

# Development of ICS and Certification of Independent smallholders

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## **Abstract:**

Smallholders will play an increasing role for oil palm production and expansion in the next decades around the globe. Among the 3 generalized categories of smallholder (scheme or tied-, associated-, and independent smallholder), the most disadvantage and challenging group in enhancing international sustainability standard is the independent smallholder due to their inferiority in accessing to proper agricultural production factors (land, labour, credit, technology, and management) and lack of institutional support to ensure their sustainable farming as a whole.

Internal control system (ICS) is, so far, a single existing mechanism in formalizing and organizing the independent farmers for RSPO certification. ICS demands a great deal of time and external supports in capacity building, especially to ensure independent ones to work together. ICS controls the quality and standardized practices of individual members via the processes of a) extension & application; b) visiting member and farm; c) evaluation, acceptance, and punishment; d) training and monitoring. *Group Management* runs the ICS according to group's standard operating procedure (SOP) or *Sustainability Manual*. The group management roles can be taken by one or a few persons as a group manager or shared amongst its committee with responsibilities covering group administration, coordination, documentation, merchandise, ICS system quality control (internal inspector, certifier), and extension & education (for farm management, environmental and HCVs, social and workers, occupational health & safety, group business, etc). Even though the principle of the ICS can be generalized, but each smallholder group should design its institutional structure and standard operating procedure to fit with local context.