

RSPO Standard for Smallholder Certification, Support and Inclusion

**Document for Public Consultation
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Defining our Terms

Generic P&Cs: Refers to the existing [Principle and Criteria document \(RSPO Principles and Criteria for the Production of Sustainable Palm Oil 2013\) for palm oil](#) production of large growers and mills approved by the General Assembly in 2013 and currently under revision and open to public consultation.

RSPO Smallholder Standard: Refers to the entire process and all the various elements that together represent simplification for smallholders to be included into the RSPO system in greater numbers.

Smallholder farms: Refers to individuals or (extended) families producing oil palm on individual or multiple “plots” or “smallholdings”, under the thresholds currently defined by RSPO (50 ha or thresholds as defined according to national interpretation).

Unit of Certification: The unit that holds the RSPO certificate, currently the group of smallholders, all of its individual members and the group manager.

1. Introduction

In June 2017, the RSPO Board of Governance (BoG) approved the RSPO Smallholder Strategy for which commits RSPO to develop new approaches to support the greater inclusion of smallholders into the RSPO system. The strategy includes three objectives, including Objective 2 *'to increase the number of smallholders included in the RSPO system through the simplification of the certification approach and pro-active engagements with pilots such as jurisdictional approaches'*¹.

In September 2017, the RSPO Theory of Change was adopted, further emphasising RSPO's recognition that inclusiveness for smallholders via a participatory approach is fundamental for the organization to achieve its desired impact.

Accordingly, and in alignment with the RSPO P&C review which is currently in process for the "generic P&C" that applies to large growers and mills, the Smallholder Interim Group (SHIG) was formed to develop recommendations for a revised approach to smallholder inclusion via a simplification of the RSPO Standard.

The SHIG is developing this simplified smallholder standard taking into account alignment with:

1. The RSPO Smallholder Strategy;
2. The RSPO Theory of Change;
3. The generic P&C document, that defines the practices expected from mills and growers, including what is required with respect to their supply base;
4. The revisions emerging from the P&C Review, including revisions to structure, terminology, and reference to shared responsibility.
5. NDPE commitments adopted by the industry.

1.1 Overview: Key Elements of Proposed RSPO Smallholder Standard

This document presents the proposed RSPO Standard for Certification of Smallholders; further referred to as the RSPO Standard for Smallholders. This proposed text is a **work in progress** with additional revisions and decisions still being worked on by the SHIG.

The simplified approach includes easier entry, simpler processes for reaching and verifying compliance, and support (provided from RSPO and from mills and markets) while progressing. Development of the smallholder standard has been guided by the need to strike a balance between ensuring that core sustainability requirements are upheld and promoting greater inclusion of smallholders (see the RSPO Smallholder Strategy for a more elaborate presentation of the [agreed guiding principles](#)).

The revised RSPO Standard for Certification of Smallholders includes a separate set of principles and criteria (P&Cs) that applies exclusively to smallholders, taking into account the reality of the smallholders' context and their needs. The overall simplified approach of the smallholder standard comprises five (5) key elements, defined as follows:

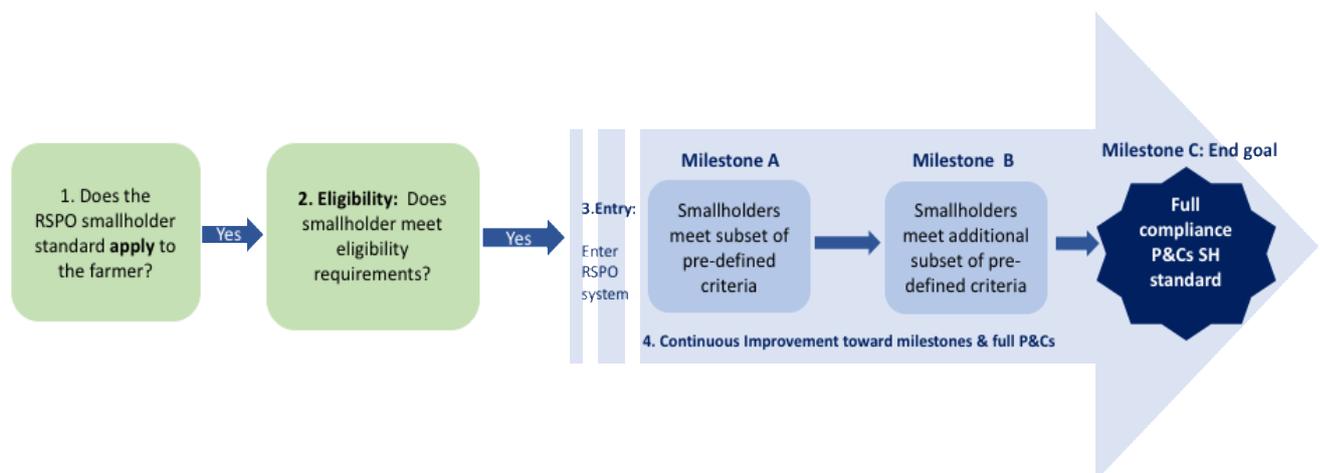
- 1) **Applicability:** Determines who can apply the RSPO Smallholder Standard as a means to achieve RSPO certification, to whom the smallholder standard applies (see Section 2)

¹ [RSPO Smallholder Strategy](#).

- 2) **Eligibility:** If the RSPO Smallholder Standard is applicable, the smallholders then need to meet eligibility criteria. These eligibility criteria are intended to rule out the most egregious social and environmental practices. Once smallholders demonstrate that they meet eligibility criteria, they 'enter' the RSPO system and can pursue certification against the RSPO Smallholder Standard (see Section 4);
- 3) **Unit of certification:** Explains what constitutes a group of smallholders in the context of the smallholder standard (see Section 3);
- 4) **Continuous improvement:** A phased approach, in which smallholders are guided through a process to demonstrate progress towards the **end goal** to meet **full compliance with 100% of the P&Cs of the smallholder standard** (Sections 5 and 6);
- 5) **Smallholder credits:** Providing quicker access to incentives for smallholders to pursue certification against the RSPO Smallholder Standard; These smallholders may generate smallholder credits (and therefore a cash incentive) before meeting full compliance with the full P&Cs (see Section 7).

The figure below arranges sequentially these elements, with a picture of how they are interrelated.

Figure 1 Overview of the full process of the RSPO Smallholder Standard



2. Applicability of the Smallholder Standard

This section specifies which smallholders may apply the simplified RSPO Smallholder Standard, as a means to pursue RSPO Certification.

1. The RSPO Smallholder Standard applies to **independent smallholder farmers** only. For the purposes of applicability, **all smallholders that are not considered to be scheme smallholders are considered independent smallholders.**

Scheme smallholders are defined as:

- Individuals /farmer/landowners or their delegates that do not have the enforceable decision-making power on the operation of the land and production practices; and/or

- Individual/farmers/landowners that do not have the freedom to choose how they utilise their lands, type of crops to plant, and how they manage them (whether and how they organise, manage and finance the land).
2. The total size of the oil palm production area of the individual independent smallholder should be:
 - a) Smaller or equal to the threshold size for the oil palm production area of smallholders as defined in National Interpretations (e.g., for Indonesia this implies threshold size is 25 ha or below and for Ecuador 75 ha or below.); or
 - b) If no threshold is defined in National Interpretation, then the oil palm production area must be smaller or equal to 50 ha.
 3. In addition to these points, national interpretations may provide further criteria to determine the applicability of this smallholder standard at the national level, as long as it maintains alignment with the RSPO Smallholder Strategy.
 4. Scheme smallholders are excluded from using the RSPO Smallholder Standard but may use other means to obtain RSPO Certification (in conjunction w/the mill or plantation company, etc.)
 5. The RSPO Smallholder Standard applies **to existing plots and also new plantings**.

Table 1: Examples of smallholder types and indication of whether or not the smallholder standard applies.

Possible smallholder scenarios (in all cases the production area is less than 50 ha)	Applicability of the RSPO Smallholder Standard	Comments
1. The smallholder has a contract with a mill, from which it receives technical assistance, loans for inputs, and favorable prices where smallholder commits to sell its FFB to the mill. The smallholder retains decision-making authority over what crop to grow and does the majority of the work.	Applicable; Smallholder can be certified under the RSPO Smallholder Standard	For example, cases in Honduras Note: in case the loan contract with the mill requests the smallholder to grow palm only AND prescribes production practices, so farmer is limited in choice to grow other crops for duration of the loan, the smallholder standard would not apply
2. The smallholder is part of a mill's certified FFB supply-base and can receive technical assistance, loans for farm inputs and favourable prices from the mill. The smallholder retains full decision-making authority over their land and what crops to grow and does the majority of the work.	Applicable; Smallholder can be certified under the RSPO Smallholder Standard	PNG
3. A mill provides technical support to smallholder through associations/ cooperatives and smallholder are bound to deliver FFB through the association / cooperative and the association/cooperative to sell to the mill. The smallholder retains decision-making authority over what crop to grow and does the majority of the work.	Applicable; Smallholder can be certified under the RSPO Smallholder Standard	
4. The smallholder does not have any contractual obligations with any mill and does not receive	Applicable; Smallholder can be certified under	

any support from a mill. Smallholder has the freedom to decide who to sell the FFB to.	the RSPO Smallholder Standard	
5. The smallholder owns/co-owns a mill, but there is no contractual obligation for the smallholder to sell to the mill, even though in practice smallholder sells to the mill. The mill has no management control on decisions of the smallholder or their operations.	Applicable; Smallholder can be certified under the RSPO Smallholder Standard	For example, in Ghana and Peru. Note: the mill and grower may choose to be certified together as mill-with-supply-base under the generic P&Cs
6. The mill has management control on the planted area of the individual smallholder and can enforce decisions on the production practices and crops to plant.	NOT applicable: FFB production should be certified under mills' generic P&C certification	For example, Indonesia plasma scheme, Felda scheme smallholders
7. The smallholder owns land and leased that land to a company that owns a mill and has developed palm on the leased land. The smallholder is not involved in any farming operations on the land and receives dividends based on the production from his/her land. In the lease contract with the smallholder, the smallholder delegates decision making of the operations to the mill company.	NOT applicable. FFB production should be certified under mill's P&C certification	For example, some cases in Ghana and Liberia Collective ownership is also possible, and follows the same logic

3. Unit of Certification

The RSPO Smallholder Standard seeks to avoid being prescriptive or exclusive but assumes a number of practical and common approaches. One of these relates to the need for collective certification of a group of smallholders.

- The unit of certification is a group of smallholders, to include a group manager and 100% of its members.
- The group manager can be a mill, an organization or an individual.
- The group can have any number of members, including one.
- The group must be a legally formed entity (defined per the national context).

4. Eligibility Criteria

To participate in the RSPO Smallholder Standard, smallholders must first demonstrate that they meet the following five eligibility criteria, as detailed below. These eligibility criteria are intended to maintain a focus on inclusivity for smallholders while at the same time ensuring that core sustainability requirements are upheld.

1. Individual smallholder group members can demonstrate they have the legal or customary rights to use the land.²

² The specifications of what is deemed legal and what type of proof RSPO requires is to be determined and will incorporate considerations for different local and national contexts.

2. Farms/smallholdings are located in areas that are outside of those classified as a national park or protected area, as defined by national law.
3. In cases where there will be new plantings, smallholders commit that they will consult with indigenous groups and local communities, where the consultation process is appropriate to local conditions, and ensures rights and interest of affected parties are respected. (Note, exact wording pending outcomes of ongoing discussions on No Deforestation and New Planting Procedures (NPP) for smallholders).
4. Smallholders commit to no use of fire in preparing for re-planting or for waste management.
5. Smallholders commit to no use of child labour. (The minimum age of workers as defined by national interpretation or law is respected, and children under the age of 18 do not carry out any work that is harmful to the health, safety or morals of children, e.g with dangerous substances, spraying, heavy lifting, harvest). Additionally, in cases where children from the household work on the smallholder farm, this is restricted to afterschool hours, the weekend or holidays and does not interfere with schooling or education.)

These five eligibility criteria are integrated within the Principles and Criteria of the RSPO Smallholder Standard and highlighted in green in Table 1 in Section 5.

5. Principles and Criteria of the Standard

This section describes the proposed principles and criteria (P&Cs) of the RSPO Smallholder Standard. Currently, the text only includes P&Cs; draft indicators are currently being developed. The proposed RSPO Smallholder Standard comprises six principles, described below:

1. **Principles 1-5** represent the practices that are linked to sustainability requirements for deforestation-free and exploitation-free oil palm production that smallholders must comply with.
2. **Principle 6** addresses improvements in practices fundamental to good farming and professionalization of smallholders in order to provide them with tangible livelihood benefits.
 - a. The practices described in Principle 6 are intended to produce demonstrable benefits for smallholders, to incentivize smallholders to enter and encourage them to remain in the RSPO system because they experience gains in productivity and returns on their invested labour and land assets;
 - b. Performance against Principle 6 is not monitored nor measured in the same manner as with Principles 1-5. Rather a tailored set of metrics, relative to the specific smallholder and group context may be used. These are not compliance indicators per se, but reporting on the agreed metrics will be mandatory.³

³ The idea is not to impose specific outcomes that are pass or fail but rather to use a different approach to measure progress. One possible example can be that farmers, based on the self-assessment, determine targets for the group, or their own smallholder farm, for which they receive support from the RSPO system if they can provide a clear action plan on how to meet the self-set targets. This would imply that measuring compliance for Principle 6 would not be based on outcomes (e.g. meeting higher yields) and thereby differ from principles 1-5.

3. The criteria highlighted in green in the table below are the eligibility criteria already presented above in Section 4 above. These criteria need to be met in order to qualify for initial entry into the RSPO Smallholder Standard certification process.
4. It should be noted that smallholders will also have access to support through the RSPO system to help them comply with some of the criteria. However, such support is not part of smallholder standard per se, and will be addressed separately by RSPO as part of the broader implementation of the RSPO Smallholder Strategy (Objective 1).

The following six principles of the proposed RSPO Smallholder Standard are described fully below:

1. Legality, Respect for Land Rights and Community Wellbeing
2. Environmental Responsibility, Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation
3. Sustainable Farming Practices
4. Human Rights and Rights for Workers
5. Transparency and Traceability
6. Long Term Livelihood Benefits

Table 2: Proposed Principles and Criteria for the Smallholder Standard

Principles	Criteria	Key elements to be incorporated at the indicator level (yet to be developed)
1. Legality, Respect for Land Rights and Community Wellbeing	1.1 Individual smallholders can demonstrate legal or customary rights to use the land . ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not legitimately contested or in conflict with regulations. Verbal evidence is acceptable in specific contexts
	1.2 Smallholders and their plots/smallholdings are located in areas that are outside of areas classified as national parks or protected area, as defined by national, regional or local law.	
	1.3 Smallholders respect land and resource-use and access rights of neighbouring communities, particularly those of vulnerable populations such as women and indigenous peoples.	
	1.4 There is absence of land conflicts, unless requirements for acceptable conflict resolution processes, are being implemented (including settlement of grievances).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of 'acceptable' Must be acceptable by all parties involved
	1.5 <u>For new plantings</u> <i>NB: Rules for new plantings by smallholders are to be further defined in line with outcomes of NPP for smallholder discussion and ongoing discussions around no deforestation.</i>	
2. Environmental Responsibility, Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation	<u>For existing plots:</u> 2.1 Where the certification unit is on an area identified as an HCV and cleared after 2005, the certification unit shall determine mitigation plans and practices (<i>tbd</i>) to minimise further negative impact on HCVs, and maintain and or enhance existing HCVs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smallholders are aware of location HCV areas Awareness of HCV best management practices

⁴ Note that this can differ from proof of land ownership and will be subject to National Interpretation documents.

	2.2 Where the certification unit exists on peat, subsidence of peat soils shall be minimised by best management practices, including water management, and ground cover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSPO best management practices for oil palm on peat are implemented • Need to address the fact that best management practices need to be applied by the group and cannot be done at the individual plot level only
	2.3 Smallholders do not use fire in preparing for re-planting or for waste management.	
	<p><u>For new plantings:</u></p> <p>2.4 There are no new plantings or expansion of smallholder farms in primary forest, HCV⁵ [secondary forest [level/type X]] areas since [cut-off date]; <i>NB: tbd and exact wording to be further defined in line with outcomes of NPP for smallholder discussion and ongoing discussions around no deforestation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCV areas are identified, managed and enhanced.
	2.5 There are no new plantings on peat of any depth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer commitment
	2.6 There is no use of fire to clear land or in land preparation for new plantings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer commitment
3 Sustainable Farming practices	3.1 Smallholders use agrochemicals in ways that do not endanger health or the environment, including responsible usage, storage and disposal of agrochemical and their containers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPM is gradually implemented • Reference to not using pesticides such as paraquat; Specific text to be aligned with 4.6.4 generic P&Cs.
	3.2 Riparian buffer zones are protected and managed to minimise risks of erosion and contamination from agrochemicals affecting downstream water quality	
	3.3 For palm planted on steep slopes, soil conservation practices must be used (e.g., cover cropping, terracing and installation of erosion barriers, (e.g., conservations bunds, silt pits etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of steep slopes
	4.1 There is no use of forced labour.	

⁵ RSPO will support smallholders with these efforts through the provision of tools such as the **HCV for smallholder App and dashboard** that the RSPO has developed.

4 Human Rights and Rights for Workers	4.2 Workers' pay and working conditions comply with minimum legal requirements, mandatory industry standards and collective agreements (<u>applicable to paid workers only</u>), as defined by the national law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages meet, at minimum, national legal standards or industry benchmark • Evidence that workers understand pay rates for overtime and are paid for it.
	4.3 There is no use of child labour, where child labour is defined as work that is harmful to the health, safety or morals of children, or that interferes with their schooling needs where relevant. (Minimum age for child labour as defined by national interpretation or law).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of the household are allowed to work on the smallholder farm, provided it is outside of school hours and does not interfere with education and it is non-hazardous work (e.g with dangerous substances, dangerous tools, spraying, heavy, harvest, etc.) and only when supervised
	4.4 Workers, without distinction, are given the right and opportunity to file a complaint to relevant third parties (e.g., RSPO, local government, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms TBD
	4.5 All individuals working on the certification unit/farm/smallholding (including paid workers and unpaid family members) have access to a safe and healthy workplace, including, where applicable, safe housing conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate health and safety training is offered. • Female workers are not forced to perform tasks beyond self-declared physical capabilities.
	4.6 All individuals working on the certification unit/farm/smallholding (including paid workers and unpaid family members) have access to health and safety training and equipment and contextually appropriate basic first aid supplies, to ensure safe and healthy working conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance to be provided on what constitutes a minimum level of H&S training and equipment and first aid
	4.7 All individuals working on the certification unit/farm/smallholding (including paid workers and unpaid family members) have access to safe drinking water.	
	5 Commitment to Transparency and Traceability	5.1 Individual smallholders have mapped their farms including size, type of land use and records of (approximate/average) yields.
5.2 Individual smallholders maintain records of sales of their FFB.		

6 Long term livelihood benefits	6.1 Smallholders have a continuous improvement plan based on a gap assessment to prioritize key areas of need / improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in yields • Application of fertilizer
	6.2 Farmers have increased capacity to implement good agricultural practices on their smallholder farms.	
	6.3 Smallholders regularly review the performance of their production unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and manage gaps • Set goals
	6.4 Smallholders have improved financial literacy/ understanding of financial management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can include savings and preparation for replanting.

6. Continuous Improvement, Assurance and Verification

To promote inclusiveness of smallholders, the Smallholder Standard introduces a phased approach for smallholders to demonstrate continuous improvement towards full compliance (see Figure 1 above).

This includes the following features:

Continuous Improvement

- The RSPO Smallholder Standard includes two intermediate milestones (referred to as Milestone A and B).
- Each milestone represents a sub-set of criteria from the P&Cs of the RSPO Smallholder Standard presented in Section 5. The criteria that need to be met for Milestone A and B, respectively, will be pre-defined, and are yet to be determined.
- Milestone C equals full compliance with the RSPO Smallholder Standard.
- These milestones have to be met within a set timeframe, which is still to be determined (for now, it is assumed there is a timeline of one year between each milestone).

Assurance and Verification

- The RSPO Smallholder Standard includes assessment and verification at every step of the process, including eligibility, milestone A, milestone B and full compliance.
- The type of assessment and level of verification varies relative to the level of assurance required.
- The types of assessment and different levels of verification include i) self-assessment⁶, ii) second party⁷ and iii) third-party assessment⁸.

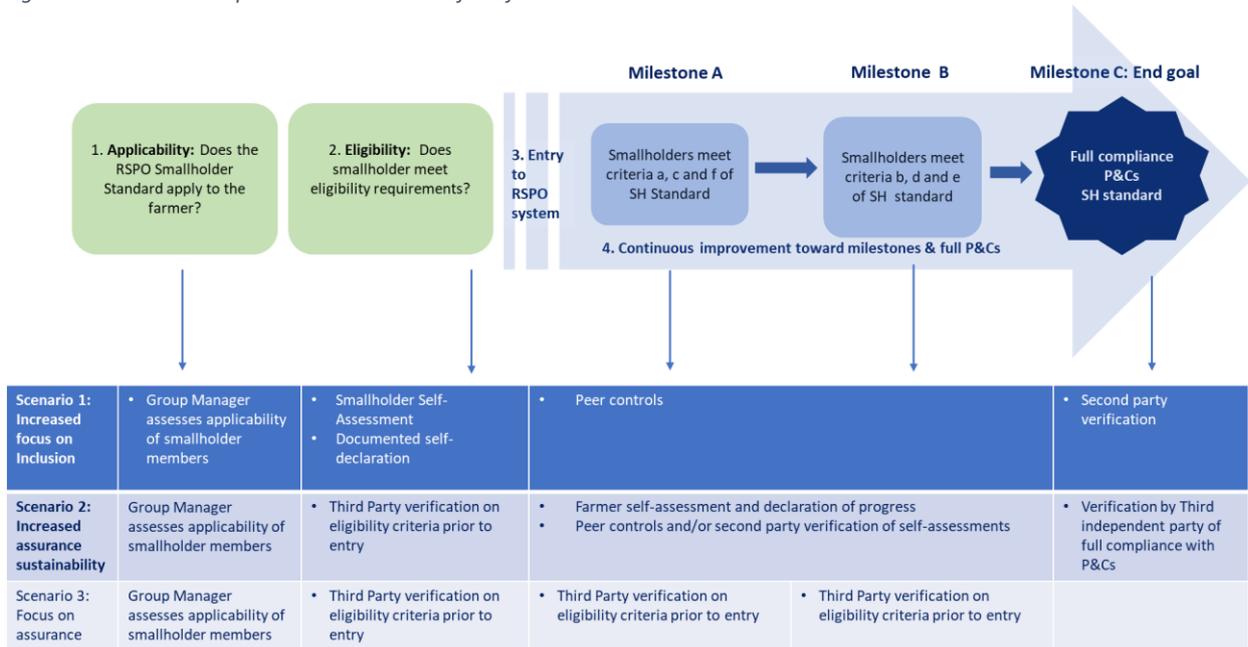
Figure 2 below presents three scenarios, ranging from maximum level of smallholder inclusion to maximum level of assurance.

⁶ This can include documented commitments, completed checklists, peer review, etc.

⁷ Second party verifiers, can for example, include a mill, association, cooperative, group manager or NGO.

⁸ A third-party audit is by an independent auditor as accredited by the RSPO.

Figure 2: Continuous Improvement and Level of verification

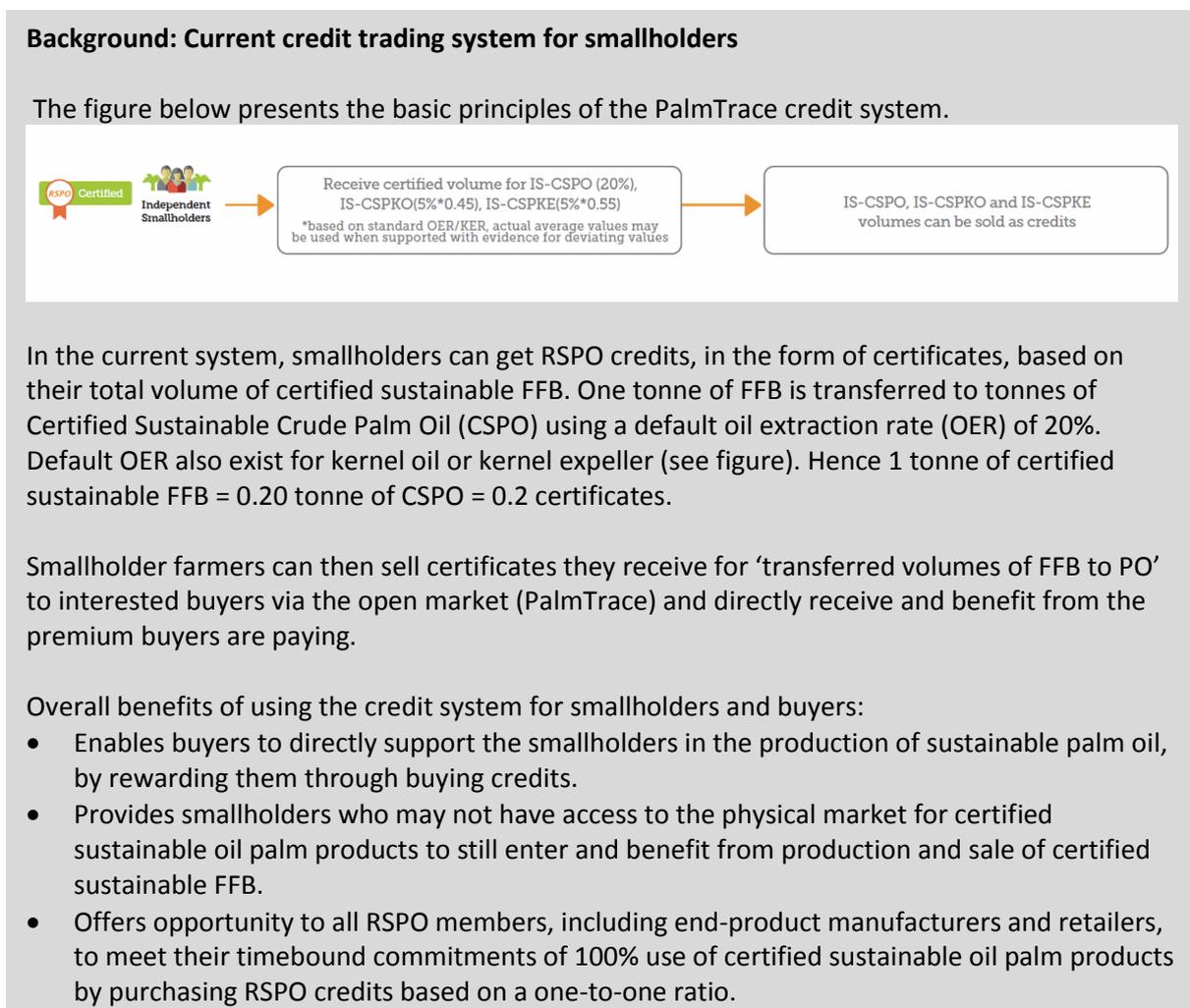


7. Smallholder Credits

The RSPO considers it essential that the revised approach to smallholder certification must provide material incentives for smallholders to participate in the system. To this end, modifications are proposed to the existing system for generating “credits” based on certified sustainable FFB produced by independent smallholders. The current system is described in Figure 3.

Note: Physically traceable CSPO trade will still be supported in the system for cases where this is possible.

Figure 3 Summary of Current Trading System (PalmTrace)



Below, two alternative options for revision of this system are presented. Both of these build upon the PalmTrace credit system currently used by independent smallholders that produce certified sustainable FFB⁹ (see <http://rspocredits.org/index.html>).

⁹ Currently, certified sustainable FFB can be produced by farmers that meet the RSPO FFB group certification system requirements and P&Cs.

Both Options 1 and Option 2 encourage entry of smallholders into the RSPO system through earlier access to monetary benefits for smallholders. Under both options, the milestones discussed above (Milestone A and Milestone B) serve as checkpoints for assessing progress made.

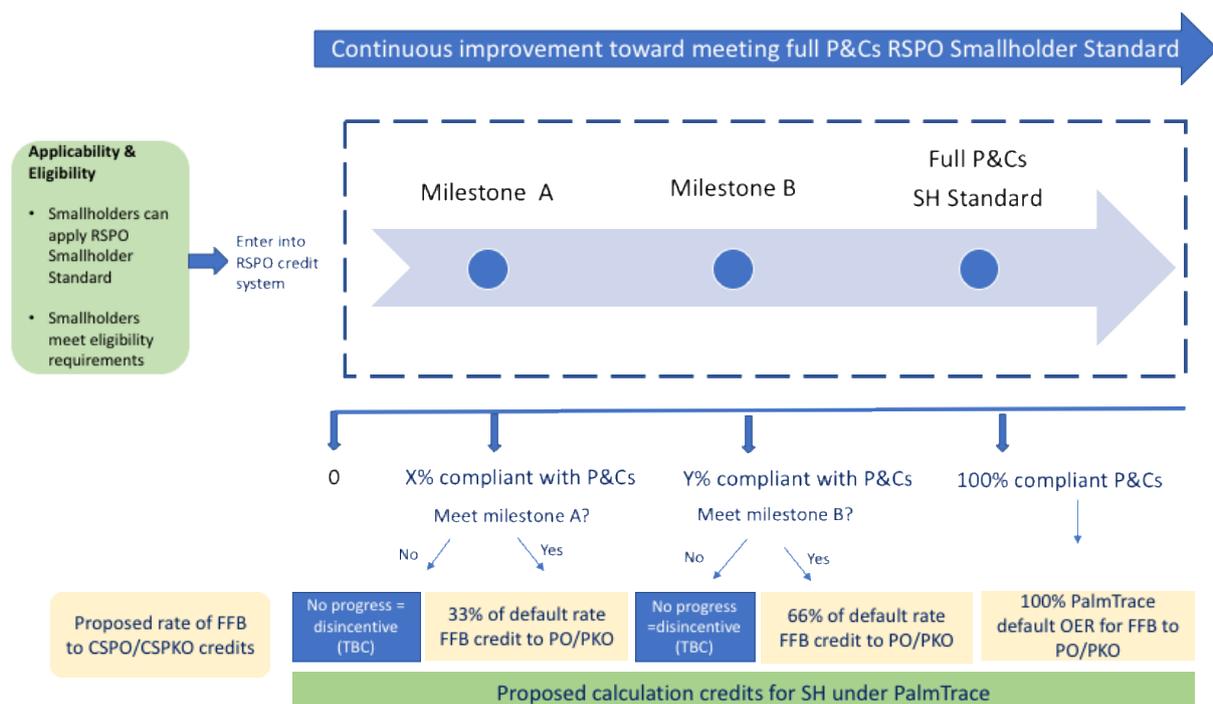
The difference between the two options presented below is that:

- Option 1 represents a phased approach to incentivize smallholders to progress along to the next milestone. Smallholders get access to more credits over time by demonstrating continuous improvement. Buyers of smallholder credits would reward improvements that have already taken place.
- Option 2 represents an approach to incentivize smallholders to enter the system by providing them with upfront access to full premiums from the start. If the smallholder cannot demonstrate progress, they lose this access to premiums. Buyers of smallholder credits are investing in future improvements.

Option 1 – Phased approach to generating credits, where FFB to oil ratio is linked to milestones

- Smallholders earn credits proportionate to meeting the criteria represented by specific milestones, e.g. Milestone A and B.
- Meeting the first milestone (Milestone A), smallholders earn credits proportionate to 33% of the default oil extraction rate (OER) per the PalmTrace system.
 - 33% of 20% OER = 6.6% OER applies.
- Meeting the next milestone (Milestone B) smallholders earn credits based on 66% of the default OER, per the PalmTrace system.
 - 66% of 20% OER = 13.2% OER applies.
- Meeting 100% of P&Cs (Milestone C) the full default OER applies, 20%, per the PalmTrace system

Figure 4 –Phased Approach: Smallholder credits proportionate to demonstrating progress

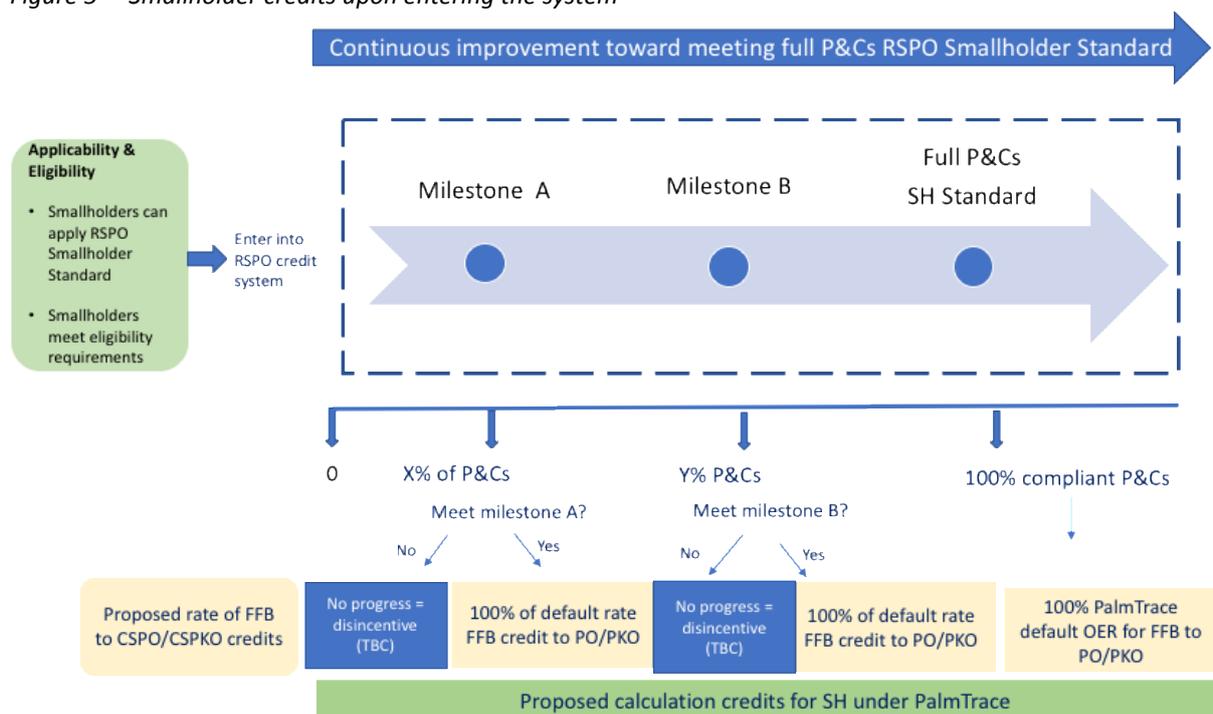


Option 2 – Upfront access to credits, generated when smallholders first enter the system. Credits purchased support future improvements of the smallholder, rather than rewarding past improvement.

Smallholders who enter the system start generating credits initially upon demonstrating they comply with the eligibility criteria (Section 4), complete a pre-assessment and sign a statement of commitment to progress toward full compliance. They earn credits by transferring the FFB volumes of their production unit to CSPO/CSPKO, using the standard default OER from PalmTrace, currently 20% for CSPO. An assurance system to verify continuous improvement ensures that smallholders continue to improve and maintain access to credits. This is done by demonstrating compliance with the pre-defined milestones (Milestone A, B, full compliance).

If smallholders cannot demonstrate progress by reaching the next milestone within a specified time, access to credits is suspended and eventually terminated. The key benefit of this option is that it provides a tangible incentive for smallholders to enter the system and continue to improve, because they already have access to premiums (a financial incentive) that they would lose if no progress is demonstrated.

Figure 5 – Smallholder credits upon entering the system

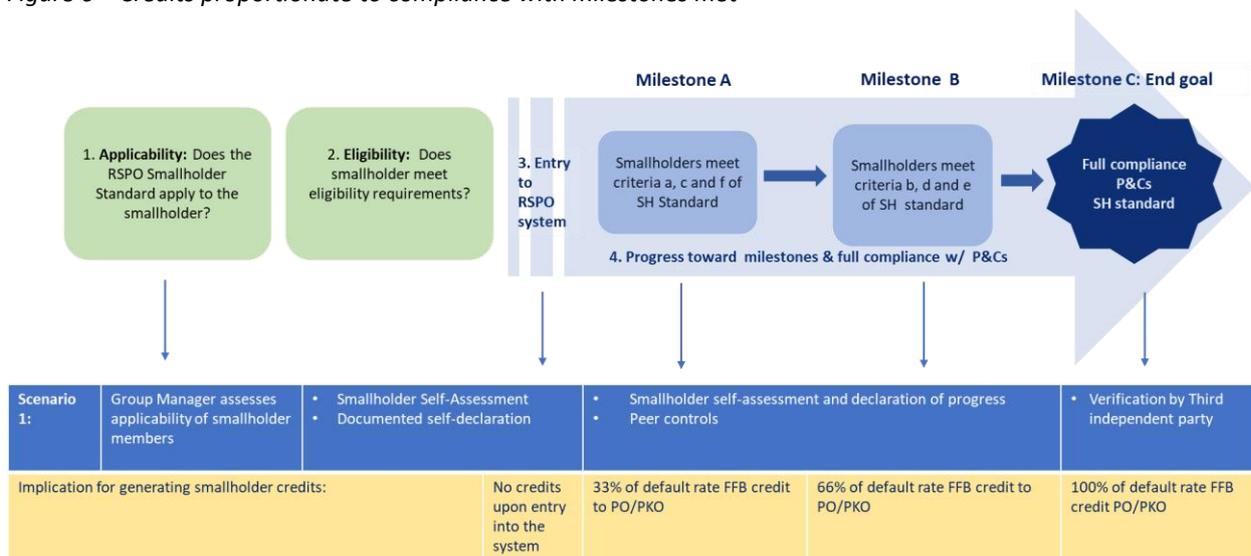


8. Putting it Together: Scenarios for combining inclusion, assurance and credits into a single, coherent system

Two options are presented below for combining various elements presented in Section’s 6 and 7 into a single, coherent system for verifying smallholder performance and issuing credits:

- i. The first scenario is based on providing proportionate incentives and level of assurance (Figure 6). Smallholders are subject to a third-party verification only at the end point of demonstrating full compliance (Milestone C). This means smallholders generate credits proportionate to the milestones they have met. Characteristics of this scenario include:
 - Proportionate incentives linked to milestones met
 - No third-party verification until meeting full compliance
 - Growth of incentives is contingent on improvement, because an increased number of credits can be claimed upon meeting the next milestone.
 - Lower level of assurance that criteria are met at intermediate milestones.
 - Higher level of assurance of full compliance all P&C of the smallholder standard.

Figure 6 – Credits proportionate to compliance with milestones met



- ii. The second scenario is premised on a belief that RSPO is most effectively addressing its mission by prioritizing smallholder inclusion, and that this is best achieved by providing smallholders with strong financial incentives as early as possible, whilst at the same time ensuring key, minimum sustainability requirements are upheld (defined as eligibility requirements; Figure 7). Smallholders are incentivized to meet the next milestone in order to maintain access to credits. Characteristics of this scenario include:
 - Upfront incentives for smallholders by initially earning additional income due to sale of smallholder credits

- Upfront need for third party verification
- Incentive to continually improve in order to not lose access to additional income.
- High level of assurance that criteria are met.

Figure 7 – Credits and assurance upon entry into the system

