GUIDE ON APPLICATION FOR ROUNDTABLE FOR SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA (RSPO P&C), RSPO INDEPENDENT SMALLHOLDER STANDARD AND GROUP CERTIFICATION

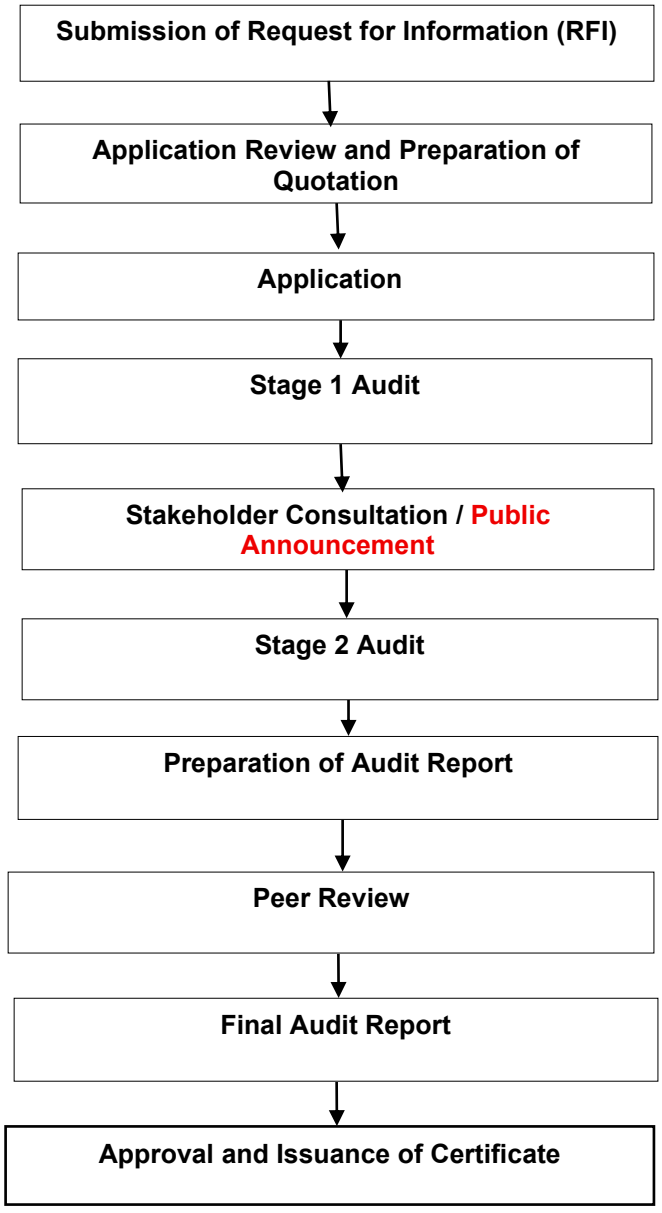
1. INTRODUCTION

This guideline has been prepared to provide guidance to organizations/companies that are interested in obtaining RSPO Principle & Criteria (P&C) certification and/or RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard certification and/or Group certification from SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd (SIRIM QAS International) to the requirements of the latest applicable RSPO P&C Certification Standard, RSPO ISH Standard and/or the RSPO Standard for Group Certification.

This guideline is prepared in accordance with SIRIM QAS International documented procedures on certification of RSPO P&C, RSPO ISH and/or RSPO Group certification, including the RSPO Accreditation and Certification Systems requirements, and other related normative documents issued by RSPO. Please contact the Sales, Marketing and Business Development Section of SIRIM QAS International if further clarification is needed regarding the contents of this document.

2. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The RSPO P&C, ISH and/or Group Certification is carried out in accordance with the policies and procedures established by SIRIM QAS International based on the requirements of ISO/IEC 17021 and the updated RSPO Certification Systems for P&C and RSPO ISH Standard. The detailed step by step processes for RSPO P&C, ISH and Group certification are explained as follows:



2.1 Submission of Request for Information (RFI)

The applicant completes and submits the RFI to SIRIM QAS International.

2.2 Application Review and Preparation of Quotation

SIRIM QAS International will review the information given in the RFI by the applicant and based on the information obtained, prepare a quotation on the total cost of certification. Overall certification costs are calculated based on the number of auditor days required to conduct the audit.

The determination of auditor days to conduct the on-site audit is guided by the document on determination on auditor days established by SIRIM QAS International. A quotation will be sent to the applicant for consideration. The quotation provides an estimation of the total cost for certification which includes the professional fees for Preaudit activities, stage 1 and 2 audits, phases like Eligibility, Milestone A and Milestone B for ISH Standard, stakeholder consultation, report writing, peer review and other related incidental costs.

2.3 Application

Upon agreeing to the quotation, the applicant is required to submit an application form together with an application fee to SIRIM QAS International. For RSPO P&C certification, an applicant is the Certification Unit which shall comprise of a mill and its supply base. For independent smallholders using the RSPO ISH standard, the unit of certification shall consist of the group manager and 100% of the ISH group members included in the scope of certification. As for RSPO Group certification, the unit of certification shall be the Group manager and group members who have signed a contract and/or agreement with the Group Manager to comply with the relevant applicable standard. 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.

2.4 Pre Audit Requirements

Upon receipt of the application form, SIRIM QAS International will appoint the audit team leader who will be responsible for the applicants Pre Audit activities. The pre audit is a desk review where the audit team examines the applicant's documentation and submissions as required by the RSPO and listed in its information system. The review may also include consultation with relevant stakeholders for further information. The desk review will be scheduled within 3 months of each type of audit and the applicant should submit the information to the CB seven (7) days before the agreed pre audit date.

2.5 Stage 1 Audit for RSPO P&C and RSPO Group Certification

Upon receipt of the application form, SIRIM QAS International will appoint the audit team, who will be responsible for the applicant's application. Stage 1 Audit is carried out on site to review the adequacy of the applicant documentation and determine the readiness of the applicant in going for initial certification assessment.

2.6 Stakeholder Consultation/ Public Annoucement

Public announcement shall be carried out not less than 30 days before the Stage 2 Audit, Recertification Audit and phases of Eligibility, Milestone A and Milestone B (initial) assessment of ISH Standard is conducted.

Stakeholder consultation shall be conducted for every audit stage. The sampling of the stakeholders for the consultation process shall vary for each audit stage.

2.7 Stage 2 Audit for RSPO P&C and RSPO Group Certification / Milestone B (initial) for ISH Standard Certification

After the findings of the Stage 1 Audit have been resolved and issues from stakeholders have been identified, the Applicant is required to inform the Audit Team Leader on the readiness to proceed to Stage 2 Audit. It is recommended that all proposed actions to address the issues of concerned identified during Stage 1 Audit are submitted to the Audit Team Leader at least two weeks before the conduct of Stage 2 Audit.

During Stage 2 and Milestone B (initial) Audit, the audit team will evaluate the implementation including the effectiveness of the applicant's RSPO system and practices against the applicable standard requirements of the RSPO P&C Standard, RSPO ISH Standard and/or RSPO Group Certification Standard.

For more details on the relevant applicable standard, particularly on ISH Standard due to its unique phases in comparison with the other two standards, applicants are encouraged to go to the RSPO website to get the updated information on the standard requirements; https://www.rspo.org/certification

2.8 Findings from Stage 2 Audit for RSPO P&C and RSPO Group Certification / Milestone B (initial) for ISH Standard Certification

Audit findings of Stage 2 / Milestone B (initial) Audit shall be classified as either major and minor non-conformities based on the classification on each indicator under each criteria of the relevant standards.

2.9 Audit Report

Upon receipt of corrective actions and satisfactory closure of the major non-conformities, the Audit Team Leader will prepare a report on the findings of the audit and provide recommendation in accordance with the audit conclusion. The audit report will undergone an internal review process to ensure that the report is ready for the peer review evaluation.

2.10 Peer Review

The Stage 2 Audit / Milestone B (initial) / Recertification Report will be submitted to peer review, an evaluation of work by an independent competent person. Peer review process is used to ensure the quality of audits, improve performance, and provide credibility to the overall assessment process. SIRIM QAS International shall respond to the comments made by the peer reviewers prior to the finalization of the audit report.

2.11 Approval and Issuance of the Certificate

Once finalize, the report will be submitted to the approver and decision maker of the scheme. Upon approval, the certificate will be awarded to the Certification Unit / ISH / Group. However, the certificate shall be issued upon payment of all fees due and signing of the Certification Agreement. The certificate is valid for 5 years from the date the certification is approved.

2.12 Preparation of Public Summary and Submission to RSPO IT Platform

A public summary shall be prepared and uploaded into the RSPO Information System together with the awarded certificate within seven days from the date of the certificate being issued. Registration and RSPO approval of the certificate on the RSPO Information System results in the issuance and activation of an annual license to trade. The RSPO Public Summary Report and Certificate will be made publicly available on the RSPO website.

2.13 Surveillance / Recertification Audit

All certified Certification Units including ISHs and Groups shall be subjected to one annual surveillance audit each year and a Recertification audit on the 5th year of the certification cycle. The annual surveillance audits shall be conducted within four (4) months prior to the license expiry date. The Recertification audit shall be conducted within four (4) months prior to the original licence expiry date and before the certificate expires.

3. SCHEDULE OF FEES

SIRIM QAS International shall prepare and issue a quotation based on the RFI submitted by the applicant which will consist of the following components:

(i) Application fee
(ii) Professional Audit fee
(iii) Administrative Process fee
(iii) Annual fee
(iv) Technical Specialist (if necessary)
(v) Translator / Local Expert (if necessary
(vi). Incidental Cost

4. FEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The schedule for payment of fees over the five-year certification cycle is as follows:

No	Stage	Fee Due
1.	Upon acceptance of quotation and submission of application form	Application fee
2.	Upon completion of pre-certification (Desk Review)	Pre-certification audit fee
3.	Upon completion of pre-assessment (Stage 1 Audit)	Stage 1 audit fee
4.	Upon completion of main assessment (Stage 2 Audit)	Stage 2 audit fee
5.	Upon approval of certification but prior to issuance of Certificate	Annual fee
6.	Upon completion of surveillance audit (year 1 to 4)	Surveillance audit and annual fee
7.	Upon completion of recertification (year 5)	Re-certification and annual fee
8.	Upon completion of Eligibility, Milestone A and Milestone B phase for ISH	Audit fee and annual fee

5. CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Site of Audit

The applicant shall identify the name and geographical GPS location, (longitude and latitude) of the Certification Unit, number of supply base, size, type, composition and site condition of the Certification Unit to be covered under the scope of certification.

5.2 Scope of certification

The applicant shall clearly define and ensure that it does not omit elements of its operation from the scope of certification.

The scope of a P&C certification:

- should clearly specify the products produced by the Certification Unit and the volume i.e. tonnage of the certified products e.g. crude palm oil and palm kernel.
- cannot include processing activities performed by other entities. The mills cannot outsource the FFB processing activities.
- In cases where an organization seeking P&C certification, contracts or outsources non-processing activities to independent third parties (such as labour, transport and external bulking activities), the activities of these third parties fall inside the scope of certification, and they shall comply with all relevant requirements of the RSPO P&C certification standards.
- Should clearly specify the applicable supply chain model.

For independent smallholders using the RSPO ISH standard, the unit of certification shall be the group manager and 100% of the ISH group members included in the scope of certification.

For Group Certification, the scope of certification should clearly specify the quantity i.e. tonnage of the certified fresh fruit bunches (FFBs) produced by the group members.

5.3 Audit Criteria

Audit criteria for certification shall be as follows:

i) RSPO P&C certification – the document that shall be applied is RSPO P&C Standard and MYNI RSPO P&C (for Malaysia) or any other RSPO approved National Interpretation applicable in the country where the audit is carried out.

ii) RSPO ISH Standard certification – the document that shall be applied is RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard.

iii) RSPO Group Certification – the documents that shall be applied are:

- RSPO Standard for Group Certification and
- MYNI RSPO P&C (for Malaysia) or any other RSPO approved National Interpretation applicable in the country where the audit is carried out.

In all cases, the latest version of the standards shall be applicable.

6. APPEALS PROCEDURE

The applicant may file an appeal if the applicant does not agree with the decision of the Certification Body. The appeal shall be made in writing to the General Manager of the Management System Department within 2 (two) weeks of notification of the decision.

The appeals procedure is available on the website of SIRIM QAS International; https://www.sirim-qas.com.my/contact-us/enquiry/

7. DISPUTES AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Any complaint on SIRIM QAS International's certification services or on certified organizations/companies shall be directed to the Head, Quality and OSHE (QOSHE) Section.

Complaints may be made verbally or in writing. All complaints received will be verified and validated by the QOSHE Manager. The complainant shall be informed of the receipt of the complaint and will be provided progress report on the outcome of the investigation.

The dispute and complaints procedure are available on the website of SIRIM QAS International; https://www.sirim-qas.com.my/contact-us/enquiry/

In the event of complaints or disputes involving RSPO certified organizations, stakeholders may use the RSPO Complaints System. Details of the process are available in the RSPO website; https://askrspo.force.com/Complaint/s/

8. WITHDRAWAL/SUSPENSION/REVOCATION/TERMINATION

(i) Withdrawal

Certified organization that wishes to withdraw from the RSPO P&C, ISH and Group certification scheme is required to:

(a) write to the Head of the FAF Section informing of its intention.

(b) ensure that all advertising matters that contain any reference to the *Certificate* are discontinued within a reasonable time frame; and

(c) return the *Certificate* to the Head of the FAF Section.

(ii) Suspension/Termination

SIRIM QAS International has the right to suspend or terminate the certification of an organization under the following circumstances:

(a) the certified organization's/company's RSPO P&C system has persistently or seriously failed to meet the certification requirements such as number of Major NCRs raised is > 15 NCRS during the specific audit and non closure of the Major NCR within the specified timeline of 90 days.

(b) the certified organization/company does not allow surveillance or re-certification audits to be conducted at the required frequencies;

(c) the certified organisation/company has voluntarily requested suspension of its certification;

(d) the certified organization has failed to take corrective actions on non-conformity (ies) raised within the specified timeframe;

(e) the certified organization has incorrectly made reference to its certification status or used the *Certificate*, marks inclusive of certification mark and RSPO trademark or audit reports in a misleading manner; and

(f) the certified organization has infringed the requirements of the certification contract.

In the event of suspension, the certified organization under suspension is required to take the necessary corrective actions within the suspension period. Failure to take corrective actions within the specified period may result in the termination of the *Certificate*. The suspension or termination or withdrawal of the certificate shall be informed to RSPO.

The information related to the certification status of the organization will be made publicly accessible. An organization dissatisfied with the decision on suspension / termination has the right to file a written appeal with the Appeal Committee.

9. CHANGES TO THE INFORMATION IN THE CERTIFICATE

A certified organization is required to inform SIRIM QAS International of any changes on the name, address, scope of certification or other details on the Certificate. Any request for such changes shall be made in writing. A decision will be made as to whether there is a need for an onsite audit prior to processing the change.

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