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RSB RESA (Rapid environmental and social appraisal) Guidelines

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Note on the use of this document

These guidelines are designed to help the operator understand the RSB RESA process as it pertains to the RSB impact assessment process.

The guidelines should be read together with the RSB impact assessment guidelines (RSB-GUI-01-002-01) which provide a map book through the various processes required to complete the RSB impact assessment process.

These guidelines can be used by the auditor to get a better understanding of key-aspects to be considered during certification process.

These guidelines were developed in collaboration with:
Coastal & Environmental Services
www.cesnet.co.za

RSB Rapid Environmental and Social Appraisal guidelines

1 INTRODUCTION

A Rapid Environmental and Social Assessment (RESA) is a smaller less comprehensive ESIA that is designed for biofuel projects that will not have fewer significant environmental and social impacts. The guidelines for determining what kind of biofuel projects can undertake an RESA instead of a full ESIA are outlined the screening tool.

The RESA may be undertaken for biofuel operations where impacts are likely to be less than for larger operations. Size is one criterion but even large operations can have few significant impacts and small operations can have large impacts. If the PO is required by the screening process to do two or less specialist impact assessments, then it is allowed to do a RESA rather than a comprehensive ESIA. Thus operations that may have some significant impacts are given the opportunity to do a less comprehensive process. However, being less comprehensive does not mean that operations can avoid assessing and mitigating impacts.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESA

A RESA is similar to the Scoping Process for a full ESIA (see section 7.4 above), but requires the additional task of identifying and rating the significance of the specific impacts. An ESIA Scoping Report describes the social and environmental context, identifies the issues of concern and provides the plan of study for the ESIA. It does not include an assessment of the significance of impacts as these are dealt with in the specialist studies and ESIR.

2.1 The RESA Process

- 1. Screening.** This determines whether a full ESIA is needed, or if a Rapid Environmental and Social Assessment (RESA) will be sufficient and/or if any specialist impact studies are required.
- 2. Notification to the Competent Authority** – in some countries, the Competent Authority (CA) must be notified at this stage. In other countries it may be done voluntarily and informally. The RSB should be notified at this point of the intention to apply for certification so that all of the relevant details and documents can be supplied.
- 3. Identifying the Alternatives and Impacts.** Describe the proposed project and its alternatives (including the 'No-Go' areas). Do a preliminary assessment of the impacts of the proposed development.

- 4. Initial Stakeholder Engagement.** First identify and inform all relevant stakeholders about the proposed project and the RESA process. For a RESA the operator does not need to complete a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. The stakeholders can be limited to those who have a specific interest in the main issues that are being covered under the specialist studies or any of the less significant issues that have been identified during the scoping exercise. Invite stakeholders to participate. Find out about the local situation and Stakeholder concerns and views. The information obtained from this consultation process will contribute to identifying and evaluating the significance of the impacts. Compliance with RSB Principles requires full disclosure of the proposed project and effective participation of all stakeholders.
 - 5. Investigating the social and environmental context.** Review of existing literature and data. Do field observations and consult stakeholders to collect baseline information on the local environmental and social context. This context needs to be described in the RESA report. It informs the assessment of the impacts.
 - 6. Assessment and evaluation of Impacts.** Evaluate impacts. Identify and predict impacts of proposed project: environmental, social and other related effects. Establish most environmentally and socially sound option for achieving objectives.
1. **Reporting.** Write a Draft RESA Report, which must discuss the RESA process, the proposed project and alternatives, the social and environmental context, the impacts and the mitigation measures (to avoid, minimize or offset adverse impacts). Provide an environmental & social management plan (ESMP). The draft reports must document the impacts and stakeholder concerns clearly.
 2. **Review.** This should be conducted independently and be based on the Terms of Reference and the stakeholder engagement. It provides an assessment of the proposal(s) and contains the information required for decision making.
 3. **Public Disclosure.** The Draft RESA Report must be made available to all stakeholders from government to NGOs and the general public for review and comment. This must be done before the auditor comes to assess the operations. The comments of the stakeholders and the responses to these from the Environmental and Social practitioners need to be incorporated into the final RESA Report.
 4. **Decision-making.** This is done according to the regulations of the country in which the proposed project is to be developed, as well as by the RSB, according to its guidelines. Submission to the Competent Authority (CA) in the form of an RESA and an application for consent for the proposed development is required.
 5. **Monitoring, compliance, enforcement and environmental auditing.** The operator must demonstrate compliance with the mitigation measures as defined by the ESMP. There must be ongoing monitoring (including bi-annual environmental and social surveys). Where required, environmental audits and process evaluation allow for unpredicted impacts and failed mitigation measures to be dealt with as soon as possible (SCBD 2006).

3 Stakeholder engagement process in the RESA

The Stakeholder Engagement process for the RESA is almost the same as for a Scoping Process. First, stakeholders are informed about the proposed development and the RESA process. Their concerns about the proposed project and impacts are obtained. The second round presents the Draft RESA Reports to the stakeholders and obtains their comments. Thereafter the engagement process keeps

stakeholders informed of the progress and outcomes of the RESA. It also keeps them involved in the bi-annual social-economic survey.

4 Methodology for Rating the Significance of Impacts

In an RESA, impacts need to be assessed in a systematic, objective and consistent manner. This is done by determining the significance of the impacts. One considers the spatial extent, time-scale, likelihood, severity of each impact. The method determines if the impacts are very high, high, moderate or low, and positive or negative. This same method will be used by all the specialists and ESIA practitioners if these are required. The method applies to all phases of the proposed biofuel project. It would also be used to measure the success of mitigation measures. An example of a systematic method commonly used in ESIA's but can be used in the RESA for assessing the significance of the impacts is provided in Annexure 1 of the RSB ESIA guidelines (RSB-GUI-01-002-03).

In an RESA there should be no impacts that have a 'Very High' negative significance rating that cannot be mitigated. If very high negative impacts are found this might indicate the need to expand the RESA into a full ESIA or to undertake a specialist study into this impact(s). It is however expected that the 1-2 specialist studies that may be conducted through the RESA could have significant impacts and these should be treated separately to the less significant impacts jointly covered under the RESA.

5 Structure and contents of the RESA Report

The information gathered through the RESA meetings, from the site visit, from the client (on the design of the project) and from the literature, must be integrated into a draft RESA report. A typical RESA Report will have the following content.

Table 1: Proposed Structure and Content of the RESA Report

#	Section Title	Contents of Draft Report
1	Summary	This serves as a summary of the RESA and includes the final conclusions of the RESA as well as a summary of the background information. This may be the only part of the RESA that people read, so keep it clear and concise.
2	Introduction	The introduction of the report should present background information. This section should provide a brief overview, introduce the proponent, and give the location of the project as well as other important parameters. This section should also include the importance of the biofuels development for the host country. The introduction should describe the scope of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, as well as a brief outline of the contents of the report.
3	Description of the Proposed Project	This section should describe all aspects of the proposed development: activities, location, size, layout, and type of project. The description should include associated infrastructure. Diagrams and site plans should be included. Justify why the project is needed.
4	Issues Raised by	The Draft Report provides a brief list and/or summary discussion of the main

IAPs	issues of concern raised by IAPs during the Scoping Process. Explain what opportunities the Stakeholders/IAPs will have to participate in the Public Review Period and submit comments. Describe how this process complies with the relevant regulatory requirements for stakeholder engagement. In the Final RESA Report this section should describe the stakeholder engagement activities (milestones) that took place during the public review period. Describe how this complied with the relevant regulations. It should also provide a summary discussion of concerns raised by stakeholders and the responses to these. Indicate the issues raised by the different types of stakeholders.	
5	Description of the Environment	This section should describe all aspects of the natural and social environment and provide the baseline data required for future monitoring of project impacts.
6	Impact Assessment	This section should provide an impact summary (usually in the form of a table) for each aspect of the environment (i.e. socio-economic, cultural, ecological, water, soils, etc) as well as their recommended mitigation measures. Provide a comparative discussion of the impacts and mitigation measures. Cumulative impacts should also be discussed. Attention should be drawn to any very high and irreversible impacts that cannot be mitigated as these may be fatal flaws that prevent the project from going ahead. Detailed justification for such a significance rating must be provided.
7	Conclusion	This section should come to some conclusion based on the overall impacts and mitigation measures, as well as the cumulative impacts. The conclusions and recommendations should remain impartial.
8	Recommendation	The recommendations should focus on the suggested mitigation measures.
9	References	A list of all the references and sources
10	Appendices	This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Issues Response Trail• Copies of all correspondence received from the public, specialists and the proponents (all stakeholders)• Minutes of any stakeholder meetings held• Copies of RESA advertisements in the media• Detailed designs for the project if not already included.