
SRP Standard Revision Terms of Reference



Title:	SRP Standard Revision Terms of Reference
Document number:	107. STD.REV.TOR
Scope:	International
Approval date:	June 2022

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About the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)

The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance comprising over 100 institutional members from public, private, research, civil society and the financial sector. Originally co-convened by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), SRP is an independent member association, working together with its partners to transform the global rice sector by improving smallholder livelihoods, reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production, and by offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice.

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1. Background

SRP is a global multi-stakeholder alliance launched in 2011 by UN Environment Programme and the International Rice Research Institute, comprising over 100 institutional stakeholders, including public and private sector stakeholders, research, financial institutions and NGOs. SRP promotes resource-use efficiency and climate change resilience in rice systems (both on-farm and throughout value chains) and pursues voluntary market transformation initiatives by developing sustainable production standards, indicators, incentive mechanisms, and outreach mechanisms to boost wide-scale adoption of sustainable best practices throughout rice value chains. SRP's goal is to minimize environmental impacts of rice production and consumption while enhancing smallholder incomes and contributing to food security.

The SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation offers a normative framework that can serve as a basis for supporting claims to sustainability performance in rice supply chains. Throughout the previous development and revision processes, stakeholders have emphasized the importance of keeping the SRP Standard as a concise and inclusive tool for practitioners to drive wide-scale adoption of climate-smart sustainable best practice among rice smallholders. SRP released the SRP Standard (Version 2.0) in January 2019, with 41 requirements structured under eight major themes. Version 2.1 was launched in January 2020.

The SRP Standard is complemented by the SRP Performance Indicators for Sustainable Rice Cultivation, which enable quantitative measurement and assessment of sustainability impacts of best-practice adoption at farm level. Using this tool, implementation partners and researchers can collect benchmark data and communicate field-level outcomes in a consistent way. Version 1.0 of the SRP Performance Indicators was released in April 2015 and revised in 2018. The current version 2.1 was launched in January 2020.

These Terms of Reference set out the need and objectives for a substantive revision of the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation v 2.1 through an open consultative process. The revision process is defined in the SRP Standard-Setting Procedure, which is designed to follow ISEAL Alliance best-practice protocols.

Sustainability challenges in the global rice sector

Rice is integral to global food systems. Worldwide, 3.5 billion people consume rice and 144 million family farmers produce rice on approximately 160 million hectares. Some 90 percent of rice farmers live near or below the poverty line - many are women.

Globally, 144 million smallholder rice farmers rely on rice production for food and household income; nearly 95 percent of Asian rice is traded and consumed domestically. Production is highly fragmented, dominated by flows of South-South bulk trade with a smaller number of relatively well-coordinated South-North and North-North supply chains. In addition, rice is a strategic staple crop of extreme public and political importance.

However, despite its critical importance to livelihoods, national economies and global food security, rice production remains highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including flooding, drought, salinization, sea-level rise and increased temperatures.

Rice smallholders, especially women, bear the brunt of the health and economic risks of production as they are inadequately equipped to safeguard their livelihood against climate change impacts and market risks. If we do not act now, today's children will live in a severely degraded environment and many of them will remain within the poverty trap in rice.

As our population grows, so does demand for rice. The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) estimates that rice production must increase by at least 25 percent in the next 25 years to meet future global demand. Meeting this growing demand sustainably poses an enormous challenge in a world with finite resources. Annual water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions of rice top the charts among food crops. Rice cultivation uses approximately 40 percent of the world's irrigated water, and accounts for 10 percent of global methane emissions.

Sustainable rice production requires economically viable, environmentally sound and socially beneficial farming systems across diverse social and production contexts. But it is possible to develop an overarching framework encompassing proven approaches and climate-smart best practices that can be generally applied, to offer a path for producers, value chain actors and governments to drive transformative change across the sector. Achieving such an ambition requires change not only at farm level; collaboration and a shared vision are required among all value chain actors and the support of governments, the financial sector, research, civil society and international development community.

The SRP Standard- principles and development

In 2015, following a multi-stakeholder consultation process, SRP launched the world's first Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation, together with a set of Performance Indicators to evaluate impact of best-practice adoption. These tools - aimed squarely at rice smallholders - were based on proven science backed by the International Rice Research Institute, and together offer an objective framework for defining and measuring the sustainability of any rice system. The Standard was designed to offer a compact, cost-effective and impactful framework for improvement while minimizing the compliance burden for resource-poor smallholders. Selection of control points took into account the limitations of voluntary standards as a tool for effecting change, as well as potential unintended consequences. Recognizing the diversity of production contexts in rice, the Standard aimed to offer directional, non-prescriptive guidelines across 8 themes. The scope of the Standard is limited to on-farm activities.

The Standard and Performance Indicators together offer utility as a normative basis for policymaking, for benchmarking and research, and as a basis for sustainable sourcing for private sector supply chains.

Following pilot implementation in 8 countries, feedback was incorporated and the SRP Standard was revised in 2020 as version 2.0, then 2.1, the current version. At that time, the next review was scheduled for 2022,

2. Need for revision

Revision of the current version 2.1 of the SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation will be undertaken with the following objectives:

- Integrate latest scientific advances
- Address any identified ambiguities / inconsistencies in language and scoring
- Rectify perceived shortcomings identified by stakeholders including Verification Bodies and farmers
- Improve consistency of auditability
- Strengthen the focus on gender and women's empowerment
- Ensure alignment with any updated regulatory issues, e.g. on chemical use and due diligence
- Provide a modular structure for partners to align with specific themes within the Standard for Rice Cultivation (e.g. climate, water, ecosystem services)
- Improve accessibility
- Simplify and strengthen data collection.

The proposed revision reflects a growing demand from diverse stakeholders, and the need for a production standard for rice cultivation to facilitate market-based sustainability solutions. The Standard also aims to serve as a tool to inform national policymaking that incentivizes and rewards adoption of climate-smart, sustainable best practices that support national targets and international obligations under the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

SRP will consult with other standards active in the sector that meet part or all of the need for a revised standard, to explore areas for collaboration, and to ensure the greatest overall progress towards SRP's objectives. This will include standards issued by GLOBALG.A.P., Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade International, national rice standards in major producing countries as well as brand and retailer standards such as the Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code, and ecosystem service standards such as Gold Standard.

All other relevant standards will be invited to contribute to the consultation process during revision of the SRP's Standard for Rice Cultivation.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this revision of the Standard for Rice Cultivation are to ensure its continued effectiveness in meeting its goals. In particular, the revision will:

- Improve the effectiveness and applicability of the Standard for Rice Cultivation and align it with the organization's vision and mission.
- Allow the Standard for Rice Cultivation to better support the evolving regulatory environment.
- Ensure the Standard for Rice Cultivation includes strong representation of gender issues.
- Incorporate the views and experiences of all relevant stakeholder groups.

- Encourage wider stakeholder participation, acceptance, and recognition of the Standard for Rice Cultivation.
- Ensure the Standard for Rice Cultivation is fully consistent with other SRP documentation.
- Structure the Standard for Rice Cultivation to facilitate flexibility for future modular incorporation of carbon benefits and other ecosystem services.

The objectives of these Terms of Reference are to:

- Ensure the revised SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation meets the expressed objectives for revision.
- Ensure the Standard for Rice Cultivation development process is inclusive and transparent to affected stakeholders.
- Provide a robust review process that ensures the Standard for Rice Cultivation effectively meets its goals.
- Ensure that the development and revision of the Standard for Rice Cultivation complies with international best practices for standard setting (e.g. ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards).

4. Specific guidance

Revision of the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation will follow the SRP Standard Setting Procedure and the ISEAL Standard Setting Code version 6.0.

The SRP Technical Committee (TC) gives additional guidance to ensure that all SRP Partners, Donors, Investors and Members are included in the consultation process and that all relevant sources of technical knowledge within the rice supply chain are consulted. Furthermore, the TC will ensure a focus on involving relevant stakeholders that were under-represented in earlier Standard development processes.

5. Scope and geographical application

The Standard for Rice Cultivation applies to all farm-level processes in rice production, including postharvest processes under the farmer's control. The Standard for Rice Cultivation can be applied by individual farmers, smallholder farmer groups, as well as larger farms. The Standard for Rice Cultivation has a focus on ensuring relevance, practicality, and impact, especially for smallholder farmers in developing countries.

If applied by a smallholder farmer group, the Standard for Rice Cultivation requires an internal management system (IMS) to support farmers in implementing the Standard for Rice Cultivation, measuring results, and identifying measures for continuous improvement.

It is important to protect the integrity and core requirements of the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation while maximizing its relevance and practical applicability within diverse national contexts – including production systems, agroecological environments, socio-

ecological circumstances, and legal and regulatory frameworks. While the Standard for Rice Cultivation offers normative guidance, practitioners may need locally relevant guidance on appropriate best practice recommendations that support the requirements of the Standard for Rice Cultivation. National Interpretation Guidelines may therefore be developed to serve as a bridge between the global standard and local field application.

6. Social, environmental, and economic outcomes

The SRP Theory of Change includes 3 main pathways around its three strategic pillars: develop sustainable rice value chains, create partnerships for scale and serve as a knowledge hub.

The SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation and Performance Indicators (PIs) are the essential elements of the first pathway. Through the training, technical support, incentive mechanisms and on the ground farmer outreach programs, rice farmers and other stakeholders are equipped with incentives and capacity to adopt sustainable, climate smart, resource efficient technologies and best practices at scale. This leads to enhanced food security, improved livelihoods, gender quality, social equity, inclusive growth and enhanced environmental outcomes for rice farmers and their communities.

7. Risks and mitigations

SRP has identified a number of potential unintended and negative consequences that might arise from use of the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation. These include the following:

- Increased costs for farmers. Mitigated by promotion, capacity building and marketing outreach, and supporting tools to increase benefits, and linking farmers to development initiatives, donors and sponsors.
- Disproportionate increase in cost for smaller farmers or traders. This will be mitigated by increasing assistance from SRP members, project owners and donors to relevant producers to support compliance and verification costs.
- Deforestation to increase growing area. This will be mitigated by advocacy for better law enforcement and increasing public awareness.
- Potential conflict between verified and non-verified farmers. This will be mitigated by making the SRP Standard as accessible as possible in all relevant locations and contexts.
- Worker discrimination will be mitigated by raising awareness and emphasis in Standard scoring
- Fraudulent claims: this will be mitigated by increasing awareness and use of the SRP Assurance Scheme which provides procedures for claims, monitoring and shadow audits, and other normative documents as well as use of effective traceability systems and the Chain of Custody Transaction Certificate system for transfer of SRP-Verified claims throughout the rice supply chain.

SRP has also identified a number of factors that could negatively affect the ability of the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation to meet its objectives. These include the following:

- National Interpretation Guidelines are developed only for localization of the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation, and not for the SRP Performance Indicators, SRP Assurance Scheme or Chain of Custody Policy & Standard.
- SRP does not control or monitor SRP authorized trainers except for a requirement for refresher training at specified intervals. This could result in miscommunication of information relating to the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation to smallholder farmers. This will be addressed by introduction of additional requirements to train the trainers and strengthen the in-house qualification process for Verification Bodies.

8. Stakeholder engagement

Throughout the SRP Standard Revision process, SRP will follow an open, inclusive and transparent consultation process to ensure stakeholder engagement as set out in the SRP Standard-Setting Procedure. SRP seeks to engage all stakeholders to ensure that the SRP Standard for Rice Cultivation meets the stated Objectives of the Standard Revision.

SRP has carried out stakeholder mapping and, following the SRP Stakeholder Engagement Plan, will monitor stakeholder participation throughout the revision process to ensure balanced and effective participation of stakeholder constituencies against target participation goals.

9. Phases of the revision process

The revision process will follow SRP's Standard Setting Procedure.
[106_SRP-Standard-Setting-and-Revision-Procedure](#)

SRP will set out and publicize the rules and schedule for transition of

1. SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1) from version 2.1 to 3.0.
2. SRP Performance Indicators for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1) from version 2.1 to 3.0.
3. SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3 from version 1.3 to 2.0

Reference Documents

ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards
SRP Standard Setting and Revision Procedure v 1.0
SRP Standard for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1)
SRP Performance Indicators for Sustainable Rice Cultivation (Version 2.1)
SRP Assurance Scheme v 1.3