Growth of the Sustainability Standards Movement

iseal alliance

ISEAL Alliance:
10 Years of Defining
Credible Standards

Sustainability standards are one of the most innovative tools to transform practices in sectors as diverse as agriculture, fishing, water and carbon. The organisations that have achieved ISEAL membership are among the most credible standards globally due to their adherence to a set of Credibility Principles that form the foundation for ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice. ISEAL's Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, with which all ISEAL full members comply, has become the global reference for high quality standard-setting. ISEAL Codes also serve as critical tools to articulate stakeholder expectations of how credible standards systems should operate.

ISEAL members commit to engage a wide range of stakeholders, to be transparent and accountable in the standards development process and in assurance mechanisms (such as certification), and to structure their standard clearly so that the environmental or social intent underpins the entire process. ISEAL members also share a strong commitment to support and unify the sustainability standards movement.

ISEAL's mission is to define good practices for sustainability standards, to distinguish and promote credible standards and to ensure that people understand the difference.

www.isealalliance.org

1999

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), Fairtrade International and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) come together to discuss the benefits of working in closer collaboration.

Early wood purchasing policies by Home Depot and later by IKEA would help to pioneer strong retailer preference for FSC and other certified products.

2000

With the addition of Rainforest Alliance, IOAS, Social Accountability International (SAI) and Marine Aquarium Council, an informal network of sustainability standards organisations forms.

2001

Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance / Sustainable Agriculture

Network, SAI and IFOAM collaborate on the Social Accountability in Sustainable Agriculture project, focused on improving social standard-setting and auditing in agriculture.

2002

ISEAL is born when the eight founding members establish the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance as a registered not-for-profit organisation. ISEAL's vision is elucidated: A world where ecological sustainability and social justice are the normal conditions of business.

Global Reporting Initiative produces the first template for companies to report publicly their social and environmental sustainability performance.

2003

With initial funding support from the Packard Foundation, Hivos and ICCO, ISEAL's financial situation grows more secure.

2004

Kraft and Procter & Gamble introduce Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee in grocery chains; the first mainstream coffee products to bear the seal.

In its first Strategic Plan (2005-2008) ISEAL's mission is defined as strengthening and promoting credible and accessible voluntary standards as effective policy instruments and market mechanisms to bring about social and environmental change.

ISEAL launches the Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (Standard-Setting Code) at a FAO conference. ISEAL's formative document articulates essential principles that would come to define credibility in the standards landscape.

The formation of roundtables on soy (RTRS), palm oil (RSPO) and sugar (Bonsucro) signal a new generation of sustainability

standards focused on global food supply chains and involving strong industry engagement from the outset.

2005

Accreditation Services International is created to manage the FSC and MSC accreditation programmes.

2006

After initial worked based out of Canada and a temporary stay in Oxford, ISEAL opens its London office with a total staff of 4. That number would grow to 16 by 2012.

A conference sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2006 is the starting point for discussing how to scale up voluntary standards and their collective impact.

Business-led sustainability platforms to generate industry-wide agreement on sustainability practices begin to populate the landscape with the formation of the

Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) in 2006 and The Sustainability Consortium (TSC) in 2009.

The world's largest retailer, Walmart, makes a commitment to source all of its wild-caught fresh and frozen fish sold in North America from fisheries that meet MSC standards.

2007

ISEAL introduces associate membership and a learning community begins to take shape.

ISEAL launches the Emerging Initiatives programme to enable emerging standards and certification organisations to build on existing knowledge and the experiences of ISEAL members.

Social Accountability Accreditation Services is established as its own independent accreditation body that manages the accreditation programme for SAI. By 2007 more

15,000 facilities are certified to the SA8000 standard, with significant numbers in China and India.

With GoodGuide and the Ecolabel Index as examples, a wave of online tools are created to inform consumers about the sustainability attributes of products, services and standards systems.

2008

The number of new certification programmes increases exponentially, covering a broad range of sectors and sustainability issues (tourism, mining, aquaculture, water) and building on the experience and credibility of mature standards systems.

Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Foundation and other partners develop the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

Government Use of Voluntary Standards, a joint project between ISEAL

and the Trade Standards Practitioners Network, explores ten innovative case studies of collaboration between public sector bodies and sustainability standards.

The total area of FSC-certified forests worldwide reaches 100 million hectares, in 79 countries.

With its expertise in traceability and chain-of-custody, UTZ CERTIFIED delivers traceability services to emerging certification programmes Better Cotton Initiative and Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

With climate change mitigation and adaptation becoming an increasing concern for smallholders, 4C Association begins work on a voluntary climate code to accompany its coffee standard.

2009

Launched in Nürnberg, Germany in 2009, ISEAL's second strategic plan strengthens the organisation's role as the global hub for social and environmental standards.

WWF Aquaculture Dialogues finalise the first standard for farmed seafood (tilapia), to be followed by standards for seven other species groups.

Mars Incorporated pledges to have its entire cocoa supply certified as sustainably produced by 2020 through partnerships with Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade and UTZ CERTIFIED.

Union for Ethical BioTrade launches the Biodiversity Barometer. In 2012 thirty-one of the top 100 beauty companies are referring to biodiversity in their reporting.

Responsible Jewellery Council launches its Code of Practices for responsible practices in diamond and gold supply chains.

2010

ISEAL launches its Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems in São Paulo. The Impacts Code provides a common framework through which standards systems can demonstrate and improve their social and environmental impacts.

ISEAL hosts its first annual public conference in London, UK.

International Organic Accreditation Services and Sustainable Agriculture Network partner to create a programme for accrediting the bodies that certify compliance with SAN/Rainforest Alliance standards.

In a major policy victory, Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB) and Bonsucro are among the voluntary schemes formally recognised by the European Union as certifying biofuels that comply with the Renewable Energy Directive.

Fairtrade, UTZ CERTIFIED and Rainforest Alliance launch the Certification Capacity

Enhancement project to boost the capacity of the West African cocoa sector to benefit from sustainability certification programs.

More than 27 000 Fairtrade products are sold globally in more than 100 countries, with retail sales of €4.4 billion.

2011

Fast food giant McDonald's announces that all fish products sold in its European restaurants will be MSC-certified.

At its second annual public conference in Zürich in June 2011, ISEAL launches the Scaling Up Strategy, a collective roadmap for ISEAL members to increase their social, environmental and economic impacts.

Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels launches a groundbreaking sustainability tool for assessing risk in biofuels operations and calculating GHG emissions.

Through support from the Ford Foundation, an ISEAL-led impacts project is launched, which looks to improve understanding of the relationship between certification and poverty reduction.

ISEAL publishes the ISEAL 100, a survey of 100 thought leaders in business, government and civil society to ask their views on certification.

2012

In partnership with SECO, ISEAL launches a landmark project to increase the awareness and use of credible standards in emerging economies and in government procurement.

Following a two-year multi-stakeholder research initiative funded by Mars, the Packard Foundation and the Walton Foundation, the Certification Assessment Report is published, providing a state of the field on the conditions under which certification can be effective.

ISEAL begins a global consultation on the draft Credibility Principles that underpin effective and high-quality standards.

As of May 2012, ISEAL has grown to 16 members and 43 affiliates.

Growth of the Sustainability

Standards

Movement

1999

FSC, IFOAM, Fairtrade
International and MSC
discuss the benefits of
working together

Home Depot and IKEA show
preference for FSC certified
wood

2000

2000-2002: Rainforest Alliance,
IOAS, Social Accountability
International and Marine
Aquarium Council come on board

2001

2001-2004: Fairtrade,
Rainforest Alliance / Sustainable
Agriculture Network, SAI and
IFOAM collaborate on the Social
Accountability in Sustainable
Agriculture project

C The ISEAL Alliance is born...

The formation of Roundtables on soy (RTRS), palm oil (RSPO) and sugar (Bonsucro) signal a new generation of standards

Kraft uses Rainforest Alliance seal, marking first mainstream coffee brand to carry a sustainability label
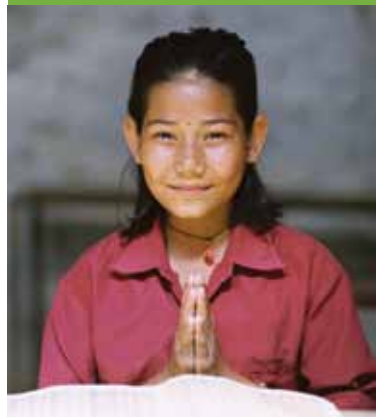

2002

2003

2004

Global Reporting Initiative produces the first template for companies to report publicly their social and environmental sustainability performance

The ISEAL Standard-Setting Code is launched

Packard Foundation, Hivos and ICCO provide funding support to ISEAL

Accreditation Services International is created to manage the FSC and MSC accreditation programmes

Walmart commits to sourcing MSC certified fish for all of its fish sold in North America

2005

2006

2007

GoodGuide and other online tools begin to inform shoppers about standards

Industry-led platforms such as the Global Social Compliance Programme (2006) and the Sustainability Consortium (2009) populate the landscape

Social Accountability Accreditation Services is established as an independent accreditation body that manages accreditation for Social Accountability International

BMZ conference is first to discuss scaling up of certification

ISEAL opens its London office

ISEAL launches the Emerging Initiatives programme

Mars pledges to source certified cocoa in entire supply by 2020

WWF Aquaculture Dialogues finalise the first standard for farmed seafood (tilapia)

New certification programmes increase exponentially

Responsible Jewellery Council launches certification for gold and diamond supply chains

FSC certified forests worldwide reach 100 million hectares

Union for Ethical BioTrade launches the Biodiversity Barometer

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UTZ CERTIFIED delivers traceability services to the Better Cotton Initiative and Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

The ISEAL Impacts Code is launched

More than 27,000 Fairtrade products are sold globally

4C Association begins work on a voluntary climate code

RSB and Bonsucro are formally recognised by the EU Renewable Energy Directive

ISEAL and the Trade Standards Practitioners Network release case studies on government use of sustainability standards

ISEAL hosts its first annual public conference

McDonald's announces all fish products sold in Europe to be MSC certified

ISEAL launches the Scaling Up Strategy in Zürich

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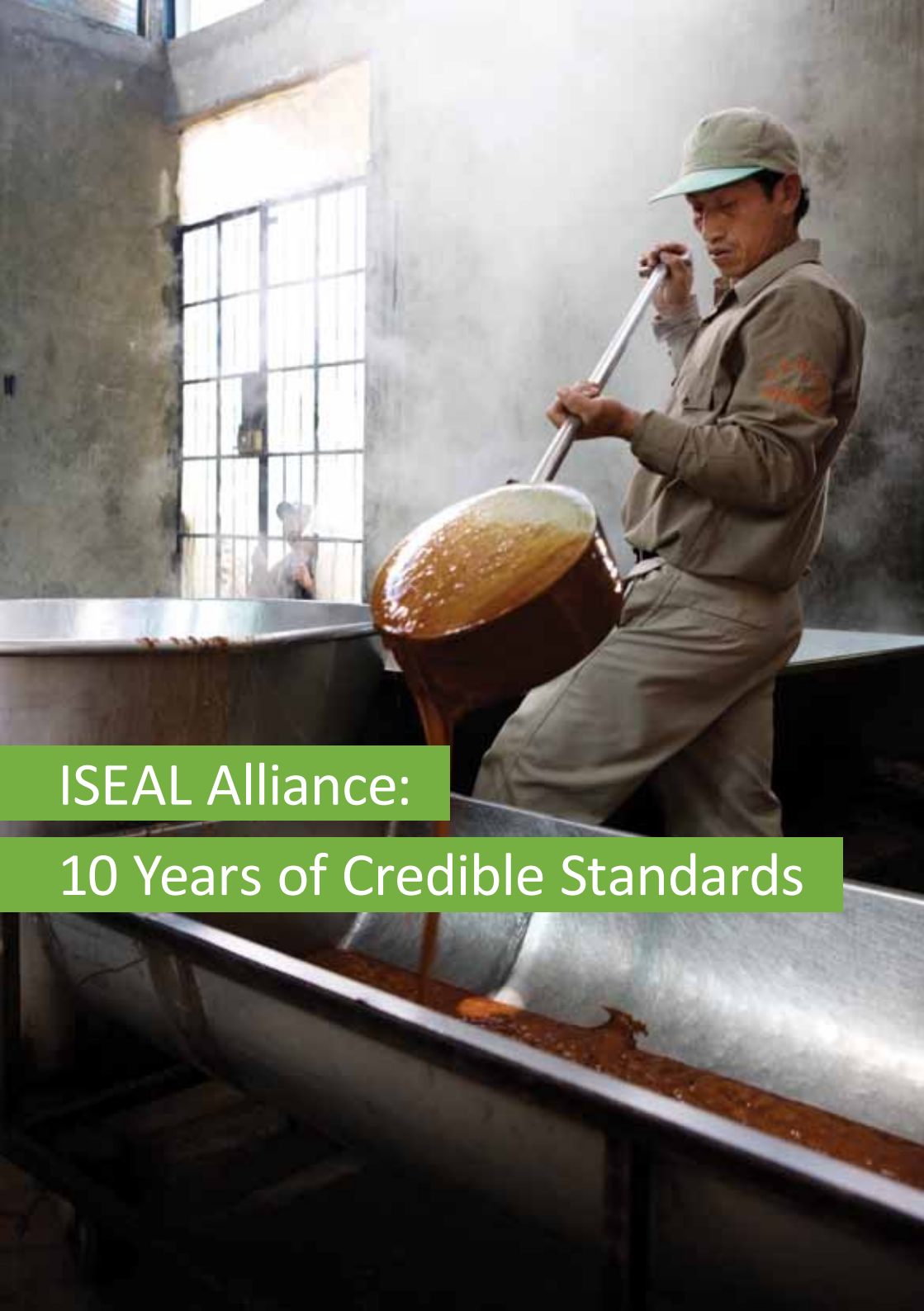
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