



January 2016

The HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme and RSPO New Planting Procedures

Since 2010, all new oil palm plantings are required to comply with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) New Planting Procedure (NPP). The NPP requires oil palm growers to commission High Conservation Value (HCV) assessments. **Growers must hire HCV assessors licensed by the High Conservation Value Resource Network (HCVRN) Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) to lead all HCV assessments commissioned after 1st January 2015.**

**Greater than
500 ha**



For cases where the area subject to NPP is 500 ha or greater, an independent ALS licensed assessor must be hired.

**Less than
500 ha**



In cases where the area subject to NPP is less than 500 ha, assessments by the grower are permitted, but the assessor must hold an ALS licence.

The ALS:

1. Issues licences to HCV assessors with relevant qualifications and experience
2. Provides an HCV assessment manual and templates for reporting, and
3. Evaluates all HCV assessment reports produced by licensed assessors undertaking HCV assessments.

Key facts

1. Growers need to commission an HCV assessment led by an ALS licensed assessor.
2. HCV assessment reports need to pass ALS quality control.
3. Once an HCV assessment report has successfully passed ALS quality control, a public summary is published on the ALS website and it is ready for inclusion in the NPP report.

Note: all material submitted to the ALS, except the public summary, is entirely confidential and will remain within the ALS.

Key Steps in the HCV Assessor


Key Responsibilities for **Licensed Assessors**

- 1. Ensure that ALS fees are covered in the assessment budget:** When signing a contract with a grower, Licensed Assessors should include the costs of the ALS report evaluation.
- 2. During the assessment:** Licensed Assessors commit to following ALS procedures when they join the ALS. When conducting the assessment, Licensed Assessors must follow ALS manuals, rules and procedures, and use the required templates. Licensed Assessors must communicate regularly with their client to discuss findings and share preliminary drafts of the assessment report.
- 3. When submitting a report to the ALS:** Once the Licensed Assessor has completed the assessment, they must log in to their ALS personal assessor account to
1) pay the appropriate report evaluation fee, and
2) upload the assessment report, public summary report and other required documentation. Upon receiving the report package, the ALS will evaluate it and give a result as soon as possible. If the report is satisfactory, it should be sent to the client. If the result is unsatisfactory, the assessment report will not comply with NPP requirements.
- 4. Submit the final report to the grower:** If the report passes ALS quality control, the HCV public summary will be published on the ALS website and may be used by the grower as part of their RSPO NPP document package.

Licensing Scheme (ALS) Process

Key Responsibilities for **Growers**

- 1. Hire an ALS-licensed assessor:** Growers must check (on the ALS website) if the Licensed Assessor holds a valid licence. It is not necessary for the assessment team members to be licensed, just the lead assessor. Be sure that the budget in the contract signed with the Licensed Assessor covers ALS report evaluation fees.
- 2. Coordinate studies and communicate during the assessment:** It is good practice to coordinate the various assessments that are required as part of RSPO NPP. For example, some information needed for the HCV assessment may overlap with Environmental and Social Impact Assessment requirements. Costs can be reduced by ensuring methods are agreed and results are shared amongst different consultants. Licensed Assessors are encouraged to provide regular updates to the grower and share drafts of the assessment report for feedback from the grower. The Licensed Assessor is responsible for submitting the HCV assessment report and supporting documents to the ALS. If the report successfully passes ALS quality control, the final version is sent to the grower for inclusion in the NPP report. If an HCV report is unsatisfactory, it cannot be submitted as part of the NPP. Growers must visit the ALS website regularly to check the status of the report review.
- 3. Receive the HCV assessment report:** Once a grower receives the final version of the HCV assessment report, they should check that the report has passed ALS quality control. This can be done by visiting the ALS website.
- 4. Prepare the NPP report:** The HCV public summary report template is aligned with RSPO requirements for NPP submission, this will streamline the preparation of the NPP report.
- 5. Submit the NPP report to RSPO.**

Certification Bodies: Verify the contents and approve the NPP report before it is submitted to RSPO. 

ALS fees

A report evaluation fee is charged by the ALS whenever Licensed Assessors submit or re-submit reports. Assessors are advised to recover report evaluation fees from their clients. Report evaluation fees are adaptive and based on Licensed Assessor performance.

What if the HCV report is unsatisfactory?

The ALS tries to avoid this outcome by:

Conducting an Initial Check before the report is sent through to the Quality Panel for formal evaluation. This step helps reduce the likelihood of scoring unsatisfactory in an HCV assessment report as it identifies if the report or the public summary are weak in ALS Key Issues. The cost of the Initial Check is included in the report evaluation fee.

Optional resubmissions: Licensed Assessors have two opportunities to revise their assessment report if the Quality Panel made required changes or recommendations. All resubmissions have a cost. Visit the ALS website for more information.

HCV assessment reports are marked as unsatisfactory if they are still weak in Key Issues and after the Licensed Assessor has exhausted all opportunities for correction. Visit the ALS website to read more about the report evaluation process and about ALS Key Issues.

Reminders for growers:

- Check that the lead assessor holds a valid ALS licence and his/her track record (www.hcvnetwork.org/als/assessors)
- Check that the assessment report successfully passed ALS quality control
- Regularly check the status of the report evaluation (www.hcvnetwork.org/als/public-summaries)
- Make sure you are in constant communication with the Licensed Assessor to understand what corrections are being required by the ALS