

## HCV Resource Network Assessor Licensing Scheme

### Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) by RSPO grower members

#### 1. Who requires Licensed Assessors?

From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, the RSPO New Planting Procedure requires oil palm growers to hire Licensed Assessors to conduct HCV assessments. From November 2017, Members of the High Carbon Stock (HCS) Approach must hire Licensed Assessors to conduct integrated HCV-HCSA assessments.

#### 2. What is the difference between a provisionally licensed assessor and a fully licensed assessor?

When assessors successfully apply to the ALS they are given a provisional licence. A full licence is granted when assessors submit two satisfactory reports in less than two years. Both categories can lead HCV assessments and integrated HCV-HCSA assessments (if complying with additional requirements).

#### 3. Why is a licence suspended or revoked?

To maintain a licence, along with paying all relevant fees, Licensed Assessors are required to:

- Deliver all assessment reports to the ALS for evaluation;
- Always deliver satisfactory reports, unless provisionally licensed (where one unsatisfactory report is allowed);
- Remain active (deliver at least one satisfactory report every two years);
- Comply with the ALS Terms and Conditions and Code of Conduct.

#### 4. Can a grower submit a report for evaluation to the ALS?

No. Only licensed assessors can submit reports for evaluation to the ALS.

#### 5. How are HCV assessment reports evaluated?

Reports are evaluated by the ALS Quality Panel, which checks that the structure and content of the report is consistent with the HCVRN Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values, the HCV Assessment Manual and the templates for HCV assessment report and public summary.

#### 6. Why do reports fail?

Some sections of the report are considered 'Key issues' and must score a 'satisfactory' mark for the overall report to pass. If one or more Key Issues is/are 'unsatisfactory', assessors will have two opportunities to resubmit their report (at an additional cost). If after these opportunities are exhausted, there are remaining unsatisfactory Key Issues, the overall report will fail.

#### 7. When is the HCV assessment report ready for submission to the RSPO New Planting Procedure (NPP)?

If the HCV assessment report passes ALS quality control, a public summary of the report will be published on the ALS website. At this point, the grower may submit the summary as part of the RSPO NPP document package.

#### 8. If the report is 'Unsatisfactory', is it possible to hire another assessor?



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Yes. Please read the leaflet available on the [Information for Companies](#) section on the ALS website for more information.

**9. What are the costs of submitting an HCV assessment report for evaluation?**

ALS report evaluation fees are based on the assessors' licence type and documented performance. When signing a contract with a grower, Licensed Assessors should include the costs of the ALS report evaluation. Report evaluation costs can be found here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/costs-and-fees>.

**10. Can companies check the track record of a Licensed Assessor?**

Yes. Companies interested in hiring a licensed assessor can check if the assessor holds a valid licence and check his/her track record here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/assessors>

**11. Who is part of the Quality Panel? Is it possible to know who from the Quality Panel evaluated a specific report?**

All Quality Panel members are listed on the ALS web platform here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/quality-panel>. The ALS does not disclose the names of specific Quality Panel members assigned to specific reports to maintain evaluations neutral and objective, and to prevent cases in which Quality Panel members may be pressured.

**12. Is the Quality Panel aware of the name of the assessor when evaluating a report?**

Yes. The name of the Licensed Assessor, the company commissioning the assessment and the assessment team are shared with the Quality Panel members before an evaluation commences to make sure the QP members declare any potential conflict of interest.

**13. How long does it take to evaluate a report?**

Submissions, first re-submissions and second re-submissions may take from 30 to 90 days each, depending on Quality Panel availability, and most importantly: the quality of the report. If the licensed assessor is required to make corrections, the evaluation time will considerably increase. It is important to keep in mind that not all delays are caused by the ALS. Often, assessors take a long time to re-submit their report corrections and this may delay the overall report evaluation process.

**14. Where can companies monitor report evaluations?**

Companies can track the status of all report evaluations here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/public-summaries>.

**15. Can companies request to see the results of report evaluations?**

The ALS contract with Licensed Assessors includes a confidentiality clause that does not allow the ALS to disclose report evaluation information with third parties. However, licensed assessors can choose to share evaluation results voluntarily with companies or can write to the ALS to authorize the ALS to do this on their behalf. The ALS also recommends that companies include a contractual clause in their contracts with licensed assessors that requires licensed assessors to share all report



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evaluation information with the company.

**16. Can Licensed Assessors appeal the results of a report evaluation?**

Yes. If Licensed Assessors disagree with the results of a report evaluation, they can submit an appeal to the ALS team following the form provided on the ALS website.

**17. Is it mandatory for Licensed Assessors to submit all their HCV assessments for evaluation?**

From August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017, ALS rules require that licensed assessors submit all assessment reports for evaluation, regardless of the context in which the assessments took place. Assessments that started before this date must be declared by the Licensed Assessor to the ALS Quality Manager.

**Identification (or ‘assessment’) of High Conservation Values (HCVs) alongside High Carbon Stock (HCS) forests**

**1. Has the RSPO adopted the High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA)?**

No. There is a task force exploring whether HCSA requirements could be included as part of the RSPO P&Cs but so far, no decision has been made. Please contact the RSPO Secretariat for more information about these discussions.

**2. I heard that an HCV-HCSA Assessment Manual was published. Who needs to follow it?**

This manual, published in November 2017, is for licensed assessors who are required to lead HCV-HCSA assessments for High Carbon Stock Approach member companies (some of which are also members of the RSPO, but not all).

**3. Who will evaluate integrated HCV-HCSA assessments?**

HCV-HCSA assessments will be evaluated by the ALS Quality Panel.

**4. What are the costs of HCV-HCSA assessment report evaluations?**

Fees for these assessments are still being set.

**Questions?** Contact [sofia@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:sofia@hcvnetwork.org)