



ADVANCING PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS TO MAINSTREAM BIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE IN BIODIVERSITY ECONOMY VOLUNTARY
SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

FISHBOWL DISCUSSION PREPARATION

1. Methodology

The fishbowl technique for group discussions is used to optimise the input gained from the discussion and manage a potential situation where: 1) participants don't freely join a large group discussion, 2) where the large group discussion is dominated by a few vocal participants or 3) where participants go off topic and the opportunity for the topic specific input is lost.

The technique involves the identification of 3 – 5 participants who have good knowledge on and/or experience in the identified topic. These participants are then informed on key areas to explore and have the opportunity to form ideas on what they would like to share beforehand. The facilitator then introduces the discussion areas during the fishbowl discussion and allows the identified participants to enter into a conversation that is observed by the rest of the group. Once the conversation has set the tone, the facilitator can also invite participants from the wider observer group to briefly join the fishbowl with a specific question and then exit again.

2. Open Discussion 1: Learnings from CSU in practice

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are becoming increasingly pivotal in shaping global supply chains by ensuring that products are harvested, produced, processed, or transported according to rigorous sustainability metrics. These standards cover a broad spectrum, including environmental impact, human rights, labor standards, and gender equality, and are crucial for promoting sustainable practices and biodiversity conservation worldwide. With nearly 500 VSS currently in existence, they are particularly relevant to key exports such as coffee, tea, cocoa, palm oil, timber, cotton, and organic agri-foods.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights international trade as a driving force for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. VSS are increasingly referenced in trade agreements to foster sustainable development and good governance, making them effective tools for encouraging governments and companies to adopt practices aligned with environmental, social, and economic goals.

In the face of pressing global biodiversity challenges, VSS can play a significant role in conservation efforts by guiding global economic activities towards sustainable management and protection of biodiversity and its ecosystem services. Recognizing this, UN Trade and Development has focused on leveraging VSS through its Global BioTrade Facilitation Programme, aiming to promote sustainable trade in biodiversity-based products and services. Building on these efforts, a new trade and biodiversity programme is being developed to



integrate trade-related measures, including VSS, as tools to conserve biodiversity while generating sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

In South Africa, the biodiversity economy is a key contributor to the national economy and an essential component of the country's biodiversity conservation efforts. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) has been exploring the development of VSS mechanisms as a public-private partnership model to effectively implement sustainability standards across biodiversity value chains. This initiative aligns with South Africa's leading efforts in conservation and sustainable use through robust policies and legislation, grounded in the Constitutional mandate outlined in Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

Section 24 of the Constitution emphasizes the right to an environment that is not harmful to health or well-being and mandates the protection of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. This includes the prevention of pollution and ecological degradation, the promotion of conservation, and the securing of ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources, while also promoting justifiable economic and social development. Given South Africa's comprehensive legislative framework, including the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) and other specific environmental management acts, the role of VSS in complementing these regulations is worth exploring. VSS have the potential to enhance compliance, reduce overregulation, and create incentives for sustainable practices within the biodiversity sector.

Objective: To establish a symbiotic relationship between Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Practices and the Biodiversity Economic Voluntary Sustainability Standards within the context of South Africa's biodiversity legislative framework.

Systematic Questions for the Panel Discussion:

1. Constitutional Imperatives:
 - How can Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) be utilized as an effective tool to fulfill the objectives outlined in Section 24(b) of the South African Constitution, particularly in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources?
2. Regulatory Imperatives:
 - Considering South Africa's comprehensive legislative framework, which includes both national and provincial regulations, can VSS be strategically employed to alleviate overregulation in the biodiversity sector while simultaneously achieving conservation and sustainable use goals?
3. Incentives:
 - What specific incentives could be leveraged through the implementation of VSS within South Africa's existing biodiversity legislative framework? How can these incentives encourage broader adoption of sustainable practices across biodiversity-based industries?
4. Compliance:
 - In your view, could VSS serve as a valuable tool or vehicle to enhance compliance with South Africa's biodiversity regulatory framework? What are the potential benefits and challenges associated with this approach?



3. Open Discussion 2: Potential for a landscape approach for South Africa

In recent years integrated landscape approaches have become a key consideration and discussion topic on the global development agenda. As with all developing areas, there are currently still different interpretations of what exactly a landscape approach involves, but in essence it focusses on the consideration and management of a landscape in a holistic manner considering the interconnected nature of landscapes as opposed to focussing on individual elements present in the landscape in a siloed manner. For example focussing on the connection between fauna and flora, biodiversity and people, economic and conservations agendas, etc. There is increasing agreement that these integrated approaches are key to addressing the multi-dimensional challenge inclusive of but not limited to sustaining a growing population, preventing biodiversity loss, mitigating climate change, finding the balance between livelihoods and environmental concerns, etc.

Possible participants	Discussion points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christine Lippai Dr Wiseman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While landscape approaches are a developing area how do you understand and engage with this from your perspective? In your experience what are the benefits of these integrated approaches? A key focus of landscape approaches is finding the balance between conservation and development. What should be considered when one sets out to achieve this goal?

4. Open discussions 2 & 3: VSS in South Africa

Voluntary Sustainability Standards are instruments setting out specific economic, social or environmental sustainability requirements based on international best practise that users have to comply with. These standards are increasingly used in the international trade and development environment as instruments of assurance, but also instruments to support continuous improvement. While these standards can be powerful tools for change, implementation challenges such as cost, lack of incentives for adoption, lack of representative governance structures, etc may hamper optimal uptake and use, especially in developing contexts. International development agencies and standards owners increasingly respond to these challenges by engaging local actors to better understand implementation realities and creatively work with these actors to identify needed adaptations to make these standards more accessible and feasible and optimise the potential for positive impact.

Possible discussion areas for Open Discussion 2: the business experience of VSS

Possible participants	Discussion points
Identified from Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given that this is a developing area for international trade, what do you believe are the benefits of engaging with VSS from a business perspective? While VSS is a compliance and market access instrument, it is also a developmental tool that can be used for industry and sector development. How can industry and



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO



UN trade &
development



	<p>government cooperate to support this development potential?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are wildlife businesses preparing to pilot
--	---

Possible discussion areas for open discussion 3: localising VSS

Possible participants	Discussion points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified from audience • Co-facilitation: Preshanthie & Marthane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VSS capture internationally accepted best practise and while valuable, this is not always optimal for local context. How does one ensure that VSS are adapted for optimal local implementation without losing the trust and assurance that international partner have in these instruments? • In SA we already see high level of collaboration and innovation between government and private sector. How can these existing relationships be developed to also include the creation of a supportive environment for VSS? • The requirements included in VSS may be hard to reach, especially for SMMEs. Please share information on how countries and standards innovate to address this challenge.