

## **Certification Body's experience in auditing independent smallholders**

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Independent Smallholders are assessed based on two main documents namely RSPO P&C for Independent Smallholders and RSPO Standard for Group Certification. The Independent Smallholder's group through the Group Manager needs to be a RSPO member prior to go through the certification assessment. The certification unit is the Group Manager and group members. Fresh Fruit Bunches produced by the group members is certified. However, conversion to CPO, PK, PKO and PKE is reported in the summary report as per requirement for the palm product trading system. The main challenge in the audit process is to determine the accurate OER conversion for the FFB produced by the group. Although the OER is available at the palm oil mill that purchasing the FFB, generally it lower than the actual OER in the mill. It is also can be challenging to obtain the national average OER from the relevant government authorities. Although the audit process is similar to big plantations and palm oil mills to certain extent, the key different in Independent Smallholders assessment is the auditor need to face traditional farmers with actual practical field experience. The audit team need to have team members with practical palm oil cultivation experience. The audit team is also required to have local experts familiar with local regulation, tradition and social issues among farmers. The main challenges for the Group Manager and the group members is to understand the sustainable palm product trading once their production is certified. It is common that the communications among Independent Smallholders are through local language. Unfortunately, the trading system that available now such as GreenPlam is in English. Translation of these documents to local language will be helpful. The key lesson learned through the assessment is that the auditor must be able to understand farmers' terms. It is also noted that the Independent Smallholders needs external support to prepare them to certifiable standard by developing farm recording system, training, initial gap assessment and understanding the group certification requirement. There should be clear guidance on certified product trading system in a language understood by the Independent Smallholders.