

The Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

Ensuring that biofuels deliver on their promise of sustainability



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Energy Center 

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We are an international multi-stakeholder initiative developing principles and criteria for sustainable biofuels production that will be:

- **Simple, accessible** and implemented worldwide
- **Generic** to all crops
- **Adaptable** to new information
- **Efficient and cheap** to measure
- **In line with WTO rules**
(use ISEAL code)



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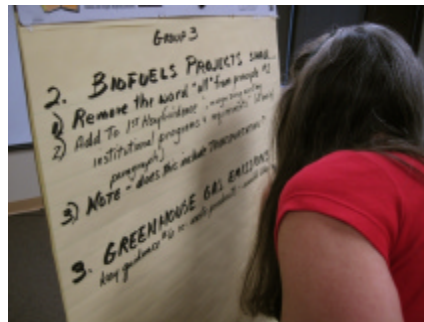
How is the RSB organized?

- Founding **Steering Board** composed of international stakeholders from WWF, UNEP, Swiss and Dutch governments, Shell, BP, Toyota, TERI India, Mali Folkecenter, Petrobras, UNICA, and others.
- **New governance structure** and open membership starting in 2009, with 'chambers' divided along the following lines: trade unions, small and large farmers, producers, financial institutions, petroleum and transportation industry, food security NGOs, indigenous people's groups, conservation NGOs, etc. Two members (one North, one South) from each chamber elected to a new Standards Board. Nearly 100 formal participants in new structure.
- One **Secretariat** based at EPFL. Part-time staff in South Africa, full-time Americas Coordinator in the US.



Stakeholder-driven

- Version Zero of the RSB standard drafted via open Working Groups, regional meetings, and **transparent standard-setting** using **BioenergyWiki.net**
- August 2008 - March 2009: **15+ Regional stakeholder meetings** held in Brazil, Mali, USA, Brussels, Bogotá, Kuala Lumpur, Mozambique, Buenos Aires, Nairobi, and Dominican Republic.
- Nearly 900 individuals and organisations from 40 countries participated in the feedback process.



Version Zero - RSB Standard

	Direct	Indirect
National Law (especially land, labor, water rights)	✓	
Community Consultation (especially to determine land rights, social & environmental impact, idle land, resolve grievances)	✓	
Social – biofuels should benefit rural communities and workers	✓	
should not contribute to food insecurity	✓	✓
GHG - significantly better over lifecycle than fossil fuel	✓	✓
Environmental – conserve and protect soil, water, air	✓	
conserve and protect high conservation values	✓	✓
Technology – (esp. biotech) should be used responsibly and transparently, contribute to income or sustainability	✓	
Economic Efficiency - economically viable, continuous improvement	✓	



Indirect impacts – RSB unique value-add

- None of the existing sustainability certification schemes address indirect impacts
- BUT the RSB cannot ignore them . . . enough evidence exists to say that there might be negative indirect effects for some crops and production systems
- BUT the RSB requires consensus for decision-making . . . and there is none
- We are trying to globalise the level of dialogue and to drive consensus wherever possible. In November, 2008 we hosted a scientific workshop in São Paulo with 63 experts from 17 countries to see if any consensus already exists . . .



Some consensus?

A first discussion on indirect impacts has been held with the new Chamber members. Consensus points include:

- The producer should not be held responsible for indirect impacts – she does not control the end use of her product
- The producer could be rewarded for activities with low risks of indirect impacts, for instance:
 - Yield improvements (either on her own farm or investing in someone else's, e.g. cattle intensification).
 - Using land that does not conflict with conservation needs nor short-term production of other crops ('degraded', 'idle, etc.)
 - Using residues and waste (carefully defined)

But lots of problems with definitions . . .

- 'Waste': IPCC definition is 'little to no economic value'. But there might be economic value for waste products in the future. And diverting the current waste use might have an indirect impact.
 - *Can probably not use a generic definition – will need to come up with a list of wastes that is periodically updated*
- Lands that do not compete w/other uses: Can identify regional trends, but very difficult to say if a particular piece of land will come into use or not. Some of these lands could also eventually be rehabilitated for biodiversity value.
- Yield improvements: Concern that we don't want to encourage the use of more inputs – are there adequate safeguards in place? How do we take into account regional/weather variation? And what about new crops?

And these 'low-risk' areas are too narrowly defined

- By only identifying three areas as 'low-risk', do we imply others are high-risk?
- The 'low-risk' areas are so narrowly defined that volume is probably minimal.
- Can we make some broad statements about other feedstocks and production practices that might also qualify as 'low-risk'?
- *Not without more scientific consensus, probably. RSB will continue to foster this type of dialogue and ensure North-South input.*

Preliminary thoughts – how a certification system might address indirect impacts

- All of these low-risk activities could be measured through a third-party audit, or 'default values' of risk created per crop & production method.
- Blenders participating in the RSB could be required over time to get the buy more lower-risk fuels as a %age of their purchases, making a market for better practices.

But note

- *Consensus in the new RSB Chambers seems to be that it is too early to propose such a policy right now, but we need to push forward on this quickly.*

Timeline

- Joint Board meeting May 26-27th to discuss feedback on Version Zero, adopt Version One this summer.



By end 2009:

- Independent benchmarking system to recognize other standards.
- Chain of custody system designed, based on user needs (clearing house?)
- Coordinate pilot testing of draft standards in real supply chains
- Encourage/foster crop-specific better practice definitions (e.g. jatropha) and national interpretations

RSB eventually will make (non-attributable) volume information available to policy-makers to help assess risks of indirect impacts.



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