

Protocol for Developing SRP National/Regional Interpretation Guidelines

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Reference Documents:

- a) Draft SRP Assurance Framework V 0.2 (2018)
- b) SRP Standard on Sustainable Rice Cultivation V 1.0 (2015)
- c) SRP Performance Indicators for Sustainable Rice Cultivation V 1.0 (2015)
- d) ISEAL Code of Good Practice Setting Social & Environmental Standards V 6.0 (2014)

Background

Following its launch in 2015, the SRP Standard on Sustainable Rice Cultivation has been field-tested in several countries around the world. While the Standard offers normative guidance, practitioners need locally-relevant guidance on appropriate best practice recommendations that support the requirements of the Standard.

It is important to protect the integrity and core principles of the SRP Standard, while maximizing its relevance and practical applicability within diverse national contexts- including production systems, agroecological environments, socio-ecological circumstances and legal and regulatory frameworks. National Interpretation Guidelines are therefore designed to serve as a bridge between the global standard and local field application.

This document sets out the principles and process through which national SRP partners can develop nationally appropriate interpretations of the Standard, that are (a) credible across stakeholder groups; (b) locally accepted; and (c) that can be officially recognized by the SRP. This common process will help avoid proliferation of multiple "SRP Standards" in different countries, allow equivalence of claims across countries and protect brand value.

Ensuring consistent outcomes across countries

The ISEAL Code of Good Practice (Clause 6.3, Consistent Interpretation Desired Outcome) defines how a standard can be consistently interpreted and applied across its full geographic scope. For SRP, the ISEAL-based requirements for interpretation of the SRP Standard are as follows:

- a) The global SRP Standard in its current approved version shall be used as the basis for developing corresponding national or regional Interpretation Guidelines, except where they would be ineffective or inappropriate.
- b) National or regional Interpretation Guidelines shall be as consistent as possible with the global SRP Standard and at least as stringent.

Any SRP NIG must maintain the global scoring system and minimum thresholds in order to ensure equivalence of claims. NIGs may only provide additional specifications according to the provisions of the relevant national legal and regulatory framework.

Principles

- An inclusive, multi-stakeholder process
- Transparent, collective decision-making, including public consultation (according to the ISEAL Code of Good Practice)
- Adheres to SRP principles and values
- No product endorsement

- Recognizes SRP Secretariat as the Standard owner and final arbiter, and involves SRP Secretariat in all relevant dialogue and activities throughout.
- Uses the SRP's name and logo in association with the NIG only with prior approval of the SRP Secretariat. Any claims based on the NIG must follow the rules laid out in the SRP Assurance Framework. Any approved and successful claim by an individual entity within the specified geographical scope of the NIG does not confer any additional claim capability by any other member of the NIG team.
- The scoring and threshold levels are consistent with the minimum requirements of the SRP Standard.

The process

The steps for developing National Interpretation Guidelines are set out as follows:

1. The Guideline-setting organization (for example an SRP National Chapter) comprising a balanced representation of private and public sector stakeholders as well as technical experts and civil society, evaluates the applicability and adaptability of the international SRP Standard to the local context, and the need for a NIG. Balanced representation is reached when each group (private/public/technical/civil society) is represented by at least one person.
2. The local Interpretation Guideline-setting organization requests the SRP Secretariat for its endorsement to develop the NIG, specifying the geographic scope and declaring any potential conflicts of interest.
3. The SRP Secretariat (or agreed upon and appointed working group) evaluates the request and provides feedback within 20 days to the Guideline-setting organization regarding the terms (timelines, cost sharing for any required review and/or scientific consultation).
4. The Guideline-setting organization and the SRP jointly define Terms of Reference (TORs) for the process.
5. The Guideline-setting organization executes the agreed TORs, beginning with an analysis of existing standards and applicable legislation, resulting in a detailed listing of deviations from the SRP Standard.
6. Based on the benchmarking results the Guideline-setting organization develops a draft National or Regional Interpretation Guideline following the ISEAL Code of Good Practice (e.g. TORs, transparency and ideally two-month public consultation).
7. The detailed listing of deviations, draft Interpretation Guideline as well as a report on the process of guideline-setting is submitted to the SRP Secretariat for review and clarification of any open questions.
8. Based on this review, additional improvements may be requested, for example revision of the National Interpretation text to ensure consistency with the SRP Standard minimum requirements.
9. The SRP Secretariat and Guideline-setting organization agree on the final version of the Regional or National Interpretation Guideline and post the Guideline on the SRP homepage as an SRP-approved Interpretation Guideline, with an announcement to the membership. An SRP-approved Interpretation Guideline would be used in conjunction with the SRP Standard within the defined geographic scope.
10. The parties agree to conclude the review process within 30 days.

Note: An additional option offers the use of the SRP Standard as an **Add-On** to an existing Standard (e.g. GLOBALG.A.P. or organic). In this case the same principle applies, that the SRP scoring and minimum thresholds are maintained.

In case of dispute over any aspect of the process or outcome, the independent ISEAL Alliance or GLOBALG.A.P. shall be consulted as an independent organization with the required expertise and impartiality. Costs of such an independent review will be covered by the entity initiating the National Interpretation, while the SRP Secretariat will facilitate the process.