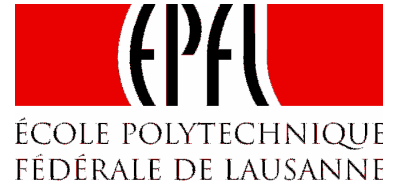


Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels

An initiative of the EPFL Energy Center



5th Virtual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment (Synthesis)

4th of December 2007

[For full minutes, please consult the background paper no 18]

1. Objectives of the meeting:

In the frame of defining criteria on conservation and biodiversity, this 5th meeting aimed to find a consensus on the synthesis suggested in the background paper n° 17 (“Draft Synthesis on Conservation Criteria”) regarding **Criteria and Principle on Conservation**.

As per the timeline, the Working Group was supposed to deliver a first draft of criteria by the month of December. On the one hand, it appears that more time is needed for discussions and the RSB Secretariat is committed not to “dash” the work on criteria. On the other hand, we have to follow the timeline agreed by the Steering Board. The intermediary possibility is hence to deliver a progress report and it appears that a table would be a good and clear format to present the main outputs of our discussions without a fixed wording, while raising all the points that need further debate.

The synthesis table (Criteria on Conservation) with the latest edits from the conference is included in the last page!

General Comments/Questions from the Participants:

- Concerns about the influence of the RSB on the existing biofuels program. The RSB has not yet decided of a formal position on that; for now, governments may comply on a voluntary basis, if standards are of a high quality.
- The principles should be action-oriented
- Producers will need technical support in the identification of HCV areas.
- Biodiversity offsets might be necessary because of unawareness of producers about the importance of biodiversity.

2. General News:

- The 2nd Expert Panel has recently started discussing the questions of **biotechnologies**. The objective is to suggest the **necessary criteria to promote the use of sustainable biotechnologies** to the Working Group **by the beginning of 2008**.
- The **RSB has held a side event during Michelin’s Bibendum challenge in Shanghai (13th and 14th of November), in partnership with the UN Environment Program and has invited almost 40 participants from several East Asian countries, US and Europe** to share their vision and concerns regarding biofuel production in their geographical context. For the most vulnerable people in these countries, there is a need to establish the **local access to benefits as a priority**, since many farmers or indigenous people face a lose-

- lose situation so far... **The use of HCV concept was strongly encouraged.** In these regions, there is an urgent need to secure and protect peatlands and mangroves, which are among the most fragile and threatened ecosystems.
- The **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)** has held its 5th Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur the week after and it was very enriching to follow the discussions, as they are far ahead in the process.
 - All the experts met in Shanghai and KL ensured that as a concept, the HCV is enough to cover every possible area with an intermediary step to be promoted: a **national interpretation of HCV areas** (so far, it was done in Indonesia, China, Russia, Malaysia and Bulgaria).
 - So far, the RSPO has not solved the problem of the access of smallholders to the compliance with standards.

Additional information about the RSPO's **Smallholder Task Force (STF)** can be found at: http://www.rspo.org/STF_Background_-_Introduction.aspx

3. Discussion on the content of the Synthesis Table :

[The original version of the table is included in the background paper n° 17. The synthesis table with the latest edits from the conference and after is included at the end of this document.]

- **Peatlands and Mangroves** can already be considered as HCV ecosystems.
- Some participants are in favor of introducing the concept of **offsets and compensation** mechanisms, in order to match the reality of business. Several participants disagree on this point, with the concern that this could create loopholes and not ensure the highest level of protection of HCV areas. **Furthermore, this aspect has not been discussed by the Expert Panel and remains absent from other standards (RSPO, FSC...).**
- From the business perspective, it looks like **compensation is the last resort** (avoid, minimize and mitigate before compensate). It has been heard often that we should leave this open, otherwise it will be unrealistic.

The secretariat will remove the mention of offsets from the table and introduce this point in another fashion, while stating that some participants seriously disagree on the concept. As it looks like a very complex concept, which can be understood in very different fashions, additional information will be distributed among the working group members before moving further on this discussion, which will hence remain open.

4. Discussion on Good Practices

- For some participants, the promotion of **degraded land** and **Crop rotation** should be clearly brought forward as the RSB's first preferences, not only as suggestions.
- **Positive guidance** could perhaps be included at the indicators level.
- The notion of having a piece of good practices under each principle sounds good, although some good practices may have involvement in several principles.
- For all the terms used in the standards (ex: degraded lands), a set of definition must be annexed.

The Working Group agrees on having a piece of good practices under each principle, in addition to what, overlapping good practices can be compiled under a separate principle. Ultimately a single document gathering all the good practices to promote can be made.

The secretariat informs the participants that some recommendations are to be suggested to the Working Group on Implementation, including the need to promote global land use management at a national level. This would include a strong promotion of crop rotations. As there are so many technical terms we are to use in the standards, a set of definitions must be seriously worked on, not at the criteria level, but to be annexed to the standards.

5. Wording of the Principle on Conservation

Original Suggestion: Biofuel production should avoid significant impacts on wildlife populations, or areas of High Conservation Value.

- Although “minimize” is proposed, participants, however, tend to prefer **“avoid significant impacts”**, because it is stronger and clearer. “Biodiversity” is a more comprehensive and a clearer term than “wildlife”, with more references in international conventions.
- “Negative Impacts” must be specified; significant can be removed as using “should” (instead of “must”) already shows some realism (“Significant” was originally added for this purpose, as impacts are unavoidable).

The group agrees on the wording: “Biofuel production should avoid negative impacts on biodiversity and areas of High Conservation Values.” The list of definitions to be annexed to the standards will include a clear definition of what the group understands as “impacts”, as per the principle.

6. Conclusions and next steps:

- The coordinator has drafted an “official” list of suggestions to be sent to the **Implementation Working Group**, it will be sent to the ENV WG members for consultation and finalized by the end of December 2007.
- Members still have a few days to comment the draft synthesis (Conservation Criteria)
- Suggestions will be made toward the Steering Board regarding in person meetings.
- RSB comes first on Google US after typing “biofuels, crop, production, standards and protocol”!

The next Virtual Meeting of the Working Group (Biotechnologies) will be held in January 2008.

Thanks to all the participants; the secretariat wishes the RSB members a merry Christmas and a marvelous year 2008!

Please keep on sending your views, comments and opinion to sebastien.haye@epfl.ch or upload them on the **Bioenergy Wiki** (http://www.bioenergywiki.net/index.php/RSB_Working_Group_on_Environment) for an interactive debate!

ANNEX: Synthesis Table on Conservation Criteria (2nd version)

Criterion	Theme	Content	Status/Points of disagreement	Remarks
7.a	Identification of production site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Responsibility of the producer in the identification of HCV areas, Native ecosystems, ecological corridors and other biological conservation areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consensus on a distinction between small and large farmers' responsibilities. ➤ Governments must be involved in a global mapping exercise but producers must provide data accordingly to their means. ➤ The identification of surrounding areas poses the problem of land ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ HCV areas defined as per the HCV network definition. ➤ Timing of identification needs to be defined. Type of assessment not defined: quick EIA? LCA? ➤ Support mechanisms to help producers must be discussed. Maybe in the IMP WG? ➤ Distinction between small/large producers based on land areas or biofuel production capacities? ➤ Is a separate set of criteria, with appropriate wording needed for small producers?
7.b	HCV areas, native ecosystems, ecological corridors and other biological conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No conversion of such areas. ➤ Limited exploitation under appropriate management as long as HCVs are maintained. ➤ Conversion of areas having lost their HCVs (degraded after a cut-off date) allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Almost at consensus. ➤ The group considers that HCV includes both terrestrial and marine ecosystems, including mangroves and peatlands. ➤ Debate: This criterion might be too strict and not workable from a business perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cut-off date to be established for use of former HCV areas, which have lost their HCVs. ➤ Needs to define degraded lands somewhere in the standards
7.c	Ecosystem functions and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoid or minimise negative effects on EF and ES. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consensus (Wording agreed). ➤ Need to define what a producer would concretely have to do to achieve this (IMP WG?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ecosystem functions include ecosystem physico-chemical integrity, regeneration and succession; genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity; natural cycles

				that affect the productivity of the ecosystem. Ecosystem services are the benefits obtained by people from ecosystems. These include provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting services, as defined by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
7.d	Buffer zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BZ must be set between production site and surrounding areas. ➤ Riparian zones to be kept in a natural state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consensus on the concept. ➤ Definition of “natural” is problematic. ➤ Guidance needed in terms of methodology and timing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BZ not forcefully at the edge of each cluster, if part of a clustered production site
7.e	Ecological Corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Avoid disruption. ➤ If an EC is identified in the production site, it must be maintained in its original state. ➤ In case habitat connectivity or wildlife movement is reduced, a significant area of the production site must be set aside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consensus on the concept. ➤ Need to define a % of the area to be set aside. ➤ To allow compensating through set aside land is contradictory with “avoiding disruption”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Could BZ and EC be the same set-aside land?
7.f	Good practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote the use of degraded land, native species, crop rotation, global landscape management system, no-till practices, green harvesting (no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consensus: The group is in favour to have pieces of good practices under each principle, including conservation. Ultimately, a general principle could compile all the good practices related to a specific principle and those overlapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Point superficially discussed due to limited time. ➤ Some participant would like crop rotation and use of degraded land to be promoted in a stronger fashion than just as a suggestion.

		pre-harvesting burning), one-pass harvesting system.	between several principles. For example: the use of native species could have an effect on conservation and water management.	➤ All the good practices found by other groups could be ultimately compiled as a single document.
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General comments:

- A list of definitions of all the terms used in the principles and criteria will need to be annexed to the standards.
- According to some feedbacks we received, HCV areas cover everything including fragmented native ecosystems and all types of biological conservation areas. Hence, is it necessary to cite the latter in the wording?
- The HCV concept lacks mapped areas. Practical implementation of a standard requires that specific HCV areas be located areas may be difficult to map, unless we refer to national interpretation with the establishment of proxy criteria.
- Global Land-use management is to be promoted in the standards (Reference to CCBA standards)

Point of debate: Some participants would like the notion of **offsets** to be introduced when development in one or more of these areas is unavoidable. There should be some recognition of a compensation mechanism that under the circumstances of **unavoidable impact** to an area of HCV (once defined), and that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied (i.e. avoid, reduce, mitigate), can kick-in (e.g. like-for-like or like-for-unlike biodiversity offset). Several participants disagree with the idea to introduce offsets, as it could create loopholes regarding protection of HCV areas. It has been however agreed that, whenever this notion was to be introduced, **it should not be in the criteria, but rather at the implementation stage.**