

贸易与生物多样性研讨会：利用可持续标准加强 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的证据与选项

2021 年 9 月 22 日

研讨会报告



本次线上研讨会于 9 月 22 日举行，由联合国贸发会议（UNCTAD）、国际可持续标准联盟（ISEAL）与《生物多样性公约》秘书处、世界自然保护联盟（IUCN）共同举办。联合国贸发会议和全球可持续标准联盟衷心感谢瑞士联邦经济事务秘书处（SECO）支持在“联合国贸发会议全球生物贸易计划：将贸易、生物多样性和可持续发展联系起来”的框架下组织本次研讨会。



Convention on
Biological Diversity



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关键信息

- 自愿性可持续标准 (VSS) 为公司和生产商提供激励，鼓励其实施符合环境、社会与经济目标的实践。
- 消费者是要求实现可持续消费与生产的主要驱动因素。自愿性可持续标准提升材料和商品的可追溯性。它们让消费者更好地了解产品的原产地、生产方式和投放市场的方式。
- 公司有潜力在生物多样性保护方面发挥重要作用。自愿性可持续标准是供应链中多个参与者实现生物多样性主流化的切入点。自愿性可持续标准为公司提供机会，使其可持续性进展得到认可。自愿性可持续标准可通过在行业中确立良好实践等方式，对认证生产商或公司以外的各方产生积极的溢出效应。
- 自愿性可持续标准是工商企业参与实施“2020 年后全球生物多样性框架”的有效主流化机会，例如作为为框架设立的政策工具的一部分，或作为国家生物多样性战略和行动计划指南文件或能力建设工作的部分。

1. 研讨会的背景与方式

自愿性可持续标准包括一系列规范和标准，用于确保根据某些可持续性指标，比如环境影响、基本人权、劳工标准和性别平等，收获、生产、加工或运输产品。如今，存在 500 余种自愿性可持续标准，适用于许多国家的主要出口产品，比如咖啡、茶叶、橡胶、可可、棕榈油、木材、棉花和有机农业食品。

[2020 年后全球生物多样性框架](#) 罗列了全球生物多样性具体目标，由 [《生物多样性公约》\(CBD\)](#) 的缔约方谈判达成。新框架将有助于实现《2030 议程》和可持续发展目标 (SDGs)，这让国际贸易成为“包容性经济增长和减贫的引擎”，发挥显著作用。随着自愿性可持续标准越来越多地在贸易协议中被引用，以促进可持续发展与良好实践，自愿性可持续标准可以成为一种有效工具，激励政府和公司实施符合环境、社会与经济目标的实践，而无需另起炉灶。

联合国贸发会议在贸易和生物多样性，以及包括可持续标准在内的私有标准方面肩负 [特定使命](#)；ISEAL 是由可持续标准与可持续体系组成的会员组织，拥有二十年的经验，致力于支持和挑战自愿性可持续标准体系采用可信实践并扩大可持续性影响。双方合作举办了本次研讨会。研讨会集中讨论了多个议题，这些议题与 [联合国贸发会议第十五次大会 \(UNCTAD 15\)](#) 和 [《生物多样性公约》第十五次缔约方大会 \(CBD COP15\)](#) 讨论的议题保持一致，并有助于上述两次大会议题的讨论。

研讨会汇集了领先的专家和利益相关方，强调和提升可持续贸易对于 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的重要性，以及如何将自愿性可持续标准用作实现生物多样性具体目标的有效工具。研讨会旨在表明，基于生物多样性的产品和服务的可持续合法贸易可为生物多样性保护与可持续利用创造有效的激励。因此，在新的框架内，自愿性可持续标准能够成为强化实施和监测机制至关重要的组成部分。研讨会还提及了

广泛的询证研究和学术研究，这些研究支持了自愿性可持续标准在加强贸易和生物多样性方面发挥的作用。

研讨会首先是“设置场景”环节，接着是专家讨论，围绕“使用可持续标准和支持全球生物多样性框架对生物多样性保护产生影响的挑战、证据和案例”。然后，与会代表被分为六个小组，每个小组由一位专家担任主持人，关注一个或多个预先确定的讨论问题：自愿性可持续标准在实施 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架过程中发挥怎样的最佳作用？政府在将自愿性可持续标准作为 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架组成部分进行推广的过程中或在具体针对自愿性可持续标准的工作中发挥怎样的最佳作用？2020 年后全球生物多样性框架如何能够更多使用自愿性可持续标准并提升其有效性，从而实现生物多样性保护？随后，每位主持人在全体会议上总结了分组讨论的情况，并汇报了主要讨论成果。研讨会还提供中英同传。

本报告总结了研讨会期间汇报的小组讨论和分组讨论一些关键要点，以激励采取切实行动，促进在新的全球生物多样性框架内采用自愿性可持续标准。

2. 如今围绕自愿性可持续标准的话题

专家讨论与分组讨论提出了有关自愿性可持续标准的数个议题/主题，并在会议全程对其重点关注。

消费者由于是可持续消费与生产的主要驱动因素之一，因此对自愿性可持续标准发挥重要作用。世界各地的消费者均日益意识到自身消费选择对可持续性产生的影响，期望供应链中采取可持续性措施。自愿性可持续标准是一种良好的方式，可向消费者证明供应链正在提升可持续性。产品上的某些自愿性可持续标准认证标签可让消费者更好地了解产品的原产地、生产方式和投放市场的方式。消费者开始了解价格以外的其他因素时，可能会有意识地做出购买决定。因此，自愿性可持续标准为供应链中各方采用的良好实践提供附加值。自愿性可持续标准标签与相关环境主张，得到认证等可信审验的支持，有助于区分市场上的绿色产品以及与之相对的棕色产品。此外，自愿性可持续标准可激励公司响应消费者需求，采用并推动符合环境、社会与经济目标的实践。最近开展的几项消费者调查支持这一结论，指出消费者日益支持购买可持续产品。¹

如果一家公司意欲提升其积极的可持续性影响，这项工作的复杂性可能会非常令人生畏。自愿性可持续标准可以通过提供良好实践、指引、建议和能力建设，以指导并贯穿上述过程。这无需认证，特别是在过程开始之初。自愿性可持续标准能为公司提供来自同一行业 and/或相同或相似地理位置的良好实践示例，以及能力建设和风险管理。自愿性可持续标准通过系统流程和能力建设得以实施。许多自愿性可持续标准要求对公司实践进行审验或验证，比如通过收集数据，核查流程，或涉及审核与其他结果措施的独立第三方认证。审验的要求和方式各不相同，但自愿性可持续标准为公司提供机会，使其可持续性进展得到认可，这可以激励持续改进，并防范倒退到较低的标准。对有些公司而言，在供应链下游跟踪、追溯和测量其产品的可持续性可能是一项挑战。自愿性可持续标准能提升材料和商品的可追溯性，并将供应链不同阶段的参与者联系起来，从而有助于提升对可持续性相关考虑因素重要性的认识，或增进对环境、依赖性和风险的相互理解。这包括对生物多样性重要性的认识。因此，自愿性可持续标准可以成为供应链中多个参与者实现生物多样性主流化的切入点。

进口市场和/或买家要求自愿性可持续标准作为必备文件时，自愿性可持续标准则具备事实上的强制性。自愿性可持续标准可以明确可能需要或希望制定贸易与生产法规的领域。自愿性可持续标准也可以得到最低要求或行业规定的支持。法规可以界定可接受可持续性水平的下限，也可以参考自愿性可持续标准，将其用于核查是否符合那些要求。自愿性可持续标准可以提升可持续实践的上限，以褒奖超越最低要求的公司。

随着时间的推移，对自愿性可持续标准的采纳不断增加，并达到显著规模。例如，英国的将环境和农业联系起来（LEAF）标准或全球良好农业规范认证（GlobalGAP）标准的情况均如此。但是，采纳依然过于有限，而且并非线性增长。例如，据估计，约 1.5% 的农用土地获得有机认证²。然而，对于某些商

¹ <https://www.accenture.com/acnmedia/PDF-134/Accenture-COVID19-Consumer-Behaviour-Survey-Research-PoV.pdf#zoom=40>

² https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/SustainableMarkets2020-layout_20201012_web.pdf

品，认证的比例要高得多。作为一项自愿性可持续标准，森林管理委员会（FSC）显示，5%的森林根据统计获得认证³。有证据显示，采纳和使用自愿性可持续标准可对生产商/公司以外的各方产生积极的溢出效应，例如从认证农场区域溢出到邻近农场，或产生系统性影响，比如为一个行业界定可持续性。

研讨会期间，与会代表指出，特别是对发展中国家的政府和生产商而言，**自愿性可持续标准的应用面临多项挑战**：在整个供应链中实施所需的自愿性可持续标准情况复杂且成本高昂。有些自愿性可持续标准可能未经核查，仅用于漂绿。可能还缺乏能力和资源，这会加剧不平等，因为有些国家或区域能够比其他国家或区域达到更高的标准。在有些情况下，自愿性可持续标准成为贸易或进入某些市场的壁垒，因此对于全球供应链中的发展中国家不利。在许多情况下，发展中国家生产主要商品，在生物多样性保护方面发挥的作用最大。因此，发展中国家的生产商是供应链的重要组成部分，在实施自愿性可持续标准时需要获得支持，其中一些内容将在下文第五部分中详述，但也可包括获取资金、降低成本和加强能力建设。同时，生产商层面强有力的实施对于自愿性可持续标准的可信度非常重要。此外，供应链参与者需要利用可信的自愿性可持续标准，但其广泛应用通常与供应链上的良好治理形成竞争关系。

3. 在自愿性可持续标准中考虑生物多样性

传统上，自愿性可持续标准与生物多样性之间的关联极少，自愿性可持续标准被用作一种工具，用以促进更可持续的实践，并回应消费者对可持续消费日益增强的意识。但是，近年来，有证据表明，自愿性可持续标准在生物多样性保护方面发挥着日益重要的作用。例如，联合国《2020年世界森林状况》报告⁴建议，利用自愿性可持续标准追溯负责任管理的林产品、改进环境友好型农业实践，并支持公司实现可持续性具体目标。荷兰环境评估署 2020年发布的研究得出结论，在零毁林商品价值链方式中，自愿性可持续标准是有证据显示在保护森林方面产生积极影响的唯一工具；同时，公私合作伙伴关系（PPP）和公司承诺也可被证实大有可为⁵。

与会代表普遍认为，需要采取自愿行动，特别是私营部门采取自愿行动，才能扭转生物多样性丧失的趋势。公司有潜力在生物多样性保护中发挥至关重要的作用。在海洋、湿地、草地和森林生态系统中，生物多样性问题正在以前所未有的速度恶化，因此这种潜力必须转化为现实。⁶采纳和应用自愿性可持续标准的私营部门参与者正在为生物多样性保护做出重要贡献。

然而，研讨会期间，许多参会代表提到，有关自愿性可持续标准对生物多样性保护影响的证据和研究相对有限。在农业部门，对自愿性可持续标准对农民收入或劳动生产率贡献的了解略多于对物种多样性或入侵物种的了解。评估自愿性可持续标准对生物多样性影响的研究相对较少。为强化自愿性可持续标准中的生物多样性考虑因素，可能有必要鼓励更多自愿性可持续标准纳入生物多样性内容，并实施生物多样性保护影响测量项目。自愿性可持续标准还可以向其他已经在测量生物多样性影响或土壤健康等其他议题的自愿性可持续标准学习。尽管如此，与会代表对围绕生物多样性影响开展研究充满信心。⁷

自愿性可持续标准通常未被生物多样性保护界充分理解，因此尚未在生物多样性保护领域充分发挥其潜力。此外，可持续标准的复杂性可能具有挑战性，可导致不平等和脆弱性，发展中国家小型生产商的情况尤为如此。自愿性可持续标准有必要朝着强化生物多样性保护的方向发展。自愿性可持续标准还可以更多关注收益分享机制，确保供应链和价值链上的利益相关方更加公平地分享收益。

自愿性可持续标准在生物多样性保护中发挥作用的一个实例便是可持续棕榈油圆桌倡议组织（RSPO）认证。RSPO认证方案要求棕榈油生产商保护和加强生态系统与生物多样性。RSPO目前在全世界拥有5,000多个会员。RSPO认证可持续棕榈油占全球总量的19%。仅中国就有268个RSPO会员。2020年，在中国，认证棕榈油的使用量约为6%，2019年为4%、2018年为2%。尽管比例依然很低，但近

³同上。

⁴联合国《2020年世界森林状况》报告。

⁵ <https://www.evidensia.eco/resources/1107/outcomes-of-deforestation-free-commodity-value-chain-approaches/>

⁶世界经济论坛指出，生物多样性丧失是全球最大的威胁之一，在《生物多样性和生态系统服务政府间科学政策平台（IPBES）发布的一份报告》中，基于生物多样性的产品和服务不可持续的生产和消费模式被识别为生物多样性丧失的间接驱动因素之一。

⁷Evidensia知识矩阵显示对农业部门自愿性可持续标准对生物多样性保护产生影响具有高度信心。

<https://www.evidensia.eco/work-with-evidence/knowledge-matrix/>

年来，认证棕榈油的使用量加速增加。与传统棕榈油相比，RSPO 认证棕榈油温室气体排放减少 36%，土地用途变化对生物多样性产生的影响降低 20%。⁸

RSPO 认证应该是向消费者做出的保证：棕榈油生产标准基于全球多利益相关方意见征询和完善的审验机制，是可持续的。认证的核心是 RSPO 原则和标准。RSPO 以七项原则为基础，旨在实现人类和地球的繁荣。这些原则每五年接受一次评审，最近一次评审于 2018 年进行，强化了零毁林、对坑位不引入新的刺激、不使用火、保护标签、人权和体面生活工资等要求。

4. 自愿性可持续标准与 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架

在过去，自愿性可持续标准与生物多样性保护的关系很大程度上尚未得到关注。2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的谈判正在进行中，但在研讨会期间，与会代表多次提到需要让主流化处于实施的核心位置。政府、经济部门、金融机构乃至整个社会都需要付诸努力。自愿性可持续标准可以将这些参与者联系起来，将生物多样性目标转化为地方和行业行动。特别是在工商企业参与方面，自愿性可持续标准是让工商企业参与实施 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的一种实用途径。

自愿性可持续标准对生物多样性重要性的认识正在不断提高，这也是因为 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的制定。为实施 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架而制定的各项进程应对自愿性可持续标准开放，以确保其潜力得到发挥。如前所述，自愿性可持续标准需要在地理范围和采纳数量方面得到更广泛的应用，以发挥其实现生物多样性目标的潜力。自愿性可持续标准可以融入其中，作为政策工具的一部分，服务于 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架。虽然框架中直接提及是可取的，但如果在国家生物多样性战略和行动计划（NBSAP）、其指导文件和能力建设的长期战略框架中提及，自愿性可持续标准也可得以加强。能力建设可涉及供应链中的所有参与者，尤其是在生产商层面和基层的参与者。自愿性可持续标准受众广泛且多样，可放大生物多样性议题，因此应在沟通策略中加以考虑。

参会代表普遍认为，2020 年后全球生物多样性框架将需要消除作为生物多样性丧失重要驱动力的**负面激励措施**。这些负面激励措施需要重新确定方向、修改用途、做出调整，甚至消除。获得认证的生产商在生物多样性可持续利用中比其他生产商更可能采用和保留良好实践。⁹自愿性可持续标准可支持制定积极的激励措施。

2020 年后全球生物多样性框架能有助于强化自愿性可持续标准对生物多样性保护议题的关注。2020 年后全球生物多样性框架当前的谈判文本包含具体目标 15，旨在让“所有企业（包括公营和私营、大、中、小企业）评估和报告从地方到全球对生物多样性的依赖性和影响，并逐步减少至少一半的负面影响，增加正面影响，减少与生物多样性相关的企业风险，实现开采和生产实践、资源和供应链以及使用和处置的完全可持续性”。如果该具体目标于 2022 年在中国昆明举行的《生物多样性公约》第十五次缔约方大会上通过，它将为组织和公司参与开展自愿性可持续标准相关工作提供切入点。

自愿性可持续标准可用作监测新具体目标实施进展的工具。例如，自愿性可持续目标可提供数据和知识。联合国贸发会议可为此制定指导。

5. 政府在自愿性可持续标准应用过程中发挥的作用

自愿性可持续标准在很大程度上属于工商企业与非政府组织（NGO）的工作范畴，政府通常只发挥有限的作用。政府即使发挥作用，通常也只是针对具体行业，而不是促进工商企业或自愿性可持续标准。政府有兴趣推广良好实践，并提高对标准的采纳。支持自愿性可持续标准是实现上述目标的一种方式。政府、国际组织，以及非政府组织或其他公共部门参与者可以推动对可持续性的期望，这可以成为商业部门通过自愿性可持续标准或其他方式采取可持续性实践的一个原因。

⁸ <https://www.evidensia.eco/resources/1006/certified-palm-oil-reduces-greenhouse-gas-emissions-compared-to-non-certified/>

⁹ <https://www.evidensia.eco/resources/21/the-effectiveness-of-standards-in-driving-adoption-of-sustainability-practices-a-state-of-knowledge-review/>

因此，研讨会上，与会代表建议，政府在推动自愿性可持续标准过程中发挥的作用应停留在元层面，通过多种方式支持在各自国内采纳自愿性可持续标准。例如，政府可以在协调数据收集和质量控制方面发挥一定的作用。自愿性可持续标准作出的主张或其目标应接受核查和评估。政府还可以支持为消费者提供信息和教育，从而让其能够作出知情选择。在有些情况下，比如出于公众健康、动物健康或植物健康的目的，政府可能被要求对标准进行监管。为此，政府可以制定元层面指导。许多与会代表和参与小组讨论的嘉宾认为，政府可在确保自愿性可持续标准透明度和指导国内工商企业制定和/或应用自愿性可持续标准方面发挥一定的作用。此外，政府还可以通过整合供应链参与者等方式，激励对自愿性可持续标准的参与。成功的自愿性可持续标准能降低监管的必要性、限制监管边界，并促进自愿合规。

政府可以召集供应链的不同参与者。政府还可以作为信息的促进者，在加强协调、数据交换、信息汇总和自愿性可持续标准的质量保证方面发挥引领作用。政府本身可以以身作则，在**众多政策领域加强自愿性可持续标准和生物多样性**，比如通过建立绿色采购流程、在贸易政策与协议中，加强对自愿性可持续标准的认可、制定针对特定商品的法规，以及改善出口促进措施。正如自愿性碳市场方案所示，政府的行为与支持可推动自愿性可持续标准成为准强制性标准。

此外，多边贸易论坛可用于在区域层面，例如在欧盟、东盟（ASEAN）或亚太经合组织（APEC）中，促进自愿性可持续标准和生物多样性。

存在一些区域和全球商业与生物多样性团体和网络，支持工商企业与生物多样性之间的联系。它们能促成对自愿性可持续标准的采纳，并强化其中的生物多样性内容。

本研讨会报告由联合国贸发组织国际贸易及商品司（DITC）贸易、环境、气候变化与可持续发展部门（TED）的Andreas Obrecht、Lika Sasaki和Lorena Jaramillo，贸易分析部门的Siti Rubiah Lambert，与ISEAL的乔舒华和Sabrina Mengrani密切合作共同撰写。

有关研讨会的进一步信息，请参见研讨会网页：<https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-trade-and-biodiversity-evidence-and-options-using-sustainability-standards>

联合国贸发组织衷心感谢瑞士联邦经济事务秘书处（SECO）支持在“全球生物贸易计划：将贸易、生物多样性和可持续发展联系起来”的框架下开展本次研究。

获取有关联合国贸发会议的“生物贸易倡议”的进一步信息，请访问：<https://unctad.org/biotrade>，或发邮件至biotrade@unctad.org，联系生物贸易团队。

了解更多有关自愿性可持续标准及其治理机制的信息，请访问：<https://unfss.org/>。

附录一：议程

主持人：Lika Sasaki, 项目管理官员, UNCTAD

设置场景

主持人：乔舒华, 会员与合作经理, ISEAL

- Isabelle Durant, 副秘书长, UNCTAD
- Karin Kreider, 执行董事, ISEAL
- Bianca Brasil, 企业参与项目官员, 《生物多样性公约》(CBD)
- 张建平, 主任, 中国商务部国际贸易经济合作研究院区域经济合作中心
- Martin Peter, 贸易促进副主任, 瑞士联邦经济事务秘书处 (SECO)

专家讨论：利用可持续标准与支持全球生物多样性框架对生物多样性保护产生影响的挑战、证据和案例，问答

主持人：Lara Koritzke, 传播与营销总监, 生物贸易伦理联盟 (UEBT)

- Vidya Rangan, 证据与影响高级经理, ISEAL
- Siti Rubiah Lambert, 可持续性专家, UNCTAD
- 万坚, 利益相关方参与代表, RSPO 中国
- Axel Marx, 副主任, 鲁汶全球治理研究中心

分组讨论

参与主持的专家分别来自《生物多样性公约》秘书处、对外经济贸易大学 (UIBE) / 联合国可持续标准论坛 (UNFSS)、南非林业、渔业及环境部、北京市东城区天恒可持续发展研究所、IUCN、ISEAL 及 UNCTAD。

主办方总结发言

附录二：与 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架进程相关的链接

联合国贸发组织有关 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的生物贸易网站：<https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/biotope/Post-2020-framework>

《生物多样性公约》执行问题附属机构第三次会议文件：<https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBI-03>

科学、技术和工艺咨询附属机构第二十四次会议文件：<https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-24>

《生物多样性公约》关于 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架的网站：

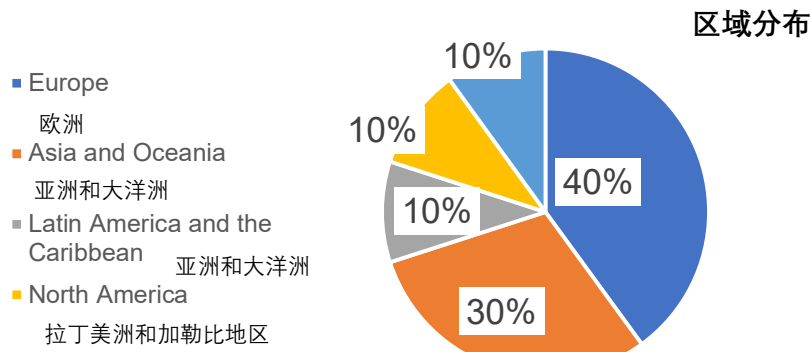
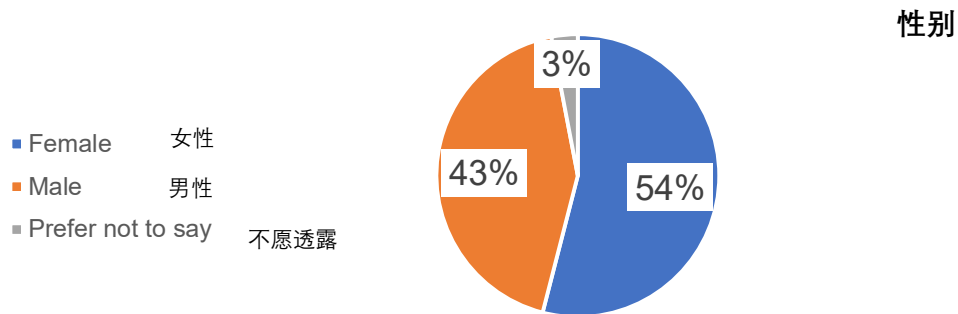
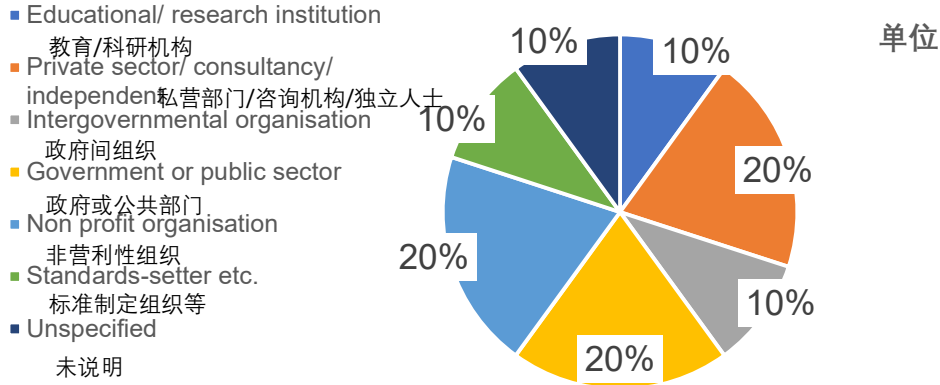
<https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>

联合国世界环境署世界保护监测中心 2020 年后全球生物多样性框架时间线工具：

<https://post2020.unep-wcmc.org>

在线研讨会网站：<https://unctad.org/meeting/online-workshop-trade-and-biodiversity-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework>

附录三：参会代表情况



Workshop on trade and biodiversity: Evidence and options for using sustainability standards to strengthen the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

22 September 2021

Workshop Report



The online workshop was organized on 22 September by UNCTAD and ISEAL in partnership with the CBD Secretariat and IUCN. UNCTAD and ISEAL gratefully acknowledges the support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO in the organization of this workshop under UNCTAD's Global BioTrade Programme: Linking trade, biodiversity and sustainable development.



Convention on
Biological Diversity



 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Confederation
Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EABER
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

This document is for discussion purposes only.

Content

1. Workshop context and approach
2. Topics around Voluntary Sustainability Standards today
3. Biodiversity and Voluntary Sustainability Standards
4. VSS and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework
5. The role of governments in the application of Voluntary Sustainability Standards

Key messages

- Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) provide incentives to **companies and producers** to adopt practises that are in line with environmental, social and economic objectives.
- **Consumers** are key drivers demanding sustainable consumption and production. VSS improve the traceability of material and goods. They allow consumers to get a better understanding of where a product originates, how it was produced and how it was brought to market.
- **Companies** have the potential to play vital roles in biodiversity conservation. VSS is an entry point for biodiversity mainstreaming for multiple actors along the supply chain. VSS offer companies the opportunity to have their sustainability progress recognized. VSS can have positive spillover effects beyond the certified producer or company, for instance by establishing good practise in a sector.
- VSS are an effective mainstreaming opportunity for engaging businesses in the implementation of the **post-2020 global biodiversity framework**, for example as part of policy tools and instruments set up for the framework or as part of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan guidance documents or capacity-building efforts.

1. Workshop context and approach

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are norms and standards that are used to ensure that a product is harvested, produced, processed or transported in accordance with certain sustainability metrics, such as environmental impact, basic human rights, labour standards and gender equality. Today more than 500 VSS exist, which apply to many countries' key exports, such as coffee, tea, bananas, cocoa, palm oil, timber, cotton and organic agri-foods.

The [post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#) includes global biodiversity targets, negotiated by country parties of the [Convention of Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#). The new framework will contribute to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which gave international trade a prominent role as “an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction”. With VSS increasingly being referenced in trade agreements to foster sustainable development and good governance, VSS can be an effective tool to provide incentives for governments and companies to adopt practices that are in line with environmental, social and economic objectives without reinventing the wheel.

UNCTAD, having a [specific mandate](#) on trade and biodiversity as well as on private standards, including sustainability standards, collaborated on this workshop with ISEAL, a membership organization for sustainability standards and similar systems with two decades of experience working to support and challenge VSS systems to adopt credible practices and upscale sustainability impacts. This workshop brought together multiple issues on the table that are in line with and contribute to the discussions of the [fifteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development \(UNCTAD 15\)](#) and the [fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD \(CBD COP15\)](#).

The workshop convened leading experts and stakeholders to emphasize and strengthen the importance of sustainable trade for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and how VSS can be used as effective tools for achieving biodiversity targets. The aim of the workshop was to show that sustainable and legal trade of biodiversity-based products and services can create effective incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Thus, VSS can potentially be a vital component to strengthen the implementation and monitoring mechanisms within the new framework. The workshop also referenced the extensive evidence-based studies and academic research that support the roles of VSS in strengthening sustainable trade and biodiversity.

The workshop opened with a 'setting the scene' panel, followed by a panel on challenges, evidence and cases of the biodiversity conservation impacts of using sustainability standards and supporting the global biodiversity framework. Then, participants were divided into six breakout groups, each with an expert moderator, to address one or more of these pre-identified discussion questions: What are the best roles that VSS can play in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework? What are the best roles for governments to play in promoting VSS as part of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework or in relation to VSS specifically? How can the post-2020 global biodiversity framework increase the use and effectiveness of VSS for biodiversity conservation? Each moderator then presented their summaries and main findings from the break-out discussion in the main plenary. The workshop also included simultaneous English and Chinese translation.

This report illustrates some of the key takeaways from the panel and breakout group discussions presented during the workshop to motivate concrete actions that facilitates the adoption of VSS within the new global biodiversity framework.

2. Topics around Voluntary Sustainability Standards today

The panel sessions and the breakout discussions revealed several issues/themes on VSS and were emphasized throughout the session.

Consumers play an important role for VSS, as they are one of the key drivers of sustainable consumption and production. Consumers around the world are increasingly aware of the effect of their consumption choices on sustainability and expect sustainability measures across supply chains. VSS are a good way to show the consumers that a supply chain is improving its sustainability. The labels on the product certifying certain VSS allow consumers to get a better understanding of where the product originates, how it was produced and how it was brought to market. It is possible for consumers to be conscious of their purchasing decisions when they are made aware of other factors beyond the price. VSS therefore provide added value to good practises which are applied by actors along the supply chain. VSS labels and related environmental claims, backed up by credible assurance practices like certification, help distinguish green products on the market against their brown counterparts. Additionally, VSS can be incentives for companies to respond to consumer demand and adopt and promote practices that are in line with environmental, social and economic objectives. Recent consumer surveys support this conclusion, noting that consumers increasingly favour sustainable purchases.¹⁰

If a **company** wants to increase its positive sustainability impacts, the complexity of that endeavour can be quite intimidating. VSS can help by providing good practises, guidelines, advice and capacity building to guide and inform that process. This need not entail certification, especially at the beginning of the process. VSS can provide a company with good practice examples from the same sector and/or the same or similar geographical location, as well as capacity building and risk management. VSS are implemented through systematic procedures and capacity building. Many VSS require company practices to be assured or validated, such as through collecting data, verifying procedures, or independent third-party certification involving an audit and other outcome measures. While assurance requirements and modalities vary, VSS offer companies the opportunity to have their sustainability progress recognized, which can incentivize continuous improvement and prevent falling back to lower standards. For some companies, it can be a challenge to track, trace and measure the sustainability of their product further down the supply chain. VSS can improve the traceability of

¹⁰<https://www.accenture.com/acnmedia/PDF-134/Accenture-COVID19-Consumer-Behaviour-Survey-Research-PoV.pdf#zoom=40>

materials and goods, and link actors from different stages of the supply chain and thereby help to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability considerations or enhance mutual understanding for circumstances, dependencies, and risks. This includes the awareness of the importance of biodiversity. VSS can therefore be an entry point for biodiversity mainstreaming for multiple actors along the supply chain.

VSS can become de facto mandatory when importing markets and/or buyers require them as pre-requisite documentation. VSS can indicate areas where regulations around trade and production could be necessary or desirable. VSS can also be supported by minimal requirements or sector regulation. Regulations can define the floor of acceptable sustainability levels and can also reference VSS to be used to verify compliance with those requirements. VSS can push the ceiling of sustainable practices to recognise companies for going beyond the minimum requirements.

While the **uptake of VSS** has been increasing over time and reached significant scale (for example in the case of the LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) standard in the UK or with the GlobalGAP standard, it remains too limited, and growth is not linear. For example, it is estimated that around 1.5% of agricultural land is certified as organic¹¹. For some commodities the share of certification is however much higher. The example of the Forest Stewardship Council as one VSS shows that 5% of forests are certified according to their census¹². There is evidence that the adoption and use of VSS can have positive spillovers beyond the producer/company, for instance from a certified farm area to neighbouring farms or from systemic impacts such as defining sustainability for a sector

During the workshop, several **challenges were raised on the application of VSS** especially for governments and producers in developing countries: The implementation of VSS required along the whole supply chain is complex and costly. Some VSS might be unverified and be used for greenwashing. Capacities and resources may also be lacking, which can exacerbate inequities because some countries or regions might be able to meet higher standards than others. In some cases, VSS can be a disadvantage for developing countries in global supply chains with VSS becoming sort of a barrier to trade or to access some markets. In many cases, developing countries produce the major commodities and play the largest role in biodiversity conservation. Therefore, producers in developing countries are an important part of the supply chain and require therefore support in implementing VSS, some of which is detailed below in section five, but can also include access to finance, reduced costs, and increased capacity building. Also, strong implementation at producer level is important for the credibility of VSS. Furthermore, actors in supply chains need to work with a credible VSS, but the proliferation of VSS often competes with good governance along the supply chains.

3. 1. Biodiversity and Voluntary Sustainability Standards

Traditionally the link between VSS and biodiversity has been minimal, with VSS being used as a tool to foster more sustainable practices and in response to consumers' increased awareness towards sustainable consumption. However, in recent years there has been evidence that VSS are playing an increasingly important role in biodiversity conservation. For example, the United Nations State of the World's Forests 2020 report¹³ recommends using VSS to trace responsibly managed forest products, improve environmentally friendly agricultural practices, and to support companies in meeting sustainability targets. Research published in 2020 by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency concluded that within deforestation-free commodity value chain approaches, VSS were the only tool with evidence of showing positive impacts in conserving forests, while Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and corporate pledges could also prove to be promising¹⁴.

There is a broad agreement that voluntary action, especially by the private sector, is needed to reverse biodiversity loss. Companies have the potential to play vital roles in biodiversity conservation. This potential must be realized since biodiversity is aggravating at a record pace, including in marine,

¹¹https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/SustainableMarkets2020-layout_20201012_web.pdf

¹²idem

¹³United Nations State of the World's Forests 2020 report

¹⁴<https://www.evidensia.eco/resources/1107/outcomes-of-deforestation-free-commodity-value-chain-approaches/>

wetland, grassland and forest ecosystems.¹⁵Private actors who adopt and apply VSS are making important contributions to biodiversity conservation.

However, many have mentioned during the workshop that there is still comparably limited evidence and studies on the impacts of VSS on conservation. In the agriculture sector, there is slightly more knowledge on the contribution of VSS to farmer income on productivity than for example on species diversity or invasive species. Comparatively fewer studies have assessed VSS impacts on biodiversity. To strengthen biodiversity considerations in VSS, it could be beneficial to encourage more VSS to include biodiversity components into their standards and implement biodiversity conservation impacts measurement programs. VSS can also learn from other VSS that are already measuring biodiversity conservation impacts or other issues, such as soil health. Nevertheless, there is significant confidence in the research conducted around biodiversity impacts.¹⁶

Because VSS are often not well understood by the conservation community, they have not yet played their full potential within the area of biodiversity conservation. Moreover, the complexity of sustainability standards can be challenging, and can lead to inequalities and vulnerabilities, especially for small producers in developing countries. It would be desirable for VSS to evolve in a direction of stronger biodiversity consideration. VSS could also pay more attention to benefit-sharing mechanisms and ensure more equitable benefit sharing among the stakeholders in supply chains and value chains.

An example of VSS playing a role in biodiversity is the certification of the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The RSPO scheme requires palm oil producers to protect and enhance ecosystem and biodiversity. RSPO currently has more than 5,000 members around the world. The share of the global volume of RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil is 19%. In China alone, there are 268 RSPO members. In 2020, the uptake of certified palm oil in China was around the 6% while it was 4% for 2019 and the 2% for 2018. While the share is still low, the uptake of certified palm oil has accelerated in recent years. RSPO certified palm oil has 36% lower greenhouse gas emissions and a 20% lower biodiversity impact from land use change compared to conventional palm oil.¹⁷

RSPO certification should be an assurance to the consumer that the standard of palm oil production is sustainable based on global multistakeholder consultation and robust assurance mechanisms. At the heart of the certification are the RSPO principles and criteria. RSPO builds on seven principles and aims for prosperity of people and the planet. They are reviewed every five years, most recently in 2018 which strengthened, among other things, requirements on no-deforestation, no new prompting on pit, no use of fire, protection of the label, human rights and a decent living wage.

4. VSS and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

In the past, the nexus of VSS and biodiversity conservation has been largely untapped. While the negotiation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is ongoing, it was mentioned numerous times during the workshop that **mainstreaming** will need to be at the heart of implementation. Efforts will need to be made by governments, economic sectors, financial institutions, and society at large. VSS can bridge those actors and translate global biodiversity objectives into local and sectoral action. Especially when it comes to business engagement, VSS are a practical way to engage businesses in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The awareness of the importance of biodiversity is increasing among VSS, also because of the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The processes which will be established to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should be open to VSS to make sure that the potential of VSS is being used. As previously mentioned, **VSS need to be applied more widely, in terms of geographic and volume of uptake** to fulfil their potential for biodiversity objectives. VSS can be integrated as part of policy tools and instruments set up for the post-2020 global biodiversity

¹⁵Biodiversity loss is among the [global top threats according to the World Economic Forum](#) and unsustainable production and consumption patterns of [biodiversity based products and services have been identified as one of the indirect drivers of biodiversity loss](#) in a report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

¹⁶Evidencia Knowledge Matrix shows a high confidence in biodiversity conservation impacts of agriculture sector VSS. <https://www.evidencia.eco/work-with-evidence/knowledge-matrix/>

¹⁷<https://www.evidencia.eco/resources/1006/certified-palm-oil-reduces-greenhouse-gas-emissions-compared-to-non-certified/>

framework. While a direct mention in the framework is desirable, VSS could be strengthened if they are referred to within the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), as well as NBSAP guidance documents and in the long-term strategic framework for capacity-building. Capacity building can involve all actors of the supply chains, in particular actors at producer and grassroots levels. VSS with their broad and diverse audiences could amplify biodiversity issues and therefore should be considered in communication strategies.

It is widely accepted that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will need to address **negative incentives** as important drivers of biodiversity loss. Incentives will need to be redirected, repurposed, reformed and eliminated. Certified producers are much more likely to adopt and retain good practice in sustainable use of biodiversity than others.¹⁸ VSS can support in setting positive incentives.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework can contribute to a strengthened focus of VSS on biodiversity conservation issues. The current negotiation text of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework includes Target 15, which aims for *All businesses (public and private, large, medium and small) assess and report on their dependencies and impacts on biodiversity, from local to global, and progressively reduce negative impacts, by at least half and increase positive impacts, reducing biodiversity-related risks to businesses and moving towards the full sustainability of extraction and production practices, sourcing and supply chains, and use and disposal*. If this target is adopted by the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022 in Kunming, China, it would provide an entry point for the engagement of organizations and companies working with VSS.

VSS can be used as a tool for monitoring progress towards implementation of the new targets. VSS could for example contribute data, and also knowledge. UNCTAD could develop guidance on how this could take place.

5. The role of governments in the application of VSS

VSS are to a large extent the domain of businesses and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with governments often playing limited roles. When governments do play a role, it is often sector-specific without promoting individual businesses or VSS. Governments have an interest to promote good practices and increase their uptake. Supporting VSS is a way to do so. Governments, international organizations as well as NGOs or other public actors can drive the expectations on sustainability, which can be a reason for business sectors to take up sustainability practices through VSS or other means.

Therefore, it was recommended at the workshop that the **role of governments in facilitating VSS** lies rather at a meta level, in supporting uptake of VSS in their country through several ways. For example, governments have a role to play in coordinating data gathering and quality control. Claims made by VSS or objectives of VSS should be verified and evaluated. Governments can also support consumer information and consumer education so that consumers are enabled to make informed choices. In some instances, governments might be compelled to regulate standards, for public, animal or plant health purposes for instance. Governments can develop meta level guidance for this purpose. Many of the participants and panellists agreed that governments also have a role to play in ensuring transparency of VSS and in guiding businesses in a country to develop and/or apply VSS. Governments can furthermore incentivize participation in VSS, for example, by bringing actors along the supply chain together. Successful VSS can reduce the necessity to regulate, limit the regulatory burden and promote voluntary compliance.

Governments can convene different actors of the supply chain. Governments can also play a role as facilitators of information and take the leading role to enhance harmonisation, data exchange, aggregation of information and quality assurance of VSS. Governments themselves can lead by example and **strengthen VSS and biodiversity in many policy areas**, for example by establishing green procurement processes, strengthening recognition of VSS in trade policies and agreements, by

¹⁸<https://www.evidensia.eco/resources/21/the-effectiveness-of-standards-in-driving-adoption-of-sustainability-practices-a-state-of-knowledge-review/>

establishing regulations on specific commodities and in improving export promotion measures. As the example of voluntary carbon market schemes show, governmental action and support can lead VSS to obtain a critical mass for becoming a quasi-mandatory standard.

Also, multilateral trade fora could be used to promote VSS and biodiversity regionally, for example under the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), or the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

There are regional and global business, and biodiversity groups and networks which support the links between businesses and biodiversity. They could contribute to VSS uptake and strengthen biodiversity aspects in them.

This workshop report was prepared by Andreas Obrecht, Lika Sasaki, and Lorena Jaramillo of the Trade, Environment, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Branch (TED) and Siti Rubiah Lambert, Trade Analysis Branch (TAB), Division on International Trade and Commodities (DITC) of UNCTAD in close cooperation with Joshua Wickerham and Sabrina Mengrani, ISEAL.

Further information on the workshop can be found on the workshop webpage:

<https://unctad.org/meeting/workshop-trade-and-biodiversity-evidence-and-options-using-sustainability-standards>

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For further information on UNCTAD's BioTrade Initiative, please visit <https://unctad.org/biotrade> or contact the BioTrade team at biotrade@unctad.org.

To learn more about Voluntary Sustainability Standards and its governance mechanisms, please visit <https://unfss.org/>.

Annex I: Agenda

Workshop moderator: Lika Sasaki, Programme Management Officer, UNCTAD

Setting the Scene

Moderated by Joshua Wickerham, Membership and Engagement Manager, ISEAL

- Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD
- Karin Kreider, Executive Director, ISEAL
- Bianca Brasil, Programme Officer Business Engagement, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Zhang Jianping, Director, Center for Regional Economic Cooperation, Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Commerce of PRC
- Martin Peter, Deputy Head of Trade Promotion, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

Panel discussion: Challenges, Evidence and cases of the biodiversity conservation impacts through use of sustainability standards and supporting global biodiversity framework, Q&A

Moderated by Lara Koritzke, Communications and Marketing Director, Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT)

- Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager, Evidence and Impacts, ISEAL
- Siti Rubiah Lambert, Sustainability Expert, UNCTAD
- Wan Jian, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, Stakeholder Engagement Representative, China
- Axel Marx, Deputy Director, Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies

Breakout group discussions

Moderated by experts from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) / UNFSS, Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries in South Africa South-North Institute for Sustainable Development, IUCN, ISEAL and UNCTAD.

Concluding remarks by organisers

Annex II: Links related to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework process

UNCTAD BioTrade website on post-2020: <https://unctad.org/topic/trade-and-environment/biotrade/Post-2020-framework>

SBI-3 meeting documents: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBI-03>

SBSTTA-24 meeting documents: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-24>

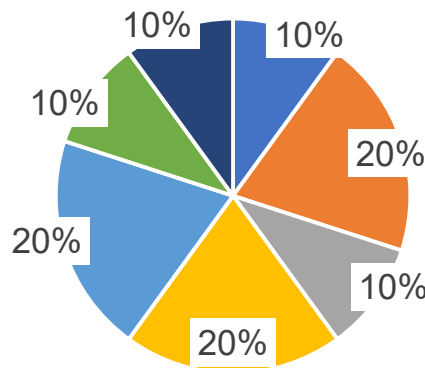
CBD Website on post-2020: <https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020>

UNEP-WCMC post-2020 timeline tool: <https://post2020.unep-wcmc.org>

Online workshop website: <https://unctad.org/meeting/online-workshop-trade-and-biodiversity-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework>

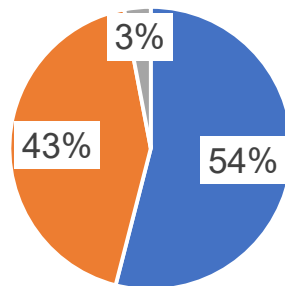
Annex III: Participation

- Educational/ research institution
- Private sector/ consultancy/ independent
- Intergovernmental organisation
- Government or public sector
- Non profit organisation
- Standards-setter etc.
- Unspecified



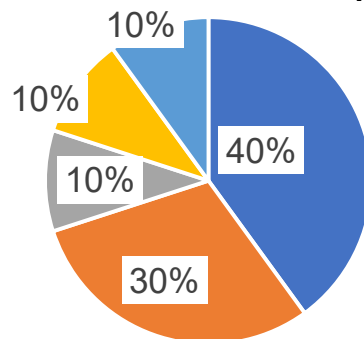
Affiliation

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say



Gender

- Europe
- Asia and Oceania
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- North America
- Africa



Regional distribution