

Oversight Committee Minutes

Meeting 33: 18 July 2023 Teleconference meeting

Present:

OC members: Jules Colombo, Ben Huyghe, Richard Kwarteng, Marike de Pena, Iresha Sanjeevanie, John Young (Chair)

Excused: Sugumar Raman, Theresa Glammert-Kuhr (proxy to Jules Colombo), Martin de la Harpe (proxy to John Young)

Fairtrade International S&P: Eleonora Gutwein, Christine Knickelbein

Contributing observer: Debora Rosado (FLOCERT)

Disclaimer:

The Fairtrade International (FI) Oversight Committee (OC) aims to reach consensus, but decisions may not always reflect the opinions of all members.

Item 1 – Opening

The chair opened the meeting and stated that the quorum was met.

Agenda: The agenda was agreed upon unanimously.

Conflict of interest: No conflict of interest was identified.

Ground Rules:

The chair reminded the OC about the ground rules for the meeting:

- All confidential information shared within the committee is kept confidential and should not be circulated or disclosed outside the committee. This does not apply to public minutes.
- All decisions will be based on consensus whenever possible.

Item 2 – FI Requirements for Assurance Providers (RAPs)

ISEAL Assurance Code requires the scheme owner to conduct regular reviews of its assurance scheme to ensure it remains adequate, effective and able to maintain integrity. The system review procedure is outlined in the Fairtrade International Oversight Procedure. As a result of the Fairtrade International's ISEAL evaluation against the Assurance code 2.0, the Assurance and Oversight team has revised the RAPs focusing on issues related to the evaluation. The review was also an opportunity to align the RAPs to the new ways of auditing after the pandemic (introducing remote audits) and amending the exceptions/variations part of the document, as well as requirements on data sharing. Also, a few minor wording changes to make the document clearer.

This was a partial review and included a consultation period of 30 days where input from affected bodies has been collected. Affected bodies are the approved Assurance Providers (APs).

The Assurance Manager (AM) presented the proposed final draft for decision. The finalization of the new draft of the RAPs is also an element of FI's corrective measure to comply with ISEAL's Assurance Code 2.0.

Discussion:

Overall, the OC agreed with the proposed changes but one and gave the following recommendations:

- to split proposed chapter on exceptions and variations into two separate chapters to make the distinction clearer.
- to remove the proposed requirement 2.15.9 that would allow worker councils of certified entities to start an appeal process. This requirement had been introduced based on an earlier guidance from the OC. However, after consulting with lawyers from the AP, the advice was that sharing details of allegations, complaints and appeals with worker councils would represent a breach of the certification contract between AP and the clients. It was decided that the work currently being done on the grievance mechanisms would address this issue sufficiently. It was hence agreed to not introduce this requirement.
- to add training on human rights to the requirement 4.2.5 (qualification criteria for auditors and other assurance personnel) which is already addressing training on labour rights.
- The RAPs document uses an "*" to distinguish requirements that APs that are accredited against the ISO 17065 norm do not have to address separately as they are already covered by the audits conducted by the German Accreditation Body, Dakks. It was agreed to review and restructure these requirements and their subsections and to see how the ISO/Dakks audit could be combined to be more effective.
- to give more flexibility to the APs to define a sanction for suspensions appropriate to the circumstances to the non-compliance of the client (annex D on sanctions). The OC agreed the following wording to be added to the current suspension rules:

In the case of a suspension the AP may outline in a sanction trade restrictions that are stricter than the requirements in the Standards.

It was recommended that APs have a clear communication about it, as well as adding a clear guidance to the requirement in the Standards where the rules for the suspension are set out. The AM pointed out that sanctions should be managed according to clear procedures set by the certifier and that a separate and publicly available sanctions policy, which is reviewed by the OC, does already exist.

In this context, it was discussed if certification sanctions should be part of the Standard as all certification related processes (including decertification and suspension) should be regulated by the Certification Body. As part of the Standard clients have to agree and accept audits and all processes related to certification.

It was agreed to look into this at the next Standards review.

Decision:

The OC unanimously approved the new version of the RAPs v.2.1 with the changes agreed during the OC meeting (see above).

Next steps:

July 2023:

- AM to conduct final editing of the RAPs v2.1
- AM to publish the RAPs v2.1
- AM to submit the RAPs v2.1 to ISEAL

Next Meeting date:

The next Oversight Committee meetings in 2023 will take place on

- September 18-19
- November 27-28

The meeting was formally closed.