

# PR3G: Overview of the AIBI-CS Certification Rules for RSPO Scheme



**Any Update to this Document is Posted on the [AIB International website](#).**

## **Introduction**

This document provides a guide for applicants and suppliers about how the AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS) evaluates and certifies companies against the RSPO Supply Chain Standards. It is important that the applicant has a copy of the most current version of the applicable RSPO Standards as this is the scope and protocol upon which the AIBI-CS Certification scheme is built.

RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standard and RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems were published in February 2020. This document follows the protocol laid out in those documents.

The AIBI-CS Quality System is designed to meet the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 (Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services). Many of the documents that are part of this system are provided at various stages of the certification process. Accreditation to the ISO/IEC 17065 Standard is carried out by the Assurance Services International (ASI).

When conducting an evaluation AIBI-CS may subcontract to AIB International, use independent contractors or full time AIBI-CS employees.

## **AIB International Certification Services, Inc.**

AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS), a wholly owned and legally separate subsidiary of AIB International provides certification services to organizations around the world within the food industry and associated services. The Certification Office of AIB International is located in Manhattan, Kansas. The General Manager, Certification Services provides oversight for AIBI-CS.

AIBI-CS has an Impartiality Governing Board composed of impartial members (who do not work for AIBI-CS) who are stakeholders in the PPC Standards. This board meets according to ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO/IEC 17065 requirements and overviews the whole certification scheme.

## **The RSPO Standards**

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a not-for-profit, international membership organisation that unites stakeholders from the different sectors of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors and traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil production. The RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standard is presented as a series of auditable requirements designed to be used by organisations in the palm value chain to demonstrate implemented systems for control of RSPO certified oil palm products. Downstream processors or users of RSPO certified sustainable oil palm products can claim the use of (or support of) RSPO certified oil palm products when they adhere to the requirements of the RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standard and the RSPO

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Rules on Market Communications and Claims. This is independently verified by an RSPO accredited certification body.

## **Eligibility**

The General Chain of Custody requirements of the RSPO Supply Chain Standard shall apply to any organisation in the supply chain that takes legal ownership and physically handles RSPO Certified Sustainable oil palm products at a location under the control of the organisation including outsourced contractors. After the end product manufacturer, there is no further requirement for certification.

Please note that any outsourced contractors shall be considered high risk if they physically transform products or if there is a risk of uncontrolled, non-deliberate or accidental cross-contamination resulting in mixing of certified and non-certified products. A review will be conducted by AIBI-CS and may also require that they need to be visited as part of the audit plan.

## **First Application Stage**

AIBI-CS will forward a copy of the certification application along with other documents that will include:

An Overview of the AIBI-CS Certification Scheme (this document)  
The Rules for Certification that must be followed by both parties  
Whether the audit will be conducted on-site or virtually  
Additional information if required

In order to progress further, the certification application should be filled out and returned to the AIBI-CS office. You should also access the following documents prior to submitting your application:

**RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standard 2020** - [https://rspo.org/library/lib\\_files/preview/1045](https://rspo.org/library/lib_files/preview/1045)

**RSPO Supply Chain Rules on Market Communications and Claims 2016** - [https://www.rspo.org/library/lib\\_files/preview/267](https://www.rspo.org/library/lib_files/preview/267)

If you have any other questions on RSPO please contact the RSPO Secretariat - <https://rspo.org/about/contact>

Please also note that you must have been operational for 3 months prior to applying for RSPO certification.

AIBI-CS will forward a final application letter and other documents that are needed for contract purposes and to allow the evaluation and certification stages to take place. This work will only be carried out when the relevant documents have been filled out and returned as detailed in the quality system. Every effort will be made by AIBI-CS to carry out the evaluation on the date(s) requested by the applicant/supplier. In the case of a re-certification audit, similar documentation will be sent to make sure that the exact scope or any other changes are known in advance. An evaluation plan for all types of audit will be forwarded to applicant/suppliers in advance of the agreed evaluation/audit date.

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Prior to the audit, you will need to download a copy of the RSPO standard and ensure you have implemented its requirements.

## **Contract Aspects of the Certification Scheme**

The signed documents at both the first and final stage of the application procedure form the basis of the contract. The final contract is when the pre-assessment or audit dates are agreed and the audit is carried out. Terms and conditions regarding payment are detailed later in this document.

## **Pre-assessment Evaluation**

A pre-assessment evaluation can be carried out if the applicant is not sure about meeting all the aspects of the certification standard. This involves an audit against the agreed scope and a list detailing possible non-conformance that are found. At this stage, the process stops, allowing the applicant to apply for final certification when any corrections to the non-conformances raised have been made. The applicant must understand that a pre-assessment audit will identify where the site does not meet the requirements of the standard, but advice on how to correct the issues cannot be given by the auditor. The pre-assessment does not involve training or consultancy.

## **Audit and Certification Stage**

Once all the final application stage documentation (including recertification) has been received by AIBI-CS, an auditor will carry out the evaluation in the agreed time scale and on the agreed date(s). Guidance on the time scale will be provided for each site. There are key aspects at this stage of the process:

1. Opening Meeting
2. Review Management Documentation
3. Review Systems (organizational, management, and operational)
4. Review Outsourced Activities (where applicable)
5. Review Records (related to receipt, processing, and supply of certified oil palm products)
6. Site Tour and Interviews
7. Notes/findings Preparation
8. Closing Meeting

It is important that the applicant understands that the evaluator will present the findings at the closing meeting by discussing any non-conformances that have been found but will not comment on the likely outcome of the evaluation. The applicant will be asked to sign as an acknowledgement of the non-conformances raised and a copy of these will be left with them.

The applicant/supplier should send in details of all the corrective actions taken to the AIBI-CS Office within 3 months of the initial audit to comply with the RSPO Standard. It should be noted that adequate time for the evaluator to assess the corrective actions and request clarification is included within the 3-month deadline. For non-conformances raised at surveillance audits the corrective action shall be provided within one month.

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The evidence/corrective actions received at the AIBI-CS office will be sent to the evaluator who will verify that they are satisfactory. If the evaluator requires further evidence, he/she will contact the applicant/supplier. If the corrective actions are assessed as inadequate at the time of the deadline, no certificate will be issued, and a full re-audit will be necessary. For this reason, it is recommended that corrective actions are submitted as early as possible to avoid to accommodate any request for further information. Typically, initial submission of CA should be within the first two weeks after the audit.

A reminder will be sent to the applicant/supplier before the due date if no evidence of corrective actions to the non-conformances raised has been received.

On receipt of the signed off corrective actions from the evaluator, a Technical Review of the documents will be carried out by an approved Technical Reviewer. The appointed Decision Maker will make sure that the whole process and all the documents involved in the evaluation are correct and documented before deciding if a certificate can be granted or, in the case of a recertification audit, re-issued.

In some cases, AIBI-CS may decide that a revisit to the site is required to be conducted to close out non-conformances; in these cases, an expedited Technical Review will be conducted so arrangements may be made for a CB representative to visit the plant and confirm that the corrective action/root cause analysis is correct and effective. The representative may or may not be the original auditor.

***It is extremely important that the applicant/supplier reads the relevant section of the Standard relating to non-conformities and corrective action as it is this protocol that AIBI-CS will follow for all types of non-conformance.***

**In the event of a re-visit to verify a non-conformance, the applicant / supplier will be charged according to the price list at the end of this document and also for additional expenses for travel. The AIBI-CS office will clearly document this.**

A certificate can only be issued after all corrective actions have been completed and verified according to the quality system.

The AIBI-CS office will notify the applicant/supplier of the outcome of the decision, typically by e-mail, and will issue a copy of the final report and certificate to them.

## **Certification Status**

The frequencies of subsequent evaluation audits are detailed in section 5.3 of the RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems.

## **Documentation and Supplementary Action**

The evaluation report and associated documents shall be stored safely and securely for a period of five years by the applicant/supplier and AIBI-CS. The certificate issued to the

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applicant/supplier is the property of AIBI-CS as outlined in section 5.3 of the RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems.

## Appeals and Complaints

The deadline is 7 working days after issuance of a RSPO Certificate. AIBI-CS will formally reply within 10 working days from the day of receipt.

A person independent from the RSPO certification process will handle and the result of the investigation/outcome will be finalised within 30 working days.

In the event of an unsuccessful appeal, the supplier may be charged for conducting the appeal investigation.

## Multi-site and Group Certification

Multi-site and group certifications are permitted under certain circumstances. If a multi-site certification audit is conducted all rules in Annex 2 of the RSPO Supply Chain Standard apply. If a group certification audit is conducted all rules in Annex 3 of the RSPO Supply Chain Standard apply.

## Book and Claim Audits

Book and Claim audits shall be conducted once the qualifying level of 500 RSPO Credits have been claimed for a specific calendar year by an organisation. Audits shall either be conducted as a remote audit or combined with RSPO Supply Chain audits or other on-site audits. If non-conformances are found, a maximum of one (1) month is to be given to the organisation to address the non-conformance.

## Notification of Significant Event

Notification of significant events must be sent to [gfsi@aibinternational.com](mailto:gfsi@aibinternational.com) within the deadlines set out within the relevant Standard. Formal written confirmation shall be kept at affected sites.

## Suspension and withdrawal

There are several reasons why a certificate can be suspended or withdrawn. These include (but not limited to) not complying with scheme rules, failure to submit corrective actions in the required timeframe and where objective evidence indicates that there has been a demonstrable breakdown in the supply chain caused by the certified client's actions or inactions, and that oil palm products have been or are about to be shipped, which are falsely identified as RSPO certified product.

In a multi-site or group if there is a non-conformance at one (1) participating site or member this can lead to suspension of the whole multisite certificate. The Central Office or Group Manager has the option to voluntarily remove that participating site from the multisite certificate.

## Publicly available information

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All information is considered proprietary information and shall be regarded as confidential. The exceptions to this are that the following information can be made publicly available upon request (and made available on the applicable website):

- a) RSPO Supply Chain Certificate
- b) For Independent mill, the RSPO audit report
- c) The list of certified organisations, which includes details of the scope of each certificate, i.e. which sites and/or processes are approved

## **Re-certification audits**

Certified facilities may have audits per the requirements laid out in the RSPO Standard.

## **Scope Extension**

AIBI-CS shall be informed of any scope extensions. This includes for multi-site and group certification organisations wishing to add sites to their certificate. Full details can be found in RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems 2020 – Annex 2 Multi-site certification A2.5 and Annex 3 Group Certification A3.5.

## **Explanation**

The Certification Manager is responsible for providing explanation to the documents related to certification process. This includes the RSPO Standard, RSPO Guidance documents and AIBI-CS internal documents. The external sources such as ASI or internal experts including the CS management team and the administrative staff will be used as needed.

## **Scheme Certification Marks**

Clients who have achieved RSPO certification must contact [rspo@aibinternational.com](mailto:rspo@aibinternational.com) for further instructions on use of the RSPO Logo.

## **Certification Fees**

These will be reviewed periodically.

## **Terms of Business**

The certification fees detailed and any revisions are effective following periodic reviews.

Subsistence fees (hotel, meals, transportation, etc.) and travel fees, where applicable, are additional to the cost shown above. AIBI-CS will try to minimize these costs by grouping work whenever possible.

Invoices will be raised in pounds Sterling (£) and should be paid in pounds Sterling (£) for audits conducted in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Invoices will be raised in US\$ and should be paid in US\$ for audits conducted in the US.

Invoices will be raised in CA\$ and should be paid in CA\$ for audits in Canada.

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Invoices will be raised in MXN pesos and should be paid in MXN pesos for audits conducted in Mexico.

Payment should be made within 30 days from the date of invoice. Failure to settle invoices in the specified time will be taken into account for ongoing certification and could result in withdrawal or suspension of certification.

## Queries

If you require any more information or clarification on any aspect of the certification process please contact:

AIB International Certification Services  
PO Box 3999  
1213 Bakers Way  
Manhattan, KS, 66502-3999  
Tel: 1-785-537-4750  
Fax: 1-785-537-0106  
Email: [certification@aibinternational.com](mailto:certification@aibinternational.com)

The office is open from 0800 to 1700 CST Monday to Friday. It will be closed on national / public holidays.

## Confidentiality

AIB International Certification Services, Inc. (AIBI-CS) shall take all reasonable measures to ensure that AIBI-CS employees and agents keep confidential all information that comes to their knowledge as a result of the certification program. AIBI-CS shall ensure that only a subcontractor / external expert and/ or evaluator who have signed a confidentiality agreement and that you, the applicant/supplier have agreed to will be used. Be advised that AIBI-CS will have to show any documentation of the suppliers to the ISO/IEC 17065 accreditation body (ASI) if they make a formal request.

Details of your certification may be displayed on the AIB International website as outlined to you in the summary above.

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