

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels
Minutes of the First Meeting of the Working Groups on Social Issues and Implementation
23rd July 2007

1. List of attendees*.

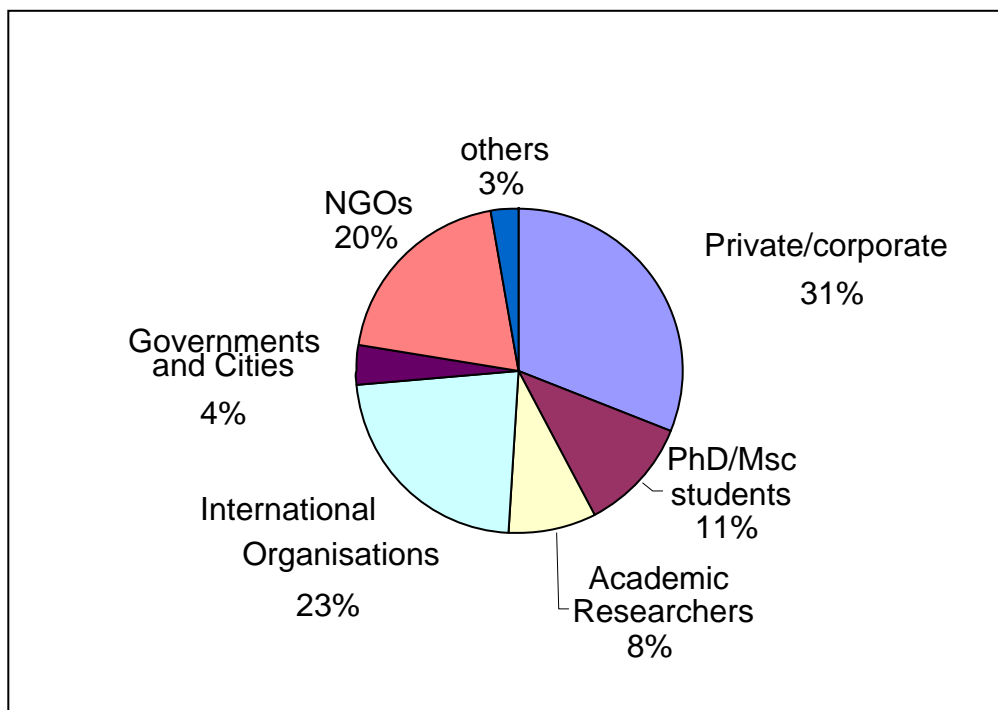
Charlotte Opal	Lars Friberg	Amin Asadollahi
Sebastien Haye	Stefan Mård	Justus Von Geibler
Thomas Ruddy	Ruaraidh Petre	Suzanne Hunt
Rob Bailey	Martina Otto	Eric Shayer

*For technical reasons, Mrs Annie Sugrue was unable to reach the Conference Call at the last minute.

Note: For organisational reasons, it is very important that each participant register on “doodle” prior to the conference call.

2. Synthesis of the Questionnaire:

The majority of participants are from **Europe and North America**, a few from **Latin America**, but we do not have many participants from **Africa and Asia**. Hence, every participant is invited to recruit people from these regions to join us!



Composition of the SOC WG (IMP WG similar)

The compositions of the two Working Groups are very similar; so far, **70 and 71 participants** have respectively signed up for the SOC and IMP Working Groups. Many participants are registered in both.

Participants bring various **fields of expertise** such as (non-exhaustive list):

- Biofuel production and trade
- Economics
- Social Sciences
- Environmental Sciences and climatology
- Development
- Land right issues and environmental conflicts
- Law and labor rights
- Standardisation
- Food and agricultural engineering
- Corporate Social Responsibility and Clean Development Management
- Political sciences and international relations
- International trade

The majority of participants envisage **alternate active and passive** participation. Because we will be handling each topic over approximately a three-month period, participants can choose to be more active on one topic and more passive on another one. It seems that all of them have a clear idea about the RSB objectives and all the remarks done regarding objectives and issues to be addressed are coherent, as regards the RSB views.

Apart from most everyone's agreement on the topics to be covered by the principles, participants have highlighted the following points as their **interests/concerns/expectations**:

- Food security in developing countries
- The indicators for evaluation
- Economic sustainability of small/large scale biofuel channels and dependency on oil price
- The land use and competition between the different exploitations of soil
- The leakage effect
- Coordination with other similar initiatives to avoid overlaps and a harmonized monitoring
- The use of RSB's standards in market place and by governments
- The transparency of RSB process
- The representation of farmers and foresters
- The absence of the consumption side in the principles (energy efficiency and use reduction)

3. Charlotte then went over the SOC and IMP Working Group goals and timeline outlined in the background paper.

4. Questions asked during the Meeting

- ***So, the job of the IMP Working Group is to review the review of the other Working Groups?***

The IMP WG should be a ‘reality check’ on the suggestions coming out of the other Working Groups. By learning from pilot studies and from our members’ experience with other certification schemes, we hope to inform the other Working Groups about the feasibility of their suggestions being followed in the field.

- ***Will the other Working Groups work simultaneously/ in parallel?***

Yes, with dialogues/feedback from the IMP WG to the other WGs (and vice-versa) being coordinated at the RSB Secretariat.

- ***How will the pilot testing be organised?***

A combination between collecting the learning from other initiatives and the development of our own field projects. In our first IMP WG meeting, we will create a map/list of all of the pilot testing of sustainability standards we know are happening, and identify where it would be useful to start new tests, or have more information (for instance feedstocks, producer sizes, production types, or regions which have not yet been studied). Then we will recruit stakeholders to set up tests for those areas.

- ***Does anyone know at which stage the German standard is at currently?***

Point of information (after the meeting) from the RSB Secretariat: The first version of the German government’s sustainability criteria for biofuels (and reporting system) should be published in August or September of this year.

- ***RSB principles: they are generic, not specific...will they become more focused on certain channels? Crop specific?***

The goal is to create a balance between globally applicable, generic criteria that somehow recognizes the existence of best practice in sustainable agriculture as defined in other feedstocks. One of the tasks of the IMP Working Group will be to advise how to structure the criteria and indicators so that they can be generic yet take into account crop-specific concerns.

- ***Martina Otto announced that UNEP is currently setting up a group to share learnings and define best practices for Jatropha. They are working on background documentation and will hold a workshop in the fall.***
- ***What if the IMP WG disagrees with the approach of another WG, who is to take the decision?***

Technically, the Steering Board makes final decisions. But as they, too, work on consensus, any controversial issues should ideally be worked out in the Working Groups beforehand. We foresee a dialogue among the Working Groups to create joint proposals to the Steering Board, with as many rounds of ‘back-and-forth’ between the groups as necessary, coordinated by the RSB Secretariat.

- ***What are the “comments pages” on the wiki?***

In fact, for each article published on the wiki, there is the main page (anyone can edit unless it's been protected) under the “article” tab, and there is a page dedicated to the comments and debates about the article, accessible by clicking on the “discussion” tab. Regarding the pages dedicated to the RSB draft principles, the organisation and connections are a little more complex, since we need to visualise the original standards, suggestions of editing, history of editing and general comments about the draft principles. Hence several pages are connected and different links exist to access either the “article” pages or related “discussion” pages. For any question about the wiki, please contact: richard.forrest@yahoo.com

- ***One of the principles about implementation is to comply with national laws but what if national legislation is not well implemented?***

It is true that one of the reasons many stakeholders ask for 3rd party certification in other products is because they cannot be sure that law is being followed. Often the right laws are in place, but the government does not have the funds or capacity to enforce them. One of the jobs of the IMP Working Group will be to balance the wish to not have an overly burdensome system of proof while being sure that the principles are being followed.

- ***What if comments on draft principles come into the wrong category?***

Secretariat has to sort the comments and switch from one category to another if needed.

Below are some questions/answers from the first joint meeting of the ENV and GHG WG (28 June, 2007) that might be of interest to those who did not participate

- ***Should we be worried about legitimacy because of lack of Southern participation?***

RSB: We will be hosting a number of regional stakeholder discussions in developing countries, and the feedback from those discussions will be presented to the Working Groups. Hopefully we can pick up more developing-country participation there. However, we encourage all WG members to invite others to participate to ensure a global discussion.

- ***What if we can't reach consensus?***

RSB: We must do everything we can to reach consensus. There is a lot of will among stakeholders from NGOs, producers, and industry to create principles and criteria for sustainable biofuels. We have to reach consensus. We drafted the principles based on already existing documents, for instance the RSPO, FSC, Low CVP, Cramer Criteria, WWF Germany, German NGO Forum, National Wildlife Federation and CERES Southern Africa suggestions, so hopefully we will not have anything too controversial. However, if we cannot reach consensus on a principle that is particularly controversial and cannot agree on a wording, we will have to drop it.

Note added by Charlotte Opal after the meeting:

We don't mean to imply that it will be easy to build consensus around some particularly contentious issues (for instance, GMOs). Right now, we don't have a balanced stakeholder governance structure in the Working Groups, which would be the only way to make voting legitimate. It would take a long time to define stakeholders and to agree on a balanced governance structure, and given that draft principles and criteria are needed as soon as possible, we could develop these things in parallel. Throughout the year, the Implementation Working Group will make recommendations for Phase two of the project (to begin in a year's time), which would outline a governance structure for the Roundtable and set up a balanced system going forward. Thus far, we are pretty fortunate that we have participants from several countries and sectors, and all types of different businesses.

In the interim, we have tried to create a representative multi-stakeholder Steering Board, which takes decisions based on consensus (or two-thirds vote if absolutely necessary) and whose members are free to leave at any time. According to their terms of reference:

5. Decision-making

The Steering Board will do its best to make recommendations based on the consensus of Board members. However, if no consensus can be built, decisions can be taken by two-thirds majority. In this case, when the decision is communicated, it should be noted that a consensus could not be reached, and that a two-thirds majority vote had to be taken. If requested, the minority opinion, and number of dissenters vs. those in agreement, could be published alongside the decision.

Thus our legitimacy at the moment rests on the fact that if a significant type of stakeholder leaves, we could lose this multi-stakeholder aspect and thus legitimacy – it is therefore very much in the Roundtable's interest to try to achieve consensus so as not to waste all of our work by losing legitimacy in such a way. We also must make every effort to make sure that the Working Groups include participants from several different regions and sectors. If the Steering Board finds that recommendations coming out of the Working Groups were not made via a multi-stakeholder process, they will probably not accept those recommendations, and we will have to start over.

I hope that we can achieve much consensus by defining minimum criteria but also by defining at the same time 'higher bar' through a scorecard or incentive system, which would allow really excellent performance to be rewarded as such. This might relieve pressure on trying to get really high standards incorporated into the minimums (around which it might be difficult to achieve consensus), by allowing best practice to be recognized and promoted.

- ***How will we incorporate the other processes that are ongoing (in individual countries, European Commission level, etc.?) What is the added value of the Roundtable?***

We will have to recognize other national and regional processes, but the whole point is that farmers and companies don't have multiple rules for multiple markets. Ideally, we could bring any EC consensus to a global platform where Americans, Brazilians, etc. could learn about it and see if it suits their needs.

- *The timeline is set based on having a certain number of principles. What if other principles are added?*

Good point – we will have to remain flexible in our timeline.

- *Will there be any in-person meetings?*

Originally, we thought there would only be one at the end of the first year (June 2008), but many people have been asking for in-person meetings, so we will likely organize a European meeting in early 2008 where Working Group members could meet in person to work in-depth on the draft criteria. There will be regional stakeholder dialogues with as many producing countries as possible so that non-English speakers and non-Internet users can also give feedback into the Roundtable.

- *Is this process definitely headed for third-party certification?*

It is not definite that we will create a standard or certification system – we could also create a voluntary code of conduct. But given the way other processes have turned out, it is likely that stakeholders will ask for a third-party system to be created. Certification is good at capturing direct impacts of production systems (for instance, how a particular farm treated its soils), but not indirect effects (for instance, that this farm displaced food production into a protected forest). We will have to come up with other tools besides certification to handle these indirect effects, and will be looking to the WGs to come up with ideas for how to tackle these issues.