

RSPO and ASI guidance for certification bodies on the transfer of RSPO certificates in case of an accreditation withdrawal

According to accreditation requirements and procedures, under certain circumstances the accreditation of certification bodies (CBs) previously accredited to offer RSPO certification can be withdrawn by ASI.

Once the decision is taken the certification body will no longer be permitted to:

- Issue new certificates;
- Re-issue certificates;
- Conduct initial assessments, surveillance or re-certification assessments as well as NPP verifications;
- Make claims associating themselves with the RSPO scheme.

Certificates issued by the certification body prior to the withdrawal will remain valid for a period of ninety (90) days after the date of withdrawal. This time period is intended to permit certificate holders to enter into an agreement with another accredited CB to enable the transfer of the certificate.

During the transfer process the CB, RSPO and ASI will work together to ensure that the impact on the certificate holders and applicants is minimized.

The list of CBs holding a valid accreditation is available on the following page:

<http://www.accreditation-services.com/archives/standards/rspo>.

The transfer of certification is defined as the recognition of an existing and valid management system certification, granted by one accredited certification body ("issuing certification body"), by another accredited certification body ("accepting certification body") for the purpose of issuing its own certification.

The following alternative scenarios could arise during the transfer:

Scenario		Applicant/certificate holder	Issuing certification body	Accepting certification body
1	The assessment (initial, surveillance, re-certification) was conducted prior to the accreditation withdrawal date and the issuing certification body has finalized the certification process but it has not issued a certificate. No outstanding major findings.	The certificate holder should identify a new certification body and start the transfer process.	The issuing certification body will provide the accepting certification body with all relevant documents, including but not limited to audit reports, checklists, result of technical review, and non-conformity reports.	The accepting certification body will issue a new certificate based on the documentation of the issuing certification body in a timely manner to prevent expiration of the annual license. On-site assessments will be conducted only in justified cases by the accepting certification body following the approval of RSPO and ASI.
2	The assessment (initial, surveillance, re-certification) was conducted prior to the accreditation withdrawal date however the report was not finalized and the the issuing certification body has not made a certification decision.	The certificate holder has the option to either transfer immediately or to wait until the issuing certification body finalizes the report and then proceed with the transfer (see Scenario 1).	The issuing certification body will provide the accepting certification body with all relevant documents, including but not limited to audit reports, checklists, result of technical review, and non-conformity reports.	The accepting certification body will issue a new certificate based on the documentation of the issuing certification body in a timely manner. If the certificate holder was transferred before the finalization of the report, the accepting certification body will finalize the report first. On-site assessments will be conducted only in justified cases by the accepting certification body following

				the approval of RSPO and ASI.
3	The assessment (initial, surveillance, re-certification) was conducted prior to the accreditation withdrawal date and the audit resulted in major non-conformities that are still open.	The certificate holder should identify a new certification body and start the transfer process.	The issuing certification body will provide the accepting certification body all relevant documents, including but not limited to audit reports, checklists, result of technical review, and non-conformity reports. The issuing certification body will not close the major non-conformity.	The accepting certification body will decide if the major non-conformities can be closed. On-site assessment may be required. Once the major findings are addressed, the certification body will continue to finalize the report and issue the new certificate.
4	The surveillance/re-certification assessment is due to be conducted within the 90 days transfer period.	The certificate holder should identify a new certification body and start the transfer process. The E-Trace license of the certificate holder will be automatically extended by 3 months to facilitate the transfer.	The issuing certification body will provide the accepting certification body all relevant documents, including but not limited to audit reports, checklists, result of technical review, and non-conformity reports.	The accepting certification body will conduct the assessment and issue a new certificate.
5	Certificate holders that already had their E-Trace licenses extended.	The certificate holder should identify a new certification body and start the transfer process. The E-Trace license of the certificate holder will be automatically extended by 3 months to facilitate the transfer however no further extension will be granted.	The issuing certification body will provide the accepting certification body all relevant documents, including but not limited to audit reports, checklists, result of technical review, and non-conformity reports.	The accepting certification body will conduct the assessment and issue a new certificate.

The transfer of the certificate shall respect the following:

- a.) A competent person from the accepting certification body shall carry out a review of the certification of the prospective client. This review shall be conducted by means of a document review and could include an on site audit to the prospective client (for Scenario 1 and 2, the approval of RSPO and ASI is required). Reasons for conducting an on site audit shall be fully justified and documented. The review shall cover the following aspects and its findings shall be fully documented:
 - (i) confirmation that the client's certified activities fall within the accredited scope of the accepting certification body;
 - (ii) that the site or sites wishing to transfer certification hold an accredited certification that is valid in terms of authenticity, duration and scope of activities covered by the management system certification.
 - (iii) the validity of certification and the status of outstanding major non-conformities shall be verified by the accepting certification body.
 - (iv) A consideration of the last certification or recertification audit reports, subsequent surveillance reports and any outstanding non-conformities that may arise from them. This consideration shall also include any other available, relevant documentation regarding the certification process i.e. handwritten notes, checklists.
 - (v) complaints received and action taken.
- b.) Certification which is known to have been suspended or under threat of suspension shall be transferred only after a new on site assessment;
- c.) Outstanding major non-conformities shall be closed by the accepting certification body after the transfer;
- d.) If no further outstanding or potential problems are identified by the pre-transfer review a certification may be issued following the normal decision making process. The original start and end dates of the certificate shall be maintained. The programme of ongoing surveillance shall be based on the previous certification regime unless the accepting certification body has conducted an initial audit as a result of the review;
- e.) If, after the pre-transfer review, the adequacy of a current or previously held certification is unclear, the accepting certification body shall, depending upon the extent of doubt, either:
 - i. treat the applicant as a new client or
 - ii. conduct an audit concentrating on identified problem areas. The decision as to the action required will depend upon the nature and extent of any problems found and shall be explained to the organization and the justification for the decision shall

be documented and the records maintained by the certification body. Furthermore the certification body will seek the approval of RSPO and ASI under certain circumstances (see point a.).

- f.) Financial obligations shall be agreed and met proportionally by all parties involved;
- g.) The content of this document remains valid until 30th of June 2016 and its only applicable for transfers initiated as the result of an accreditation withdrawal.

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