

# Setting Social and Environmental Standards

ISEAL Code of Good Practice

Version 6.0 – December 2014

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# Foreword

ISEAL Alliance is the global membership association for sustainability standards. ISEAL is a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to strengthen sustainability standards systems for the benefit of people and the environment.

ISEAL is the global leader in defining and communicating what good practice looks like for sustainability standards through guidance and credibility tools such as the Codes of Good Practice. The four goals of ISEAL are to:

- Demonstrate and improve the impacts of sustainability standards systems;
- Improve the effectiveness of sustainability standards systems;
- Increase the adoption of sustainability standards systems; and
- Define credibility for sustainability standards systems;

ISEAL's membership is open to all multi-stakeholder sustainability standards and accreditation bodies that demonstrate their ability to meet the ISEAL Codes of Good Practice and accompanying requirements, and that commit to learning and improving. ISEAL also has a non-member, subscriber category to engage with standards systems in development and other stakeholders with a demonstrable commitment to the ISEAL objectives. Further information about the ISEAL Alliance and its membership is available at [www.iseal.org](http://www.iseal.org)

## ISEAL Codes of Good Practice build credibility

The goal of all ISEAL Codes of Good Practice is to support standards systems to deliver positive social and environmental impact. ISEAL Codes of Good Practice complement each other to achieve this:

- The ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (Standard-Setting

Code) supports the development of standards that are relevant and transparent and that reflect a balance of stakeholder interests;

- The ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards (Assurance Code) helps to ensure accurate results from assessments of compliance and to encourage the use of assurance to support learning; and
- The ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems (Impacts Code) supports standards systems to measure and improve the results of their work and to ensure that standards are delivering their desired impact.

Individually, each Code is useful in strengthening a component of a standards system. However, users of standards and other stakeholders will have a higher level of confidence in the effectiveness of a standards system when the Codes are implemented together.

## Implementation

This version of the Code (v6.0) was approved by the ISEAL Board of Directors on 10 December 2014. It becomes effective from 1 January 2015. Organisations who wish to apply for ISEAL Associate Membership can apply using either v5.0 or v6.0 of the Standard-Setting Code up to 31 March 2015. Applications received after this date must relate to v6.0 only.

For more information on implementation timelines for v6.0 of the Code, please visit the ISEAL Alliance website: [www.isealalliance.org/our-work/defining-credibility/codes-of-good-practice](http://www.isealalliance.org/our-work/defining-credibility/codes-of-good-practice)

# Code Review Process

The public review and revision process for the Standard-Setting Code takes place every four years. The next review is scheduled for 2018. For each review and revision process, the ISEAL Secretariat prepares the draft revisions and coordinates the revision process.

The ISEAL Technical Committee, a permanent multi-stakeholder governance body, is responsible for monitoring the Code revision process, signing off on drafts, and recommending approval of the revised Code to the ISEAL Board of Directors, based on both the content of the Code and on the quality of the revision process.

The ISEAL Alliance welcomes comments on the Standard-Setting Code at any time. Comments will be incorporated into the next review process. Please submit comments by mail or email to the address below. You can also choose to use the comment submission form that is available on the ISEAL Alliance website: [www.isealalliance.org/our-work/defining-credibility/codes-of-good-practice](http://www.isealalliance.org/our-work/defining-credibility/codes-of-good-practice)

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# Introduction

ISEAL Alliance facilitated the development of the Standard-Setting Code in 2004 as a means to evaluate and strengthen the process for setting sustainability standards. A good standard-setting process ultimately improves the quality of the standard and its uptake.

By adhering to credible practices and procedures for setting standards, standard-setting organisations help to ensure that the application of their standard results in measurable progress towards their social and environmental objectives, without creating unnecessary barriers to international trade. In addition, the Standard-Setting Code can serve as a minimum bar against which to measure processes to develop sustainability standards. An intention of the Standard-Setting Code is to avoid duplication and improve consistency between standards, thereby enhancing their effectiveness.

Standard-setting practices should be based on relevant international normative documents, where appropriate. The WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement Annex 3 *Code of good practice for the preparation, adoption and application of standards* and ISO/IEC Guide 59 *Code of good practice for standardization* are relevant international normative documents that apply primarily to product-related standards. While not relevant in their entirety to sustainability standards, all standard-setting organisations should strive for practices that are as consistent as possible with these reference documents. The Standard-Setting Code aims to build on these normative documents by including additional requirements that are specific to the development and revision of sustainability standards and that are based on more current understanding of good practice.

The ISEAL Standard-Setting Code normative *Requirements* are structured around *Desired Outcomes* in sections 4, 5 and 6 in this document. The *Desired Outcomes* are the results that standard-setting organisations should seek to achieve. Complying with the *Requirements* that are linked to each *Desired Outcome* should lead an organisation to achieve those outcomes.

The Standard-Setting Code includes a number of *Aspirational Good Practices*. While these practices are recommended, they are not mandatory *Requirements* for complying with the Standard-Setting Code. To make this distinction clear, the *Aspirational Good Practices* are presented separately from requirements in green shaded boxes.

The Standard-Setting Code also includes *Guidance* that provides supplementary information to the *Requirements*, as well as interpretation of key phrases in the *Requirements*. The *Guidance* is an important non-binding supplement to the Standard-Setting Code and should be taken into account when developing or revising sustainability standards. The *Guidance* can be found in a separate column adjacent to the *Requirements*.



## 1. Scope

The Standard-Setting Code specifies general requirements for transparent and accountable preparation, adoption and revision of sustainability standards. The Standard-Setting Code applies in its entirety to all sustainability standards that aim to achieve social, environmental or economic outcomes and that are operating at the international, regional, national or sub-national level.

Where a standard-setting organisation develops standards or other requirements that do not address social or environmental practices, such as certification methodologies, logo licensing, pricing, traceability, etc., these do not fall within the scope of this Code. Where a standard is constituted in whole or in part by technical specifications that address social or environmental practices, such as greenhouse gas calculation methodologies, the standard-setting organisation itself shall determine whether the technical specifications should be subject to the requirements in this Code.

## 2. Referenced Publications

EU Commission Communication 2010/C 341/04: EU best practice guidelines for voluntary certification schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs.

ISEAL Claims Good Practice Guide: forthcoming.

ISEAL Credibility Principles: 2013.

ISEAL Impacts Code: 2014. Code of Good Practice for Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems.

ISEAL Assurance Code: 2012. Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards.

ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004. Standardization and related activities - General vocabulary.

ISO/IEC Guide 59: 1994. Code of Good Practice for Standardization.

ISO 26000: 2010. Guidance on Social Responsibility.

OECD Glossary: 2002. OECD Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management - OECD Publications.

WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Annex 3: 1995. Code of good practice for the preparation, adoption and application of standards.

WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Second Triennial Review Annex 4: Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations with Relation to Articles 2, 5 and Annex 3 of the Agreement.



### 3. Definitions

The definitions of ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004 apply to this Code with the following exceptions and additions:

#### Consensus

General agreement, characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important stakeholder group.

**NOTE** – Consensus should be the result of a process seeking to take into account the views of interested stakeholders, particularly those directly affected, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. It need not imply unanimity. (Adapted from ISO/IEC Guide 2: 2004).

#### Outcome

The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term results from the implementation of a standards system's strategies. (Adapted from OECD Glossary).

#### Publicly Available

Obtainable by any person, without unreasonable barriers of access.

**NOTE** – Information that is published on an organisation's website and can be found through a basic and quick search is considered to be publicly available. 'Available on request' is not the same as publicly available. (ISEAL Impacts Code).

#### Stakeholder

Individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organisation. (Adapted from ISO 26000).

#### Standard

Document that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for products or related processes and production methods, with which compliance is not mandatory.

**NOTE** – It may also include or deal exclusively with terminology, symbols, packaging, marking or labelling requirements as they apply to a product, process or production method. (Adapted from Annex 1 of the WTO TBT Agreement).



#### Standard-Setting Organisation

The organisation responsible for managing the development or revision of a standard.

#### Standards System

The collective of organisations responsible for the activities involved in the implementation of a standard, including standard-setting, capacity building, assurance, labelling, and monitoring and evaluation. (ISEAL Credibility Principles).

#### Sustainability Standard

A standard that addresses the social, environmental or economic practices of a defined entity, or a combination of these. (ISEAL Credibility Principles).

# ISEAL Credibility Principles and Standard-Setting

The ISEAL Credibility Principles underpin effective practices for sustainability standards systems, supporting those systems to achieve more positive social, environmental and economic impacts, while decreasing negative impacts.

The ten ISEAL Credibility Principles were published in 2013 as the result of a year-long global consultation with contributions from more than 400 stakeholders on five continents.

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Sustainability | 6. Impartiality  |
| 2. Improvement    | 7. Transparency  |
| 3. Relevance      | 8. Accessibility |
| 4. Rigour         | 9. Truthfulness  |
| 5. Engagement     | 10. Efficiency   |

The ISEAL Credibility Principles provide the foundation for the normative sections of the Standard-Setting Code. Since the Standard-Setting Code does not include detailed requirements for all situations that can occur, the principles should be used as guidance for making decisions in unanticipated situations where there is need to interpret the Code's requirements. The Standard-Setting Code is underpinned most strongly by six of the ten Credibility Principles.

| Credibility Principle                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Relation to Standard-Setting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>2. Improvement</b><br>Standards scheme owners seek to understand their impacts and measure and demonstrate progress towards their intended outcomes. They regularly integrate learning and encourage innovation to increase benefits to people and the environment.                                                                                 | Standards are reviewed and revised regularly to integrate learning about sustainability, good practices and results of monitoring and evaluation activities.<br>Standards include requirements that have been shown to contribute to the system's defined sustainability outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>3. Relevance</b><br>Standards are fit for purpose. They address the most significant sustainability impacts of a product, process, business or service; only include requirements that contribute to their objectives; reflect best scientific understanding and relevant international norms; and are adapted where necessary to local conditions. | There is an assessment of the most significant social and environmental challenges faced by the sector or industry. Requirements in the standard primarily focus on these most significant sustainability issues.<br>The requirements reflect best scientific or current understanding of good practice and are written to enable an objective assessment of compliance, focusing on outcomes rather than approach.<br>Detailed guidance or requirements for the development of local adaptations of the standard ensure that stakeholders have a consistent understanding of the principles and criteria.<br>The process is sufficiently inclusive, participatory and transparent so as to avoid creating unintentional barriers to trade. |

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| <p><b>4. Rigour</b></p> <p>All components of a standards system are structured to deliver quality outcomes. In particular, standards are set at a performance level that results in measurable progress towards the scheme's sustainability objectives, while assessments of compliance provide an accurate picture of whether an entity meets the standard's requirements.</p> | <p>Stakeholders involved in setting the standard need to have a shared understanding of the desired outcomes of the system and a degree of expertise or first-hand experience in the subject matter so that they can set the performance level accordingly.</p> <p>The requirements of the standard are at a performance level that is likely to achieve the sustainability outcomes of the standards system.</p> <p>The standard is clear and adequate guidance documents are in place such that different, but equally competent, auditors assessing the same enterprise would arrive at the same result.</p>                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>5. Engagement</b></p> <p>Standard-setters engage a balanced and representative group of stakeholders in standards development. Standards systems provide appropriate and accessible opportunities to participate in governance, assurance and monitoring and evaluation. They empower stakeholders with fair mechanisms to resolve complaints.</p>                        | <p>The standard-setter informs stakeholders about why the standard is important and communicates to them how they can participate in the standards development or revision process. The standard-setter proactively engages with stakeholder groups that are likely to have an interest in the standard or that are likely to be affected by its implementation, and provides them with mechanisms for participation that are appropriate and accessible. Stakeholders feel that their views are represented in the consultation process and in decision-making.</p>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>7. Transparency</b></p> <p>Standards systems make relevant information freely available about the development and content of the standard, how the system is governed, who is evaluated and under what process, impact information and the various ways in which stakeholders can engage.</p>                                                                             | <p>The standard and information about its development are made freely and publicly available at a minimum via an organisation's website. This includes, at least, draft and final versions of the standard, information on governance (how decisions are made and by whom, and how to participate in decision-making and standards development), and information on consultation (stakeholder input and how it was addressed in standards development).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>8. Accessibility</b></p> <p>To reduce barriers to implementation, standards systems minimise costs and overly burdensome requirements. They facilitate access to information about meeting the standard, training, and financial resources to build capacity throughout supply chains and for actors within the standards system.</p>                                     | <p>Standard-setters provide appropriate opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the standard-setting process. They identify and support disadvantaged stakeholders to participate through appropriate mechanisms, including regional visits and using local languages.</p> <p>The content of the standard is equally applicable to all types of enterprises, is focused on outputs and does not discriminate based on the size of the enterprise. The content of the standard is aligned with other standards where there are shared objectives. There are tools in place to support clear understanding of the requirements and how to meet them, including guidance documents and translations of the standard where appropriate.</p> |

## 4. General Provisions

### Clause 4.1 Standard-Setting Procedures

| Desired Outcome                                                                               | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Guidance                                                                                                                     |
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| The standard-setting organisation follows transparent procedures that are improved over time. | 1. Documented procedures for the process under which each standard is developed or revised shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>form the basis of the standard-setting process; and</li> <li>shall be made available to stakeholders, at a minimum through the organisation's website.</li> </ol> |                                                                                                                              |
|                                                                                               | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall conduct a regular review of its standard-setting procedures, taking comments from stakeholders into account.                                                                                                                                                    | 'Regular' is defined here as being at least every five years OR before the next review of the standard, whichever is sooner. |

### Clause 4.2 Consistency Between Standards

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                                                                               | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| The standard-setting organisation seeks to avoid duplication and to be consistent with standards that have overlapping scopes, while not limiting innovation and improvement. | 1. At the outset of a new standards development process, the standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>inform organisations that have developed similar international standards of its intention to develop a new standard;</li> <li>shall seek input from them on the terms of reference; and</li> <li>shall encourage their participation in its development.</li> </ol> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                               | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on at least an annual basis, prepare a work programme that includes its contact information, the standards it is currently preparing, and the standards which it has adopted in the preceding period; and</li> <li>publish the work programme at a minimum through its website.</li> </ol>                                | The work programme does not need to be a separate document, e.g. it can appear as a page on the organisation's website. Where the standard-setting organisation has a national or regional scope, it should publish the work programme through an international standardising body's website, such as the ISO/IEC Information Centre. |
| Aspirational Good Practice                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                               | 3. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make explicit reference (e.g. on their website) to other relevant standards systems that are complying with good practices and are operating in the same</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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|  | <p>sector, policy area and geographical regions and identify where approaches converge; and</p> <p>b. actively explore possibilities for unilateral or mutual recognition for parts or all of the system requirements.<sup>1</sup></p> |  |
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<sup>1</sup> Source: EU Commission Communication 2010/C 341/04: EU best practice guidelines for voluntary certification schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs

## 5. Standards Development and Revision

### Clause 5.1 Terms of Reference

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                             | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Guidance                                                                                |
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| The standard-setting organisation has clearly articulated what the standard aims to achieve and why the standard is needed. | <p>1. At the outset of a new standards development process and as needed thereafter, the standard-setting organisation shall develop or update the terms of reference (TOR), which shall include the following elements:</p> <p>a. the proposed scope of the standard and the intended geographic application;</p> <p>b. a justification of the need for the standard, including: an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the standard; an explanation of whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need; and documentation of other standards operating or in development that meet all or part of the expressed need;</p> <p>c. clear social, environmental and economic outcomes that the standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the organisation's intended change (see ISEAL Impacts Code); and</p> <p>d. an assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks. (see Impacts Code 7.6 and 7.4)</p> | 'As needed thereafter' could include prior to any subsequent revisions of the standard. |

## Clause 5.2 Stakeholder Identification

| Desired Outcome                                                                     | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| The standard-setting organisation has an understanding of who its stakeholders are. | 1. At the outset of a standards development or revision process, the standard-setting organisation shall develop or update lists of sectors that have an interest in the standard and key stakeholder groups within those sectors, based on the standard's scope and its social, environmental and economic outcomes. | Key stakeholder groups include directly affected stakeholders (those who will be impacted by implementation of the standard) and may include indirectly affected stakeholders who have an interest in the application of the standard.<br><br>Scope includes the sector and geographies to which the standard applies. |
| Aspirational Good Practice                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                     | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seek to achieve representative participation in its standard-setting activities; and</li> <li>to this end, set participation goals for interest sector engagement that can be evaluated and updated over time.</li> </ol>          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## Clause 5.3 Public Summary

| Desired Outcome                                                                          | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| Stakeholders have the information they need to determine whether and how to participate. | 1. At the outset of a standards development or revision process, the standard-setting organisation shall make publicly available a summary of the process that shall include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>summary of the TOR for the standard (5.1), including the proposed scope, objectives and justification of the need for the standard;</li> <li>steps in the standard-setting process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing; and</li> <li>decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.</li> </ol> | The Public Summary is a concise overview for stakeholders to understand whether and how to engage. If the TOR (5.1) include all of the information outlined in this requirement, and if the TOR are made publicly available, then they can serve as the Public Summary. However, care should be taken to ensure the TORs are accessible to stakeholders. |

## Clause 5.4 Public Consultation

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                                             | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| Stakeholders have sufficient time and opportunity to provide input on the standard and can see how their input has been taken into account. | 1. a. The public consultation phase for standards development or revision shall include at least one round of 60 days for comment submissions by stakeholders.<br><br>b. For new standards development, a second round of consultation of at least 30 days shall be included. | A second round of consultation is necessary for new standards development to ensure that stakeholders have an opportunity to provide feedback on whether their comments were understood and taken into account, and to gather input on substantive, unresolved issues. |

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|  | <p>c. Where substantive, unresolved issues persist after the consultation round(s), or where insufficient feedback was received, the standard-setting organisation shall carry out additional rounds of consultation, as necessary.</p>                                                                                                                                                              | <p>‘As necessary’ means that these additional rounds should be undertaken where stakeholder input may help to achieve consensus or agreement on an issue, or where more extensive stakeholder input may strengthen a consultation process that was not of high quality. In both cases, the standard-setting organisation determines if additional consultation would be beneficial.</p> <p>Where the standard-setting organisation is consulting with stakeholders on related topics, such as determining what claims can be made about compliance with the standard or what outcomes and impacts to measure, it should consider the efficiency gains from combining these consultations.</p> |
|  | <p>2. The standard-setting organisation shall ensure that participation in the consultation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. is open to all stakeholders; and</li> <li>b. aims to achieve a balance of interests in the subject matter and in the geographic scope to which the standard applies.</li> </ul>                                                                   | <p>A balance of interests in stakeholder participation cannot be ensured but the standard-setting organisation should make efforts to engage all those stakeholder groups identified in the stakeholder identification process.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|  | <p>3. The standard-setting organisation shall provide stakeholders with appropriate opportunities to contribute to the development or revision of a standard.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Appropriate opportunities include the use of consultation mechanisms and tools that are accessible and culturally appropriate for the stakeholder groups in question. For example, an in-person meeting or workshop may be more appropriate than an email or an online survey where a stakeholder group is less likely to have access to the internet.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|  | <p>4. The standard-setting organisation shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. identify stakeholder groups that are not adequately represented; and</li> <li>b. proactively seek their contributions.</li> </ul> <p>This shall include addressing constraints faced by disadvantaged stakeholders.</p>                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|  | <p>5. The standard-setting organisation shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. compile all comments received during a consultation period;</li> <li>b. prepare a written synopsis of how each material issue has been addressed in the standard revision;</li> <li>c. make the synopsis publicly available; and</li> <li>d. send it to all parties that submitted comments.</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| Aspirational Good Practice |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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|                            | 6. The standard-setting organisation shall make original comments received during a consultation period publicly available. | Original comments that are made publicly available can be attributed to the stakeholder group but should not be attributed to individual stakeholders unless those stakeholders have consented to be identified. |

## Clause 5.5 Feasibility Assessment

| Desired Outcome                                                                       | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| Aspirational Good Practice                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Enterprises can implement the standard and assessors can evaluate compliance with it. | 1. As part of the standards development process, the standard-setting organisation shall carry out tests to assess the feasibility and auditability of requirements in the draft standard. | These tests can include field trials or audits, impact or risk assessments, product testing or lab tests as appropriate. These tests can also be carried out for standards revision processes, if appropriate. |

## Clause 5.6 Decision-Making

| Desired Outcome                                                     | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| Stakeholders see that their views are reflected in decision-making. | 1. Participation in governance bodies making decisions on the content of the standard shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be open to all stakeholders; and</li> <li>shall be constituted by a reasonable balance of those stakeholders, including those that are directly affected.</li> </ol> | <p>Governance bodies making decisions on standards' content are often Technical or Stakeholder Committees. This criterion does not preclude Boards of Directors or other top governance bodies from making decisions on the quality of the standard-setting process followed.</p> <p>A reasonable balance of stakeholders is one in which all stakeholders feel that their views are adequately represented.</p> <p>Directly affected stakeholders are those that will be impacted by implementation of the standard. This can include, among others, enterprises being assessed for compliance against the standard, community and indigenous groups affected by application of the standard, and environmental organisations who have an interest in areas affected by the implementation of the standard.</p> |
|                                                                     | 2. Where the standard-setting organisation limits decision-making to members only, the membership criteria and application procedures for becoming a member shall be transparent and non-discriminatory.                                                                                                 | Limiting decision-making to members does not preclude the standard-setting organisation from meeting other requirements for balanced, multi-stakeholder participation in decision-making (5.6.1).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                                                                     | 3. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strive for consensus on decisions on the content of the standard;</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                          | A stakeholder type can be all stakeholders representing one of social, environmental or economic interests.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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|  | b. define criteria in advance to determine when alternative decision-making procedures should come into effect, in the event that consensus cannot be achieved; and | Criteria for determining when to consider moving to a vote could include that decision-makers who are not in agreement provide alternative solutions and, if these are not accepted by the majority, nor is a compromise reached, then alternative decision-making could come into effect. |
|  | c. define what the decision-making thresholds will be. Those thresholds shall ensure that no one stakeholder group or type can control decision-making.             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Clause 5.7 Standards' Availability

| Desired Outcome                                        | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Guidance                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The standard is accessible to interested stakeholders. | 1. All approved standards shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be published promptly; and</li> <li>shall be made available for free, in electronic format.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Stakeholders may also find it useful if the standard-setting organisation publishes a summary of major changes between the revised standard and the previous version. |
|                                                        | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall make hard copies of public summaries, standards and other related materials available upon request at as low a cost as possible, and covering only reasonable administrative costs.                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                        | 3. Standards and supporting documents shall each include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contact information for the standard-setting organisation;</li> <li>the formal status of the document;</li> <li>the official language(s) of the standards system; and</li> <li>a note that, in the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version.</li> </ol> | Formal status of a document includes its stage of development (draft, final, etc.) and potentially its version number, who approved it, and when it was approved.     |
|                                                        | 4. The standard-setting organisation shall make draft and final standards available at least in their official language(s).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Aspirational Good Practice                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                        | 5. a. The standard-setting organisation shall seek to ensure that translations of the standard are available in additional languages where this supports the use of the standard.<br><br>b. Where the standard-setting organisation authorises additional translations, it shall have oversight and responsibility for these translations.                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                       |

## Clause 5.8 Review and Revision of Standards

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                     | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Standards remain relevant over time and reflect current stakeholder understanding of good sustainability practices. | 1. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review a standard at least every five years for continued relevance and for effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives; and</li> <li>if necessary, revise it in a timely manner, in line with the requirements in this section.</li> </ol>                                      | A standard's review considers information gathered from stakeholder input, auditing results and organisational monitoring and evaluation, as well as new knowledge or practices that might require the standard to be updated. If the review concludes that changes to the standard are required, then a standards revision is carried out according to the process outlined in this Code. |
|                                                                                                                     | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make publicly available the planned date of the subsequent review; and</li> <li>include this date in the standard.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                     | 3. The standard-setting organisation shall establish and maintain a publicly accessible process to receive proposals at any time for revisions or clarifications to the standard.                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                     | 4. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>document input received; and</li> <li>consider the input in the subsequent review process.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                     | 5. In the case of non-substantive changes to the standard (e.g. to clarify language), the standard-setting organisation does not need to conduct a formal revision process but shall include notification of any changes in the subsequent review and revision process.                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                                     | 6. Where the standard-setting organisation allows for urgent substantive revisions to the standard (in-between regular revisions), it shall follow a publicly available procedure that includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the conditions under which these revisions may be triggered; and</li> <li>the steps in the urgent revision process.</li> </ol> | Substantive revisions include changes to the requirements that would require a change in practice by certified enterprises.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



## Clause 5.9 Transition Period

| Desired Outcome                                                                                             | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Guidance |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Certifying entities and assurance bodies have adequate time and notice to comply with any new requirements. | 1. The standard-setting organisation shall note in the standard: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the date of a revision or reaffirmation of the standard; and</li> <li>the transition period by which the revised standard will come into effect.</li> </ol> |          |
|                                                                                                             | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall promptly inform its stakeholders of the revised standard and transition period, in particular certification bodies and, where feasible, certified enterprises.                                                           |          |

## Clause 5.10 Records

| Desired Outcome                                                                                           | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Guidance |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Stakeholders can refer to previous consultations to understand the basis for the standard's requirements. | 1. The standard-setting organisation shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>keep on file for at least five years the following records related to each standards development or revision process:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policies and procedures guiding the standard-setting activity;</li> <li>lists of stakeholders contacted;</li> <li>stakeholders involved at each stage of the process;</li> <li>comments received and a synopsis of how those comments were taken into account;</li> <li>all draft and final versions of the standard; and</li> </ol> </li> <li>make these available to stakeholders upon request.</li> </ol> |          |

## Clause 5.11 Resolving Complaints

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                                                   | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stakeholders have access to a transparent mechanism for raising concerns about the standard-setting process and having those concerns considered. | 1. The standard-setting organisation shall make impartial and documented efforts to resolve procedural complaints related to standard-setting, based on a publicly documented complaints resolution mechanism. | Procedural complaints are complaints about the standard-setting procedure (how the standard was set), as opposed to substantive complaints, which relate to the content of the standard and which should be taken into account through the regular standards' review and revision process. |
|                                                                                                                                                   | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall disclose, at least to interested parties, decisions taken on procedural complaints.                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## 6. Standards' Structure and Content

### Clause 6.1 Sustainability Outcomes

| Desired Outcome                                                                                          | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The standard only contains requirements that support achievement of the defined sustainability outcomes. | 1. The standard-setting organisation shall state the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes clearly and explicitly in the standard. (see ISEAL Impacts Code)                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                                                          | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall ensure in its standard that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criteria are included to address all of the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes; and</li> <li>only criteria that are relevant to meeting these outcomes are included.</li> </ol> | Making these links can be accomplished by including introductory language in each section of the standard indicating to which outcomes the criteria relate, or by noting this correlation beside each criterion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                                                                                                          | 3. The standard-setting organisation shall ensure that any claims made about the standard or about compliance with the standard are consistent with the defined social, environmental and economic outcomes. (see ISEAL Impacts Code 6.5 and ISEAL Claims Good Practice Guide)                                  | Claims made about the standard are a type of marketing claim that is used to promote an aspect of, or relationship with a standards system. An example would be an advertisement promoting association with a standard or standards system. Claims made about compliance with the standard usually result from an assurance process. Examples of assured claims include use of logos / labels / trust marks and claims of certification against a standard. |

### Clause 6.2 Performance Level

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                          | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Requirements in the standard are set at a performance level that results in significant positive sustainability impacts. | 1. Standards shall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meet or exceed existing regulatory requirements; and</li> <li>clearly reference relevant, existing national and/or international laws and regulations.</li> </ol> | Where compliance with regulatory requirements would result in significant positive sustainability impacts (e.g. where regulations would not otherwise be enforced), or where regulations are consistent with international good practice, then standards' requirements that meet these regulations are sufficient. In other cases, it is expected that standards' requirements will exceed regulatory requirements. |



## Clause 6.3 Consistent Interpretation

| Desired Outcome                                                                        | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The standard is consistently interpreted and applied across its full geographic scope. | <p>1. Standards shall be consistent with the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. only include language that is clear, specific, objective and verifiable;</li> <li>b. be expressed in terms of process, management and performance criteria, rather than design or descriptive characteristics;</li> <li>c. not favour a particular technology or patented item;</li> <li>d. include definition of the scope to which the standard applies;</li> <li>e. attribute or cite all original intellectual sources of content; and</li> <li>f. not present administrative requirements related to assurance, claims or labels or other non-technical issues integrated with technical and/or performance requirements.</li> </ul> | 'Assurance' requirements can include scoring mechanisms for evaluating compliance, definition of mandatory and improvement requirements, policies on derogations from the standard, etc. 'Other non-technical issues' are issues such as requirements for participation in the scheme.                    |
|                                                                                        | 2. The standard-setting organisation shall prepare sufficient guidance on the standard to support consistent interpretation of its requirements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | In cases where there is a detailed normative standard, additional guidance may not be necessary. Where interpretation of the standard is required, this can take the form of additional normative or non-normative guidance. Non-normative guidance is information with which compliance is not required. |
|                                                                                        | 3. International standards shall be used as the basis for developing corresponding national or regional standards, except where they would be ineffective or inappropriate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | A local standard-setting organisation is not required to use an international standard as the basis for a local or national standard if the international standard is not applicable and cannot be adapted to the local context.                                                                          |
|                                                                                        | 4. National or regional standards shall be as consistent as possible with relevant international standards and at least as stringent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |



## Clause 6.4 Local Applicability

| Desired Outcome                                                                                                    | Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Guidance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The standard is relevant in the local contexts where it is applied, based in part on input from local stakeholders | 1. Where international standards are to be adapted for direct application at the national or regional level, the standard-setting organisation shall develop interpretive guidance or related policies and procedures for how to take into account local economic, social, environmental and regulatory conditions.                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                                                                                                                    | 2. Alternatively, where national or regional standards are prepared by the standard-setting organisation as interpretations of international standards, these shall be developed through multi-stakeholder processes.                                                                                                                              | These multi-stakeholder processes do not need to be as extensive as the processes for developing international standards since this is a matter of interpreting an existing standard. However, appropriate opportunities for stakeholders to provide input to the process are necessary. |
|                                                                                                                    | 3. Where the standard-setting organisation recognises existing standards as partially or fully equivalent, this shall be based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. a determination of the equivalence of the sustainability performance; and</li> <li>b. an assessment that the existing standard reflects the local context.</li> </ul> | One approach to ensure that 'the standard reflects the local context' is for local stakeholders to be given an opportunity to provide input that is taken into account in the development or revision of the standard.                                                                   |



# Appendix A: Compliance Criteria

Each of ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice consists of a combination of baseline, improvement and aspirational criteria.

This distinction is relevant for ISEAL members showing compliance with the respective ISEAL Code:

- **Baseline criteria** are the minimum compliance requirements that standards systems need to meet to become an ISEAL Associate Member.
- **Improvement criteria** provide a learning framework that supports standards systems to improve over time and with which ISEAL members make a commitment to comply within one to three years, depending on the Code (one year for the Standard-Setting Code).

- **Aspirational criteria** (optional good practice) are either new and innovative practices that can be implemented and tested by standards systems but for which compliance is not assessed, or are practices that new organisations might not be able to implement within the timeline for compliance.

All requirements from the Standard-Setting Code are presented in the table below with an indication of the level of compliance required. Where all requirements under a given clause have the same level of compliance, only the clause is indicated:

| Clause                              | Compliance Criteria |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>4 General Provisions</b>         |                     |
| 4.1 Standard-Setting Procedures     | Baseline            |
| 4.2.1 Consistency Between Standards | Baseline            |
| 4.2.2 Consistency Between Standards | Baseline            |
| 4.2.3 Consistency Between Standards | Aspirational        |

| Clause                             | Compliance Criteria |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>5. Standards Development</b>    |                     |
| 5.1 Terms of Reference             | Baseline            |
| 5.2.1 Stakeholder Identification   | Baseline            |
| 5.2.2 Stakeholder Identification   | Aspirational        |
| 5.3 Public Summary                 | Baseline            |
| 5.4.1 to 5.4.5 Public Consultation | Baseline            |

|                                        |              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|
| 5.4.6 Public Consultation              | Aspirational |
| 5.5 Feasibility Assessment             | Aspirational |
| 5.6.1 Decision-Making                  | Baseline     |
| 5.6.2 Decision-Making                  | Baseline     |
| 5.6.3 Decision-Making                  | Baseline     |
| 5.7.1 to 5.7.4 Standards Availability  | Baseline     |
| 5.7.5 Standards Availability           | Aspirational |
| 5.8.1 Review and Revision of Standards | Improvement  |
| 5.8.2 Review and Revision of Standards | Baseline     |
| 5.8.3 Review and Revision of Standards | Baseline     |
| 5.8.4 Review and Revision of Standards | Improvement  |
| 5.8.5 Review and Revision of Standards | Improvement  |
| 5.8.6 Review and Revision of Standards | Improvement  |
| 5.9 Transition Period                  | Baseline     |
| 5.10 Records                           | Baseline     |
| 5.11 Resolving Complaints              | Baseline     |

| Clause                                    | Compliance Criteria |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>6 Standards' Structure and Content</b> |                     |
| 6.1.1 Sustainability Outcomes             | Baseline            |
| 6.1.2 Sustainability Outcomes             | Baseline            |
| 6.1.3 Sustainability Outcomes             | Improvement         |
| 6.2 Performance Level                     | Baseline            |
| 6.3.1 Consistent Interpretation           | Baseline            |
| 6.3.2 Consistent Interpretation           | Improvement         |
| 6.3.3 Consistent Interpretation           | Improvement         |
| 6.3.4 Consistent Interpretation           | Improvement         |
| 6.4 Local Applicability                   | Improvement         |



#### **Our Cover**

Coffee cherries growing in Guatemala. They will turn bright red when ripe and ready to pick. © UTZ Certified.

#### **Photography**

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