

## Memo: Certification schemes for biofuels

### What are voluntary schemes for biofuels?

Voluntary schemes are control systems that certify sustainability of biofuels. Companies importing or producing biofuels have to demonstrate that their biofuels are produced in a sustainable way. They can do so by asking a scheme to do all the necessary audits to prove that. The EU Commission does **not run these schemes itself but opened up the opportunity for private companies and for institutions** to play this part. They could apply for it and today, the Commission has confirmed that seven companies can act as a scheme.

### What are the main sustainability criteria that the schemes have to check?

The following criteria have to be included:

- 1) A set of land use criteria: It is not allowed to convert land with high carbon stock or land with high biodiversity value into land used for production of biofuels. In plain words: No forests – whether tropical forests or natural forests – can be destroyed to grow biofuels. No wet land can be dried or protected areas.
- 2) **A minimum amount of greenhouse gas savings over the whole production chain:** Biofuels need to stand a comparison with fossil fuels such as petrol: Only if it is proven **that they emit at least 35% less** greenhouse gases than petrol, than they are seen as sustainable. In 2017 these savings have to be at least 50%. Biofuels produced from new installations have to save at least 60% from 2018.
- 3) The system needs to monitor the **whole production chain from** how the crops are grown through the manufacturing process to the pump.

### How are the schemes doing their controls in practice?

The scheme arranges for an **independent auditor** to do the controls. This auditor will be checking both **all the documents** and do **controls on the spot**. This means that the auditor inspects a **sample of the farmers, mills and traders**. In the case of e.g. a Brazilian farmer, he will check whether the land where the feedstock for the ethanol is produced was indeed already farm land before and not a tropical forest.

### Can biofuels produced outside the EU be included in these schemes?

Yes, all biofuels can be covered by voluntary schemes

### Who pays the scheme for their audit work?

The company importing or producing biofuels pays the scheme.

### **How did the Commission check the schemes?**

The Commission assesses schemes for quality of their control system and their reliability. This means that schemes must ensure that:

- **all companies in the supply chain are audited before making any claims about sustainability under the scheme;**
- **a follow up audit of the companies in the supply chain takes place at least once a year;**
- **the auditors are competent and independent;**
- **the administrative system is protected against fraud.**

### **How does the recognition of a scheme work in practice?**

The Commission assesses a scheme that has been submitted for recognition. Typically, schemes need to make amendments to their rules to meet the strict requirements of the Commission. When the Commission deems the rules of the voluntary scheme to adequately cover the requirements, it adopts a decision to recognise a scheme. Member States must accept proof from a recognised voluntary scheme 20 days after publication of the decision in the Official Journal.

### **Who checks the work of the schemes?**

For schemes to be recognised by the Commission they have to include rules about who checks that the rules of the scheme are applied correctly by companies and that these checks occur with sufficient frequency. The Commission requires that the auditors of the scheme are competent and independent. Schemes can show this by, for instance, laying down in their rules that only **auditors** who have relevant **ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards in place** and who are accredited by an independent accreditation body who is a member of the International Accreditation Forum, may audit for that scheme.

### **Is there a time-limit for the validity of the scheme?**

The current recognitions are for a period of 5 years. Any extension would require a new decision.

### **Can the Commission withdraw its decision to recognise a scheme?**

Yes. The Commission can revoke its decision if it becomes clear that the scheme does not follow the agreed set of rules.

### **Is there another possibility to prove sustainability of biofuels than the voluntary schemes?**

According to Renewable Energy Directive Member States have to set up a national system through which companies can show that they comply with the sustainability requirements for biofuels. Companies can thus choose to follow the national systems or to make use of voluntary schemes. National systems also mean that there is an adequate standard of independent auditing involved. However, this standard can differ between Member States and each national system is normally only valid in the Member State where it was set up.

## **Has the Commission received more applications for voluntary schemes to be recognised?**

To date the Commission has received 25 applications. Seven of the schemes are recognised today. These were the first seven schemes that made a request for recognition to the Commission. The Commission is continuing to assess other schemes which have been received subsequently

## **Can you give more information on the schemes recognised today?**

The schemes and the assessment reports are available on the Commission Renewable Energy Transparency Platform at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/biofuels/sustainability\\_schemes\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/biofuels/sustainability_schemes_en.htm)

You will find below a brief overview of the schemes:

### **- ISCC (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification)**

ISCC is a global initiative developed in a multi-stakeholder approach with a large number of companies from the entire supply chain. Furthermore research organizations, NGOs like WWF and industry associations from different countries are involved. ISCC is governed by an association with currently 55 members. ISCC is covering all types of biomass and biofuels and has a global scope. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive. The development of the scheme has been supported by the German **Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture** and Consumer Protection via the Agency for Renewable Resources (FNR).

### **- Bonsucro EU**

Bonsucro EU is a special version of the Bonsucro scheme, specifically designed to meet the mandatory requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive. Bonsucro is a **roundtable initiative**, which has a large number of companies from the different parts of the supply chain involved. Furthermore, the "**World Wide Fund For Nature**" (**WWF**) is a member. Bonsucro EU is a standard for sugarcane based ethanol with a strong focus on Brazilian sugarcane production. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive, except for the provision on highly biodiverse grasslands.

### **- RTRS EU RED (Roundtable for Responsible Soy)**

RTRS EU RED is a special version of the RTRS scheme, specifically designed to meet the requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive. RTRS is a roundtable initiative, which has a large number of companies from the different parts of the supply chain involved. Furthermore, a number of representatives **from the civil society, including environmental NGO's** are its members. Among these members are: "**Conservation International**", "**The Nature Conservancy**" and "**World Wide Fund For Nature**" (**WWF**). RTRS EU RED is a standard for soy based diesel with a strong focus on Argentinean and Brazilian soy production. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive.

#### **- RSB EU RED (Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels)**

RSB EU RED is a special version of the Roundtable for Sustainable Biofuels scheme, specifically designed to meet the mandatory requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive. RSB is a roundtable initiative, which has a large number of companies from the different parts of the supply chain involved. Furthermore, it has members from the civil society including environmental NGO's. Among these members are: "**Conservation International**", "**The International Union for Conservation of Nature**", (IUCN), "**United Nations Foundation**", "**Wetlands International**" and "**World Wide Fund For Nature**" (WWF). RSB EU RED is covering all types of biofuels and has a global scope. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive.

#### **2BSvs (Biomass Biofuels Sustainability voluntary scheme)**

2BSvs is a **French initiative**, developed by a consortium of different companies led by Bureau Veritas. 2BSvs is covering all types of biofuels and has a global scope. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive, except for the provision on highly biodiverse grasslands.

#### **RBSA (Abengoa RED Bioenergy Sustainability Assurance)**

RBSA is an **industry initiative**, developed by Abengoa. RBSA is covering ethanol and has a global scope. It is characterised by a mandatory requirement to calculate actual greenhouse gas values as supposed to also allow default values, with a view to drive better greenhouse gas performance in the supply chain. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive.

#### **Greenery Brazilian Bioethanol verification programme**

The standard is an **industry initiative**, developed by Greenery. The standard is applied to sugarcane based ethanol produced in Brazil. The scheme has received recognition for all criteria of the Renewable Energy Directive, except for the provision on highly biodiverse grasslands.