



## Q&A

# from the webinar on HCV-HCSA Assessments 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

### Background

On December 6<sup>th</sup> 2017, the HCV Resource Network Secretariat, with support from Ellen Brown (Proforest), hosted a webinar to present the new HCV-HCSA Integrated Assessment Manual and explain HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) quality assurance procedures. The last part of the webinar consisted of a Q&A session. Questions asked by the participants are presented below.

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**Q35.** Let's say we have finished carbon stock assessment but not the standard HCSA assessment. This means no patch analysis. Now we want to finish the assessment by doing participatory mapping, patch analysis etc. Do we have to follow HCV-HCSA or can we use Toolkit V.1?

**Q36.** Is there any "Pass" or "Fail" in HCSA peer reviewed based on the HCSA Toolkit V.2?

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## Questions and Answers

### General requirements for HCV-HCSA assessments

**Q1. Does the lead assessor need both licenses, ALS licence and HCSA?**

The lead assessor must have a valid ALS licence and be an HCSA registered practitioner. The HCSA does not issue licences.

**Q2. Can the lead assessor and the GIS expert be the same person?**

Ideally, the lead assessor and the GIS expert would be two different team members, but it is acceptable if the lead assessor is a registered HCSA practitioner and a GIS expert. It is required that the HCV-HCSA assessment team has two HCSA registered practitioners.

**Q3. Should the company staff be on the HCV-HCSA assessment team?**

It is not required for company staff to be on the assessment team and it is also not prohibited. Integrated HCV-HCSA assessments can have company staff on the assessment team (or even leading the team). However, please note that if the



assessment is done by an HCSA member company that is an RSPO member undergoing the RSPO New Planting Procedure (NPP), then RSPO NPP rules must also be complied with (i.e. independent HCV assessors with ALS licence are required for new plantings over 500 ha). More information on using the ALS in the NPP context can be found here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/information-companies>). Note that currently integrated HCV-HCSA assessments are **not** a mandatory requirement of RSPO.

**Q4. What are the requirements to have a membership of HCSA and ALS?**

Because governance of the HCS Approach Steering Group and the HCV Resource Network remains separate, membership requirements are different. Details on membership can be found on each organisation's website: [www.highcarbonstock.org](http://www.highcarbonstock.org) and [www.hcvnetwork.org](http://www.hcvnetwork.org).

The HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) is managed by the HCV Resource Network (HCVRN). Assessors wanting to lead HCV-HCSA assessments must have a valid ALS licence and be HCSA registered practitioners.

**Q5. Is there any particular template for reporting integrated assessments?**

The HCVRN is developing templates for the HCV-HCSA assessment report and public summary, the templates are based on the Manual and will be available in early 2018.

**Q6. What template should be used before the integrated assessment template is ready?**

Licensed assessors in this situation should get in touch with the HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) Quality Manager at [qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org).

**Q7. Can the "FPIC throughout" be replaced by a checklist of minimum FPIC approach activities?**

The HCS Approach is developing a social implementation guide (guidance on fulfilling the social requirements of HCSA) which is due out in February. That guidance will go into detail about land tenure studies, participatory mapping and FPIC by the companies. FPIC must be done through the entire process (before, during and after the assessment takes place). See Module 2 of the HCSA Toolkit for a list of FPIC resources. The HCV-HCSA manual includes the key information that licensed assessors need to understand for FPIC. Companies need to have a wider understanding of FPIC, as their responsibility is greater.

**Q8. Participatory mapping: What is the minimum of local people required for this?**

For purposes of the HCV-HCSA assessment, there is no exact number. The number will depend on the local communities, they will determine how many people can participate in the survey activities. What is important is that local people are



involved. More guidance on participatory mapping will also be included in the social implementation guidelines being developed by the HCS Approach.

**Q9. What does it mean local people in the HCV-HCSA assessment team at field work?**

It is recommended to include local people in the assessment sub-teams (e.g. the vegetation team). They do not have to be technical experts, but they could act as guides or participate in other activities. Local people can provide valuable information on the site that is being assessed. It also acts to build awareness about the assessment activities.

**Q10. Can an HCV assessment be carried out after the HCSA assessment?**

HCS-alone assessments are no longer allowed and should be conducted as integrated assessments from the date of publication of the HCV-HCSA Assessment Manual. This is mainly to avoid that new HCS data is overlaid with data from an old HCV assessment or an HCV assessment that was done by an unlicensed HCV assessor (and therefore not monitored by the HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme). This is also to avoid duplication of efforts (e.g. consultations, field work). However, timing of different field activities within the three main assessment phases is up to the discretion of the team.

Please note that while HCS-alone assessments are no longer allowed, HCV-alone assessments can still be conducted.

**Q11. How about the guidelines for HCV-HCSA management and monitoring?**

The HCVRN Common Guidance for HCV Management and Monitoring is available on the HCVRN website. This guidance document is applicable to many commodity sectors, including forestry, and some of the recommendations are useful for managing and monitoring HCS forests.

There is not a specific module on the HCS Approach Toolkit for Management and Monitoring of HCS forests.

**Q12. Is the integrated HCV-HCSA assessment a mandatory assessment?**

For HCS Approach member companies, all HCS assessments must now be integrated HCV-HCSA assessments and must be led by an assessor licensed by the HCVRN Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS).

**Q13. Can an only HCSA experienced ALS assessor lead an integrated assessment during this transition period?**

In the manual, it is stated that during the initial period, while training is being rolled out, the lead assessor does not have to be an HCSA-registered practitioner.

However, there must still be two HCSA practitioners in the team. HCVRN is rolling out training courses (physical and online) for licensed assessors to make sure that they are trained to lead HCV-HCSA assessments.



**Q14. Does the lead assessor always need to be an ALS licensed assessor and also HCSA registered practitioner?**

Yes, the lead assessor must always have a valid ALS licence and be an HCSA registered practitioner.

**HCV-HCSA training**

**Q15. Do you have any idea of the number of HCV assessors (capable for African ecosystems) who are going to be trained?**

The HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme already has licensed assessors in Africa. Please consult the 'Find an Assessor' section on the ALS website.

**Q16. In addition to training in late January, are there any other trainings scheduled in Indonesia?**

The HCVRN Secretariat, with funding from a donor, is currently delivering HCV-HCSA training targeted specifically at licensed assessors to get them trained on how to lead HCV-HCSA assessments. As part of this work, HCVRN will design a plan on how more comprehensive HCV-HCSA training could be delivered (depending on demand) by ALS-registered training organisations in the future. Please keep an eye on the training section on the ALS website for updates:  
<https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/hcv-assessor-training>.

**Q17. Are there any plans to provide training in South America?**

An HCV-HCSA course is planned in Mexico in February. Please contact [olivia@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:olivia@hcvnetwork.org) if you are a licensed assessor and you want to participate in this course. For HCV Assessor Training course information please consult the training section on the ALS website. The long-term goal is that ALS-registered training providers will take on the responsibility of delivering training and that this training will include HCV-HCSA content.

**Q18. Are the registered training providers ready for HCV-HCSA training? Can new providers join?**

At the moment, training providers are not fully equipped to provide HCV-HCSA training. However, the HCVRN will make sure training providers are up to speed so they are able to take on HCV-HCSA training in the near future.

Courses can only be delivered by ALS-registered training organisations. For more information on how to register as a training provider, visit the following link:  
<https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/documents-and-guidance>.

**Q19. How can the current list of HCV ALS training providers be eligible to conduct HCV-HCSA integrated training? Any specific requirements or process?**

See responses to questions above.



## HCV-HCSA assessment process

### **Q20. Is there a standard time to do an integrated HCV-HCSA assessment?**

There is not a standard time. Assessments can take several months. That depends on how much time it takes to do a scoping study, the different field studies, participatory mapping with local communities, data analysis, consultations and report writing. More information is available in the manual.

### **Q21. What is the value of the recommendations during the consultation?**

During consultation, recommendations/concerns from stakeholders (local people, social and environmental NGOs, government, etc.) and experts (social experts, ecologists, etc.) may be brought up. These recommendations/concerns must be documented and included in the assessment report.

### **Q22. Will the security people (army/police) assigned by the government in Papua be a problem during FPIC and participatory mapping?**

The HCVRN cannot comment on the security measures implemented by the governments of countries where assessments take place. However, it is generally recommended that before an HCV-HCSA integrated assessment commences, the Organisation<sup>1</sup> contacts all parties involved to make sure that everyone is aware of local conditions to avoid any potential conflicts. Having said that, licensed assessors should not, in any case, compromise their safety. The Organisation is responsible for letting the assessment team know if there are any risks in the area in which they will work.

### **Q23. As consultant, is there an average time needed to execute integrated HCV and HCSA assessments?**

As mentioned in Q20, there is no standard time. Assessment timelines depend on the size area to be assessed, local conditions, team capacity, and many other variables. Assessments can take several months. Please consult the manual for more information.

### **Q24. Is there any technical guidance of HCV-HCSA assessment ready? For oil palm plantations, forest plantations and natural forests utilization?**

The integrated HCV-HCSA Assessment Manual provides technical guidance on how to do integrated assessments and it can be applied in any type of commodity plantation. The manual is to be used in conjunction with the HCSA Toolkit V.2 and

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<sup>1</sup> 'Organisation' refers to the entity responsible for commodity production and for commissioning the HCV-HCSA assessment. This can be considered synonymous with operator, project developer, company, etc.



the Common Guidance for HCV Identification. Please read the manual for more information.

**Q25. What if the community does not accept this assessment during the FPIC process? Should we continue the assessment? How do we manage this?**

Community consent must be granted for the assessment team to proceed with the assessment. If local communities do not give their consent, the assessment cannot begin. The Organisation is responsible for laying the groundwork before the assessment and must have already engaged with communities. It may be possible that some communities give consent and others refuse to participate in the assessment process. Please read the manual for more information.

**Q26. In the (HCS Approach) Toolkit, it is said that assessor may leave an assessment if let's say it is highly forest covered area. High possibility that most of the land is HCS. What is the suggestion in this case?**

Would the person that asked this question please contact us for clarification at [secretariat@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@hcvnetwork.org).

**HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) quality assurance**

**Q27. What are the criteria for HCV-HCSA integrated assessment reports to be 'Satisfactory'?**

HCVRN is finalising the template but, to get an idea, people can look at the ALS website to see the documents available for HCV-only reports. Including what the Quality Panel uses to evaluate the reports. Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory ratings are based on the Key Issues. These are certain parts of the report that must be strong in order for it to be Satisfactory. Key Issues include: justification of the identification of values, quality of stakeholder consultation and quality of methods.

**Q28. If the report is 'Unsatisfactory', is it possible to hire another assessor? And start again or continue the HCV-HCSA assessment?**

If the report is Unsatisfactory a different licensed assessor will need to be hired (if the company still needs a Satisfactory report). The new licensed assessor may use the data that was collected by the previous assessor or can choose to re-do the assessment entirely. The new assessor will need to take full ownership of the data used in the new report. This situation is rare given that licensed assessors have two opportunities to submit corrections to their reports.

**Q29. Who will be involved as Quality Panel member? Are there clear criteria?**

The biographies of Quality Panel members and the application guidelines to become a Quality Panel member are publicly available on the ALS website. More Quality Panel members with relevant HCSA experience may need to be recruited



soon to increase HCV-HCSA report evaluation capacity. Please visit the ALS website regularly for updates on this matter.

**Q30. Would there be an additional cost for resubmission? if yes, what are the costs?**

Please visit the ALS website for more information.

**Q31. How long will it take to review an HCV-HCSA assessment report?**

The report evaluation process is composed of many steps. Delays often occur at an early stage (i.e. when inconsistencies are found in the initial check) or later in the process (i.e. when a report is sent back to the assessor for corrections). To understand each step in the process, please visit this page:

<https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/how-are-reports-evaluated>

**Q32. Where can we register an integrated HCV-HCSA assessment? Should it be registered first before conducting it?**

Licensed assessors are asked to pre-register all assessments by logging in to their ALS account. Licensed assessors who pre-register assessment reports are awarded points which can then be exchanged for report evaluation fee discounts or free licence renewals. Read the ALS "Points-based rewards for assessors" for more information here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/documents-and-guidance>.

**Q33. What makes an ALS license suspended or revoked from an integrated assessment?**

Licence suspensions may happen if a licensed assessor is under investigation or if a complaint has been filed against him/her.

Licence revocations can happen if a licensed assessor breaches the ALS Terms and Conditions or the ALS Code of Conduct. For example, if a fully-licensed assessor submits a report that fails on one or more 'Key Issues' the overall report will be marked as Unsatisfactory and the assessor's licence will be revoked. To understand why a report is marked as Unsatisfactory, visit this page here:

<https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/key-issues>

## HCSA

**Q34. If the HCSA assessment was already ongoing (V.1 of the HCSA Toolkit was used) when the HCSA Toolkit V.2 was launched. Do we have to re-do the HCSA assessment?**

This question should be addressed to the HCSA Secretariat.

**Q35. Let's say we have finished a carbon stock assessment but not the standard HCSA assessment. This means no patch analysis. Now we want to finish the assessment by doing participatory mapping, patch analysis etc. Do we have to follow HCV-HCSA or can we use Toolkit V.1?**

This question should be addressed to the HCSA Secretariat.



**Q36. Is there any 'Pass' or 'Fail' in HCSA peer reviewed based on the HCSA Toolkit V.2?**

HCS Approach peer reviews do not emit a pass or fail result. Note that HCSA peer reviews for HCSA assessments will be phased out. The quality assurance for integrated assessments will be done through the HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme. The ALS uses a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating for report reviews. Reports will need to pass as Satisfactory under the ALS. Read more here:

<https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/how-are-reports-evaluated>

**Q37. Could you briefly explain the difference between the HCS Approach and the required Carbon Stock Assessment by RSPO?**

The HCS Approach is a methodology that distinguishes forest areas for protection from degraded lands. The HCS Approach stratifies the vegetation in an area of land into six different classes using analyses of satellite data and ground survey measurements. The RSPO Carbon Stock Assessment consists of identifying and estimating the corresponding expected carbon stock fluxes (above and below ground) and GHG emissions associated with the resulting land cover change to oil palm, peat drainage (if appropriate) and emissions from mills and operations can be estimated and thus development plans could be adjusted to avoid areas with high carbon stocks and minimise net GHG emissions associated with new plantation development. Please contact the HCSA Secretariat and the RSPO Secretariat for more information.

**Q38. Can we just complete the gap of the requirement in HCSA V.2? If we already did the assessment according to HCSA V.1?**

This question should be addressed to the HCSA Secretariat.

**Q39. Can the HCSA Toolkit V.1 still be used when the HCV Assessment is already completed?**

According to the HCS Approach, HCS Approach Members must follow Version 2 of the Toolkit from its publication onwards. However, please contact the HCSA Secretariat for more information.

### Other

**Q40. Some countries like Ghana are now developing assessment tools and methodologies and would want to integrate these tools and approaches. What are the plans for this?**

There are no current plans of integrating specific methodologies into the HCV-HCSA Integrated Manual. However, in the spirit of collaboration, please contact the HCVRN Secretariat if you would like to contribute with ideas or feedback.

**Q41. What is the main idea to integrate HCS and HCV assessments? Reduce costs?**



Please refer to the 'Introduction' section of the HCV-HCSA Assessment Manual here:

[https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/hcv\\_hcs\\_manual\\_final.pdf](https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/documents/hcv_hcs_manual_final.pdf)

**Q42. Indonesia has published an HCV Assessment Toolkit, with the majority of criteria based on national regulations. What can we do if regulations are different from results of HCV-HCSA assessment?**

Indonesia has an HCV National Interpretation that is currently out of date and does not include the latest High Conservation Value (HCV) definitions. Assessors licensed under the HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) are required under ALS rules to give precedence to the Common Guidance for HCV Identification over HCV National Interpretations (or 'toolkits'), particularly if these are out of date.

**Q43. Do you think that this integrated tool will be endorsed by RSPO, sooner or later?**

This question should be addressed to the RSPO Secretariat.

**Q44. Where can I find a list of companies that want to conduct or are conducting an HCV or HCV-HCSA integrated assessment? In short: How do we know how much demand there is?**

You can see what HCV assessments have been submitted for evaluation to the ALS here: <https://www.hcvnetwork.org/als/public-summaries>. The HCV Assessor Licensing Scheme has not yet received any HCV-HCSA Assessment reports for evaluation. As soon as these are received they will be visible in the link above.

**Q45. When can HCV-HCSA integrated assessments be implemented for growers? In 2018?**

HCSA Member companies must commission HCV-HCSA assessments from the date of publication of the HCV-HCSA Assessment manual onwards.