



**Checklist to compare  
certification bodies for  
a right first time RSP0  
certification process**

Key insights to ensure you select a  
trusted and experienced partner

## Introduction

There is a growing global concern that commodities need to be produced without damaging the environment or society. The RSPO certification is an assurance that the final products of companies are coming from a sustainable palm oil source. RSPO members that claim to produce or handle sustainable palm oil products need to be RSPO certified.

To achieve the RSPO certification, you're looking for a right first time and smooth certification process with a trusted and experienced partner. But how do you find the right certification body?

This checklist provides some pointers to the most important and critical criteria to look at. This framework can be a helpful starting point to select the right certification body for your company, rally your people, build policies and outline procedures to get started.

### Is the certification body accredited or not?

The first and most important criteria to look at, is if the certification body is accredited or not. You want to know if the certification body has the appropriate accreditation to complete the RSPO audit you need. You can check the accreditation body's website to see if a certification body is accredited for the RSPO certification. Make sure the accreditation is relevant for your business because the certification body can have many different accreditations.

Another way to find out if a certification body is accredited for the RSPO certification you need is to go to the official website of RSPO. On this website, you will find a list of all appointed certification bodies that are accredited and for which RSPO certification they're accredited for.

### Does the certification body have a good track record?

Track record is an important criteria, because it gives you insights into all achievements, failures or successes of the organization. It demonstrates positive or negative references and actual past performance.

To gain insights into the track record of a certification body you can Google the name of the certification

body to find all the positive or negative news or any reputation of risk that is written about the certification body. Another option could be to check the certification body with your contacts in the industry (other stakeholders) who may have previous experience of them.

### What are the fields of expertise?

The entire certification process will be smoother when a certification body has experience with helping companies like yours.

From initial processors to margarine producers and ultimately CPG manufacturers, its beneficial if certification bodies have experience working with similar companies. They'll better understand the type of products you produce and how it impacts your certification process. Some certification bodies have extensive experience and work with all sizes of organizations.

The RSPO certification can be offered in two different types, these are:

- **Plantations:** to ensure the palm oil is sustainable produced by producers/growers of palm oil
- **Supply Chain:** this is to ensure that palm oil end products are produced by certified plantations (trade of sustainable palm oil).

Not every certification body offers both RSPO certifications, either due to not being accredited or not having enough experience. For example, in Indonesia many certification bodies only offer the plantations certification and not the supply chain certification.

If your company has both plantations and the other downstream activities, you will be better placed to go for certification bodies who offer both RSPO certifications. If your company only focusses on plantation, you can go for a company that only offers the RSPO certification you need.

### Is the processing time no longer than [...]

In most cases, you need to achieve the RSPO certification in a timely manner. It's an essential part of your business success. That's why processing time is an important criteria to take into account when selecting a certification body.

To better understand this timeframe, it's good to know which steps are included in the processing time.

- Issuing the offer letter: once an application is received, companies will process your request and issue an offer letter in approximately 10 working days. The offer letter is valid for a set number of months (depending on the company) and needs to be signed within that period or another application stage will be needed.
- Conduct the audit: Once the offer letter is signed, the contracting office will set a date for the audit and assign an auditor. The assignment of an auditor also depends on the supply chain and the availability of the auditors.
- Discuss the results: After the audit, results will be discussed with the site(s) and any non-conformances will be addressed via a corrective action. This should not take more than a month (preferable). Within two weeks, most certification bodies have finalized it but it doesn't always work that way. When there's a green light, you'll receive the certification.
- Renewal of license: The RSPO certificate is issued with a validity of five years. After those years, the license must be renewed and thus an annual audit is required to start the renewal process.

### Are knowledgeable staff available?

Customer experience and customer service can say much about the capabilities of a certification body to help you achieve the RSPO certification first time right.

For example, it could be that you have questions about the RSPO certification process and you want these or other questions to be answered quickly to understand the processes and to know what's next. In the end, the availability of knowledgeable

staff contributes to the progress of the certification process. It plays an important role in whether you feel valued as a customer.

### Does the certification body have local staff and experience?

Local staff experience can be important, depending on your location. For example, if you operate in America you may prefer a certification body with a few auditors have experience of certifying here, and not in Europe. If there is a choice between a certification body with extensive local experience and another certification body has never done any work in the area, you will definitely go for the one with local knowledge and local auditors.

This has also an impact on what the certification body charges. A smaller company with local experience could charges less than a bigger (European) company. Additionally, Certification bodies with local auditors who understand the complexity of the operations on the ground may be cheaper.

### What price is offered?

Contact different certification bodies and ask them if they can send you a quotation. You can compare the prices of different certification bodies to see who offers the best service for the best price. More importantly, you can understand whether the offer is aligned with your budget or not.

### How is the flexibility on legal review?

With some certification bodies you may need to negotiate around terms and conditions, depending on the complexity of the contract. This has something to do with the contracting. It could be that some certification bodies are complicated in the way they write the contract. Other certification bodies will be easier to deal with. It is also possible you may have to deal with different legal requirements in specific countries than the country you're operating in.

## Request your RSPO certification

This checklist covers the most common questions and problems companies experience when they need to become RSPO certified. Hopefully, it will help you to find the right certification body for a right first time and smooth certification process.

If you want to apply for the RSPO certification already, request it by clicking below.

With Control Union, you are guaranteed to have:

- A fast certification process
- An auditor on-site quickly because of flexible audit planning
- Extensive experience with all sizes of organizations
- Integrity and worldwide recognition of certificates

## CHECKLIST

- Certification body accredited
- Good track record
- Fields of expertise
- Processing time no longer than...
- Knowledgeable staff available
- Local staff and experience
- Price
- Flexibility on legal review

### Control Union Certifications B.V.

The Netherlands

**Contact** Robert Demianew

**Author** Michelle den Boer

**E** [certifications@controlunion.com](mailto:certifications@controlunion.com)

**controlunion.com**



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