

Leveraging Sustainable Markets for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development

Only through access to credible and independent information can less-developed country stakeholders build strategies to benefit from Voluntary Sustainability Standards



Sustainable Agricultural Commodities in Mainstream Global Markets

The production of sustainable agriculture commodities continues to grow, reaching as high as 20 per cent of palm oil and 30 per cent of cocoa's global production. Consumer preferences and purchase decisions are largely driving this trend, motivated by advancing sustainability and reducing poverty in the countries of production. To respond to these consumer demands, hundreds of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSSs) and other multistakeholder alliances have emerged over the last three decades as market tools to enhance sustainable development. Over the past decade, consumer preferences have influenced the evolution of VSSs from serving niche markets to entering mainstream, in which multinational companies have defined sourcing commitments for sustainable agriculture commodities.

The Challenge: Avoiding Marginalization

Despite this favourable context, data collected and analyzed by IISD consistently reveals that the production of standard-compliant commodities tends to be concentrated in more advanced, export-oriented economies with greater production capacity, excluding the poorest producers from accessing sustainable markets.

With over 400 VSSs operating globally, producers, businesses and government institutions in less-developed countries face the challenge of being properly informed on their utility, performance and best practices. These countries have access to insufficient information, making it difficult to address their unique needs concerning sustainable markets.

Enhancing transparency on VSSs, their structures and market impacts, as well as how sustainable agriculture markets operate, can unlock the potential of less-developed countries to better plan fact-based strategies to expand sustainable production and market access through VSSs. This can, in turn, potentially contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.



Leveraging Sustainable Markets for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development

To meet this challenge, IISD launched the Leveraging Sustainable Markets for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development project. It aims to facilitate poverty reduction among marginalized commodity producers by enabling more strategic and proactive entry into value-added sustainable markets for less-developed countries.

Through this project, we identify, develop and disseminate needs-based information and build the capacity of less-developed country stakeholders to benefit from VSSs. In a series of in-depth studies, we will provide annual and regional reports and examine VSSs to increase transparency with a preliminary focus on accessing affordable finance, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reducing poverty while promoting sustainable development.



IISD will also engage with less-developed country stakeholders to identify their information and capacity-building needs related to VSSs. Initially targeting six pilot countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, we will respond to their unique needs through enhanced and targeted data collection, analysis and knowledge dissemination.

Outputs: Our Commitment to Sustainability

- Cutting-edge data collection and analysis of VSSs market impacts, structure and trends presented in annual and regional reports
- Digital data platform to collect and share VSS-related information among supply chain stakeholders
- Thematic reports on VSSs and finance, poverty reduction and SDGs, accompanied by international dialogue workshops
- Customized advisory services based on needs assessments of less-developed producing countries

Outcomes: Contributing to Poverty Reduction and the SDGs

- Improve the effectiveness of VSSs through better information and planning capacity
- Build the capacity of poor producers and supply chain stakeholders to better understand and benefit from VSSs
- Foster strategic investment by private investors and companies in sustainable production and trade
- Promote proactive economic policies at the national and global levels related to VSSs

Solutions: Working Collaboratively for Sustainability

Over the course of this project, and to achieve its breadth of activity, IISD will continue to strengthen strategic and constructive partnerships with private, public and civil society actors, at both the national and international levels. These collaborations will be key to the effective development, dissemination and value addition of the data and information produced.

To learn more about IISD's State of Sustainability Initiatives project, please visit iisd.org/ssi.

What is the SSI?

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) launched the State of Sustainability Initiatives (SSI) in 2008. The SSI is an international transparency and capacity building project which aims to improve strategic planning and sustainable development outcomes related to VSSs by providing in-depth, credible and needs-based information. The SSI is a result of a collaborative work between organizations such as IISD, IIED, FAST, FiBL and the International Trade Center.



SSI Timeline

<p>SSI launched in coordination with</p>		<p>First SSI Review launched, highlighting sustainability and transparency</p>		<p>Third SSI Review launched, highlighting standards and the blue economy</p>	
2008	2009	2010	2014	2016	2017
	<p>SSI signs MOU with International Trade Center to develop indicators for ITC Standards Map</p>		<p>Second SSI Review launched, exploring standards and the green economy</p>		<p>Fourth SSI Review launched, focused on standards and biodiversity</p>

For more information on SSI:

Website: iisd.org/ssi Email: ssi@iisd.org

In collaboration with:

