B. Profiling of smallholders pursuing RISS (resource and knowledge capacity), which shall at minimum consist of data listed below:
 - Total land holding size owned by ISHs by land use (types of crops planted)
 - Trend in hiring of labour by an ISH
 - Income source of an ISH
 - Access to support
- C. A comprehensive review of the challenges in complying to key RISS requirements, including requirements specifically relevant to the phased approach (Eligibility, Milestone A & Milestone B):
 - Social requirements
 - Labour requirements
 - Environmental requirements
 - The Internal Control System requirements for ISH groups
- D. An assessment of the feasibility of levels of cost incurred for ISH groups to be certified against the standard. The cost should take into account:
 - Certification (External and Internal Audits)
 - Formation/ Organising/ Maintaining (including addition of members) a group
 - Assessments required for compliance with criteria and indicators
 - Training of ISH Group members as per indicator requirements
- E. Recommendations on elements of the standard and all requirements which require amendment during the next revision process
- F. Include documentation on unintended results of RISS implementation found/observed during the study

4. Methodology / Approach

The Independent Review shall be carried out by means of a two (2) phase approach. Both phases are detailed as listed below:

A. Phase One (1): Desktop research & Literature review

- A desk based study shall be carried out by the consultant which will cover the requirements of **Scope A, C, D, E and F**. The desk-based study shall be carried out through primary and secondary sources and published work derived from academic and non-academic sources.
- The study shall profile smallholders into various aspects according to the requirements of **Scope B**.
- An online survey of all certified ISH groups, and/or their facilitators or group managers, shall be carried out, designed to seek views on key issues relating to the scope of this independent review.
- Wider consultation across relevant stakeholders, including representatives of smallholder interests shall be included as part of the consultation process.
- Analysis of findings and reporting shall cover items A - F listed in the Scope of the ToR.

Phase Two (2) is included as part of this TOR. However, the activity is separate and will be commissioned based on the results of Phase one (1) as well as the situation on the ground. The Consultant is required to provide the proposed approach and costing for Phase Two (2) as a separate section within the full proposal.

B. Phase Two (2): Field Visit and Verification

- Fieldwork shall be conducted to further verify the findings of the desk-based study, through structured interviews with representatives of certified ISH groups.
- The field visit shall include at minimum ten (10) **certified ISH groups** from groups consulted in **Phase One (1)**, consisting of
 - i. A representative sample across regions (as permitted by the situation on ground), and
 - ii. Include ISH groups that have transitioned from the previous standard and groups newly certified against the RISS 2019.
- The field visits shall also include (where possible) wider consultation across relevant stakeholders (i.e., NGO's, Growers and Facilitators supporting ISH)

5. Consultant Qualifications

The person(s) conducting the study is expected to have:

- Good level of understanding of certification scheme compliance and entry level requirements (including RSPO Standards)
- Experience working with smallholders (farmers) of RSPO key producing region (Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia)
- Understanding of social and environmental requirements within the context of smallholders.
- Familiarity with the smallholder context, particularly about the challenges faced by smallholders in organising a group and showing compliance to relevant standards requirements in any of the regions listed below:
 - Latin America
 - Africa
 - Southeast Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand)

6. Deliverables

The final deliverables expected are:

- A final report including the following:
 - Background data and profiling of ISH groups certified against the RISS 2019
 - Overall effectiveness of the ISH Standard 2019 in increasing smallholder inclusion in the RSPO system
 - Analysis of the level of benefits and incentives for independent smallholders in achieving certification against the ISH Standard 2019
 - The practicality of the ISH Standard 2019 for implementation by Independent Smallholders
 - The cost of certification against the ISH Standard 2019 and feasibility of the observed cost levels
 - Recommendations on potential amendments to the ISH Standard 2019 to inform the upcoming P&C review process

7. Timeline and Budget

Phase One (1) of the independent review of the RSPO ISH Standard is expected to be completed by **March 2022** and **Phase Two (2)** is expected to be completed by **June 2022**. The consultant is expected to adhere to the timelines listed below:

Phase One (1)

- 15 November 2021 - award of contract & work plan presentation
- 21 December 2021 - Preliminary report
- 31 January 2022 - Delivery of first draft of the Independent Review
- February 2022 - Presentation of draft findings to RSPO Smallholder Standing Committee (SHSC) and delivery of the final version of the Independent Review
- March 2022 - Completion of **Phase One (1)**.

Phase Two (2) is included as part of this TOR. However, the activity is separate and will be commissioned based on the results of Phase one (1) as well as the situation on the ground. The Consultant is required to provide the proposed approach and costing for Phase Two (2) as a separate section within the full proposal.

Phase Two (2)

- March 2022 - Start of **Phase Two (2)**
- April 2022 - Delivery of first draft of the field verification report
- May 2022 - Delivery of the final draft of field verification report
- June 2022 - Completion of **Phase Two (2)**.

The consultant is expected to provide an outline of the work plan together with a breakdown of costs in their proposal. Interested applicants may submit their expression of interest to tender@rspo.org by 6:00 pm MYT on 5 November 2021.

For any queries, kindly contact smallholder@rspo.org.