

MINUTES OF MEETING

Biodiversity and High Conservation Value Working Group (BHCVWG) – 52nd Meeting (Hybrid)

Date : 10 November 2024
Time : 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM (THA)
Venue : Amari Bangkok, Thailand

Attendance:

<p><u>Members and Alternates</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lee Swee Yin (SDG) 2. Hendi Hidayat (GAR) 3. Bungaran Naibaho (GAR) 4. Lim Sian Choo (Bumitama) 5. Martin Mach (Bumitama) 6. Sophie Gett (SIPEF) 7. Matthew Gerard Nowak (SIPEF) 8. Quentin Meunier (OLAM) 9. Ruth Silva (HCVN) 10. Anne Rosenbarger (WRI) 11. Ahmad Furqon (WWF) 12. Angga Prathama Putra (WWF) 13. Eleanor Spencer (ZSL) 14. Imogen Fanning (ZSL) 15. Cahyo Nugroho (FFI) 16. Mahendra Primajati (FFI) 17. Marcus Colchester (FPP) 18. Chin Sing Yun (Wilmar) 19. Syahrial Anhar (Wilmar) 20. Dita Galina (Musim Mas) 21. Athirah Insani (Musim Mas) <p><u>Absent with apologies</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Arnina Hussin (SDG) 23. Paola Despretz (OLAM) 24. Harjinder Kler (HUTAN) 25. Bukti Bagja (WRI) 26. Michelle Desilets (OLT) 27. Lanash Thanda (BCI) 28. Dayang Norwana (BCI) 29. Patrick Anderson (FPP) 30. Sally Chen Sieng Yin (SEPA) 31. David Wong Su Yung (SEPA) 32. Yunita Widiastuti (Cargill) 33. Per Bogstad (Haleon) 	<p><u>RSPO Secretariat</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HS Yen 2. Aloysius Suratin 3. Akmal Razali 4. Lydia Tan 5. Durgha Periasamy <p><u>Invited Experts</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jennifer Lucey (SEARRP) 2. Arie Soetjadi (HCVN) 3. Zulaikha Syed Othman (HCSA)
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Meeting Agenda:

No.	Agenda	PIC
1	Opening and welcoming remarks	RSPO Secretariat/ BHCV Co-Chairs
2	Confirmation of MoM and a brief update on the BHCVWG action tracker	RSPO Secretariat
3	Updates on the 2024 RSPO Standards and Prioritisation for Normative & Informative Document Development	RSPO Secretariat
4	Process Overview and Alignment with prisma	RSPO Secretariat
5	Review of the different scenarios in which the RaCP reprieve related to Resolution 18-2d is applicable (Scheme Smallholder Study)	PT Hijau Daun
6	RaCP V2 Update	RSPO Secretariat
7	LUCA Pilot Project	RSPO Secretariat
8	Guidance on HCVs - HCS Forest Management & Monitoring, Changes in HCV Conditions and Status, Adaptive Management	RSPO Secretariat
9	Guidance on Steep Slope and Fragile and Marginal Soils Management	RSPO Secretariat
10	RSPO Research Agenda	RSPO Secretariat
11	Review of BHCVWG & CTF2 ToR	RSPO Secretariat
12	AOB	RSPO Secretariat/ BHCV Co-Chairs

Summary of key points:

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1	Review of the different scenarios in which the RaCP reprieve related to Resolution 18-2d is applicable (Scheme Smallholder Study)	PT Hijau Daun presented Phase 2 of the study, which involved interviewing cooperatives and scheme smallholders across six countries. The categories of scheme smallholders were refined based on previous feedback. Two options were proposed, both offering a partial reprieve. The final report is expected to be released by the end of 2024.
2	RaCP V2 Update	The 2018 RaCP will not be released for public consultation immediately. Based on the agreement from the last CTF2 meeting, it was decided to restart the subgroups to address the grower version. A workshop will then be held to finalise the document once the subgroups have proposed solutions.
3	LUCA Pilot Project	The group has agreed to proceed with Step 1 (Proof of Concept) of the proposed pilot study, which involves a desktop feasibility study. Currently, there is sufficient budget to cover Step 1. Subsequent steps will be undertaken once Milestone 1, Consideration to Proceed, is achieved.

4	Guidance on HCVs - HCS Forest Management & Monitoring, Changes in HCV Conditions and Status, Adaptive Management	The group agreed on the need for this document but requested the Secretariat to first revisit and refine the ToR shared earlier this year. The Secretariat will revise the ToR based on the inputs provided. Once finalised by the WG, the Task Force will be initiated to begin work on this.
5	Guidance on Steep Terrain Conservation and Management	The group decided not to proceed with a field visit. Agreed to work towards an integrated document, recognising the many aspects of soil management. However, it was decided to adopt a modular approach for now, focusing on steep terrain. To support this process, the Secretariat will conduct an inventory checklist as a stocktaking exercise, considering the numerous soil management-related items raised. This will help identify existing content within RSPO documents, areas of overlap, and gaps requiring updates. Some updates may require input from working groups such as the BHCV. The Secretariat will also include an annexe in the ToR to highlight documents requiring significant amendments and outline the scope of work needed.
6	Review of BHCVWG & CTF2 ToR	WG has agreed to revise the ToR. The Secretariat will draft the new version and share it for comments once completed. The group has also agreed to establish three new Task Forces (TF) to focus on normative/high-priority documents that need to be published within 12 months following the endorsement of the standards. These documents include the interpretation of Indicator 7.7.1, RSPO Guidance on HCVs - HCS Forest Management & Monitoring, Changes in HCVs Condition and Status, Adaptive Management, and the RSPO Manual on BMPs for Steep Terrain Conservation and Management (to be renamed to include other soil components).

Minutes:

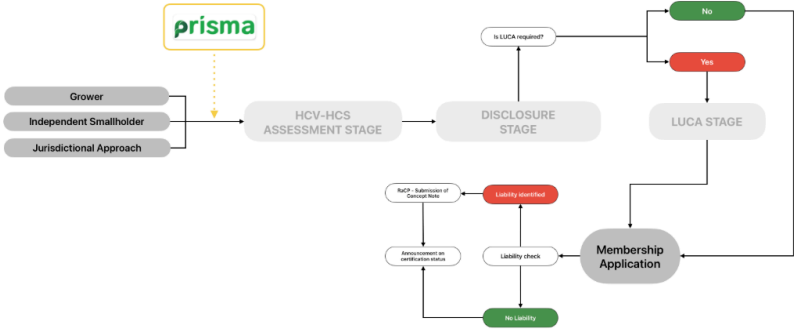
No.	Agenda	Action
1	<p><u>Opening and welcoming remarks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All members were welcomed by the RSPO Secretariat to the 52nd BHCVWG hybrid meeting. ● The Secretariat went through the meeting’s housekeeping details and read out the RSPO antitrust policy statement, consensus-based decision-making, and conflict of interest declaration, if any. No conflict of interest was raised by the members. ● The Secretariat welcomed 1 new member to the BHCVWG: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Matthew Gerard Nowak (SIPEF) ● The Secretariat welcomed the following invited experts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arie Soetjadi (HCVN) ○ Jennifer Lucey (SEARRP) ○ Zulaikha Syed Othman (HCSA) ● The current composition of the BHCVWG was presented. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The seat for the LATAM grower and financial institutions seats are currently vacant. ● The Secretariat provided an overview of the meeting's agenda. 	
2	<p><u>Confirmation of MoM and a brief update on the BHCVWG action tracker</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The minutes of the 51st meeting (23 & 24 July 2024) were presented to the members. The minutes were accepted with no amendments or objections. ● The Secretariat provided an update on the ongoing BHCVWG activities. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. <i>Timeline for RaCP V2.</i> The discussion was brought to the CTF2 level, and updates were presented during the meeting. II. <i>Scheme smallholder study (Resolution GA18-2d)</i> The study is nearing completion. The consultant presented phase two of the study during the meeting. III. <i>ToR for the evaluation of remediation and compensation plans.</i> 	

No.	Agenda	Action
	<p>Currently on hold as it relates more to the evaluation stage, requiring further alignment before progressing.</p> <p>IV. <i>ToR on HCV-HCSA management and monitoring (M&M)</i> It was clarified that this was previously labeled as a ToR due to ongoing discussions about exploring the topic. However, as it has now been incorporated into the new standards, it is to be addressed as a key document coming from BHCVWG.</p> <p>V. <i>Guidance on steep slopes and fragile and marginal soil management</i> The draft is in the finalisation stage, and updates were shared during the meeting.</p> <p>VI. <i>Undisclosed land clearing issue</i> This falls under the RSPO Assurance Team and is currently on hold as further information is being gathered about land-clearing cases. The Secretariat seeks BHCV's guidance on quality assurance and actions regarding land-clearing cases.</p> <p>VII. <i>A system to update existing HCV assessment</i> Relates to addressing changes in HCV areas and updating documentation and databases accordingly. With the M&M portion now incorporated into the new standards, a method is to be developed to address this.</p> <p>VIII. <i>Review of BHCVWG ToR</i> Updates on this were presented during the meeting.</p> <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member questioned whether the consideration document prepared by the Secretariat aimed to outline agreed and pending actions of the RaCP for WG feedback. They expressed concern that the document overlooked social aspects, which had been repeatedly raised in meetings and should be integral to the group's considerations. They requested that future documents comprehensively address both social and environmental aspects with equal priority. The Secretariat and members agreed, committing to ensuring that social liabilities will be given the same equal priority as environmental liabilities when addressing land cleared without an HCV(-HCS) assessment. Both aspects will be developed simultaneously. 	
3	<p><u>Updates on the 2024 RSPO Standards and Prioritisation for Normative & Informative Document Development</u></p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat provided a brief update on the standards revision and the associated processes following the adoption of the standards. A list of documents linked to the BHCVWG was presented, highlighting supplementary and derivative documents tied to the P&C and ISH standards. Documents marked in yellow (below) represent new processes requiring decisions on how to proceed, resource planning, and prioritisation of which should be addressed first. 																																																																																	
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	<p>[Note: The full list of documents can be found in Annex 6 of the P&C and Annex 4 of the ISH standards.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that while the transition period allows 12 months to complete as many documents as possible, it is not feasible to finalise all of them within this timeframe. It was noted that any document under the WG’s purview that does not require a formal SSC decision can proceed. The SSC has requested monthly updates to monitor document progress and completion timelines. If any documents are not ready within 12 months, clear timelines must be provided to manage stakeholders' expectations for key documents. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A question was raised about whether the list of documents is exhaustive and if future themes of interest from members, like guidance on BMPs for riparian management and peat planting, will be considered. The Secretariat clarified that the list is not exhaustive; the full list is in Annex 6 of the P&C and Annex 4 of the ISH standards. The highlighted documents are those relevant 																																																																																	

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	<p>to the BHCV group and require review due to their inclusion as standards' requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regarding new guidance, the BHCV group can assess and propose this to the SSC. However, due to the 12-month transition period, priorities should be set realistically. The current focus is on completing priority documents, with additional guidance to be addressed later. ● A clarification was sought on the difference between BMPs and guidance documents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that the third column in the table indicates whether a document is normative or informative, based on the standards' wording. For example, if the standards say "you shall follow BMP," the document is considered a normative requirement, even if called guidance. The naming of documents can cause confusion, as seen with the "Guidance on Peat Inventory for RSPO Reporting," which is labelled as guidance but is a mandatory requirement in an indicator. This highlights the need to standardise naming conventions for clearer distinction between mandatory and advisory documents. ● A member asked for clarification regarding the purpose of the interpretation of Indicator 7.7.1(C). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that Annex 5 in the previous standards outlines various scenarios in which Indicator 7.7.1 applies. This annex remains relevant but requires updating to reflect the consistent language and align with the current P&C. It was also highlighted that the previous existing annex provides a foundational framework for the scenarios where the indicator applies, but it needs revisions to ensure alignment with present requirements. The goal now is to produce an updated version of this guidance, as there wasn't enough time to do so during the previous review. ● A member highlighted that time constraints during the standard revision left some elements inadequately reflected in the P&C and indicators. They suggested using the 12-month transition period to refine standards based on early implementation and sought clarification on the BHCVWG's role in addressing misalignments, particularly in the definitions section. Concerns were raised about gaps due to limited task force review time and whether the 	

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	<p>Secretariat could promptly address these to minimise negative feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat explained that the interim revision process will tackle gaps, clarify definitions, and address minor inconsistencies. The SSC oversees this process, and feedback, including minor adjustments, will be escalated to them. It was confirmed that the review process would likely involve a multi-stakeholder approach, with further details pending SSC finalisation. ● There was an emphasis on the need to ensure that all these documents are aligned with the new planting procedures, as this is when the management plans are implemented and must be agreed upon with other stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that the NPP is included in the full exhaustive list, and it falls under the responsibility of ASC. The assurance team is aware that it needs to be updated to harmonise with the other documents. ● It was mentioned that it is important to ensure these documents align with the national interpretations to make the process more productive. Simplifying the process is key to avoiding duplicated reporting. ● A question was raised regarding the development of BMP for soil, whether it refers to soil for palm oil plantation operations or soil for conservation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that its focus is on managing fragile and marginal soils as outlined in the relevant indicators, following multistakeholder discussions. They noted that BMPs might need updates to align with the standards and emphasised linking soil conservation, GHG considerations, marginal soils, and regenerative agriculture in the process. The broad scope of soil management requires further deliberation. ● The Secretariat noted that, on the ISH side, there is currently no dedicated deforestation task force. Previously, the task force was tasked with developing the simplified HCS component while the BHCV group worked on the simplified HCV approach. There is potential in the future for cross-collaboration, and it was suggested that the BHCV group be kept informed of the progress made by ISNDF to ensure alignment and coordination between the two groups. 	

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4	<p><u>Process Overview and Alignment with prisma</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the common process flow for RSPO producers. The goal of this agenda item was to ensure that, when discussing document development, members are aware of the process flow and the order in which tasks should be prioritised. It was noted that, in addition to the document development discussions, other considerations, such as smallholders and JA (Jurisdictional Approach), have yet to be fully addressed. When it comes to JA, the HCV-HCS aspect will need to be discussed eventually. With the development of prisma, it was noted that data management would need to be considered before going into the more detailed aspects of document development. <p>Common Process Flow with prisma Integration</p>  <pre> graph TD subgraph Inputs G[Grower] ISH[Independent Smallholder] JA[Jurisdictional Approach] end Inputs --> HCV[HCV-HCS ASSESSMENT STAGE] prisma[prisma] -.-> HCV HCV --> DISC[DISCLOSURE STAGE] DISC --> LUCA[LUCA STAGE] DISC --> Q1{Is LUCA required?} Q1 -- No --> LUCA Q1 -- Yes --> LUCA LUCA --> RA[RaCP - Submission of Deforestation Risk] RA --> LI1[Liability check] LI1 --> MA[Membership Application] LI1 --> Q2{Liability check} Q2 -- No Liability --> MA Q2 -- Liability identified --> RA MA --> LI2[Liability check] LI2 --> Q3{Liability check} Q3 -- No Liability --> MA Q3 -- Liability identified --> RA Q3 --> MA </pre> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The long-term plan for prisma is to integrate almost all components into the system, including membership applications. prisma's development is being rolled out in phases, with Phase 1 focusing on traceability and is backed with a codified module that is ready for EUDR (European Union Deforestation Regulation) considerations. It was highlighted that several Phase 2 modules connected to BHCVWG will be rolled out later, including the digital RaCP module, drainability assessment, peatland inventory, and others. The focus will be on ensuring that these modules are well integrated and flow together, from stages like disclosure to LUCA 	

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	<p>(Land Use Change Assessment), etc. The goal is not only to digitise the processes but also to optimise them as the system evolves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As prisma is being developed in phases, there are two key aspects to anticipate (when developing processes and procedures): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How each module fits with other modules and within the entire digital architecture 2. The development lead time for prisma modules is at least six months, particularly when connecting related modules. Developing modules like RaCP, LUCA, and JA together optimises time and cost, while separate development doubles expenses and effort. Streamlining the process ensures smoother integration and reduces the challenges of managing multiple versions. ● The 12-month timeframe will assist in understanding how data management will work and how it will tie back to entity management, which is the core of prisma. All the data from management units, including historical data, maps, and more, will sit in this central system. Therefore, it was noted that it was important to consider not just certification systems but also lead times for development to ensure an efficient and well-integrated process. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member inquired about the envisioned future of prisma and suggested incorporating features like deforestation alerts to help avoid NCLC (Non-Compliant Land Clearance). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Secretariat acknowledged that such features could be explored once prisma is fully operational. They also noted that since prisma's developers, Agridance and NGIS, are now affiliate members of RSPO, they could be invited to future BHCVWG meetings to provide insights into upcoming functionalities and offer guidance on potential developments, given their in-depth knowledge of the system. ● A member noted that as prisma progresses to modules most relevant to the BHCVWG, it will be important to consider the feedback loop process and the role of the WG and subject matter experts in development, prioritisation, and revision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat explained that the platform will launch with a basic "skeleton" structure, with the risk module, including remote sensing, planned for Phase 2. This phase will involve collaboration with developers and working groups to address 	

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	<p>specific needs. While initial efforts focus on core traceability, future modules will expand functionality. The assurance team highlighted challenges with the simplified HCV paradigm, particularly data management issues arising from its separation from the central database. Future discussions should prioritise seamless integration into prisma. Additionally, the simplified HCV approach, aligned with ISNDF, may need adjustments to better support smallholders in managing data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clarification was sought regarding the thematic issues, specifically whether the group is expected to identify these issues and determine the type of data required for each, such as spatial data, formats, or other parameters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that thematic issues are guided by prioritised documents and modules, focusing on content, digitisation, and existing data use. For instance, PalmGHG v5 reduces manual input by pulling data automatically from a "single source of truth." The same approach will apply to other modules, with inputs pre-filled from existing databases. Priority will remain on listed modules and documents before addressing non-prioritised items. ● There was a suggestion to circulate the proposed or initial scope of topics being compiled so members could have some thoughts on the type of data prisma can collect and whether additional data or collection methods are needed. There were also some suggestions about identifying how the platform would be utilised and by whom, and also who would provide input on these decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat responded that once the base version is established, discussions will focus on potential improvements, introducing new features, and determining who makes decisions on these updates. It was suggested to introduce prisma at a hands-on level in the next meeting to facilitate these discussions. ● A member emphasised that the purpose and intended use of a system should guide its development from the start to avoid challenges in making adjustments later. They highlighted that discussions like the M&M of HCVs are closely tied to the overall impact of members' activities on the ground. Thus when developing guidance on changes to HCVs, it is crucial to consider how this will integrate into prisma, moving beyond operational 	

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	<p>perspectives to ensure it is data-driven so that it is visible to growers, auditors, and the public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that the system has been designed with future adaptability in mind. They assured members that they have adopted a modular and adaptive design ethos, anticipating changes and ensuring the system can evolve as needs arise. 			
5	<p><u>Review of the different scenarios in which the RaCP reprieve related to Resolution 18-2d is applicable (Scheme Smallholder Study)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The session was presented by Jules and Dillon from PT Hijau Daun, focusing on the second phase of the study. (Note: Phase 1 of the study was presented in July 2024). Interviews were conducted with cooperatives and scheme smallholders (SSH) across six countries. A total of 9 cooperatives and 44 individual SSHs were interviewed. The aim was to gather detailed insights into farm management approaches and the support smallholders receive, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of company management versus self-management by smallholders. Types of support provided by companies. Productivity outcomes and financial structures, such as how income is calculated and the ability to grow crops on their farms. The three categories of smallholders were presented and refined based on feedback; Managed SSH and Supported SSH (both fall under scheme smallholders) and Grouped Smallholders (ISH). These categories are not new but were derived from an RSPO study conducted in 2020. The current study builds on this earlier work, ensuring continuity. How grouped smallholders (ISH) implement the RaCP is not explored in this study. <div data-bbox="375 1501 1015 1795" style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Scheme Smallholders</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #c8e6c9; margin: 0;">Managed SSH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land is fully managed by the company • Fall under RSPO P&C Certification. • Clear contractual agreements between the company and the smallholders • Smallholders are obliged to sell their FFB to the contracted mills. • Smallholders own the land and operate legally • Smallholders incur management and operational costs • Smallholders are assisted fully in RSPO certification but do not own the certificate. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previously, there were four options, ranging from total reprieve to no reprieve. However, after extensive research and feedback from the WG, it was decided that the concepts of no reprieve and total reprieve are not recommended. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For Option 2 (Partial Reprieve), it applies to ISH who are responsible for their own land clearance and must comply with RaCP requirements. After reviewing the ISH RaCP, it was concluded that the existing mechanism addresses the level of risk associated with ISH. Therefore, the recommendation is to not change the ISH mechanisms. ○ For Option 3 (Partial Reprieve), SSH is still recommended for a partial reprieve, but they must comply with the RaCP 2015, which is more rigorous than the ISH standards. Therefore, the recommendation is to introduce new procedural steps for scheme smallholders RaCP. ● Several problem statements/issues were presented, along with recommendations and justifications for each. ● The study's deliverables against the ToR were presented to highlight the activities completed and the deliverables achieved to meet the objectives outlined in the ToR. <table border="1" data-bbox="365 1102 1036 1409" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="background-color: #92d050;">Objectives</th> <th style="background-color: #92d050;">Review</th> <th style="background-color: #92d050;">Activities</th> <th style="background-color: #92d050;">Deliverables</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Assess the current variety of scheme smallholder engagement type with RSPO Growers and identify in which circumstances scheme smallholders could be eligible for the RaCP Reprieve.</td> <td> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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Recommendations for the simplification of RaCP for SSH. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> ● The next steps in the study include addressing the WG's final recommendations and comments and producing a final report by the end of the year. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clarification was sought on whether it should be reviewed based on the split. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that yes, the recommendation is based on this approach because the scheme definition under RSPO is unclear. The consultant's findings on the characteristics of managed and supported scheme smallholders are proposed to improve these definitions. It will then be up to RSPO to 	Objectives	Review	Activities	Deliverables	Assess the current variety of scheme smallholder engagement type with RSPO Growers and identify in which circumstances scheme smallholders could be eligible for the RaCP Reprieve.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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	<p>decide whether further differentiation between the two is necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member noted that the distinction was helpful to see spelled out but questioned whether it would lead to a more nuanced differentiation of recommendations for the problem statements presented, or if it would require assessing differences in handling managed versus supported scheme smallholders. It was asked whether adopting a more differentiated approach to the recommendations was necessary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant stated that after analysing the differences between scheme smallholders, they found the recommendations for managed and supported smallholders to be the same, and concluded there is no need to split these categories. However, it was noted that if the group wishes to differentiate, RSPO could consider implementing RaCP 2015 for managed smallholders, though the consultants do not recommend this due to the previously identified issues. ● It was questioned why RaCP liability falls on smallholders rather than the core plantation that failed the assessment, stressing the need for clarification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant explained that in some cases, scheme smallholders independently clear land before joining a company’s supply chain. Using Indonesia as an example, smallholders with 2 hectares clear land and later join a corporation for HGU renewal. The corporation benefits, and smallholders receive support. This is now rare, as RSPO members avoid allowing forest or riparian clearance for expansion. The consultant noted that while companies are responsible for compensating for FCL, the cost of RaCP is sometimes passed to scheme smallholders, who may bear higher costs for company support.. ● It was noted that some smallholders cleared land without an HCV assessment before joining a scheme. Questions were raised about whether they were informed of potential liabilities and whether assigning liability after joining is unfair. It was suggested that the company should bear the liability instead of smallholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant clarified that when companies renew their HGU, they often require 100–200 hectares from smallholders to support the process. During due diligence, companies typically exclude smallholders with FCL or remediation liabilities. The proposed recommendations aim to create a 	

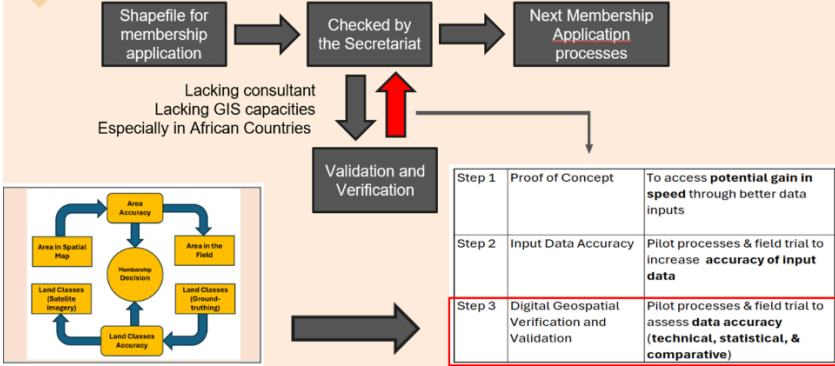
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	<p>mechanism for smallholders who planted near rivers to establish riparian buffers without penalties, ensuring smallholders with 1–2 hectares are not disadvantaged by becoming RSPO members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A question was raised about how to address the definitions of managed and supported scheme smallholders, especially when land conversion decisions are made by smallholders themselves, leading to different liabilities. Concerns were also raised about cooperatives where few plots are converted in a large group, questioning who should bear liability in such cases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that the distinction between managed (scope 1) and supported smallholders (scope 3) is already recognised in PalmGHG V5. These definitions can be reviewed during the interim revision period. For cooperatives, responsibility depends on the type of smallholder; group managers in ISH-certified groups are responsible for monitoring NCLC via their internal control system, but there is no equivalent framework for scheme smallholders, presenting an opportunity for further clarification. ● It was questioned why the consultant concluded that there wasn't a functional difference between managed and supported smallholders in terms of the recommendations or what led to that conclusion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant explained that the distinction between managed and supported smallholders is often unclear, as both share similar histories. Despite differences in contracts, the recommendation for option 3 (partial reprieve) remains the best for both. ISH smallholders typically face fewer requirements and achieve better livelihoods than scheme smallholders, who bear significant costs for RSPO compliance, making RSPO standards less effective for them. Option 4, converting FCL into monetary figures under RaCP 2015, is no longer recommended. ● A question was raised if Option 2 and 3 apply to scheme smallholders who conduct the clearing, and not the entire entity scheme smallholder? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant clarified that RaCP applies to the management unit, meaning all scheme smallholders must go through the process. Smallholders with FCL activities must address them to gain certification. Option 2, the ISH RaCP mechanism, remains unchanged. For Option 3, the recommendation is to 	

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	<p>simplify the process to include all scheme smallholders in the RSPO system, rather than allowing companies to selectively include them. RaCP implementation will be managed at the cooperative level, but in countries like Indonesia, it will be part of the company's supply base</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some members raised concerns, questioning why the distinction between supported and managed scheme smallholders wasn't maintained in the partial reprieve or streamlined approach. They noted that keeping this distinction could address concerns, especially since the risk of reprieve for land managed by companies is low. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant agreed and suggested maintaining RaCP 2015 for managed smallholders, as the company fully manages the land. However, in cases where land is returned to smallholders after rotation, the company's actions are often driven by regulations. The consultant acknowledged the concern and noted that if the WG decides to differentiate, RaCP 2015 could be maintained for managed smallholders, depending on RSPO's decision. ● A member suggested clearly outlining the distinction between managed and supported scheme smallholders. They questioned which cases would qualify for a reprieve and which would not, proposing that the report include caveats and reflect on the practical realities. The member emphasised the need for a systematic approach to address these issues, rather than removing RaCP for managed smallholders. They recommended that underlying problems, if present, should be tackled in a more structured manner. ● It was noted that managed scheme smallholders could be divided into two categories. Those managed at the time of development and those not managed at the time of development. This distinction was highlighted as significant, as it introduces a gradation from managed to non-managed, with an intermediary group of scheme smallholders who were not managed during development but are now being onboarded by a company. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The consultant agreed. Consultant to incorporate into the report and consider how this impacts the various options. ● The scoping of the report was questioned, particularly regarding Problem Statement 2, which touched on recommendations for a streamlined process for new planting. This raised concerns about whether it falls within NPP territory and might be outside the 	

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	<p>current group's remit. The member suggested cataloguing how these issues would be addressed or deferring the discussion to another body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that the consultant included this consideration as part of the broader picture, but it would remain a recommendation, not the primary focus of the report. ● A member noted that sometimes smallholders have their own land, referred to as Hak Milik, meaning it is fully managed by the smallholder. However, when smallholders are part of a company scheme, the land may be fully managed by the company. There should be an agreement in place, particularly regarding costs. The member pointed out that there is no information available regarding the RSPO premium. If this is clarified, it might be easier to address the issue at hand. ● The consultant noted that the previous meeting discussed the definitions and potential differentiation of scheme smallholders, but the recommendations were not finalised. The consultant asked if there was agreement on simplifying RaCP for supported scheme smallholders. It was clarified that the decision would not be made today but would be addressed after the report is received. It was suggested that different options be presented in the report, followed by a reconvening for further discussion and a final decision. 	<p>The WG to provide comments and feedback on the deck.</p> <p>Consultant to incorporate the points and feedback received into the final report.</p>
6	<p><u>RaCP V2 Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The previous timeline was presented, and it was noted that it has since shifted since the last WG meeting. Moving forward, the group needs to consider a new timeline, factoring in the conclusion of the scheme study and the additional clarity gained on procedural alignments. This will help structure the process for the 12-month interim period and also ensure that everything is in the ToR. ● The two main objectives based on the circulated consideration document are to: (1) align RaCP v2 with RSPO updates and ensure practical applicability, and (2) ensure alignment with the new RSPO standard and prisma integration. ● A few other considerations were highlighted during the discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independent Smallholder Considerations: There was an emphasis on how to approach remediation and compensation 	

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	<p>from a smallholder's perspective, with a particular focus on inclusivity and financial viability. This point was raised by regional colleagues, who stressed the importance of ensuring the documents' implementability and viability at this stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detailed Procedural Guidance: The current concept of RaCP has merits, but there are concerns about how detailed the requirements and specifications are in various documents. If the documents do not properly connect and align on an operational level, there could be significant issues. Without clear, consistent guidelines in the official documents, members could face problems (e.g., liability issues or changing HCV), and the Secretariat may have to refer back to the BHCVWG for decisions each time. ○ Alignment with Membership and Certification Procedures: It was acknowledged that previous efforts were done in isolation, with some procedures not fully aligned. However, this is seen as a prime opportunity to ensure better alignment and integration of the procedures moving forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meeting outcomes from the CTF2 meeting were presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Splitting RaCP Document: Split as per BHCVWG's July request. One document will address 2018 grower requirements; another combined version (for growers and ISH) will cover 2024 requirements. ○ Coordination with RSPO Assurance Division: Engage the Assurance team in upcoming CTF2 meetings focused on process improvements. ○ Timeline: The Secretariat will propose a new timeline after SSC updates or 2024 standards adoption. CTF2 subgroups will then be reactivated. ○ Reorganising Subgroups: Restructure CTF2 subgroups to consolidate memberships and resolve resource/time issues. ○ Plenary/Workshop: A 1- or 2-day plenary/workshop to finalise the document. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member stressed the importance of ensuring that RaCP V2 equally prioritises both social and environmental aspects throughout its development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was noted that there is a social subgroup that would need to be reactivated, with a focus on addressing any remaining issues. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regarding subgroups, there was discussion about restructuring them due to challenges in progressing caused by limited capacity and availability. ● It was also noted that the timeline could not be immediately decided as the subgroups need to revisit the document. ● A member raised a query on whether the timeline could proceed or if it would have to wait for the scheme smallholder report, considering some content would be incorporated into the document. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that for the 2018 version, the report is not essential, but for the combined 2024 version, it would be needed. ● The Secretariat highlighted that during the development of the consideration documents, it became clear that the RaCP revision must address the GA 182D resolution. This is important as the reprieve document covers both scheme and ISH smallholders, and there is potential for confusion during implementation due to the current applicability of RaCP to the ISH standard. This clarification will need to be included in the document for consideration. ● There were no objections to the updates from CTF2, the idea of splitting the document, or the proposal to hold a workshop. <p>[Note: Further discussions with the BHCVWG chairs clarified the outcome of this agenda item, as it was not clearly defined during the meeting. It was confirmed that the grower version will not be released for PC immediately. Instead, the CTF2 subgroup will be restarted to address the grower version, followed by a workshop to finalise the document. The Secretariat proposed streamlining discussions at the CTF2 level rather than forming separate subgroups, with a workshop planned for Q1 2025. Feedback and any objections to this approach were requested by 20th December 2024 via email.]</p>	
7	<p><u>LUCA Pilot Project</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Secretariat presented the Luca pilot project design, which follows the decision and recommendations made by the SSC in 2020. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scope of the project has expanded from focusing only on Africa to including other regions such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Latin America.  <table border="1" data-bbox="735 527 1118 722"> <tr> <td>Step 1</td> <td>Proof of Concept</td> <td>To access potential gain in speed through better data inputs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Step 2</td> <td>Input Data Accuracy</td> <td>Pilot processes & field trial to increase accuracy of input data</td> </tr> <tr style="border: 2px solid red;"> <td>Step 3</td> <td>Digital Geospatial Verification and Validation</td> <td>Pilot processes & field trial to assess data accuracy (technical, statistical, & comparative)</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretariat sought feedback from the WG on whether the proposed approach is agreeable. It was also noted that once feedback and agreement are received from the group, SSC will be updated before proceeding with the project. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A member asked the Secretariat about the essentiality and the priority of the LUCA pilot project, questioning whether its implementation is critical to progressing with LUCA. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was clarified that the project stems from an official SSC request and has been pending for several years. It aims to update the SSC with a clear follow-up plan. While prioritising timing alongside other initiatives, it will align with ongoing process improvements, particularly with prisma. The pilot will assess whether a modular or risk-based approach to LUCA is feasible, balancing speed and accuracy. Pre-2021, LUCA took 600 days, reduced to 180 days, but improvements are still needed. Accuracy remains crucial for robust screening, especially with an increasing influx of disclosures, requiring optimisation of the LUCA process. Step 1 will focus on balancing speed and accuracy using remote sensing and digital technology for risk-based assessments. A member raised concerns about the time-consuming nature of the membership process, particularly the HCV-HCS assessments, which can take up to two years due to hiring consultants and ALS reviews. They noted that the new requirement to submit a RaCP proposal, alongside LUCA disclosures, adds complexity and delays. 	Step 1	Proof of Concept	To access potential gain in speed through better data inputs	Step 2	Input Data Accuracy	Pilot processes & field trial to increase accuracy of input data	Step 3	Digital Geospatial Verification and Validation	Pilot processes & field trial to assess data accuracy (technical, statistical, & comparative)	
Step 1	Proof of Concept	To access potential gain in speed through better data inputs									
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	<p>The member suggested simplifying or removing steps to speed up the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat acknowledged the concern and confirmed that the broader process is under review to identify optimisation opportunities. While consultant availability is a key issue, improving interconnected elements of the process as a whole could enhance efficiency. The Secretariat stressed that multiple areas are being considered for improvement. ● Concerns were raised about consultant shortages and whether suitable experts would be available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that the initial phase would involve desktop research, conducted internally using identified technical platforms and analysts. The proof of concept would also be managed by the Secretariat. The goal is to develop a simple mechanism that could be used by smallholder group managers or those with basic capacities, reducing reliance on consultants and addressing the current shortage of expertise. ● A member suggested broadening the scope of the analysis to include other BHCV aspects, such as standardising M&M practices and integrating tools for geospatial techniques, land cover biodiversity monitoring, and carbon monitoring. This could enhance LUCA and contribute to broader standardisation in M&M and data collection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat responded that the priority is to first address the trade-off between speed and accuracy. Starting with a small-scale focus allows them to assess if improvements can be made without sacrificing accuracy for speed. Establishing a successful proof of concept could lay the groundwork for applying similar improvements to other processes, but the initial focus must remain on this core issue. ● A clarification was sought on whether there would be a pause after step one of the process to evaluate progress and decide whether to continue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat explained that step one might include elements of steps two and three. They noted the importance of reaching a milestone where an assessment could be made on the balance point—whether the available options are acceptable and align with RSPO’s goals or if the risks outweigh the benefits. This evaluation would determine if it’s feasible to proceed without risking RSPO’s reputation. It also may need to go to the BoG and SSC for their input. Ultimately, 	

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	<p>answering the core question of the trade-off between speed and accuracy would guide whether and how to move forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some concerns were raised about funding, noting that much of the cost might arise during steps two and three, particularly for field trials and sending personnel into the field. They suggested exploring opportunities to combine field trial elements associated with WG initiatives to save costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat noted that while the current budget is limited, it should suffice for step one if most of the work involves desktop feasibility studies carried out internally. They emphasised that steps two and three are likely to be more costly and would not commence until milestone one is reached and a decision is made on whether to proceed further. ● It was noted that from the growers' perspective, there are no current issues with LUCA reviews conducted by the Secretariat. While there were significant challenges in 2020, these have since been resolved unless this project targets new membership applications, particularly for the African region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that, for context, they had reviewed the membership pipeline and found at least 24 grower applicants across all regions still stuck in this phase, unable to progress to full membership. They emphasised that the potential benefit of conducting this proof of concept could extend beyond addressing these cases, optimising other related processes as well. ● No objections to moving forward with Step 1 (proof of concept). 	
8	<p><u>HCV-HCS Management and Monitoring (M&M) and Guidance on Changes in HCV Conditions and Status & Adaptive Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Currently, for HCV-HCS areas within concessions or designated conservation areas, there is no clear mechanism to address changes requiring updates to M&M processes. In the July meeting, the group discussed HCVs, focusing on the M&M aspects and how to address changes in value. These considerations are now incorporated into the new standards. ● The new standards begin with identifying HCV and HCS conservation areas, then conducting historical assessments for RaCP and LUCA, and then transitioning to M&M and continuous management. As a result of the July discussion, the need to revisit 	

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	<p>the conversation on M&M was identified. The aim is to frame it into a guidance or supplementary document for the standards to support practical use. The discussion is to focus on determining the key components to include in the document and assessing whether previous discussions can be leveraged to avoid starting from scratch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It was noted the earlier draft ToR for this purpose will not continue, all relevant discussions will be integrated into the new document. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member acknowledged the Secretariat's effort in outlining the various considerations and existing guidance that could inform the development of this document. However, it was suggested taking a step back to first decide if the WG agrees on the need for such an M&M guidance document at this point in time. Some key questions were raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is this document needed now, and is this the right way forward? ○ How to proceed with its development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Should it be developed internally within the Secretariat, or - Should it be taken forward externally? ● It was noted that there is a need for M&M guidance, highlighting that the nature of HCVs is not static, and M&M must recognise and address changes in HCV conditions over time. It was pointed out that current practices often treat HCV management areas broadly, neglecting the complexities of individual HCVs, especially social HCVs. Any guidance developed must be practical, credible, and efficient, considering financial capacity, human resources, and operational planning. Effective management relies on feasibility, not just technical requirements. Stakeholder involvement, particularly growers and local communities with hands-on experience, is crucial to ensure the guidance is practical. The ToR must be refined to clarify the goals and intended audience before progressing. Another member stressed the importance of defining the M&M process and its outcomes to track RSPO trends, with standardised data collection being key for comparing data across plantations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat acknowledged these points, highlighting the need for clear data metrics to measure the impact of the guidance and ensure the process is tangible, measurable, and demonstrates the positive contributions of RSPO members 	<p>Secretariat to revisit and refine the existing ToR</p>

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	<p>and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A member echoed the need for this guidance, emphasising that the necessity for such a framework has been recognised since the 2010s. They particularly pointed out its relevance now, following the removal of the Integrated Conservation and Land Use Plan (ICLUP) from the 2024 standards. The member emphasised that landscape changes are influenced by more than just threats, pointing out the importance of recognising new opportunities and emerging factors, such as policy changes or funding sources. The guidance should not solely focus on threats but also consider how to leverage global opportunities. They highlighted the potential for companies and communities to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets, especially through nature-based solutions like Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) or Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). The guidance should enable companies and communities to see themselves as active agents in broader conservation efforts, rather than solely focusing on threats. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: The Secretariat clarified that in 2020, a guidance document on HCSA requirements for RSPO was developed, so ICLUP was never part of the equation. Therefore, it is the IMP for RSPO members. ● From the growers' perspective, it was noted that the complexity of consolidating multiple operational units and separate studies over time creates challenges for developing a consistent M&M plan. Assessments completed years ago may not align with more recent ones, requiring a flexible approach that allows the plan to adapt as conditions change. Growers also pointed out that HCV-HCS assessments are not always perfect, even after peer review, as field conditions can evolve. For example, mapped rivers may no longer exist, and a process is needed to address such changes without necessitating a new assessment of the HCV-HCS areas. ● A member shared that the Indonesian WG had developed an HCV M&M monitoring document around 2017-2018, but it needed revisions to integrate HCV and HCS. The group lacked the capacity to continue at that time. They suggested using this practical, tested document as a reference for developing similar guidance, noting it received positive feedback from companies. Additionally, the HCVN's last document addressed the issue of changing HCV areas, providing guidance on managing these changes, though it is not yet public as it was submitted in 2018 and focused only on HCV, not HCS integration. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goal of M&M practices is to benchmark and provide the best ways to manage and monitor HCVs, building on established practices like those for riparian zones and peatland planting. The complexity of managing different HCVs, such as elephants and tigers (HCV 1 and 2), requires different strategies. The focus should be on integrating existing models, identifying gaps, and gradually building a more comprehensive approach. Expertise is also needed, particularly for topics like orangutan management, but this may not require new studies. Instead, leveraging existing data, such as from the SEnSOR study, and practices where available would create a more efficient, data-driven foundation for managing and monitoring HCVs. • It was highlighted that while some HCVs may merge or expand over time, they more often degrade, presenting a more complex issue. The degradation of HCVs must be carefully documented, as companies are responsible for protecting these areas. This issue involves both technical and assurance processes. When developing guidance, it's important to address practical aspects for growers, such as managing and monitoring these areas, as well as the requirements for auditors to verify if HCVs have degraded or been lost. The guidance should also consider factors beyond the company's control when addressing these changes. • It was noted that while the current structure of the M&M guidance appears to present three separate documents, they are essentially interrelated and should be considered as one cohesive document, all under the same M&M umbrella. • The WG collectively agreed that the guidance is needed, and the ToR presented earlier in the year should be revisited and revised to incorporate the points raised in the meeting. The aim is to make the guidance clearer and more concise. It was also noted that in the ToR, reference should be made to existing documents. Once the ToR is approved, the TF will initiate the development process. There were no objections to the TF taking on this responsibility. The WG as a whole will need to approve the ToR, which will provide the group with an overview of what the TF will be working on. The TF will decide on what can be done internally and what might need to be outsourced to experts in specific topics, ensuring the most efficient development approach. However, these decisions will be made only once the ToR is finalised 	<p>The WG is requested to review the document containing the 14 consideration points presented during the meeting and provide any additional comments</p>

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9	<p><u>Guidance on Steep Slope and Fragile and Marginal Soils Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An update was presented on soil management and steep slopes, particularly in relation to indicator 7.3.4 of the new P&C 2024. This indicator focuses on replanting and how to address replanting on steep terrain and marginal soil. Currently, the requirement at the indicator level serves as a guideline for these situations. ● Since the previous discussion on the drafts presented, there have been discussions on how to refine the document further such as having clearer definition on steep terrain and having a notice in the guidance advising the use of certain cover crops. ● The Secretariat proposed organising a field visit to members plantations who have experience managing steep terrain, to gain practical insights and inform the development of the guidance <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It was noted that during earlier discussions on this document in February and July, several technical questions repeatedly raised, leading to differing opinions. The conclusion at that time was that the document needed to be reviewed by experts to address specific key questions, such as those concerning Mucuna and appropriate cover crops. Clarification was sought on whether this expert review had taken place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that, following expert feedback, the focus has shifted to operationalising the standards. Two main points were highlighted: first, the procedural note for 7.3.3, which requires updating the NPP to reflect the new replanting requirements on marginal soil or steep terrain; and second, the note for 7.3.4, regarding the development of BMP for soil. The document is now at a stage similar to the earlier HCV discussions, with webinars having been exploratory. The proposal is to refine the current content by validating it through field visits. While operational realities may differ across plantations, the visits aim to establish a baseline for the BMP, which will provide guidance rather than being normative. The Secretariat stressed the importance of covering all relevant areas in the BMP. ● Further clarification was sought on the purpose and scope of the proposed field visit, with questions including the aim of the visit, whether it would involve only the Secretariat or include members, 	

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	<p>and whether the goal was to address outstanding questions in the document by gathering more data from the field or to trial the guidance and assess its applicability. Additionally, it was questioned whether a field visit was the most efficient way to answer specific technical questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that the purpose of the field visit is to gather insights directly from practitioners. The aim is to address specific gaps in the document, such as understanding common practices for controlling risks (e.g., using cover crops) and managing steep terrain in the field. The visit is not intended as a field trial but rather as an opportunity to learn from real-world practices and validate existing information. This data will be used to refine and enrich the guidance content. ● A member suggested that instead of a field visit, it would be more useful to ask growers for monitoring data on changes in soil erosion or water quality following the implementation of management practices, as this could provide valuable insights. They raised concerns about the field visit seeming more like a research trip and questioned whether existing research could address the necessary questions. Emphasising the need for a clear plan if new research is to be conducted, they called for a detailed outline of the aims, methodology, and sampling approach. Additionally, they stressed the importance of clarifying the specific questions being addressed, given the broad scope of the document, and considering how any new research fits within the wider context of existing documents. The member also suggested an interview-based study could be more effective, proposing the creation of a series of questions focused on recommended practices and scenarios, followed by engaging plantation managers. This would help gather insights on the pros and cons, limitations, opportunities, capacity, resources, and trade-offs associated with each scenario, as simply visiting a site and observing would not provide as much useful information. ● It was asked whether a literature review of soil management in oil palm or similar contexts had been conducted and whether clear recommended management practices had been concluded from it. Additionally, it was questioned if these practices had been incorporated into the document. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat confirmed that such a review had been conducted. Information on aspects like vegetation types and soil compactness are available, which can be used to determine suitable vegetation types and management 	

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	<p>approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There was some confusion regarding the scope of the discussion, as it was mentioned that the focus was on 7.3.4, but this indicator does not specifically mention steep slopes, only marginal or fragile soils. There was a concern that the soil guidance document being developed is just focused on soil erosion, whereas soil guidance encompasses broader issues, such as nutrient management, soil organic content, climate change mitigation, carbon storage, and leaching into water systems. It was also questioned whether this is part of a larger plan to create a comprehensive soil guidance document or if the focus remains solely on steep slopes and how it ties into marginal and fragile soils, which are not the same as steep slopes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Secretariat clarified that steep slopes and fragile soils overlap to some extent, as steep slopes often feature fragile soils. While the guidance is not yet inclusive of marginal soils, fragile soils are being addressed. ● A suggestion was made to create a single, integrated soil management document covering all aspects, including steep slopes, soil types, carbon storage, and nutrient recycling, to provide a comprehensive resource for growers. The development of steep terrain guidance is ongoing, while work on fragile and marginal soils is just beginning. It was suggested to prioritise the steep terrain guidance first and consider integrating all documents into a single resource later. ● The WG agreed that combining the different soil-related documents would be beneficial but was unclear on the purpose of the proposed field visit, thus delaying approval at this stage. The group debated whether to develop a clearer ToR for the combined document or refine the research questions for the current one. The Secretariat suggested listing key topics, such as steep terrain, fragile soils, and other specifications, to guide the ToR drafting. The group emphasised the importance of addressing interconnected factors like nutrient management, carbon storage, soil compaction, and climate mitigation, with cross-referencing to other areas. It was acknowledged that the content is highly technical, and the need for specialised experts to address specific research questions was raised. ● When asked about proceeding with the steep terrain document and linking everything later, the Secretariat outlined a stock-taking exercise to identify what is already covered, such as peatland or subsidence aspects, and highlight areas needing updates, 	<p>Soil TF and Secretariat to work on a modular approach first and integrate the rest of components later</p>

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	<p>particularly around permissions and approvals. These updates would fall under the BHCVWG's responsibility. The stock-taking could be included in the ToR, with an annex listing items requiring significant amendments but not immediate action. The WG would then decide on the next steps, considering the document pipeline and whether WG members or external parties should handle development. There was no objection to this, but it was noted that priority should be given to the key items in the RSPO P&C.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additionally, it was recognised that soil is increasingly seen as a fundamental component of resilient and sustainable agricultural practices, making it crucial for the RSPO to develop a strong document that reflects the state-of-the-art knowledge on good soil management, covering aspects like soil biodiversity, regenerative agriculture, and other relevant approaches. 	<p>Secretariat to conduct a stock taking exercise and to include them in the revised WG ToR, under annexe to indicate the amount of amendments and priority</p>
10	<p><u>RSPO Research Agenda</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RSPO research agenda was briefly discussed. The agenda outlines key research questions designed to inform and validate RSPO's Theory of Change (ToC) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework. It will focus on various themes to assess the performance and impact of RSPO's strategies, aiming to enhance effectiveness and explore innovative research avenues for the sustainable oil palm industry. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research agenda's list of questions was highlighted as a valuable tool to shape the BHCVWG's priorities, particularly regarding sustainable ecosystem and community livelihood management. It was recommended to revisit the agenda regularly to frame discussions and integrate it into the ToR. Members were encouraged to consider how these questions could guide the WG's work and provide feedback on better integrating research into future activities. • A query was raised about the five years of research from SEnSOR, questioning whether existing data already answers these questions or if further analysis is needed, emphasising the importance of fully utilising available research. 	<p>Members to provide comments, if any, to the RSPO Research Team.</p> <p>Secretariat to check with RSPO Research team</p>
11	<p><u>Review of BHCVWG & CTF2 ToR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current ToRs requires review and updating to ensure alignment with the adoption of the new standards. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions were centred on the content of the ToR in relation to the standard revision, with an emphasis on prioritising the release of normative or high-priority documents, ideally within a 12-month period. <p><i>Feedback/questions from the members:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group collectively agreed to revise the ToR. A clarification was made about the distinction between subgroups and task forces (TFs), with TFs being focused on specific deliverables and disbanded upon completion. It was agreed to use "task force," which will handle document development and present outputs to the BHCVWG for review. TFs may form smaller groups or hire external experts for specialised tasks but will not have approval authority; final decisions rest with the WG. The Secretariat will draft the ToR for WG approval, and TFs will oversee its implementation. A suggestion to consolidate TFs into a single group was considered, but it was noted that separate TFs are more effective for addressing technical and complex topics independently. In terms of implementability, it was suggested to invite representatives from certification bodies, such as auditors, to provide insights on auditability. Additionally, it was recommended to include social NGO representatives in every task force. There was a request to include smallholder representation in the WG composition/structure . In total, three additional TFs were agreed upon by the WG, in addition to the existing CTF2 group. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation Task Force: Interpretation of Indicator 7.7.1(C) and Annex 3 of the 2024 RSPO Principles & Criteria. HCV-HCS M&M Task Force: HCV-HCS management and monitoring guidance. Soil Management Task Force: Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Soil Management, including steep terrain, fragile & marginal soils. <p>[Note: The revised version will be a single, consolidated ToR. BHCVWG will serve as the umbrella group, with the other four task forces operating under it.]</p>	<p>Secretariat to prepare the draft ToR and to circulate to WG for review</p>
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	<p><i>Brief update on the HCV Change Request from a Grower Member</i></p> <p>[Note: This section of the meeting is closed-door and conducted under Chatham House Rules]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Request: A grower sought Secretariat guidance on constructing a road through HCV areas at the community’s request. The Secretariat advised submitting all relevant documents, including consultant recommendations, but clarified it lacks authority to approve such requests. ● Concerns: Allowing exceptions for development in HCV areas risks setting a dangerous precedent for further encroachments. The P&C mandates HCVs must be protected and enhanced. ● Consensus: The request should be rejected. Grower must be informed that road construction in HCV areas is prohibited under the P&C. ● Key Points: Addressing such requests requires extensive information on the specific HCV, and any discussions on potential changes must be documented carefully. BMPs should guide activities in surrounding areas to avoid harm to HCVs, not justify development within them. <p><i>Inquiry on Compensation Plan Validation and Changes in Compensation Area Size</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Request 1: An auditor asked if the compensation plan report undergoes third-party validation. The Secretariat acknowledged this issue has arisen before. While independent verification is required for liability calculations (e.g., LUCAs), there is confusion, and some stakeholders skip this step. This will be addressed in RaCP V2. ● Request 2: A grower reported a change in the compensation area size. The company initially committed to a specific area, but the actual area is larger, citing government rejection and community concerns. The Secretariat advised that discrepancies should be reported during the membership process and reviewed by the assurance team and compensation panel. This issue will be aligned with RaCP V2 procedures. ● Next Steps: The member was advised to contact the RSPO Assurance team for further action. Both issues are crucial, 	

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	<p>especially concerning governance. A clear, transparent procedure is needed to help members resolve such problems, and further discussions on establishing governance mechanisms will continue in future meetings.</p> <p><i>New Biodiversity Manager</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Biodiversity Manager will be joining the RSPO team in January 2025. <p><i>Upcoming BHCVWG Meeting Dates</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested to schedule the next meeting for late February, coinciding with the POC event in Kuala Lumpur. If urgent matters arise before then, a short meeting can be held to address them. <p><i>MoU between RSPO and HCVN</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSPO and HCVN have signed an MoU to formalise and strengthen their collaboration. 	
13	<p><u>End of meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Co-Chairs and the RSPO Secretariat thanked all the members for their participation in the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned. 	