



## OUR WORK



Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) are standards that ensure that products, systems, processes, or services meet certain sustainability metrics including: respect for basic human rights, worker health and safety, environmental impacts of production, and others.

More and more consumers are questioning how the food they eat and the clothes they wear are produced. Moreover, do their production methods degrade the environment or exploit labor? Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important factor in shaping consumer preferences in today's global market. Therefore having the ability to comply with a growing number of VSS has become a necessary step for many producers to access markets, and to reach consumers.

VSS have the potential to generate significant environmental, economic and social benefits in developing countries and can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example they can:

- Help small-holder producers improve access to more profitable markets
- Reduce environmental impact and protect biodiversity
- Support workers' rights and living wages
- Increase customer trust and loyalty
- Help upgrade their production methods, improve productivity, and increase quality

With over 500 VSS in existence, they are gaining traction in the global market and are considered as trendsetters for further standard development.

Nevertheless decision makers in developing countries often say VSS can be a hurdle because:

- Compliance is challenging
- Implementation is costly
- small-scale producers risk being left out
- standards are not harmonized

## HOW DOES THE UNFSS WORK?

UNFSS is a demand-driven forum for intergovernmental bodies to communicate among each other and engage with key target groups including producers, traders, consumers, standard-setters, certification bodies, relevant NGOs, and researchers to address their information needs.



500 VSS

25 Industries



199 Countries



The United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) was created to respond to these challenges. It supports decision makers in developing countries to find the right information on VSS, as well as share their experiences and get technical help

## CORNERSTONE OF UNFSS'S WORK

- **Informed Policy Dialogue on VSS**  
Hold annual UNFSS meetings and issue-focused workshops with key decision makers to identify and discuss priorities relating to VSS issues.
- **Research and Analytical Hub of VSS**
  - Provide research to offer reliable and independent information on VSS.
  - Publish Flagship Reports on topical VSS issues.
  - Publish Discussion Paper series and regular Policy Briefs.
- **National Multi-Stakeholder Platforms**  
Three national platforms have been launched so far with the support of UNFSS: India in 2016 and both China and Brazil in 2017.

## THE "ADDED VALUE" OF UNFSS

UNFSS is the only forum that systematically conducts analytical, empirical and capacity-building activities in this field. The forum is committed to address the growing need of VSS-related information and assist developing countries.

Our work is rooted in the existing mandates and activities of participating United Nations agencies. UNFSS is uniquely positioned to provide credible information and assist developing countries to have equitable representation in the dialogue on standard-setting and governance.

The value of the forum lies in pooling resources, synchronizing efforts and assuring policy coherence, coordination and collaboration.

**UNFSS aims to become the backbone for the development of a coherent program of public policy and private initiatives of VSS.**

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN UNFSS?

### STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee consists of five collaborating UN agencies: FAO, UNIDO, ITC, UN Environment and UNCTAD.

### NATIONAL PLATFORMS

The UNFSS supports capacity building efforts for National Platforms to generate a national dialogue among stakeholder groups on pro-active policy approaches.

### TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

Analysis is conducted by partner international organizations and relevant multi-stakeholder initiatives.



For further information on UNFSS website:  
**unfss.org**

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