



iseal
alliance

**The recognised experts on
what credibility looks like for
sustainability standards**

www.isealalliance.org

ISEAL Credibility Principles

The **Credibility Principles** will be applied by the whole standards system, which refers to the collective of organisations involved in and responsible for the activities involved in the implementation of a standard, including standard-setting, capacity building, assurance, labelling and monitoring.

TRUTHFULNESS

Claims and communications made by actors within standards systems and by certified entities about the benefits or impacts that derive from the system or from the purchase or use of a certified product or service are verifiable, not misleading, and enable an informed choice.

SUSTAINABILITY

Standards scheme owners clearly define and communicate their sustainability objectives and approach to achieving them.

They make decisions that best advance these objectives.

IMPARTIALITY

Standards systems identify and mitigate conflicts of interest throughout their operations, particularly in the assurance process and in governance. Transparency, accessibility and balanced representation contribute to impartiality.

ACCESSIBILITY

To reduce barriers to implementation, standards systems minimise costs and overly burdensome requirements. They facilitate access to information about meeting the standard, training, and financial resources to build capacity throughout supply chains and for actors within the standards system.

The ultimate aim of sustainability standards systems is to bring about positive social, environmental and economic impacts while decreasing negative impacts.

RIGOUR

All components of a standards system are structured to deliver quality outcomes. In particular, standards are set at a performance level that results in measurable progress towards the scheme’s sustainability objectives, while assessments of compliance provide an accurate picture of whether an entity meets the standard’s requirements.

RELEVANCE

Standards are fit for purpose. They address the most significant sustainability impacts of a product, process, business or service; only include requirements that contribute to their objectives; reflect best scientific understanding and relevant international norms; and are adapted where necessary to local conditions.

ENGAGEMENT

Standard-setters engage a balanced and representative group of stakeholders in standards development. Standards systems provide meaningful and accessible opportunities to participate in governance, assurance and monitoring and evaluation. They empower stakeholders with fair mechanisms to resolve complaints

IMPROVEMENT

Standards scheme owners seek to understand their impacts and measure and demonstrate progress towards their intended outcomes. They regularly integrate learning and encourage innovation to increase benefits to people and the environment.

EFFICIENCY

Standards systems refer to or collaborate with other credible schemes to improve consistency and efficiency in standards content and operating practices. They improve their viability through the application of sound revenue models and organisational management strategies.

TRANSPARENCY

Standards systems make relevant information freely available about the development and content of the standard, how the system is governed, who is evaluated and under what process, impact information and the various ways in which stakeholders can engage.

Integrating these principles increases the likelihood that a standards system will achieve its intended positive impacts.

**DELIVERING CREDIBLE
standards systems**



Research shows that ISEAL full membership is strongly linked to improved transparency, accessibility and rigour of a standards system.



52%

more likely to openly provide information
on their *dispute* and **complaint resolution**
systems



44%

more likely to openly provide information
on their development **procedures** for their
standards



34%

more likely to openly provide information
on their *certification* and *verification*
procedures

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TRANSPARENCY



37%

more likely to have certification costs
shared between **producers, supply chain**
actors and **standard systems**



34%

more likely to offer learning **assistance** to
producers



20%

more likely to offer financial assistance to
producers

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11

ISEAL members made **verified improvement** to their assurance practices since August **2016**



17

ISEAL members made **verified improvement** to their standard-setting practices since August **2011**



12

ISEAL members made **verified improvement** to their monitoring & evaluation practices since March **2014**