



A Platform of **International Dialogue** on **Voluntary Sustainability Standards**

**UNFSS Briefing Session in West/Central Africa
at the ICCO's International Workshop on Cocoa Certification
24th – 27th June 2013 in Douala, Cameroon**

Summary Report

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1. Summary of the UNFSS Briefing Session

The United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) held a Briefing Session for Central/and West Africa at the International Cocoa Certification Workshop organized by the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) from 24th to 27th June in Douala, Cameroon. The Certification Workshop was organized in conjunction with the Ministry of Commerce Cameroon, the Office National du Café et du Cacao (ONCC) and UNFSS.

The workshop was attended by over a 150 participants from different stakeholder groups. The UNFSS was presented to participants following the opening ceremony of the event and was actively integrated directly into the three days of the workshop. On the fourth day of the event, June 27th, the UNFSS briefing session was held with the objective of raising awareness about the UNFSS to the international cocoa community, as well as to other stakeholders interested in sustainability standards in Cameroon and the region, and to identify their information needs and concerns related to Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS). The briefing session opened with presentations on best practices from Cameroon and Indonesia and followed by discussions on the role of governments with regard to sustainability standards. Furthermore, a panel session, with a representative from each of the stakeholder group sessions held during the previous 3-day workshop, presented their session's view on VSS and the recommended focus and future work of the UNFSS.

In addition, other stakeholders groups expressed their positions with regard to sustainable cocoa certification throughout the event. It was highlighted that voluntary standards and certification are not necessarily identical to sustainability, but if done well, voluntary standards can be an important means to achieve more sustainability at the producer level and throughout the supply chain. Although evidence shows that the amounts of certified cocoa and related earnings were rising, there was discussion about how to share the benefits from this development throughout the supply chain and in particular for smallholders. It was also emphasized that VSS must be proactively addressed in order for them to function as valuable policy tools, and that governments can play a critical role in this process. The conference received very positive feedback; especially the time for open exchange throughout the discussions was rated as very valuable.

In the final statement of the workshop, ICCO underlined its commitment to further cooperate with UNFSS with regard to the ongoing discussion on cocoa certification and sustainability.

2. ICCO Workshop with UNFSS Co-Organization: General Observations and Outcomes

The UNFSS was invited to collaborate on the ICCO workshop after the official launch of the UNFSS in March, 2013 in Geneva and welcomed the opportunity to present the aims and current work of the UNFSS during this important event. The **group of participants (over 150)** during the workshop was very diverse: farmers and NGOs, as well as government representatives, donor agencies, standard organizations and companies were present. The ICCO is comprised of delegates from cocoa producing and consuming countries. On the last day of the workshop, additional stakeholders were invited on behalf of UNFSS in order to join the discussion about certification and sustainability with additional stakeholders (e.g. forest sector, NGOs and private companies).

The ICCO workshop proved to be an ideal venue for the UNFSS to present a briefing session, given the intergovernmental nature of the ICCO and its lead role in addressing VSS in such a significant commodity sector. As well, during the event the varied stakeholders of the international cocoa community had the chance to discuss the role of standards with regard to sustainable development. Since a prime objective of the UNFSS's briefing sessions is to consult with key stakeholders on the

issue of VSSs, the combination of working with the ICCO and the direct participation of this broad stakeholder group made the event an excellent and productive opportunity.

The speakers of the workshop included among others:

- H.E. Mr. Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, Minister of Commerce Cameroon
- Dr. Jean-Marc Anga, Executive Director, International Cocoa Organization
- Dr. Edem Amegashie-Duvon, Cocoa Trader, Ghana Cocoa Board/Cocoa Marketing Company
- Mr. Alastair Child, Cocoa Sustainability Director, Certification and Community Development at Mars Global Chocolate
- Mr. Michiel Hendriksz, Sustainability and Rural Development Expert, ADM Cocoa
- Ms. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance
- Mr. Christopher Wunderlich, Co-coordinator of the UNFSS

A **detailed report of the ICCO workshop** is available online: ([see report](#))

The **presentations and discussions of the workshop** focused on the growing importance of cocoa certification and its potential use as a development tool to support environmental, economic and social progress. At the same time, it was also discussed whether there are potential constraints related to cocoa certification, such as high costs and the danger of marginalizing smallholders given the complexity and difficulty related to compliance.

The discussion in Douala showed that many of the general issues previously identified by the UNFSS related to standards and certification (e.g. transparency, information sharing, impact assessment, harmonization etc.) are also of key importance in the cocoa certification sector. Participants stressed among other aspects the following:

- The benefits of certification should be equitably distributed.
- Farmers' livelihoods must become a top priority.
- More information sharing, particularly with regard to impacts was needed, and to enhance the knowledge level of farmers.
- Certification should be considered as a tool among others to achieve sustainability, rather than immediately associating certification with sustainability.
- Better align interests and positions of cocoa producing countries.
- Maintain cocoa production attractive for future generations and therefore produce with regard to financial, environmental and social aspects.
- Further harmonization with regard to standards and certification.
- Focus on marginalized farmers (who are not part of the "low hanging fruit") in order to achieve more sustainability in the cocoa supply chain.
- Address the various challenges to come along with certification in order to avoid negative impacts with regard to reaching sustainability goals.
- Develop and share best practices.
- Reduce costs for training and certification.
- Identify the most important drivers of change.
- Value sustainable certification as a potential supply management tool.

The whole event was perceived as very positive, not only thanks to it being well organized, but also due to the open exchange across all stakeholder groups.

In the **final statements** it was concluded that ICCO and UNFSS will further collaborate with each other and it was suggested that consultations with producers, buyers and government representatives should be facilitated by ICCO and UNFSS.

3. UNFSS Participation and Briefing Session

UNFSS participated directly during the following activities:

Monday, 24th June

- Presentation of aims and activities of the UNFSS by Mr. Christopher Wunderlich (UNFSS co-coordinator) ([see presentation](#))
- Presentation of the UNFSS Flagship Report Part I and II by Ms. Jutta Steinmann (UNFSS support-team)
(please note: the Flagship is available online at unfss.org: [Flagship Report.pdf](#))

Tuesday, 25th June

- Presentation of an ITC study on impacts of certification (ITC is a member of the UNFSS Steering Committee)

Wednesday, 26th June

Participation by Mr. Wunderlich at the **Multi-Stakeholder Panel “Standards Differentiation and Convergence/Recommendations”** and the following panel discussion **“Recommendations on the Way Forward for Cocoa Certification”** (*The UNFSS statement based on the ICCO workshop on Sustainable Cocoa Certification can be found in Annex I below*)

Thursday, 27th June

UNFSS Briefing Session, moderated by Mr. Wunderlich

- **Linking Standards Implementation to Sustainable Development Goals**, with presentations by:
 - Ms. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance
 - Mr. Eric Asoh, Brandenburgische Technische Universität ([Eric Asoh presentation](#))
 - Mr. Manfred Borer, Sustainable Cocoa Production Program, SwissContact ([Manfred Borer presentation](#))
- **UNFSS - Recap of UNFSS Objectives, Structure and Process**, presented by Ms. Steinmann (UNFSS support team)
- **Panel Session: Stakeholder’s Views on the Role of the UNFSS**, moderated by Mr. Wunderlich, including the panelists:
 - Ms. Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL Alliance
 - Mr. Michiel Henriks, Sustainability and Rural Development Expert, ADM Cocoa
 - Mr. David Aidoo, cocoa farmer from Western Region, Ghana
 - Mr. David Guba Kpelle, Programme Director, Africa Cocoa Coalition
 - Mr. Robert Yapo, Director of Sustainability, Café-Cacao Conseil, Côte d’Ivoire

The UNFSS aims to link/integrate the results and conclusions of the ICCO workshop on sustainable cocoa certification into the general focus and activities of the UNFSS. For this purpose, panelists were asked to present a summary of the concerns and recommendations that came up in their stakeholder group during the workshop, and to additionally comment on the on-going and planned activities of the UNFSS.

With regard to the **concerns and recommendations** by stakeholder group and **recommendations on the current and further work of the UNFSS** can be found in **Annex II** below.

The presented recommendations and the following panel discussion including feedback from the audience yielded the following general results:

- ◆ Firstly, cocoa certification is a growing reality and stakeholders deal best with it if they act proactively.
- ◆ Moreover, it was stressed that standards and certification are just “one brick in the wall of sustainability” which is why alternative approaches should also be considered in order to promote sustainability.
- ◆ Companies indicated that importance has to be given to continued improvement and that stakeholders can still learn a lot from each other.
- ◆ Farmers stressed that capacity building should be an integral part of certification and that further harmonization would facilitate farmers’ lives and avoid confusion among different standards.
- ◆ Governments were asked to create enabling environments and to provide space for the needed networking with regard to standards and certification.
- ◆ It was stressed as well that more interaction between governments and standard organizations could be very useful and that the planned UNFSS decision-making tool could be very helpful in this regard.
- ◆ Information sharing, impact assessment, and capacity building were seen as important areas for the UNFSS. However, regarding the latter two, it was stressed that the UNFSS should work with existing programs to strengthen them (ie. not conduct these activities itself) but rather promote their effectiveness and credibility and help interpret/share information from them.
- ◆ It was also discussed (as had been done in previous ICCO meetings) that capacity building would require the proper funding and a sustainability fund should be examined as a possible mechanism to support this goal.
- ◆ As well, a possible alignment of national platforms of producing countries was proposed to be a good area for UNFSS to intervene and provide the needed space for further dialogue. This has to be seen as well with regard to the announcement of several producing countries governments’ interest in developing their own standards.
- ◆ It has been further discussed that the UNFSS could play a role in the current CEN/ISO process, but such participation would have to be evaluated and approved by the UNFSS steering committee

Breakout Session: Priority Issues and Activities to Address Sustainability Certification (Working Groups):

The activities planned by the UNFSS were presented to the participating stakeholders and the following panel discussion offered a consultation round for feedback on these activities and further recommendations. Among the participants feedback, the following points were raised:

- Further sensitization of and awareness raising among decision makers is needed
- Include civil society as well in the dialogue
- Create a better North-South dialogue: regarding issues of representation and participation
- Regarding capacity building: Define who is getting trained? And at which level capacity building will occur?
- Enforcement of existing legislation is needed next to VSS
- Discuss the current feeling of imposition of rules by the buyer
- It would help if governments ensure a certain level of legality and credibility, they should also provide reporting on VSS
- Still proliferation of VSSs is an issue that must be addressed
- As well, harmonization of approaches and requirements (lowering transaction costs) is fundamental

- UNFSS needs to focus on its mandate, and one feature should be support to national platforms and alignment at international level.

Annex I: UNFSS statement based on the ICCO workshop on Sustainable Cocoa Certification, June 24-26, 2013, Douala Cameroon

The UNFSS agrees with the ICCO workshops identification of sustainable cocoa certification as an increasingly important trade and development issue.

UNFSS is aligned with the following key points identified in the workshop:

1. Sustainable certification has demonstrated significant benefits but also important challenges, which must be addressed.
2. Sustainable certification is a tool within a toolbox of interventions that can potentially support the sustainable development of the cocoa sector and the sustainable development of producer countries. But if the associated challenges are not addressed they could add burdens on the sector and in particular on smallholders, negatively impacting both the sector and the economic and social development of cocoa farmers and their environment.
3. Governments must play a proactive role in this process, and the ICCO can play a leading role in achieving this. Recommended action includes:
 - a) Having access to credible and rigorous information on the impacts and real costs and benefits of implementing sustainable certification programs, in order to make informed policy decisions.
 - b) Governments need to view certification programs within a broader national development strategy and context.
 - c) Standards programs need to be comprehensive and include clear, locally applicable, and results-based criteria and processes, efficient and effective training programs- focusing, in addition to complying with criteria, on improved yields and quality as well as organizational development and business management.
 - d) A funding mechanism should be established to support this process, and the concept of a sustainability fund, with both private and public contribution, could be such a mechanism and should be further pursued. The ICCO is perhaps best placed to effectively manage such a fund.
 - e) Costs and benefits must be equitably shared along the supply chain and farmers' net incomes must be sufficient to incentivize them to adopt sustainable farming practices and to receive a proper living wage, in order for them to continue farming cocoa.
 - f) Standards programs must continue and expand their cooperation to harmonize their approaches, lower the complexity of their programs and the costs of becoming certified.
 - g) Overall, coordination and cooperation between all the stakeholders (private, public, civil society, producers, researchers) is critical in this process and the ICCO can play an important role in constructively convening these actors.

The UNFSS is open and supportive of working with the ICCO and its members in achieving these goals.

Annex II: Summaries (5) of stakeholder representatives

A. Producer group: Mr. David Aidoo, Cocoa farmer from Western Region, Ghana

1. With regard to concerns and recommendations of the stakeholder group

- It is very fair to say that certification in terms of social and environmental awareness creation have been very beneficial. However, in terms of increment in yield and income, it must be done in conjunction with other interventions like access to agro-inputs, increase in the product-price of cocoa and many more.
- Capacity building should be an integral part of every certification intervention. So far, we have done well in passing on the information but implementation is becoming a problem.
- Training modules and accreditation of trainers should be standardized. This will help to present accurate and appropriate information to farmers. At the moment, some programmes and implementers are confusing us as farmers.
- If indeed certification is to benefit the farmer, then let us show this commitment at all levels of certification engagements.
- Finally, I am old and you want sustainable cocoa and chocolate, you cannot continue to depend on my little strength. Come up with strategies and incentives to attract youth into cocoa production.

2. With regard to recommendations on the current and further work of the UNFSS

- Decision-making tool: Increase farmers' involvement and participation in the process. They are the main targets and it makes much sense.
- Impact Assessment: A lot of interventions are going on at the same time in the cocoa producing communities. Maybe we should be working on the contribution of certification and not the attribution.
- Capacity Building: This is a very critical area. If you effectively build capacity along the value chain to farmer level, farmers might not even need to be audited by a third party to keep producing cocoa in a sustainable manner.
- Harmonization: This will surely come, I believe, but the farmers' interest must be considered seriously. It should not bring about additional costs and labour.
- Emerging initiative: Any new development that will sustain the cocoa value chain is welcome; we want to remain in business as cocoa producers.

B. Civil Society: Mr. David Guba Kpelle, Programme Director, Africa Cocoa Coalition

To enable effective decision-making and proper understanding of certification bodies the following should be considered:

1. A Decision-Making Tool must provide the following:

- *Strategic direction* with a clear *mission* or purpose and how it fits into the national development priorities of the country;
- Who are the owners or decision-makers, who pulls the shots? Membership of Committees and Board of Directors; Annual General Assembly and to what extent stakeholders within the supply

chain participate or contribute to decision-making governing the operations of the standard body;

- Target standard setting procedures group
- What benefits it brings to the people and identify benefit-sharing mechanism
- Understand the operations and how it is going to impact on the social structure, economic benefits and the environment to be able to monitor;
- Any feedback system and to what extent it is contributing to improvement
- What resources of the country will they be using: both human and material
- Number of groups complying and being certified
- Who certifies? Transparency and dispute resolution mechanisms being applied
- Documentation of decisions taken and the procedures for decision-taking critical.
- Transparency of policies and procedures relating to decision-making, including meeting records, monitoring and evaluation, auditing, annual financial reports: annual general progress reports.
- Type of documents being allowed online access.
- Use of research recommendations and application of technology;

2. For Impact Assessment, the following needs to be considered:

- Establish baseline conditions and institute mechanisms to ensure visibility in the improvement of those evaluated against the original status/baseline:
- Social: social services such as schools, hospitals, water supply; labor conditions; gender and women's empowerment and to what extent these are contributing to livelihood improvement;
- Environmental aspects: monitoring encroachment on protected areas; watershed and river bank protection; soil conservation and improvement in fertility; protection or setting aside of high conservation value areas; protection of wildlife and their habitat; tree cover: number of trees/ha to contribute to carbon sequestration, reduction in GHG emissions and use of other energy-saving mechanisms;
- Economic factors should include: Living wages and ability to re-invest in farm inputs; premium payments; ability to pay children's school fees, living conditions and general livelihood standards; contract conditions between buyers and sellers; product quality and quantity;

3. Capacity Building

- Training curricula simplified and harmonize for ease of use.
- Target groups to be trained
- Focus on Trainer-of-Trainers (TOT) schemes; and how many trained by trainer of TOT
- Frequency of the training
- Impact of the training

4. Harmonization and Equivalence of Standards

- Adopt common criteria indicators across board

5. Emerging Initiatives

- Collaborate with new and innovative initiatives such as Forest Carbon Programme Facility of the World Bank to support efforts at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) Clean carbon mechanism (CCM) and other payment for ecosystems service schemes to leverage support for certification efforts.

6. Flagship Report

- Use national platforms and similar stakeholder participatory processes to collate information and develop consensus on all the issues from 1 to 5 above.
- Simple format that allows comparison between standard bodies including challenges, innovations and recommendations should be used.

7. Role of ICCO and Member Countries

- ICCO should collaborate with members countries to provide policies and guidelines for the operation of the standard bodies;
- Should develop a common framework to monitor their impact of the industry, particularly on consumption and production as well as quality and pricing.
- ICCO should collaborate with UNFSS to develop frameworks for the monitoring and evaluation of the operations and impact of the standard bodies, particularly their impact on socio-economic, environmental issues.

C: Government: Mr. Assamoi Robert Yapo, Director of Sustainability National Coffee and Cocoa Council, Côte d'Ivoire

Comment on activities identified by the UNFSS so far. These include*:

- a. **Decision-making tool:** The development of the decision –making tools are necessary to facilitate the understanding of the Government and other governmental bodies to the challenges and policy measures related to VSSs
- b. **Impact Assessment:** UNFSS could participate or initiate impact-assessment studies; but the UNFSS could rather focus on developing briefing or policy notes for the diffusion of the results and conclusions of such studies for the Governments and policy makers.
- c. **Capacity Building:** Not sure that this is the mandate for UNFSS
- d. **Harmonization and equivalence of standards:** This is in line with UNFSS mandate
- e. **Emerging initiatives:** UNFSS can participate in these emerging initiatives in order to assist the governments to understand and participate effectively in them.
- f. **Flagship report:** Annual document. Could be important tool for the governments to share the results and conclusion of the initiatives on the ground and better understand the challenges identified.

3. What should be the role of governments in this process? In particular members of the ICCO:
Please refer to my communication ([see presentation](#))

4. How can the ICCO and its members more effectively engage with the UNFSS? In other countries we are setting up committees that communicate directly with the UNFSS to express their interests, concerns and needs: See my communication; UNFSS will participate at the direct dialogue that will be facilitated by ICCO between the chocolate industry and the Producing countries (Governments)

D. Standards: Ms. Karin Kreider, Director ISEAL on behalf of the participating standard organizations (from workshop)

- Farmers' livelihood: should be the main priority for certification schemes
- Transparency of the system: certification schemes were encouraged to ensure that adequate information is available on their website
- Impacts: need to define the kind of impacts of certification to be assessed, better measure them and take actions when and if impacts are not sufficient
- Harmonisation: several factors can help:
 - need for cocoa sector to come together to define a basic vision
 - national platforms: a place to support capacity building, standard implementation and harmonisation at national level
 - develop a common set of criteria
 - provision of services and support of farmers is needed (ie. CCE, SCAN, etc)

(from UNFSS session)

- UNFSS should specialize in the interaction between standards and governments- focusing on information sharing and analysis.
- As well as, analysis and guidance on how to use VSSs as policy tools and disseminate that information.
- Impacts are critical and should focus on sustainability goals (more than a premium is needed to avoid/alleviate poverty).
- A standard is a full system and needs to be viewed as a comprehensive system (ie. Including Standards, capacity building, well-trained auditors etc.)
- Standards are a means to an end and are best used within a broader structure and strategy
- Need to understand how governments can engage with VSS and how VSS can engage with governments. In particular to support emerging initiatives.

E. Industry

(from workshop):

It was noted that certification was to remain a feature of the cocoa and chocolate sector but that the key challenge was to maximize the benefits of certification to the farmers, in particular related to incomes at farm level. Farmers' prospects were thought to be the priority, in order to serve both the farmers and the industry's long-term vision.

Seven points were listed to fulfill the industry's vision:

- Role of certification is defined and clear: an instrument in a set of tools for intervention in cocoa sustainability
- Sustainability requirements: the industry is committed to provide a set of core, non-negotiable requirements that all certification schemes and national standards should incorporate
- Impacts: certification should have clear, measurable and visible impacts (key role for certification standards)
- Audit: moving towards a management system audit of the process within producer groups (key role for certification standards and CEN)
- Credibility: strengthening the chain of custody in producing countries, ensuring that the intended benefits reach the farmers
- Governments in cocoa producing countries, through their national platforms, to take the lead in defining farmers' priority in their respective countries and to set criteria for standards to operate in their country, thereby "localising" the standards.
- The following aspects should also be taken into consideration: (i) reaching unaffiliated farmers;

- (ii) supporting and ensuring the credibility of the implementation of certification standards;
and (iii) linking criteria to extension services
- Need an international forum to align the efforts of cocoa producing countries with the market

(from UNFSS session)

- Certification is a means and not an end
- Knowledge transfer needs to focus on the farmer first (while respecting the knowledge that they also have)
- Impact Assessment is critical and it needs to be improved. We must conduct proper baseline assessments with the proper indicators and have the process be credible
- National platforms should be linked to international platforms and the ICCO can work with the UNFSS on this
- We must go beyond already organized farmers to find ways to work with independent “high-hanging fruit”