

Benchmark summary of the Core Standards

As for other commodities, there exists a variety of crop-growing standards for soy as well. The Soy Network has agreed on core standards. Currently the core standards are: the Bio Suisse Guidelines, ProTerra Standard, RTRS Non-GM Standard, ISCC PLUS with the 'Non-GMO' module (as of 2020 with the two additional modules 'Environmental Management and Biodiversity' and 'Classified chemicals'), Danube Soya and Europe Soya Standard. A common feature of all of these standards is their guarantee for soya to be produced in a responsible and socially acceptable way. Malea Caroline Birke, an independent evaluator, has carried out a benchmark for different soy standards during September and October 2016. The final report was completed in 2017.

The questions addressed

The benchmark is based on a document analysis. All documents published on the standard organisation's web page at the time of analysis were considered. The evaluator addressed the following questions:

1. Which are the strengths and weaknesses of the standards? What differences exist?
2. To what extent do the standards fulfil the core criteria of Soy Network Switzerland?
3. Which are the main areas of improvement that need to be discussed with the standard organisations and that ought to be incorporated into the standard and into its administration?

Methodology

The core standards were examined by means of the WWF CAT (Certification Assessment Tool) V.4.0 methodology and financed by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). WWF CAT on the one hand examines the decision-making structure and the rules and practices of the standard organisation (administration, management), while on the other hand it looks into the agricultural practice *per se* (content). Each of the two areas is assessed by means of 80 evaluation criteria.

The appraisal was done in absolute terms: 'pass' (TRUE) or 'fail' (FALSE). A third option was 'not applicable' (N/A). Thus, it is not possible to credit for partial fulfilment (as would be the case with a 'traffic light principle'). The CAT gives a 'pass' result in case of a binding time limit and a binding result. Farmers selecting options without a deadline for practices and improvement measures will obtain a 'fail' result. This implicates that standards without options perform better results for a producer than standards that give an option (ProTerra, ISCC PLUS). For ISCC PLUS and ProTerra two CAT assessments were carried out – a best-case scenario and a worst-case scenario – the reason being that these two standards allow for gradations: All main criteria, but only a certain number of secondary criteria need to be fulfilled. This

results in worst-case and best-case scenarios; in the case of agricultural practice these may for instance vary between 18 and 65 percent. The current certification practice lies in between. Furthermore one should also bear in mind that the CAT was designed for global standards. Regional specifics or certain priorities of a standard are less taken into account. For this reason, the Danube Soya performs less well.

Results

The benchmark shows that all standards assessed have their strengths and weaknesses (see radar charts). In evaluating the administration of a standard, the RTRS (approximately 80 percent of criteria fulfilled) and Danube Soya (slightly over 70 percent) performed best. Next in line were ISCC PLUS with 65 percent (best case) and ProTerra with 53 percent (best case). Room for improvement exists for ProTerra regarding the balance of its organisational structure and the independence of its certification. With respect to the content criteria (production requirements), RTRS, ProTerra and ISCC PLUS satisfied more than half, providing that the best-case scenario was included in the process-driven standards of ProTerra and ISCC PLUS. Danube Soya scores 45 percent, owing to the aforementioned restriction that the standard can only be applied to Europe. This result also derives from an unequal setting of priorities: In developing the Danube Soya standards, biodiversity, soil fertility or land conflicts were not prioritised; instead, the focus was on traceability and exclusion of GMO. Within the social context all standards have strengths: adequate labour protection, labour law and compliance with the law. Differences exist with regard to the agricultural practice, nature conservation and the resolution of land conflicts.

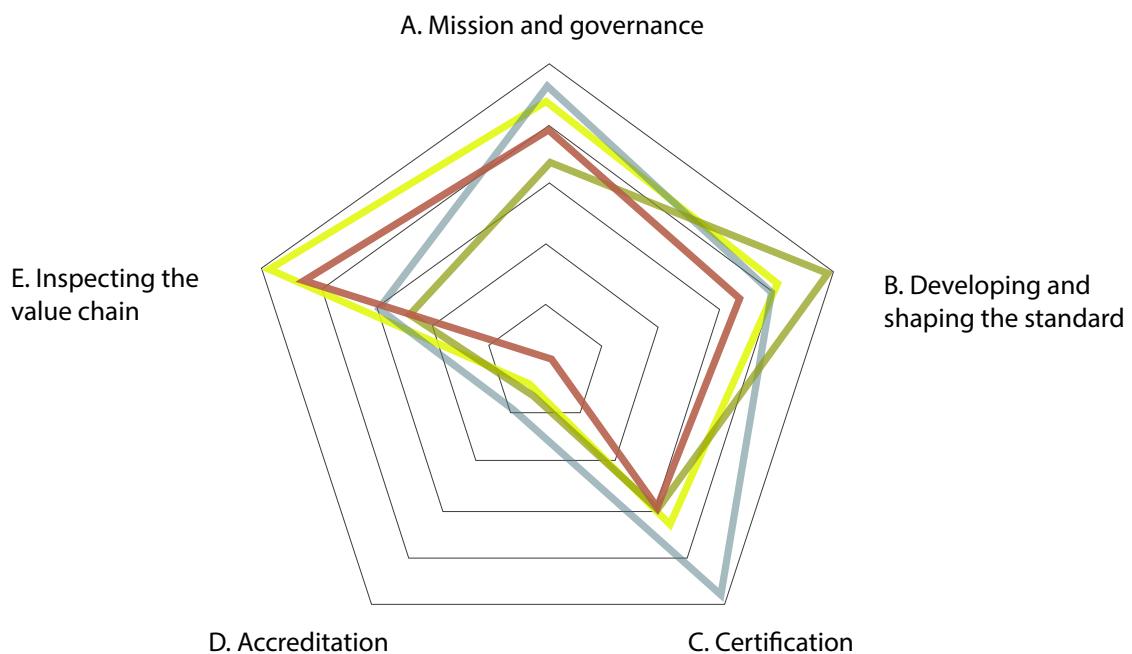
Conclusions

Soy Network Switzerland intends to use the benchmark to support a continuous process of improvement of the standard organisations. Currently, none of the assessed standards satisfies the sustainability requirements as defined in the CAT. The same goes for the Core Value, established by Soy Network Switzerland, which are not yet completely fulfilled by any of the standards. In order for this to happen until 2020, Soy Network Switzerland has prepared improvement measures for the standards. Presently, the Soy Network collaborates with the standard organisations in defining the steps necessary for successfully complying with the core criteria by the year 2020. How can gaps be filled in and how can improvements be achieved? And how can the standard organisations learn from each other to leverage synergies, in order to continue offering credible value added to farmers, purchasers and consumers?

Members of Soy Network Switzerland

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Management of the standard



Content of the standard

