

**RSPO**

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

# **RSPO Accreditation and Certification Requirements for Group Certification**

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## Terms and Definitions

<b>Additional assessment</b>	Assessment carried out by certification body to evaluate effectiveness of corrective action taken by the Group Manager to address any non conformity assigned.
<b>Accreditation</b>	Formal third-party attestation that a certification body is competent to undertake a specific certification.
<b>Certification</b>	The procedure by which a third party gives written assurance that a clearly identified process has been methodically assessed such that adequate confidence is provided that specified products conform to specified requirements <b>[Definition from: <i>IFOAM Accreditation Criteria</i>].</b>
<b>Certification assessment</b>	Process by which a certification body evaluates an operation against specific standards and/or other normative documents.
<b>Certification body</b>	Third party that assesses and certifies the conformity of organizations with respect to published standards or other normative documents <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Certification Systems Document – June 2007</i>]</b>  In this document, the term ‘Certification Body’ refers specifically to RSPO-approved bodies to assess oil palm growers for compliance to RSPO requirements.
<b>Certified Fresh Fruit Bunches</b>	Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) from an RSPO certified plantation.
<b>Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO)</b>	Palm oil from an RSPO certified mill (with its supply base) <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems Document – November 2009</i>]</b>
<b>Crude Palm Oil (CPO)</b>	First stage palm oil product produced from fresh fruit bunches (FFB) at a mill <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems – November 2009</i>].</b>
<b>Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB)</b>	Harvested oil palm fruit bunches.
<b>Fundamental Failure</b>	Fundamental failure is indicated by non-conformity which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continues over a long period of time</li> <li>• Is repeated or systematic</li> <li>• Affects a wide area or causes significant damage</li> <li>• Is indicated by the absence or a total breakdown of a system or</li> <li>• Is not corrected or adequately responded to by the group manager once identified</li> </ul> <p><b>[Definition from: <i>Forest Stewardship Council's Forest Management Evaluations FSC-STD-20-007 (v.3.0) EN</i>]</b></p>

<b>Formal Group Member</b>	An oil palm grower that has been accepted in the group as a formal member for inclusion in RSPO group certification. All formal group members shall comply to the required relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production as a prerequisite to joining a group
<b>Group Certification</b>	Joint certification of a group of oil palm growers with the certification applying to the whole group.
<b>Group Manager</b>	Person or group of people responsible for running the internal control system and managing the group. In some certification schemes, the Group Manager entity is sometimes referred to as an <i>Internal Control System Unit</i>
<b>Group Management documentation</b>	A documented set of procedures and processes that a group implements to achieve its specified requirements. This also includes the Internal Control System (ICS).
<b>Independent Growers</b>	Oil palm growers where the plantation is not associated with a mill (by contract, credit agreement or other similar means) and where there is no exclusive contract to sell FFB to any particular miller/grower. Independent growers may be smallholders (see 'smallholders' definition).
<b>Internal Assessment</b>	Process undertaken by the Group Manager to assess the members of a group against particular standards, other normative documents and internal policies.
<b>Internal assessor</b>	Assessor given overall responsibility by Group Manager for specified internal assessment of group members.
<b>Lead assessor</b>	Assessor with overall responsibility for a certification assessment.
<b>Major non-conformity</b>	Non-conformity to a compulsory indicator as defined within the RSPO Principles and Criteria or relevant National Interpretation  or  A serious non-conformity by the group manager in relation to compliance with the Group Certification Standard, which leads the certification body to conclude that internal group control systems are not functioning adequately.
<b>Minor non-conformity</b>	Non-conformity to a non-compulsory indicator as defined within the RSPO Principles and Criteria or relevant National Interpretation  or  Where there is non-conformity by the group manager in relation to compliance with the Group Certification Standard, which is isolated and does not prevent internal group control systems from functioning adequately.
<b>National Interpretation</b>	Interpretation of the RSPO Generic Principles & Criteria for a specific country.
<b>Prospective Group Member</b>	An oil palm grower that is part of a programme to achieve compliance with RSPO requirements as organized by a group. Once the prospective member is in compliance with the RSPO standard they shall be formally included as a member of the certified group (i.e. become a formal group member). Until RSPO compliance is achieved, the FFB production from prospective member sites will not count towards the total certified production of the group.

<b>Risk Assessment</b>	Assessment to identify risks which might jeopardize environmental and social aspects of sustainable CPO/FFB production and effectiveness of the ICS at the different levels of farm production, transport and processing must be known and taken into account in all internal control procedures.
<b>RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil)</b>	Not-for-profit association working to advance the production, procurement and use of sustainable palm oil products.
<b>RSPO P&amp;C for Independent Smallholders</b>	RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production for independent smallholders under group certification (under development - Jan 2010) - an auditable standard applicable to producers who meet the RSPO eligibility criteria for independent smallholders.
<b>RSPO Principles &amp; Criteria (P &amp; C)</b>	RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production (October 2007) - an auditable standard applicable to palm oil mills and their supply base.
<b>RSPO Standard for Group Certification</b>	RSPO requirements that shall be met by a producer group for group certification.
<b>Smallholders</b>	<p>Farmers growing oil palm, sometimes along with subsistence production of other crops, where the family provides the majority of labour and the farm provides the principal source of income and where the planted area of oil palm is usually below 50 hectares in size</p> <p><b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production - October 2007</i>]</b></p> <p><b>Scheme smallholders:</b> Scheme smallholders, while also very diverse, are characterized as smallholders who are structurally bound by contract, by a credit agreement or by planning to a particular mill. Scheme smallholders are often not free to choose which crop they develop, are supervised in their planting and crop management techniques, and are often organized, supervised or directly managed by the managers of the mill, estate or scheme to which they are structurally linked <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production: Guidance on Scheme Smallholders - July 2009</i>]</b></p> <p><b>Independent smallholders:</b> Independent smallholders, while very varied in their situations, are characterized by their: freedom to choose how to use their lands, which crops to plant and how to manage them; being self-organized, self-managed and self-financed; and by not being contractually bound to any particular mill or any particular association. They may, however, receive support or extension services from government agencies <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production: Guidance on Scheme Smallholders - July 2009</i>].</b></p> <p>Where an endorsed National Interpretation also includes a definition for smallholders, this will also be recognized.</p>

<b>Stakeholders</b>	An individual or group with a legitimate and/or demonstrable interest in, or who is directly affected by, the activities of an organization and the consequences of those activities. <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Certification Systems Document June 2007</i>].</b>
<b>Stratified semi-random sampling</b>	The sampling approach that dictates that one portion of the sample is selected randomly while another is selected based on farm attributes.
<b>Surveillance</b>	A set of activities to monitor the continued fulfillment of requirements for certification <b>[Definition from: <i>RSPO Certification Systems Document June 2007</i>].</b>

## INTRODUCTION

In Group Certification, all formal members of a group shall comply with specified group requirements, which must comply with the relevant RSPO standard. The relevant RSPO standards are: RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production for Independent Smallholders under Group Certification (under development) and the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

In the group certification process, the certification body will assess that the mechanism for ensuring compliance of all formal group members with the group requirements, as managed by the Group Manager, is functioning well and efficiently. This assessment is done by checking the relevant documentation, procedures and systems against the RSPO Standard for Group Certification, and also by conducting a sample assessment of group members to determine there is consistency in implementation.

Producers, specifically independent smallholders, can obtain RSPO certification as a group if they formally apply to join a producer group, and are found to comply with the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production, by the Group Manager. The formal group members operate under contractual or binding requirements to the Group Manager specifying their commitment to the standard and allow assessments to be undertaken.

A group can be RSPO group certified if all formal members comply with the relevant RSPO Standards for Sustainable Oil Palm Production as well as applicable requirements in the RSPO Standard for Group Certification, and that the Group Manager complies with the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

### ***Scope of this document***

This document outlines the additional requirements for certification bodies that wish to include RSPO Group certification within the scope of their RSPO activities. These include:

- **Accreditation requirements** - to be met prior to approval by RSPO as a certification body that can carry out RSPO group certification, and checked by RSPO's accreditation service on a regular basis
- **Certification requirements** - to be followed when carrying out RSPO Group Certification

Certification Bodies accredited by the RSPO to carry out group certification must already be accredited by RSPO for certification of sustainable palm oil production.

### ***Reference Documents***

The following are documents which should be used in association with this document:

#### **RSPO Group Certification Documents**

- RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

- RSPO Guidance for Group Managers [under development].

### **RSPO Certification Documents**

- RSPO Certification Systems, 26 June 2007.
- RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems, November 2009.

### **RSPO Standards for Sustainable Palm Oil production**

#### ***Generic Global Standards:***

- RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production, October 2007.

#### ***Approved RSPO National Interpretations***

- Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Malaysia National Interpretation (MY- NI)- Indicators and Guidance to establish the RSPO Principles & Criteria, April 2008.
- National Interpretation of RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production - Republic of Indonesia, May 2008.
- The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) PNG National Implementation Working Group (PNG NIWG) - Indicators and guidance required to establish the RSPO Principles and Criteria, March 2008.
- National Interpretation of RSPO Principles & Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production For Scheme Smallholders - Republic of Indonesia, May 2009.

#### ***RSPO Smallholder Guidance on palm oil production standards***

- RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production: Guidance on Scheme Smallholders, July 2009.
- RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production for Independent Smallholders under Group Certification (under development)

# 1: ADDITIONAL ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

**NOTE: The title of “Accreditation” remains with the understanding that RSPO are in the process of finalizing a RSPO accreditation system with an independent Accreditation Body. Currently, the RSPO utilizes an approval system (with the accreditation element provided by accreditation to ISO standards)**

## ***1.1 General Accreditation Requirements***

- 1.1.1 Only certification bodies already accredited<sup>1</sup> by the RSPO to conduct certification of sustainable palm oil production may seek accreditation by RSPO for the expansion of scope of their accreditation to include carrying out RSPO Group Certification.
- 1.1.2 All requirements of the RSPO accreditation requirements (detailed in Sections 3 and 4 of the RSPO Certification Systems document) must be met in full. The other requirements listed here are in addition to these.

## ***1.2 Assessment and Certification Process of Group Certification***

- 1.2.1 All certification bodies must already meet the requirements as listed in Section 4 of the RSPO Certification Systems Document.
- 1.2.2 The certification body must define procedures relating to the group certification assessment process. As a minimum, these must be consistent with the specifications defined in *ISO 19011: 2002 Guidelines for Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing*.
- 1.2.3 The group certification assessment procedures must require that the initial certification assessments and the subsequent additional assessments (monitoring or surveillance), include an appropriate range of methods to collect objective evidence, including documentation review, field checks and interviews with the Group Manager, group members and external stakeholders.

## 2: REQUIREMENTS ON CERTIFYING GROUPS

### 2.1 Applicable Certification Standards

2.1.1 A sample of group members shall be assessed against the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production. The relevant standard shall apply as follows:

2.1.1.1 For those group members that are independent smallholders, the applicable standard shall be the RSPO Principles & Criteria for Independent Smallholders under Group Certification. All the criteria shall apply to the management of oil palm and the certified end product is FFB. Where mixed farming is practiced (i.e. where oil palm is grown together with other crops on the same piece or land or property), the contiguous area of farming shall also comply with the RSPO Principles and Criteria. The exception is where the different crops can clearly be segregated and delineated from oil palm, whereby areas that are not planted with oil palm do not need to comply with the RSPO Principles and Criteria.

2.1.1.2 For those group members that are independent growers not classified as smallholders, the applicable standard shall be the grower specific criteria within the RSPO Generic Principles & Criteria<sup>ii</sup>. **[NB: As of June 2010, Group Certification under RSPO shall only cover independent smallholders. Larger independent oil palm growers (i.e. usually exceeding 50 ha, or as defined by national interpretations, and without an associated mill) may be included within Group Certification at a later time as decided by the RSPO]**

2.1.2 All the criteria shall apply to the management of oil palm and the certified product is FFB.

2.1.3 Where National Interpretations for either standard mentioned in 2.1.1 exist, these shall be used instead of the generic global standard.

2.1.4 The RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems [November 2009] shall apply to the trading of all RSPO certified products originating from a certified group.

**Note 1. Note for consideration of the Executive Board: RSPO Supply Chain standards for FFB**

Currently the RSPO supply chain standards refer exclusively to the transport and trading of Crude Palm Oil (CPO), since they were designed to work with the model of certification for mills where the certified product would be CPO. However, the introduction of a Group Certification model, where the product of the group is likely to be FFB, requires the introduction of supply

chain certification to cover this section of the RSPO supply chain.

Section 3.7 in the RSPO Standard for Group Certification (4<sup>th</sup> Draft) suggests an option for any willing intermediaries to be included within group certification control, but that this is strictly voluntary.

## **2.2 Scope of Group Certification**

- 2.2.1 The Certification Body shall provide to the Group Manager and group members, clear communication of the requirements of relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production, and RSPO Standard for Group Certification to the group. Certification bodies shall also provide prompt communication of any changes in requirements with reasonable time given for compliance (See Section 4.3 of the RSPO Certification Systems Document).
- 2.2.2 The unit of certification shall be the Group Manager and group members:
- 2.2.2.1 The unit of certification must include all managed land (or estates) of group members, where the group members shall have contracts or agreements with the Group Manager to comply with the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production and the RSPO Standard for Group Certification; and permits assessments by both the Group Manager and an RSPO accredited certification body.
- 2.2.2.2 All the FFB from all managed land (or estates) of group members shall be produced to RSPO certifiable standards.
- 2.2.3 Producers with more than one oil palm plantation area and/or that have a controlling unit (more than 51%) in other land holdings, shall only be permitted to join a group to be certified under RSPO group certification if the requirements for phased/partial certification are adhered to, i.e. if there are no significant land conflicts, no replacement of primary forest or of any areas containing HCVs since 2005, no labour disputes that are not being resolved through an agreed process and no evidence of non-compliance with law in any of the plantation areas. However, for smallholders as identified by the National Interpretations – all uncertified additional plots or areas, grown with oil palm or other crops, shall only be required to register with the Group Manager.

## **2.3 Group certification assessment process**

- 2.3.1 RSPO group certification assessment must comprise:
- 2.3.1.1 Assessment in each evaluation of the group manager, according to the requirements of the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.
- 2.3.1.2 Assessment of a sample of group members, according to the requirements of the relevant RSPO standard for Sustainable Palm Oil Production and relevant elements of the RSPO Standard for Group Certification. (see section 3.4 below) These assessments will also provide evidence of the conformance of the group manager

with the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

- 2.3.2 The assessment of the group manager shall determine conformity or non-conformity with each indicator in the RSPO Standard for Group Certification. Non-conformities must be graded as either minor or major. Major non-conformities are those which – either alone, or in combination with further non-conformities – result in, or are likely to result in a major failure in a significant part of the Group Manager System. A Major non-conformity is defined as a non-conformity that:
- 2.3.2.1 Continues over a long period of time.
  - 2.3.2.2 Is repeated or systematic.
  - 2.3.2.3 Affects a wide area or causes significant damage.
  - 2.3.2.4 Is indicated by the absence or a total breakdown of a system.
  - 2.3.2.5 Is not corrected or adequately responded to by the group manager once identified.
- 2.3.3 The assessment of a sample of formal group members shall determine conformity or non-conformity with each indicator within the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production. Non-conformities must be graded as either minor or major, as defined in Annex 3 of the RSPO Certification System, the RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production for Independent Smallholders under Group Certification (under development) or the appropriate National Interpretation.
- 2.3.4 Non-conformities shall lead to corrective action requests (CARs), suspension or withdrawal of the certificate. CARs must be issued to the group manager and may be copied to those members who were assessed. Group managers shall have a system to ensure that CARs are communicated to all group members and any instances of other members having the same non-conformity are identified and addressed. CARs may include the exclusion of specific group members until such time as their specific non-conformities are addressed.
- 2.3.5 A certificate of conformance with the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production and RSPO Standard for Group Certification cannot be issued with any major non-conformity outstanding.
- 2.3.6 Any major non-conformity raised in an annual surveillance assessment (i.e. after certification has been awarded) must be addressed within 60 days, or the certification is suspended. If the major nonconformity is then not addressed within a further 60 days, the certification will be withdrawn. Minor non-conformities will be raised to major if not addressed by the following surveillance assessment.
- 2.3.7 Any Corrective Action Requests (CARs) issued shall be based solely on the stated standard and certification requirements. The certification body shall have a documented CAR policy for non-conformities in group certification. Any CARs issued shall apply to the group as a whole. The group has the right of appeal which the certification body is bound to consider in a fair and timely manner.
- 2.3.8 The Group Manager of a group seeking certification is responsible for ensuring that its

members comply with the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Palm Oil Production and relevant elements of the RSPO Standard for Group Certification, and that compliance is maintained. This does not remove the responsibility of the group members themselves to comply with specific requirements in the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Palm Oil Production and the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

- 2.3.9 The maximum period of validity of the group certificate is 5 years. A reassessment of compliance of the group (i.e. recertification) must take place before the end of the 5 year period.

## ***2.4 Sampling for certification – sample assessment of group members:***

- 2.4.1 The sample assessment shall assess the performance of the group members and the effectiveness of the Group Manager and the internal control system.

2.4.1.1 The sample assessment shall always include interviews with the group member whose site is being assessed as well as representatives of the Group Manager.

2.4.1.2 The certification body shall carry out a risk assessment of group members and the group manager prior to the certification assessment. The risk assessment allows the certification body to identify an appropriate sampling intensity of group members for the certification assessment. The risk assessment shall take into account the diversity of the group members (i.e. range of size, management structure, diversity of terrain, etc) and any perceived risk relating to the activities being undertaken (e.g. how much replanting or expansion is occurring, how many members are new, whether there is a history of non-conformities). Additionally, the risk assessment shall take into account the perceived risks relating to the capacity of the Group Manager to be performing adequately (e.g. change of management, high turnover of staff, very small staff compared to the size of group they are managing). The more diverse the group, and the more risk factors associated with the group or group manager, the higher the risk.

2.4.1.3 Where the Group Manager can show that internal monitoring and control procedures are robust then the certification body can consider reducing the sampling size for high risk groups to the equivalent of low risk groups.

**Example:** Low risk groups are those where the group is relatively homogeneous i.e geographically as well as socioeconomically, there are no current replanting activities, there are no new members, the group and its manager are well established and have no history of non-conformities.

High risk groups are those where there is considerable heterogeneity in the group (e.g. geographically separated, very different terrain, different levels of experience of oil palm cultivation, very diverse sizes of plantation, different socioeconomic situations amongst members, etc), where there is recent expansion or replanting, and/or where the group management has recently undergone changes.

2.4.2 A ‘risk level’ shall be determined by the certification body (Level 1 - low risk, Level 2 - medium risk, Level 3 - high risk).

2.4.3 The sample size shall be determined by the formula  $(0.8\sqrt{y}) \times (z)$ , where z is the multiplier defined by the risk assessment. Multipliers are set as follows: Low risk = multiplier of 1, medium risk = multiplier of 1.2, high risk = multiplier of 1.4 (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Example of sample size for group members in a certification assessment**

Example of sample size of group members to be assessed in a certification assessment				
Number of group members = y	Minimum = $0.8\sqrt{y}$	Low risk = $(0.8\sqrt{y}) \times (1)$	Medium risk = $(0.8\sqrt{y}) \times (1.2)$	High risk = $(0.8\sqrt{y}) \times (1.4)$
6	2	2	3	3
14	3	3	4	5
25	4	4	4	6
39	5	5	6	7
56	6	6	7	8
75	7	7	8	10
100	8	8	10	11
500	18	18	21	25
1000	26	26	30	35
2500	40	40	48	56
3600	48	48	58	67

2.4.4 The certification body shall then select for evaluation, specific group members to achieve the required calculated sample number. The certification body should include a random

element in the selection process. They should also ensure that the sample selected is representative of the whole group under evaluation in terms of:

2.4.4.1 Geographical distribution (districts, villages, valleys).

2.4.4.2 The personnel within the group manager responsible for technical support to different members.

2.4.4.3 The different internal assessors.

**Example:** One of the easiest ways to ensure that a variety of group member types are included, and also that there is an element of randomness, is to use 'stratified random sampling'. For this, the group members are categorized into 'sets' (strata) of similar operations (based for example on size, or geographical location). For each set, the specific members to be sampled are chosen at random. One way to do this is to give all the members a number and use a random number generator to decide which to visit (e.g. See <http://www.random.org/>). Randomness is important - it ensures that the certification body is not unduly influenced by the suggestions of the group manager, or ease of vehicle access etc.

2.4.5 If there are selected group members that have been excluded by the Group Manager, the certification body may need to assess similar replacements (e.g. neighbouring plantations, same village or terrain etc).

2.4.6 At least 75% of the selected group members for assessment must be different from those that were assessed the year before.

## ***2.5 Evaluating Internal Assessments***

2.5.1 As part of the assessment of group members, evaluation assessments shall be conducted by the certification body on a randomly selected internal assessor. The aim is to assess the quality of the internal assessments as conducted by the Group Manager.

2.5.2 The internal assessor shall be assessed in regards to: planning the assessment, preparing documentation, plantation/field visit, interview with group members, writing the internal assessment report, and debriefing.

2.5.3 The evaluation of internal assessor performance shall be conducted in conjunction with the evaluation of their training and assessing their overall knowledge of the relevant RSPO Standard for Sustainable Oil Palm Production, RSPO Standard for Group Certification and the group management documentation and procedures.

## **2.6 Assessment of Group Purchases and Transactions**

- 2.6.1 The certification body shall review a sample of entrance, exit records and stock lists for all RSPO certified products from the group. They shall check that mechanisms exist and are operational and functional to verify crop deliveries by each group member and shall also include the purchasing of any FFB from external sources.
- 2.6.2 The certification body shall evaluate that the group marketing system is in compliance with the Supply Chain Model (i.e. Identity Preserve, Segregation or Mass Balance) requirements as stipulated within Annex 6 of the RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems document – November 2009.
- 2.6.3 If an intermediary exists in the supply chain from the group to the CPO mill and the intermediary has chosen to be included in the group certification control:
- 2.6.3.1 The intermediary must be identified to the certification body assessor by the Group Manager. All relevant intermediaries must fulfill the relevant RSPO Standard requirements and RSPO Group Certification Requirements.
- 2.6.3.2 Certification bodies need to ensure that all relevant intermediaries meet the stated requirements within the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

**Note 2. Note for consideration of the Executive Board: Control of Intermediaries and claims of RSPO certified**

This is linked with section 3.7 in the RSPO Standard for Group Certification (draft 4). This section will be amended to be consistent with any decision made in respect to the previous mentioned.

## **ANNEX 1: Additional guidance for assessing the effectiveness of the Group Manager**

The following guidance is recommended for certification bodies when assessing the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

- 1) In assessing the Group Manager, the certification body should carry out the following:
  - a) An interview with the group manager with respect to:
    - i) Group overview (e.g. number of group members, group organization etc).
    - ii) Problems/ important issues of previous year, (changes in Group Management Documentation manual).
  - b) Evaluate the internal documentation (Group Management Documentation) (preferably before assessment):
    - i) Do the procedures and forms fulfill the minimum RSPO Standard for Group Certification requirements?
    - ii) After assessment: Are the described procedures effectively implemented?
  - c) Screen random formal group member files:
    - i) If there is more than one internal assessor, check several files per internal assessor to evaluate consistency and effectiveness of the internal assessor.
    - ii) Check the documents are complete.
    - iii) Cross-check information with the group members lists (certified group members listed last year vs. current updated list by Group Manager).
  - d) Focus on any corrective action requests issued by the Group Manager:
    - i) Check all non-compliances and corrective action requests assigned by the Group Manager.
    - ii) What were the problems and were the corrective action requests by the group manager appropriate?
    - iii) Have the corrective action requests been effectively implemented?
  - e) Approval procedures:
    - i) How were the decisions made and by whom?
    - ii) How were the decisions documented?
    - iii) Focus specifically on any new formal members.
  - f) Verify formal group member list:
    - i) Is this Complete? Check that the approved group member list contains at least the following information: Location (community, field), group member's code, name and

surname of group member, entry date to the certification program, land history, age of palms, area of plantation, area of plantation under oil palm, FFB (volume) delivered to the group or mill last year, estimated yield for current year, name or code of internal assessor, date of internal assessment (at least one, could be several), result of internal assessment (approved / sanctioned)

- ii) Have there been any changes from last year (e.g. number of group members, areas owned, estimated yields etc).
  - iii) Who manages the smallholder list and how/when is information updated?
- g) Check Group Manager Staff qualifications and training:
- i) Check staff files and training records.
  - ii) Interview a few field advisors (if these are not the same as internal assessors).

**Note 3. Note for consideration of the Executive Board**

In the previous draft these recommendations were included as part of the standard (ie. Requirements). It is proposed here that they are given as additional guidance and that CBs are allowed to develop their own specific office procedures and interview techniques for determining compliance with the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

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<sup>i</sup> As of June 2010, RSPO currently practices an approval process for Certification Bodies to be able to conduct certification under RSPO. This approval process is based on accreditation under ISO. Until this has been amended within the RSPO Certification Systems document (26 June 2007), the term “accredited” within this document will be used with the assumption that the current approval process will be superseded with an RSPO accreditation system.

<sup>ii</sup> This is based on the fact that the current **RSPO Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production** contains criteria that are relevant to growers, similar to how outgrowers of a mill with associated plantation must comply with the requirements contained within.