

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

An initiative of the EPFL Energy Center



Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) Working group on SOCIAL ISSUES (SOC WG)

Background documents- Paper 2 General overview, principles and scope

Co-chairs and Coordinator:

To be determined. Sebastien.Haye@epfl.ch is the main contact for the moment.

Purpose:

The social issues related to the production, transport and trade of biomass are numerous and have emerged as a threat to the credibility and potential of biofuels as a source of development and livelihood improvement among farmers, agricultural labors and smallholders, especially from Southern countries.

Within the RSB, the Working Group on Social Issues aims to set global principles, criteria and indicators, for the socio-economic aspects of biofuel production, to ensure that they deliver on their promise of sustainability. This Working Group has to cover all possible major social impacts that could result from the cultivation, harvesting, transport and processing of biofuels. Not only must these draft standards prevent negative impacts, but also promote the positive social development impacts of biofuels' production, as the potential contribution of biofuels to rural development and employment is often highlighted as a major driver of support for biofuels.

The SOC WG will work on a participative basis, meaning that each participant can initiate discussions on the topics of concern, debate with the other participants and form contrary opinions. Each decision regarding the draft and final principles, as well as the draft criteria and indicators will be preferably agreed by consensus or by simple majority, but always through a democratic process of consultation. The communication and meetings will be held through any available technology that allows quick, clear and thorough exchanges among the participants with the aim of minimizing travel and consequent GHG emissions. This is why, in addition to the regional (cross-Working Group) stakeholder meetings that will be held in person, web communication (Bioenergy wiki: http://www.bioenergywiki.net/index.php/Roundtable_on_Sustainable_Biofuels), blogs, e-mails, and conference calls have to be used as often as possible.

Several existing documents and production standards already include relevant principles of socio-economic development, and the RSB compiled many of them in order to propose draft principles of sustainable biofuels production and processing. The current principles related to social impacts proposed by the RSB Steering Board are:

- **Biomass production should contribute to the well-being of communities, workers and rural populations.**
- **Biomass production should not contribute to food insecurity.**

In addition, the first draft principle regarding national law could also cover many social issues, for instance labor and land rights:

- **Biomass production should comply with all local and national laws, including labor laws and recognizing land and water rights. If such legislation does not exist, international norms shall be the reference.**

These principles have been suggested based on the current best thinking, as per previous documents published by international organizations, GOs and NGOs to develop sustainability criteria for biofuels. Their formulation and content will be discussed among all the participants throughout the oncoming months, with the aim to definitively validate them by December 2007.

Ultimately, the SOC WG aims to develop and discuss on the translation of these principles into applicable criteria and indicators on a worldwide perspective of implementation. Our aim is to have a draft version of the criteria and indicators to meet these socio-economic principles by May, 2008.

Membership

Almost seventy people have registered for the Social Impacts Working Group (listed below). As with the other Working Groups, we have inadequate participation from Africa and southeast Asia, so please invite your contacts from these regions to participate, especially small farmers and labour rights organizations.

Name	Institution/Company
Adrian Müller	CCRS, University of Zurich
Agenor Mundim	Brazilian Foundation for Sustainable Development
Alice Woodhead	Link Strategy
Amin Asadollahi	Natural Resources Canada
Annie Sugrue	
Antti Arasto	VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland
Arrigo della Gherardesca	Green Energy ITALIA srl + Italian African Alliance
Asep Suntana	Forest Systems and Bio-energy Program, Univ. Washington
Barbara Bramble	National Wildlife Federation
Barbara Oliveira	WTO
Benjamin Hay	Nandan Biomatrix
Bettina Schreck	Univ of Cambridge
Bijou Lulla	
Carlo Pereira	Petrobio Ind. e Comercio de Eq. para Biodiesel
Carmen Virasoro	Sustentable SRL
Christian Schaible	European Biodiesel Board
Claire Bussy Pestalozzi	International Labour Organisation
Daniel Gilman	National Wildlife Federation
Dr. Ana Maria Bravo-Angel	Genencor
Emilie Pons	Institut d'études politiques de Paris
Emilio Font-de-Mora	APPA Biofuels
Enrique Manzanilla	
Eric Shayer	Infinity Bioenergy
Flo DiBona	
François Vuille	E4Tech Sàrl

Name	Institution/Company
Gerald Knauf	German NGO Forum on Environment and Development
Heidi Quante	Sustainable Biodiesel Alliance
Ilmari Lastikka	Neste Oil
Jean Baptiste de Vevey	Université de Lausanne
Jean-Francois Dallemand	Joint Research Centre, European Commission
Jennifer Taylor, PhD	Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
Jeremie Mercier	Imperial College
Jeroen Douglas	Solidaridad
Jonas Dallinger	University Muenster
Judy Siegel	Renew the Earth
Julie Robson	Fauna and Flora International
Kirk Leonard	Marion Polk Food Share, Salem, Oregon
Lars Friberg	Potsdam University
Laurens Rademakers	Biopact
Lorenzo di Lucia	lund university
Lynette Warren	Centre for Sustainable Technologies
Martijn Verdonk	Grontmij
Martina Otto	UN Environment Programme
Meghan Sapp	HG Consulting
Monica Romano	IFAD
Nicolae Scarlat	Joint Research Centre, European Commission
Olivier Genevieve	Ethical Sugar
Patrick Avato	The World Bank
Peter Rowan	Nawor Independent Development Experts
Phani Mohan Krishna	Anagha Datta Trade
Philipp Schukat	GTZ
Rainer Krell	FAO
Richard Forrest	National Wildlife Federation
Rob Bailey	Oxfam GB
Sauman Das Gupta	
Stefan Mard	Novozymes
Susanne Stulemeijer	Hill & Knowlton
Sylvia Breukers	
Thomas Odgaard	Novozymes SA
Thomas Ruddy	EMPA
Tiina Tuominen	Neste Oil Corporation
Touria Dafrallah	Enda Third World
Valerie Nelson	Natural Resources Institute
Vineet Raswant	IFAD
Wyn Ellis	GTZ
Yen Chin Tho	ED & F Man
Zane Abdul	

Timeline and Workplan

The RSB Steering Board has delegated to the SOC Working Group the task of developing sustainability criteria and indicators in order to tackle any social impact of biofuel production chains. Ultimately, the SOC WG aims to develop and discuss the translation of these principles into globally applicable criteria and indicators of sustainable biofuel production, for recommendations to the RSB Steering Board. Our aim is to have a draft version of the criteria and indicators needed to meet these social principles by May, 2008.

To achieve this ambitious goal, we hope to take the following approach:

1. For each subject, the Working Group will submit a proposal of criteria to the Steering Board, which will then be examined by the Steering Board and accepted, unless the Working Group is asked to add necessary modifications.

2. To maximize efficiency, the Working Group will address one subject at a time, with the goal of coming to consensus on how to address one subject and then moving on to the next subject. For instance, all the concerns related to labor rights and worker well-being will be continuously addressed over a period of approximately three months: one month of preparation/compilation of documents by the WG Coordinator, one month of discussion among the WG members (including a group teleconference), and one month to submit a summary of the discussion and an overall recommendation to the Steering Board. The WG will then move on to the next principles/area of concern (for instance, water protection and conservation).

The goal is to have partial decisions made throughout the year by the Steering Board, such that within twelve months an overall draft standard has been decided piecemeal.

However, if important changes have to be made to previously covered topics, the WG could decide to reopen the topic, and suggest changes to the Steering Board.

This subject-specific timeline will also accommodate those WG members who are more interested in a particular topic – they can choose to actively contribute to the discussions in a specific field, and be more passive for other topics.

3. Small Expert Advisory Groups will be constituted for each main subject – specifically workers and labor rights, food security, rural development, and land and water rights. These Expert Advisory Groups will work in depth with the RSB Secretariat on one of the topics to be covered and formulate suggestions to the rest of the Working Group for approval. Participation in one of the Expert Advisory Groups means a greater contribution (time and technical inputs), but for a limited period (approximately three months). Composition of these Expert Groups will be coordinated by the Secretariat, with the goals of creating a small but diverse expert group.
4. During the first month a topic is worked on, the co-chairs and the coordinator, along with the Expert Advisory Group, will work jointly to prepare relevant background papers, for instance summaries of how other schemes address the particular issue (with the aim of recognizing other certification schemes and best practice definitions). These background papers will be submitted to be discussed by the entire Working Group, and inform the draft criteria and indicators that the Working Group will suggest to the Steering Board.
5. *Note on indirect impacts.* Product-specific standards can provide a good indicator of how a farmer or facility can *directly* implement sustainable practices, but are not always the best tool to deal with *indirect* effects of biofuels production. Food security represents a good example of this. A farm with excellent labor conditions and environmental practices that was previously selling to the food market but is now selling to the biofuels market has reduced the available food supply, which could result in an increase in food prices and might have negative impacts on poor urban populations. This would be a macroeconomic impact which is not the result of her particular *direct* practices on the farm (which could be considered sustainable) but other broader interactions of food and agriculture markets.

In our WG, we hope to develop other tools besides product-specific standards or certification that could deal with these displaced or indirect effects. Within each topic,

we will try to separate these direct and indirect impacts, and recommend the best tool (standards or otherwise) to mitigate any adverse impacts.

The timeline below is a draft, with topics to be added, deleted, and/or re-arranged during the first SOC WG meeting, to be held in early September.

Timeline - Social Impacts Working Group

	2007								2008					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Constitution of Working Groups														
SOC Working Group meetings/conf call														
SOC Working Group scope definition														
Feedback on Round 1 general RSB principles (only SOC principles)														
Feedback on Round 2 general RSB principles (only SOC principles)														
Criteria & Indicator Development														
<i>Rural development and community well-being</i>														
<i>Labor rights and worker well-being</i>														
<i>Food security</i>														
<i>Land and water rights</i>														
Regional Workshops														
Pilot Testing of draft principles & criteria														
Draft standards (criteria & indicators) compiled														
Draft standards approved														
Begin Phase Two Recommendations (IMP WG)														
Implement Phase Two														