



Initiative Nachhaltige Rohstoffbereitstellung für die stoffliche Biomassenutzung

3/2013 INRO Criteria for good Certification Systems

Decided at the INRO Session 19/06/2013

The implementation of the certification of primary distributors of raw materials from biomass is based on a comprehensive documentation and assessment of whether the criteria are met. For the credibility of the certification, it is essential that it is not arbitrary. This is very important equally for the companies as well as for the NGO's.

The nature of the certification also has great influence on the extent to which the local civil society is able to participate in the certification process.

However, it is not possible to define indicators for every single plant, in each country, in each climate zone etc., and for how the criteria need to be verified. This must be left, in some extent, to the competence of the certification systems and the auditors.

The professional level of the global certification systems is highly diverse. However, trust in certification can only arise if it is ensured that the certification system chosen by the company meets at least certain necessary basic requirements. These include questions such as: How well are the criteria set within a certification system? How thoroughly will the sustainability requirements be verified? Are the inspectors (certification systems and bodies and auditors) independent? Questions like these determine the credibility of the entire certification.

For this reason, INRO defines the following basic requirements for certification systems. They serve as a checklist for companies in their selection of the certification systems.

In principle

- Strategic document (e.g. statutes) and rules of communication are available and transparent
- Announcement of the geographic scope in which the certification system operates
- Notification of all certification bodies that are working for the certification system
- The system is accurate, reliable and protected from abuse
- Disclosure of all certificates in a database that is accessible / on the website of the certification system

- Disclosure of membership fees and royalties
- Quantity-based fee and/or other funding rules to ensure the financial independence of the certification system. Dependence of third-party funds must be below 20%.
- Clear definition of sustainability criteria for each country in which it carries out its activities.
- National and regional adaptation of global criteria
- Regular review of the standard criteria and principles including all stakeholders (at least every five years)
- Provision of procedures containing guidelines for economic operators.
- Within the framework of the certification, it is not possible to only carry out a partial certification of surfaces; minimum requirements (land use, compliance with ILO criteria) must be respected on all lands of an owner.
- Commitment of the system participants to comply with said requirements.

Verification

- Opposition proceedings and appeal mechanism for both the auditors and the stakeholders are present
- Standardized and procedural rules mandatory for all certification bodies and checklists of requirements for verification and performance on the indicators level
- Standards/Requirements for certification bodies regarding expertise, equipment and infrastructure, the number and qualifications of staff
- Standards/Requirements for certification bodies regarding recognition by delegating authority or specialized accreditation, and regarding the procedure for the issuance of certificates.
- Mutual independence, free from any conflict of interest on standards, certification body and company
- Independence of the auditor from the standard provider and from the company to be verified.
- Ascertainment of the specific risk factors for the control of growers and primary gatherers and requirements for risk assessment and risk management: defining methods of control, the audit frequency and audit sampling requirements.
- Clear guidelines of rules for traceability
- Ability to group certification with a distinct group definition
- Sanctioning mechanism, which includes different levels, from the lowest level of information about minor variations (“minor”) to severe deviations (“major”) with defined periods of time and with sanctions in case of non-fulfillment. The catalog of sanctions should also include rules for partial and complete certificate divestiture as well as explanations on how to deal with fraud. Furthermore, requirements for and checks of the basic qualifications of the auditor and mandatory training courses and seminars should be in place.

- Risk- and quality management of the standard.

Transparency

- Annual reports of one's experiences with the activities of the certification system
- Disclosure of the governance structure and the members/participants
- Public presentation of the certification standard with all its normative documents
- Certification system places the certification bodies under obligation to actively hold dialogue, particularly in high-risk areas, in order to enable proactive stakeholder participation.
- Transparent design of decision-making structures
- Publication of a summary of the results of primary and surveillance audits with an explanation of the deviations and the agreed time and action plan
- Requirements for documents that enable traceability (e.g. delivery notes)
- Information about the location of the certified areas (GPS data), if available.
- Measures for prevention of abuse and fraud are public.

Management

- Certificate of registration, business license and organizational chart are transparent.
- Agreement on continuous improvement of the system and for system users
- Reviews of the frequency and methods of controls and the reliability of the data
- Well-balanced cost-benefit-structure, participation of the multi-stakeholders during the development, implementation, and during the process.
- Standard was developed in line with ISEAL¹
- Standard was developed with the involvement of scientific expertise. The standard requires of its members a commitment to continuous reduction of harmful effects on the environment (soil, water, air, biodiversity) and establishes a monitoring, which measures the effect of certification.

¹ International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (A standard for standards)