

Name scheme: RSPO

Reference sources

RSPO Principles & Criteria 2018

<https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review>

<https://rspo.org/resources/certification/new-planting-procedure>

3	Strong
2	Good
1	Medium
0	Weak / non-compliant / non-existent / missing
n.a.	Not applicable / relevant

Main questions	Subsidiary questions	Scheme requirements	Score
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Process to ensure protection of Biodiversity

Requirements prior to significant intensification or expansion of cultivation, infrastructure or processing;

<p>Does the standard require the identification of biodiversity values that would be potentially affected by operations, and the assessment of potential impacts on those biodiversity values?</p>		<p>Yes, in criteria 3.4 requires a SEIA to be carried out and the guidance for the criteria also mentions that should include: "Assessment of the impacts on HCVs, biodiversity and RTE species, including beyond concession boundaries and any measures for the conservation and/or enhancement of these." For this requirement they refer for additional information such as HCSA Toolkit Module 3 and the International Finance Corporation (IFC)'s Guide to Biodiversity for Private Sector: The Social and Environmental Impact Process.</p> <p>Then other Impact Goal – Planet: Conserved, protected and enhanced ecosystems that provide for the next generation, Principle 7 refers specifically to protect, conserve and enhance ecosystems and the environment. Criteria 7.12 refers exclusively to HCV assessments conducted as part of integrated HCV-HCS assessments.</p>	3
	<p>Does the standard reference HCV (High Conservation Values)?</p> <p>Requirement for HCV assessment prior to development?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Criterion 7.12 requires that new land clearing after 15 November 2018 (i.e. adoption of the P&C at GA15) must be preceded by an HCV-ACS assessment. In annex 5 of the Scheme, in existing certified plantations (certified before 15 November 2018), with land clearing after 15 November 2018 → New combined HCV-HCS required.</p>	
	<p>Requirement that HCV assessment comply with HCVRN ALS quality control?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
	<p>Does the standard require use of the HCSA (High Carbon Stock Approach) which provides a measure of protection for Biodiversity ?</p>	<p>Yes, In fact that P and C 2018 makes specific reference of the transition of HCV approach to HCV-HCS assessments. In annex 5, shows how the new requirements apply in different scenarios of existing and new certifications, with and without new land clearing.</p>	
	<p>Requirement for High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA) assessment, or combined HCV/HCSA assessment prior to development?</p>	<p>Yes, transition to a combined HCS / HCS assessment. In Annex 4 of the Scheme, there are more details of HCA prior assessment.</p> <p>NO NEW LAND CLEARING SCENARIOS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing certified plantations, with valid HCV assessment approved before 15 November 2018 oGoing for recertification → HCV assessment is acceptable oReplanting → HCV assessment is acceptable - Existing plantations, not yet certified at 15 November 2018, going for initial certification <p>NEW LAND CLEARING SCENARIOS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In new plantations and in existing uncertified units, land clearing after 15 November 2018. - In existing certified plantations (certified before 15 November 2018), with land clearing after 15 November 2018 → New combined HCV-HCS required 	
	<p>Requirement that HCSA assessment be undertaken in compliance with the HCV/HCSA Assessment Manual or HCSA toolkit?</p>	<p>Yes, the procedural Note for 7.12 makes specific reference to incorporate the HCSA toolkit. Also in 7.12b refers that: "Any new land clearing (in existing plantations or new plantings) after 15 November 2018 is preceded by an HCV-HCS assessment, using the HCSA Toolkit and the HCV-HCSA Assessment Manual".</p>	

Does the standard require other robust forms of assessment prior to development that have a biodiversity protection component e.g. EIA, land use baseline assessments or other studies?	Yes, criteria 3.4 requires a SEIA to be carried out and the guidance for the criteria also indicate that should include: "Assessment of the impacts on HCVs, biodiversity and RTE species, including beyond concession boundaries and any measures for the conservation and/or enhancement of these." In the guidance of the criteria for 3.4 there is list of studies that should be included but not limited to: 1. Assessment of the impacts of all major planned activities, including land clearing, planting, replanting, pesticide and fertiliser use, mill operations, roads, drainage and irrigation systems and other infrastructure 2. Assessment of the impacts on HCVs, biodiversity and RTE species, including beyond concession boundaries and any measures for the conservation and/or enhancement of these. 3. Assessment of potential effects on adjacent natural ecosystems of planned developments, including whether development or expansion will increase pressure on nearby natural ecosystems. 4. Identification of watercourses and wetlands and assessment of potential effects on hydrology and land subsidence of planned developments. Measures should be planned and implemented to maintain the quantity, quality and access to water and land resources. 5. Baseline soil surveys and topographic information, including the identification of steep terrain, marginal and fragile soils, areas prone to erosion, degradation, subsidence, and flooding. 6. Analysis of type of land to be used (forest, degraded forest, peatlands, cleared land, etc.). 7. Assessment of land ownership and user rights. 8. Assessment of current land use patterns 9. Assessment of impacts on people's amenity. 10. Assess impacts on employment, employment opportunities or from changes of employment terms. 11. A cost-benefit analysis on social aspects. 12. Assessment of potential social impacts on surrounding communities of a plantation, including an analysis of potential effects on livelihoods, and differential effects on women versus men, ethnic communities, and migrant versus long-term residents
If other forms of assessment are followed, do they require licensed experts, stakeholder consultation and public reporting?	Yes, criteria 3.4 requires a SEIA to be carried out and include stakeholder consultation and also In the guidance of 7.12b includes the stakeholder consultation for the HCV -HCS assessments. In the guidance of the indicator it reads the following: <i>"Ideally, the SEIA should be carried out by accredited independent experts, in order to ensure an objective process". Since the guide is precisely a guide, it is not a mandate to have a licensed expert to develop the SEIA.</i>
Are these assessments and studies required to assess values and impacts both inside the management unit and beyond its boundaries?	Yes. In the case of the SEIA, the guidance does briefly describe the main issues the assessment should include. Also the Common Guidance on HCV Identification provided by the HCVRN. In criteria 3.4, there is list of terms of reference of the SEIA that should be defined. The assessment (SEIA) should include, but is not limited to: 1. Assessment of the impacts of all major planned activities, including land clearing, planting, replanting, pesticide and fertiliser use, mill operations, roads, drainage and irrigation systems and other infrastructure 2. Assessment of the impacts on HCVs, biodiversity and RTE species, including beyond concession boundaries and any measures for the conservation and/or enhancement of these. 3. Assessment of potential effects on adjacent natural ecosystems of planned developments, including whether development or expansion will increase pressure on nearby natural ecosystems.

Does the standard require identification of measures to maintain or minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on biodiversity values?

The indicator 3.4.3 (C) states that, the social and environmental management and monitoring plan is implemented, reviewed and updated regularly in a participatory way. Also, Criteria 7.1 refers that for pest control, invasive introduced species are effectively managed using appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques and the indicator 7.12. refers to species referenced in the Global Invasive Species Database and CABI.org are not to be used in managed areas, unless plans to prevent and monitor their spread are implemented. Also, Criteria 7.8 details the use of practices maintain the quality and availability of surface and groundwater. Also Criteria 7.12 is specific



	<p>Is there a requirement to develop Biodiversity Action Plan, Integrated Conservation and Land Use Plan (ICLUP) or equivalent management and monitoring plans?</p>	<p>In Criteria 7.12 and 3.4 there is specifically reference to management and monitoring plan for conservation areas. Also 7.8.1 does mention " A water management plan is in place and implemented to promote more efficient use and continued availability of water sources and to avoid negative impacts on other users in the catchment."</p>	
	<p>Does the standard explicitly prohibits or at least mentions "no excision of non productive/ conservation areas" from PO concessions to ensure concession holders do not avoid responsibility for actively managing and protecting HCV areas and to avoid reallocation of excised areas for development by uncertified producers?</p>	<p>7.12.4, a critical indicator, requires that where HCVS, HCS forests after 15 November 2018, peatland and other conservation areas have been identified, they are protected and/or enhanced. An integrated management plan to protect and/or enhance [...] is developed, implemented and adapted [...] and contains monitoring requirements.</p>	
<p>Does the standard specify any particular measures to be applied in given circumstances to minimize and mitigate negative impacts from operations on biodiversity values?</p>		<p>Principle 2: Operate legally and respect rights which aims to Implement legal requirements as the basic principles of operation in any jurisdiction. The criteria 2.1 requires the compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations. In guidance of Criteria 3.4, numeral 2, refers to assessment of the impacts on HCVs, biodiversity and RTE species, including beyond concession boundaries and any measures for the conservation and/or enhancement of these. In numeral 4 of the same criteria, Identification of watercourses and wetlands and assessment of potential effects on hydrology and land subsidence of planned developments. Measures should be planned and implemented to maintain the quantity, quality and access to water and land resources. Also the indicator 7.12.4 states to develop responsible measures to resolve human-wildlife conflicts.</p>	3
	<p>Does the standard have requirements on minimum areas to "set aside" as conservation areas?</p>	<p>Yes, Indicator 7.7.7 is explicit about all areas of unplanted and set-aside peatlands in the managed area (regardless of depth) are protected as "peatland conservation areas"; new drainage, road building and power lines by the unit of certification on peat soils is prohibited; peatlands are managed in accordance with the 'RSPO BMPs for Management and Rehabilitation of Natural Vegetation Associated with Oil Palm Cultivation on Peat', version 2 (2018) and associated audit guidance. Also in the definition section, the managed area is defined as "The land containing oil palm and associated land uses such as infrastructure (e.g. roads), riparian zones and conservation set- asides." Also in the definition for other conservation areas, the "Areas (in addition to HCV, HCS forests and peatland conservation areas) that are required to be conserved by the RSPO P&C (such as riparian areas and steep slopes) and other areas allocated by the unit of certification." There is no explicit reference to a minimum size of area expressed in has nor percentages.</p>	
	<p>Does the standard have requirements on buffer zones (e.g. around sensitive sites including nesting & breeding sites, water courses, and steep slopes, etc.)?</p>	<p>The guidance of Indicator 7.12.4 states that " Evidence of attempted collaboration efforts should be documented and available. Such collaborative plans and areas should include but are not limited to..."Avoiding damage to and deterioration of HCV habitats, for example by ensuring that HCV areas are connected, corridors are conserved, and buffer zones around HCV areas are created", and "Protecting and managing other conservation areas including watercourses and wetlands, peatlands, riparian zones, steep slopes". Also the criterion 7. 8.2 (C) Water courses and wetlands are protected, including maintaining and restoring appropriate riparian and other buffer zones in line with 'RSPO Manual on BMPs for the management and rehabilitation of riparian reserves' (April 2017).</p>	

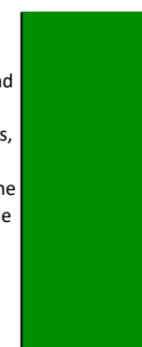
Requirements after expansion of cultivation or infrastructure - for existing plantations, infrastructure and processing operations;

<p>Does the standard require regular monitoring and reporting on implementation of plans for biodiversity conservation?</p>		<p>Principle 3, aims to "optimise productivity, efficiency, positive impacts and resilience" and indicator 3.3.3 is about having "Records of monitoring and any actions taken are maintained and available." In indicator 3.4.2 is requirement for the unit of certification, that a SEIA is available and social and environmental management and monitoring plans have been developed with participation of affected stakeholders." Also, 3.4.3 requires: "The social and environmental management and monitoring plan is implemented, reviewed and updated regularly in a participatory way."</p>	3
	<p>Does the standard include provisions to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement on monitoring the implementation of plans for biodiversity conservation?</p>	<p>Principle 1 does refer to behave ethically and transparently, but it is not explicit in the criterion specifically about biodiversity. The Criteria 7.12.2b for the HCV-HCS assessment includes Stakeholder consultation taking into account a wider landscape level considerations. Also refer to criteria 4.5 details of the FPIC process. Also criteria 7.12.5, it does mentioned that to encourage the involvement of local communities in the maintenance and management of the conservation areas. This involvement is directly related to the Free, Prior, Informed and Consented (FPIC) process previously conducted to negotiate the agreement with local communities. In the guidance of 3.4 there is also the following paragraph: "Affected stakeholders are able to express their views through their own representative institutions, or freely chosen spokespersons, during the identification of impacts, reviewing findings and plans for mitigation, and monitoring the success of implemented plans." FPIC is a guiding principle and should be applied to all RSPO members. Refer to RSPO approved FPIC guidance ('FPIC and the RSPO; A Guide for Members', October 2015).</p>	
<p>Does the standard require regular monitoring of actual impacts on biodiversity and adaptive management as necessary for improvement?</p>		<p>yes, in the Impact Goal of Prosperity: Competitive, resilient and sustainable sector in the description of Objectives and outcomes, it is stated that "A sustainable, competitive, and resilient palm oil sector ensures long-term viability of the entire supply chain and shared benefits for both private sector as well as the livelihoods of communities where palm oil is grown. An effective planning and management system addresses economic viability, environmental and social compliance and risk, establishes procedures and systems for ensuring conformance to the RSPO P&C, and supports continuous improvement toward sustainable palm oil. An within this goal, Principle 3 refers directly about Implementation of plans, procedures and systems for continuous improvement. Indicator 3.2 is explicit about continuous improvement.</p>	3

Does the standard include provisions to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement on biodiversity impact assessment ?	Yes, Criteria 3.4 refers to "A comprehensive Social and Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) is undertaken prior to new plantings or operations, and a social and environmental management and monitoring plan is implemented and regularly updated in ongoing operations." Also in Annex 3, where there is the list of all the Key international laws and conventions applicable to the production of palm oil, there is a reference to UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), Art. 14: "Environmental impact assessment of its proposed projects that are likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity with a view to avoiding or minimising such effects and, where appropriate, allow for public participation in such procedures." Also in 7.12.5 there is the following requirement that aims to transparency: Where rights of local communities have been identified in HCV areas, HCS forest after 15 November 2018, peatland and other conservation areas, there is no reduction of these rights without evidence of a negotiated agreement, obtained through FPIC, encouraging their involvement in the maintenance and management of these conservation areas.
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Habitat loss and degradation

Is the standard explicit in requiring the protection of all natural ecosystems that are important for species survival?		Yes, there is the Impact Goal – Planet: Conserved, protected and enhanced ecosystems that provide for the next generation. In the objective and outcomes Objectives and outcomes: Ecosystems and their services are protected, restored and resilient, supported by sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable management of natural resources (in line with SDG 15 – sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss). And Principle 7 is explicit about " Protect, conserve and enhance ecosystems and the environment Protect the environment, conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable management of natural resources." Also there is an explicit reference to High Conservation Values areas and the description of them. On the other side there is the definition natural ecosystem.
	Does the standard specify which types of ecosystems might be important for species survival? e.g. <i>Primary forest, Biodiverse secondary forests, Wetlands, Riparian zones, Savannah woodlands and natural grasslands, Natural water bodies</i>	The standard refers to the HCV concept and requires all identified HCVs to be protected. Furthermore, there are references to primary forests and wetlands. Additionally, in the Standard 2018 there is the new definition of High Forest Cover Landscape (HFCL) : "Landscapes having >80% forest cover. Landscape as defined under HCSA Toolkit (Module 5): "The size of a landscape may be determined by (a) identifying the watershed or the geographical land unit containing a cluster of interacting ecosystems; (b) selecting a unit size that encompasses the plantation concession and a buffer of the surrounding area (e.g. 50,000 ha or 100,000 ha); or (c) using a radius of 5 km from the area of interest (for instance, the planned concession)." All of these are not explicitly linked only to species survival only, but are protected for their general conservation and/or carbon values, which however in essence also benefits species survival.
	Does the standard require that such areas appropriately defined by organization(s) with specialist expertise?	Yes, HCV assessments conducted as part of integrated HCV-HCS assessments, should follow the HCVRN procedures, using HCVRN ALS approved assessors for HCV assessments for new plantings, in line with the current version of the Common Guidance on HCV Identification provided by the HCVRN or national HCV toolkits.
	Does the standard require a consistent and complete identification of such areas on the ground prior to development of the management unit?	Yes
	Does the standard allow for distinguish between different types of secondary forests according to their value for biodiversity protection?	Yes, it refers to the HCV and HCSA methodology and HCVRN/HCSA HCV/HCS manual which details classification of different vegetation types, some of it informed by the carbon value first and foremost, but ultimately leading to protection of relevant areas for biodiversity value conservation.
	Does the standard preclude the conversion of natural ecosystems that are important for species survival i.e. rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems to palm oil production?	yes



	<p>What historic cut-off dates apply for conversion of such ecosystems to be eligible for certification?</p>	<p>Land clearing since November 2005 has not damaged primary forest or any area required to protect or enhance HCVs. Land clearing since 15 November 2018 has not damaged HCVs or HCS forests. And in indicator 7.12.4, there is the requirement that where HCVs, HCS forests after 15 November 2018, peatland and other conservation areas have been identified, they are protected and/or enhanced.</p>	
	<p>Does the standard require protection of ecosystems that are identified as rare, threatened or endangered, but have not necessarily been recognised as important for the survival of particular species?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>Does the standard require protection of ecosystems providing services critical for off site biodiversity conservation?</p>		<p>Yes. For Indicator 7.12.4 guidance, there is explicit paragraph " Ensuring that any legal requirements relating to the protection of species or habitats are met and by avoiding damage to and deterioration of HCV habitats, for example by ensuring that HCV areas are connected, corridors are conserved, and buffer zones around HCV areas are created". Also in Principle 2, 2.1 the requirement is that there is compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations. This also applies to all contractors providing operational services and supplying labour, and Fresh Fruit Bunch (FFB) suppliers.</p>	3
<p>Does the standard exclude any palm oil development in protected areas?</p>		<p>Yes. Pinciple 2 : Operate legally and respect rights- Implement legal requirements as the basic principles of operation in any jurisdiction.</p>	2
	<p>How are protected areas defined in the standard?</p>	<p>There is no a explicit definition for protected areas. However, under national legislation, in most countries, palm oil production will be excluded from protected areas.</p>	
	<p>Any distinction between areas protected under national legislation and those covered by an international designation?</p>	<p>No distinction between areas protected under national legislation and those covered by any international designation. Under national laws, palm oil is excluded from protected areas.</p>	
<p>Does the standard require the maintenance of buffer zones around protected areas?</p>		<p>yes. In the guidance for Indicator 7.12.4 , there is an explicit paragraph: " Ensuring that any legal requirements relating to the protection of species or habitats are met and by avoiding damage to and deterioration of HCV habitats, for example by ensuring that HCV areas are connected, corridors are conserved, and buffer zones around HCV areas are created". Also, The guidance of Indicator 7.12.4 states that " Evidence of attempted collaboration efforts should be documented and available. Such collaborative plans and areas should include but are not limited to..."Avoiding damage to and deterioration of HCV habitats, for example by ensuring that HCV areas are connected, corridors are conserved, and buffer zones around HCV areas are created", and "Protecting and managing other conservation areas including watercourses and wetlands, peatlands, riparian zones, steep slopes". In criteria 7.8.2, the standard refers to " Water courses and wetlands are protected, including maintaining and restoring appropriate riparian and other buffer zones in line with 'RSPO Manual on BMPs for the management and rehabilitation of riparian reserves' (April 2017)". Also in Principle 2, 2.1 the requirement is that there is compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations. This also applies to all contractors providing operational services and supplying labour, and Fresh Fruit Bunch (FFB) suppliers.</p>	3
	<p>Is the requirement limited to buffer zones around areas protected under national legislation?</p>	<p>The standard is not explicit about this specific aspect. But the above paragraph does refer to compliance under national legislation.</p>	

Does the standard require that representative areas of native ecosystems in the management unit be actively conserved?		There is a Principle dedicated to protection and enhancement of ecosystems but this is not explicit about representative areas to be actively conserved. However, HCV management will require areas of native ecosystems in the management unit be actively conserved. The HCV and HCS assessment covers all important native ecosystems be actively conserved. Indicator 7.12.7 mentions that HCV,HCS, natural ecosystems, peatland conservation and RTE species are monitored, with the results of the monitoring to be fed back into the management plan. It is clear from the wording of Principle 7.12 that this is to conserve and/or enhance these areas.	3
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Does the standard incorporate P&Cs that provide positive encouragement to direct socio-economic pressure for PO expansion within a given landscape towards degraded lands that are not critical for species survival?		PO expansion within a given landscape towards degraded lands is not mentioned in the standard.	1
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Habitat fragmentation and connectivity loss

Does the standard require protection of corridors of natural vegetation where these are critical for connectivity between habitats, to avoid fragmentation of ecosystems (e.g. large landscape-level ecosystems/HCV 2 areas)?		Guidance for Indicator 7.12.4 (referred to in question 2.2 above) covers this. Also refer to "Common Guidance for the HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES". 2014 from HCV Network.	3
	Does the standard specify or recognise particular methodologies to evaluate ecosystem connectivity and identify critical corridors of natural vegetation?	Yes. the HCS Assessment methodology requirement it does include it. Also HCV Methodology refers to evaluation of ecosystem connectivity and it provides some criteria if even smaller corridors can be considered as HCV 2.	

Direct mortality (of RTE species)

Does the standard include explicit requirements for the protection of rare, threatened or endangered species?

Does the standard require that particular threats considered and mitigated in palm oil production, i.e.

Over exploitation		In guidance for 7.12.4 there is reference to "Controlling any illegal or inappropriate hunting, fishing or collecting activities, and encroachment"	2
	Does the standard require that measures be taken against any illegal or inappropriate logging, hunting, fishing or collecting in the management unit?	Yes. It is mentioned in indicator 7.12.4 and in this indicator refers to relevant guidance documents on HCVRN websites. Please, for more details refer to "Common Guidance for the HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES". 2014 from HCV Network.	
	Does the standard cover the use of natural resources at a renewable rate? This could be relevant where there is; - Community use of biodiversity reserves - Current irrigated production of palm oil - Potential future climate change pressures driving producers to consider use of irrigation	Only Criteria 7. 3 makes explicit reference to " Waste is reduced, recycled, reused and disposed of in an environmentally and socially responsible manner."	

Pollution		Yes, there is an Impact Goal – Planet: Conserved, protected and enhanced ecosystems that provide for the next generation. And one outcome is that climate change is addressed through continuous GHG reductions; air and water pollution are controlled.	3
	Does the standard provide sufficient controls to prevent pollution from effluent and emissions, through control/minimisation of agro-chemical and pesticide use or requirements for maintenance of buffer zones?	Yes, Principle 7 makes explicit reference to Ecosystems and their services are protected, restored and resilient, supported by sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable management of natural resources (in line with SDG 15 – sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss). Climate change is addressed through continuous GHG reductions; air and water pollution are controlled. There is greater resilience in our food and fibre production. The water and air are cleaner, and carbon is drawn out of the air to regenerate soils for current and future generations. Inputs decrease while yields are maintained, or even improved. In the guidance for indicator 7.2.5: The pesticides that are categorised as World Health Organisation Class 1A or 1B, or that are listed by the Stockholm or Rotterdam Conventions, and paraquat, are not used, unless in exceptional circumstances, as validated by a due diligence process, or when authorised by government authorities for pest outbreaks. The due diligence refers to: 7.2.5a Judgment of the threat and verify why this is a major threat 7.2.5b Why there is no other alternative which can be used 7.2.5c Which process was applied to verify why there is no other less hazardous alternative 7.2.5d What is the process to limit the negative impacts of the application 7.2.5 e Estimation of the timescale of the application and steps taken to limit application to the specific outbreak. Additionally, under 7.1 IPM systems are made mandatory and under 7.4 soil management requirements ask for minimising environmental impacts and optimising fertilizer inputs.	
Invasive species		Criteria 7.1 addresses that pests, diseases, weeds and invasive introduced species are effectively managed using appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques. There a reference document from 2011- Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO): Research project on Integrated Weed Management Strategies for Oil Palm. FINAL REPORT. Compiled by: M. Rutherford, J. Flood & S. S. Sastroutomo. (CABI UK and Malaysia). April 2011	1
	Does the standard control for the introduction or use of alien species in the management unit that might adversely affect habitats and bioregions?	Yes	
	In this regard, does the standard require assessment of the risk that bio-control agents may negatively impact rare or endangered species?	No. There is the mention in Indicator 7.1.2 explicitly ask that the Species referenced in the Global Invasive Species Database and CABI.org are not to be used in managed areas, unless plans to prevent and monitor their spread are implemented. https://www.cabi.org/	
	Does the standard have requirements on the use of genetically modified organisms (GMO)?	No, the Standard does not mention requirements on the use of genetically modified organisms.	
Anthropogenic introduced disease		No mentioning of Anthropogenic introduced disease	0
	Does the standard require bio-security measures to control the risk that pests and diseases introduced as a result of palm oil operations negatively impact RTE species?	No	
	In this regard, does the standard require assessment of the risk that bio-control agents may negatively impact RTE species?	No	
Fire		The Criteria 7.11 require that fire is not used for preparing land and is prevented in the managed area.	3
	Does the standard control for the use of fire in the management unit?	Yes	

Does the standard require absolute exclusion of fire in the management unit, or does it impose limitations on its use as a management tool?	There are some limitations detailed in indicator 7.1.3 -There is no use of fire for pest control unless in exceptional circumstances, i.e. where no other effective methods exist, and with prior approval of government authorities. [For National Interpretation to define process].
Does the standard require that a certificate holder mitigate the risk of wildfire in the wider landscape?	No. It only requires the following: 7.11.2 The unit of certification establishes fire prevention and control measures for the areas directly managed by the unit of certification. And 7.11.3- The unit of certification engages with adjacent stakeholders on fire prevention and control measures.

Anthropogenic climate change (with indirect impacts on biodiversity)

Does the standard reference HCS (High Carbon Stock) forest?	yes, the Criteria 7.12 addresses that "Land clearing does not cause deforestation or damage any area required to protect or enhance High Conservation Values (HCVs) or High Carbon Stock (HCS) forest. HCVs and HCS forests in the managed area are identified and protected or enhanced."	3
Requirement for High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA) assessment, or combined HCV/HCSA assessment prior to development? <i>Ref 1.1</i>	Yes	
Requirement that HCSA assessment be undertaken in compliance with the HCV/HCSA Assessment Manual or HCSA toolkit? <i>Ref 1.1</i>	Yes	
Does the standard require any other robust methodology for the assessment of existing carbon stocks?	Yes. It does require the use of HCSA toolkit of HCV/HCSA assessment manual. It also requires to conduct a historic Land Use Change Analysis (LUCA) prior to any new land clearing, in accordance with the RSPO LUCA guidance document. https://rspo.org/news-and-events/announcements/rspo-luca-guidance-document	
Does the standard require the protection of significant carbon stocks?	Yes, it requires HCS assessment following the HCSA manual, effectively therefore protecting significant carbon stocks from conversion.	3
Does the standard define what constitutes a 'significant' carbon stock?	It refers to the HCSA definitions.	
Does the standard recognize and distinguish between above ground and below ground carbon stock?	Not explicitly. HCSA addresses above ground carbon and the added peat protection measures (see 'peat' section) address the most significant below ground carbon issue in the context of palm.	
Does the standard preclude the conversion of peatland to palm oil production?	Yes. Criteria 7.7 is explicit: No new planting on peat, regardless of depth after 15 November 2018 and all peatlands are managed responsibly. Also in guidance of Indicator 7.12.4 it reads "Protecting and managing other conservation areas including watercourses and wetlands, peatlands, riparian zones, steep slopes"	3
Does the clearly standard define peat soils?	Yes. Peat: A soil with cumulative organic layer(s) comprising more than half of the upper 80 cm or 100 cm of the soil surface containing 35% or more of organic matter (35% or more Loss on Ignition) or 18% or more organic carbon. Note for management of existing plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia, a narrower definition has been used, based on national regulations: namely soil with an organic layer of more than 50% in the top 100 cm containing more than 65% organic matter.	
Does the standard require measures to limit CO2 emissions from peatlands already planted with oil palm?	Yes. There is a reference document "RSPO GHG Assessment Procedure for New Development Version 3, 30th October 2016". https://rspo.org/certification/palmghg/ghg-assessment-procedure	3

Does the standard require adherence to best management practices to limit drying of peat in the current rotation?	<p>yes. In criteria 7.7- The unit of certification is encouraged to map the peatlands within the supply base to enable monitoring and promotion of BMPs. For Indicator 7.7.3: For existing plantings on peat, the water table should be maintained at an average of 50 cm (between 40 cm and 60 cm) below ground surface unless required to be higher by national regulations, measured with groundwater piezometer readings, or an average of 60 cm (between 50 cm and 70 cm) below ground surface as measured in water collection drains, through a network of appropriate water control structures (e.g. weirs, sandbags, etc.) in fields, and watergates at the discharge points of main drains.</p> <p>For Indicator 7.7.3: Monitoring of subsidence should be undertaken in all drained peat areas in the plantation including areas adjacent to the plantation where water tables may be impacted by drainage associated with the plantation.</p>
Does the standard require a time-bound plan to retire PO on peat?	<p>Yes, refer to indicator 7.7.5 -For plantations planted on peat, drainability assessments are conducted following the RSPO Drainability Assessment Procedure, or other RSPO recognised methods, at least five years prior to replanting. The assessment result is used to set the timeframe for future replanting, as well as for phasing out of oil palm cultivation at least 40 years, or two cycles, whichever is greater, before reaching the natural gravity drainability limit for peat. When oil palm is phased out, it is replaced with crops suitable for a higher water table (paludiculture) or rehabilitated with natural vegetation. There is the PROCEDURAL NOTE: Full details of the RSPO Drainability Assessment Guidelines and related concepts and detailed actions are in the manual currently being fine-tuned/tested by PLWG (Peatland Working Group). A final version should be approved by PLWG in January 2019 and will include additional guidance on the steps to be followed after the decision not to replant as well as implications for other stakeholders, smallholders, local communities and the unit of certification. It is recommended that a further twelve-month methodology trial period is proposed for all related management units (i.e. those with plantations on peat) to utilise the methodology and provide feedback to the PLWG to enable further refinement of procedure as appropriate before January 2020. Units of certification have the option to defer replanting till after the availability of the revised guidelines. Additional guidance on alternative crops and rehabilitation of natural vegetation will be provided by PLWG.</p>

Does the standard require monitoring and control of GHG emissions from land use change?		Yes,	3
	Does the standard explicitly require measurements of green house gas emissions and calculation of net GHG balance at management unit level as a result of land use change when palm oil plantations are established?	Criteria 7.10 is specific about plans to reduce pollution and emissions, including greenhouse gases (GHG), are developed, implemented and monitored and new developments are designed to minimise GHG emissions.	
Does the standard require monitoring and control of GHG emissions from production operations after planting?		Yes	3
	Does the standard explicitly require measurements of green house gas emissions and calculation of net GHG balance at management unit level for ongoing production in existing plantations, taking into account any sequestration by woody vegetation and soils within the management unit?	<p>Yes, in indicator 7.10.1- GHG emissions are identified and assessed for the unit of certification. Plans to reduce or minimise them are implemented, monitored through the Palm GHG calculator and publicly reported.</p> <p>Then indicator 7.10.2- Starting 2014, the carbon stock of the proposed development area and major potential sources of emissions that may result directly from the development are estimated and a plan to minimise them prepared and implemented (following the RSPO GHG Assessment Procedure for New Development).</p> <p>And finally, in indicator 7.10.3 - Other significant pollutants are identified and plans to reduce or minimise them implemented and monitored.</p>	

Does the standard anticipate GHG accounting to take account of both - CO2, including recycling of woody carbon? - Methane emissions from processing/waste disposal?	Yes
Does the standard set out a hierarchy of measures to mitigate GHG emissions from existing PO plantations?	Yes. In guidance for 7.10 there is brief referral to adopting low-emission management practices for both mills and plantations.
Does the standard allow for the use of financial instruments to offset residual GHG emissions from plantation operations (beyond any measures to mitigate emissions through good management practice)?	There is no explicit reference to financial instruments

Does the standard allow for linking of emissions reductions to national targets?		No. There is no specific linking of emissions to national target. However there is Principle 2 that requires compliance with national legislation.	1
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Does the standard require measures to mitigate the risk of GHG emissions as a result of fire? *Ref 4.1e*

Legality

Does the standard include requirements to comply with relevant international conventions? (e.g. RAMSAR, CITES)		yes, there is Annex 3 – Key international laws and conventions applicable to the production of palm oil. Also during the National Interpretation process at country level, there shall be identification of all international conventions applicable to the country.	2
Does the standard list international conventions considered relevant?		Yes, They are listed in Annex 3	
If so, is this list comprehensive?		No, it just a list of Key international laws and conventions. It only makes reference to UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001), Rotterdam Convention on Prior and Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (1998). It does not include RAMSAR, CITES and other relevant international conventions for protection of biodiversity.	
Does it include regional as well as global agreements and treaties?		Some are included.	

Does the standard explicitly require compliance with national legislation on protection of biodiversity (where these requirements are more rigorous or restrictive than those of the voluntary standard)?		Yes. Criteria 2.1 does require compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations. However, in practice in many countries the local, national and international law is enforced nor obeyed.	3
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Does the standard require respect for local and customary laws providing for protection of biodiversity (where these requirements are more rigorous or restrictive than those of the voluntary standard)?		There is no direct reference to this. But, HCV -HVS assessment do include the respect for local and customary laws.	1
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Restoration

Does the standard require restoration of natural habitats where their past conversion for palm oil production contravenes the requirements of the standard and/or national legislation?		The Impact Goal – Planet: Conserved, protected and enhanced ecosystems that provide for the next generation. An in the objectives and outcomes states the following: Objectives and outcomes Ecosystems and their services are protected, restored and resilient, supported by sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable management of natural resources (in line with SDG 15 – sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss).
Does the standard require on-site restoration of natural habitats?		Criteria 7.7 refers to peat lands and further guidance for restoration of peatlands being developed by PLWG and indicator 7.8.2 refers to water courses and wetlands are protected, including maintaining and restoring appropriate riparian and other buffer zones in line with ‘RSPO Manual on BMPs for the management and rehabilitation of riparian reserves’ (April 2017).
Does the standard set a cut-off date after which any critical habitat destroyed by palm oil planting must be restored?		The overall cut-off date, for all criteria is November 15, 2018. The first version of the P&C in 2007 (RSPO’s Principles, Criteria and associated mandatory Indicators) stated that: Criterion 7.3 New plantings since November 2005 have not replaced primary forest or any area required to maintain or enhance one or more High Conservation Values. In accordance with the RSPO Principles & Criteria (P&C), RSPO growers are required to have completed HCV assessments of their land holdings for new plantings from November 2005. The intention is that areas of land under the control of RSPO growers that contain or support High Conservation Values (HCV) are not cleared for planting after this date. the RSPO has developed a clear, formal, and transparent procedure to remediate and compensate for land clearance without prior HCV assessment since November 2005.
Does the standard set a deadline for undertaking restoration of critical habitat destroyed after the cut-off date?		No
Does the standard have requirements on restoration of water bodies to a natural function?		Indicator 7.8.2 refers to water courses and wetlands are protected, including maintaining and restoring appropriate riparian and other buffer zones in line with ‘RSPO Manual on BMPs for the management and rehabilitation of riparian reserves’ (April 2017). In accordance with the RSPO Principles & Criteria (P&C), RSPO growers ¹ are required to have completed HCV assessments of their land holdings for new plantings from November 2005. The intention is that areas of land under the control of RSPO growers that contain or support High Conservation Values (HCV) are not cleared for planting after this date.
Does the standard allow for off-site restoration or biodiversity off-set as an alternative to on-site restoration?		Yes, the Remediation and Compensation Procedure (RaCP) Related to Land Clearance Without Prior High Conservation Value (HCV) Assessment Approved by Consensus of Compensation Task Force on November 12th, 2015
Does the standard provide an option for payment of financial compensation as a substitute for restoration of natural habitats?		Yes. The Remediation and compensation procedure is required for any clearance since 2005 without prior HCV assessment on land under the top asset owning and/or managing agency company and all its majority owned and/or managed subsidiaries that produce oil palm, regardless of whether clearing occurred before the land was acquired or leased. Also, in addition to remediating affected communities for loss of HCV 4-6 (see Section 4.2) and areas requiring environmental remediation (see Section 4.3), growers in control of areas cleared without prior HCV assessment after 2005 are required to make additional contribution(s) to biodiversity conservation on site or off site.

Does the standard treat payment of financial compensation as a complement to on-site restoration, to remediate for damage to biodiversity where remediation through ecosystem restoration is not technically feasible?	The Remediation and Compensation Procedure (RaCP) was established to address land clearance and plantation development undertaken since November 2005 without prior High Conservation Value (HCV). The procedure requires growers to first disclose any new land development that took place without conducting a HCV assessment, calculate environmental liabilities through a Land Use Change Analysis (LUCA), and to carry out onsite or offsite remediation for the affected sites or remediation with affected parties. Compensation liabilities are determined through the use of a matrix, which combines vegetation coefficients as proxies for HCVs, the land clearance period, membership status and areas requiring environmental remediation. The final compensation liability is expressed in hectares.
<u>OR</u> Does the standard allow developers to use payment of financial compensation as an alternative to on site restoration, which might reduce or dilute the strength of the standard with respect to this criterion?	Yes. Giving the developer the option of 'off-site' restoration where 'on-site' restoration is technically feasible may well reduce the biodiversity value of outcomes.

Does the standard require restoration of peatlands, natural water bodies or riparian vegetation damaged as a result of palm oil production in contravention of the requirements of the standard and/or national legislation?		C.7.7 clearly indicate that all existing plantations on peatlands are managed responsibly in line with the BMPs produced by RSPO. It also provides a requirement that plantations are phased out and rehabilitated (as per BMP) in plantations on peat areas that reach the 40 year mark before reaching the natural drainability limit.
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Community engagement for biodiversity protection

Does the standard include requirements for raising the awareness of workers, smallholders and local communities on biodiversity protection?		3.7.1 has clear requirement on training all staff, smallholders, etc. on all aspects of the P&C, which also includes HCV and biodiversity protection, though is not explicitly mentioned. Also 7.12.6 asks for regularly education of the workforce on RTEs.
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Does the standard make special provision for disadvantaged small producers, enabling them to overcome barriers to certification and participate in certified supply chains, thereby engendering their support for biodiversity protection?		Yes, in fact an entire new principle, P5, has been included to foster Smallholder inclusion. Specifically, indicator 5.1.8 mentioned that companies support smallholder with certification and ensure mutual agreements between mills and smallholders. Also, in June 2017, the RSPO Board of Governance (BoG) approved the RSPO Smallholder Strategy which commits RSPO to develop new approaches to support greater inclusion of smallholders into the RSPO system. The strategy set out three objectives, including "to increase the number of smallholders included in the RSPO system through the simplification of the certification approach and proactive engagements with pilots such as jurisdictional approaches". The recognition that inclusiveness for smallholders is fundamental for RSPO to achieve its desired impact is also emphasised in the Theory of Change, adopted in September 2017. accordingly, the Smallholder Interim Group (SHIG) was formed to develop recommendations for a revised approach to smallholder inclusion via a simplification of the RSPO Standard. This has resulted in the development of a separate and new standard under the RSPO: the RSPO Smallholder Standard which is in process of consultation and approval.
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Does the standard require palm oil project developers to engage with local communities on biodiversity protection?		In 7.12.5 local communities are referenced and 'encouraged to be involved in maintenance and management of protected areas'. Also the HCV Methodology does require engagement with community for biodiversity protection.	3
	Does the standard recognise/endorse local agreements/compacts that secure community level support for biodiversity protection in return for;	This is referred in the HCV methodology . Refer to Common Guidance for the identification of HCV. October, 2013 https://hcvnetwork.org/library/common-guidance-for-the-identification-of-high-conservation-values/	
	a. Technical assistance to develop alternative livelihoods that relieve pressure on RTE species and ecosystems?	No	
	b. Securing community land tenure?	Yes	
	c. Direct Payments for Ecological Services?	No	
	Does the standard require monitoring and evaluation of such agreements/compacts to facilitate their continuous improvement and scale up?	Yes	
Does the standard include a requirement to identify and manage potential conflicts between social/community needs/livelihoods and biodiversity conservation?		7.12.5 addressed this, stating that where customary rights have been identified, these not be diminished and communities encouraged to be involved in maintenance and management of protected areas. Also the HCV identification methodology helps identify customary users of the areas and would make appropriate recommendations.	3