

## Resolution GA21-2b

### Proposed Resolution to be adopted at the 21st General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

13 November 2024

**TITLE:** ADOPTION OF THE REVISED 2024 RSPO PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA AND 2024 RSPO INDEPENDENT SMALLHOLDER (ISH) STANDARD FOR THE PRODUCTION OF SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL AND PALM OIL PRODUCTS

**Submitted By:** The Board of Governors of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (Currently represented by: Malaysian Palm Oil Association, Golden Agri-Resources Ltd.\*, Foresta Foods Corporation., Asosiasi Petani Sawit Swadaya Amanah, AAK AB, Musim Mas Holdings Pte. Ltd., Retailers' Palm Oil Group\*\*, UNILEVER PLC, The Procter & Gamble Company, Standard Chartered Bank, World Resources Institute (WRI), WWF International, Both ENDS, Forest Peoples Programme)

*\* Represents the Indonesian Growers Caucus*

*\*\*HOFER KG dba ALDI SOUTH Group, ASDA STORES LIMITED, Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc., Coles Supermarkets Pty Ltd, The Co-operative Group, Coop Switzerland, Federation of Migros Cooperatives, Lidl Stiftung & Co.KG, Marks and Spencer plc, Royal Ahold Delhaize N.V, Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd., Tesco PLC and John Lewis Plc*

#### Background

In line with the 'RSPO Standard Operating Procedure for Standard Setting and Review (2020)' and in compliance with the 'ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards Version 6.0', the 2018 RSPO Principles and Criteria (in application since 15th November 2018) and the 2019 Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard (in application since 13th November 2019) have been reviewed and revised.

The 2018 RSPO Principles & Criteria and the 2019 RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard are the RSPO's active main standards for RSPO member companies that produce palm oil and independent smallholders that produce Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB).

In February 2022, RSPO began a comprehensive Standards Review process to assess the 2018 RSPO P&C and the 2019 RSPO ISH Standard to ensure that RSPO standards remain relevant and reflect stakeholder understanding of good sustainability practices. Terms of Reference (TOR) were developed for the review process, establishing a multi-stakeholder Steering Group (SG) to provide oversight to a multi-stakeholder Standards Review Task Force (TF) that was established to lead this process, supported by three Technical Committees (TCs).

The Task Force met on four occasions, with several work streams working in between the physical Task Force meetings as well, operating by consensus. In line with ISEAL requirements, two rounds of Public Consultation (60 days and 30 days, respectively) were organised in 2022 and 2023, during which comments were collected in online surveys and from a total of 17 physical consultations were

organised globally in 9 countries across Southeast Asia, West Africa, and Latin America. These comments were analysed, considered, and discussed by the Task Force and led to further revisions and improvements of the draft standards.

Following the completion of the Standards Review in August 2023, the SG directed the RSPO Secretariat on 6th September 2023 to address and propose technical solutions to the substantive issues raised by the TF, as well as to revise the draft standards for clarity, auditability, implementability, and relevance. The directive was approved by the Standards Standing Committee (SSC) on 8th September 2023 and endorsed by the RSPO Board of Governors on 13th September 2023. The directive also stipulated that the revision of the standards should be done in parallel with the revision of the Certification System for P&C and ISH Standards, with a deadline of submitting the revised standards for adoption no later than the RSPO General Assembly scheduled for mid-November 2024.

Various activities were taken by the Secretariat to implement the directions of the SG, including internal and external engagement to formulate proposals to address the outstanding substantive issues and address market/regulatory relevance of the standard, as well as identifying potential gaps in the scope, structure and supporting processes underpinning implementation of the standards. These proposals were discussed with the SG, and approved proposals were implemented into a new draft (Revision 1.0) proposed by the Secretariat on 3rd June 2024.

The new draft (Revision 1.0) went through 5 Targeted Consultations with various stakeholder groups in June, July and August 2024, and a 45-day Stakeholder Consultation period beginning 5th July 2024 (with 7 physical workshops in 7 countries, and 7 webinars). Comments and feedback were analysed, considered, and incorporated in an updated draft (Revision 2.0) by the Secretariat.

Per the direction of the Standards Standing Committee (SSC) and the SG, a Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Task Force (MSCTF) was established and met from 2nd to 9th September 2024 to reach consensus on the remaining issues identified as requiring a multi-stakeholder discussion from the Stakeholder Consultation period. For inclusiveness and transparency, the SSC also requested an online Public Comment period on the Konveio platform for Revision 2.0 to run in parallel with the MSCTF, from 2nd to 15th September 2024.

Issues from the MSCTF that were not able to reach consensus were raised to the SG, together with comments on issues previously unraised from the Public Comment period. The SG met on 26th and 27th September 2024 to discuss the outstanding items, and reached consensus on all.

Following approval by the SG, the draft 2024 RSPO Principles and Criteria and the draft 2024 RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard was forwarded to the SSC for approval on 3rd October 2024. The SSC approved endorsed the revised 2024 RSPO P&C and 2024 RSPO ISH Standard on 4th October 2024, and approved that the revised standards be forwarded to the RSPO Board of Governors (BoG) for endorsement as a GA Resolution for adoption by RSPO members at the 21<sup>st</sup> RSPO General Assembly of the RSPO.

The drafts of the revised 2024 RSPO Principles and Criteria and revised 2024 RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard drafts for adoption by RSPO members can be [accessed here](#) on the RSPO website.

### **Proposed Resolution**

Specifically, this Resolution calls for:

1. That RSPO members adopt the revised 2024 RSPO Principles and Criteria and the revised 2024 RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard.
2. To request members to whom the RSPO P&C and the RSPO ISH Standard applies to begin preparation and work towards implementation of the revised 2024 RSPO P&C and 2024 RSPO ISH Standard.
3. To request members to whom the RSPO P&C and the RSPO ISH Standard applies to begin preparation and work towards certification under the revised 2024 RSPO P&C and 2024 RSPO ISH Standard by the effective date (i.e., 12 months after adoption of the revised standards, or 13 November 2025).
4. To request members to whom the RSPO P&C and the RSPO ISH Standard applies to assess and evaluate clarity, implementability and auditability of the revised 2024 RSPO P&C and 2024 RSPO ISH Standard, and raise issues of major concern to the RSPO Secretariat prior to the effective date (i.e., 12 months after adoption of the revised standards, or 13 November 2025). Such issues will be considered by the Standards Standing Committee and, if necessary, addressed through a procedural update of the 2024 RSPO P&C and 2024 RSPO ISH Standard.
5. To request members to whom the RSPO P&C and the RSPO ISH Standard does not apply to actively promote the sourcing, consumption and promote awareness of sustainable palm oil and oil palm products, and give support to those members engaged in implementing the revised standards.

### **Potential Benefit**

1. Improved clarity, auditability and implementability of the RSPO P&C and RSPO ISH Standard.
2. Improved market and regulatory relevance of the RSPO P&C and RSPO Standard, to address evolving market and trade expectations, to maintain and improve the position of RSPO certified palm oil and palm oil products in key mature and developing consumption markets.
3. Strengthens alignment between the RSPO P&C and RSPO ISH Standard in terms of content, structure, definitions and processes, to provide improved compatibility in certification and compliance, and to support traceability.
4. Strengthens alignment between the RSPO P&C and RSPO ISH Standard with the Certification System for P&C and ISH Standard, to reduce interpretation risk and align expectations between implementation of the revised standards' requirements and compliance

verifications/checks to be performed by auditors, strengthening the overall assurance process.

5. Coordinates the RSPO P&C, the RSPO ISH Standard and the Certification System for P&C and ISH Standards with the development of the new RSPO digital certification, trade and traceability system (prisma), to ensure smooth alignment and incorporation of updated compliance, certification and data requirements of the revised standards into a unified system that strengthens traceability across the supply chain.
6. There is no diminution of the standards compared to the 2018 RSPO P&C and the 2019 RSPO ISH Standard, while strengthening the standards in terms of streamlining language for consistent interpretation with a unified drafting style.

### **Potential Risk & mitigation plan**

**Risk:** Certain new procedures, guidance or tools required by the revised standards will need to be developed, and some existing procedures, guidance or tools will need to be updated, potentially affecting implementation due to time lags.

**Mitigation:** The formal 12-month transition period between the adoption and the effective dates of the revised standards allows for such development or updates to be completed before the revised standards are effective for compliance. A publication roadmap for such developments and updates is being prepared by the Secretariat, with a priority for activities linked to Critical Indicators. Improved document and process control procedures will be put in place by the Secretariat to allow the standard documents to be updated to reflect current expectations for implementation, or to at least collect all relevant information on implementation, interpretation and compliance to the standard in common reference point.

**Risk:** There are supplementary annexes that will be addressed and completed during the interim period.

**Mitigation:** The formal 12-month transition period between the adoption and the effective dates of the revised standards allows for these annexes to be completed before the revised standards are effective for compliance (e.g., the Compliance Requirements and Informative Guidance annex is targeted to be completed no later than March 2025). Finalisation of these sections will be delegated to the relevant Working Group or Task Force, or the Secretariat, to be approved by the Standards Standing Committee.

**Risk:** Clarity is necessary for associated processes, in particular National Interpretations.

**Mitigation:** Preparatory and supporting materials are planned by the Secretariat to assist any initiated National Interpretations, to shorten time lags between the effective date of the revised standards and the endorsement of an NI for implementation. An NI process may be initiated by members of a particular country after the revised standards have been adopted; for NIs initiated and in development prior to the effective date of the revised standards, the Secretariat shall continually update of these NI Working Groups on any adjustments that may be made in the general 2024 RSPO P&C and/or the 2024 RSPO ISH Standard that may affect development of the NI.

**Contact Information**

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**References:**

Revised 2024 RSPO Principles and Criteria and revised 2024 RSPO Independent Smallholder (ISH) Standard drafts, accessible [here](#) on the RSPO website.