

State of Sustainability Initiatives Project

Building Effectiveness in Market-based Approaches to Sustainable Commodity Production and Trade

Project Profile

WHAT IS THE SSI?

The SSI project is a global initiative dedicated to researching and reporting on the development and impacts of market-based and voluntary approaches to sustainable commodity production and trade. As an independent reporting service and learning network, the SSI aims to facilitate information sharing, transparency and the continual improvement of voluntary supply chain initiatives. The SSI Project's activities will revolve around, and feed into, the publication of an Annual "State of Sustainability Initiatives" Report and regular reporting on sector developments.

WHAT ARE THE PROJECT'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES?

By providing regular reporting on the nature, trends, performance and developments related to voluntary initiatives for sustainable commodities, the SSI seeks to provide a consolidated source for business, consumers, producers, policy makers and the initiatives themselves, to navigate the field of voluntary approaches and sustainable markets more strategically and effectively. By enabling more efficient decision-making and participation in voluntary approaches, the SSI Project hopes to raise efficiency, effectiveness and transparency within the sector while contributing to a reduced environmental footprint and enhanced participatory governance, and social and economic well being through global commodity markets.



WHO ARE THE SSI PARTNERS?

The SSI Project is coordinated by four institutions with a deep and long-standing history in the promotion of sustainable commodity production and trade. The core implementing partners are:

- AIDEnvironment
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
- International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

The Project will be guided by a high level **Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group** and will provide a regular forum for inter-initiative and stakeholder information exchange.

WHERE IS THE SSI PROJECT FOCUSED?

The SSI Project is a global initiative focusing on compiling and reporting information on the development and performance of market-based and voluntary approaches to sustainable commodity production and trade. While SSI has no geographic focus, it will, in accordance with a "needs-based" approach to sustainable development, devote special attention to the role, challenges and opportunities facing developing country stakeholders in the growth and expansion of sustainable markets. It will also provide a tool for those value chains sourcing from such markets.

WHAT IS THE PROJECT STATUS AND TIMELINE?

The SSI Project is currently in its launch phase over which it will seek the establishment of a high level Advisory Panel, identification of core reporting parameters and a common reporting format and a three-year work-plan for the initiative's initial reporting and information sharing activities. The first State of Sustainability Report will be published in the fall of 2009.



WHY WAS THE SSI PROJECT DEVELOPED?

Over the past two decades a growing number of voluntary sustainability initiatives and other multi-stakeholder alliances have emerged to improve the livelihoods of the millions of commodity-dependent producers and manufacturers around the world while reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture. The growth of such initiatives represents an important opportunity for all stakeholders to participate in the greening of global supply chains and improving producer livelihoods. But the multiplication of initiatives makes it increasingly difficult for stakeholders inside and outside of the initiatives, including policy makers and civil society organizations, finance, food manufacturing and retail sectors - to stay abreast of the latest developments and best practices across the voluntary sector. Moreover, it is exceedingly difficult to assess their utility and performance, let alone the steps required to mainstream best practice. Through reporting activities the SSI will enable stakeholders, policy makers and the initiatives themselves to access and interact with each other to improve their effectiveness and benchmark their performance

STRATEGIC APPROACH

The SSI approach revolves around three key elements: reporting services, knowledge sharing and research.

Reporting Services:

i. **Annual Report:** The State of Sustainability Initiatives Annual Review will provide a regular overview of the voluntary initiatives sector that includes key statistics, market trends, performance metrics in development and in use, and forward looking strategies. Each annual issue will focus on the relationship between voluntary sustainability initiatives and a key sustainable development theme.

ii. **Regular Initiative Development Reporting:** Through regular reporting activities, the SSI project will provide state-of-play journalistic updates on the latest developments of sustainable commodity markets and voluntary initiatives around the world.

iii. **Thematic Reports:** Print and online publications offering in depth analysis of the relationship between commodity markets, voluntary sustainability initiatives and key environmental themes such as poverty reduction, climate change, desertification and biodiversity preservation. Thematic information briefs will target policymakers and the private sector as a monthly electronic resource with guidance and recommendations.

Knowledge Sharing:

The SSI Project's information gathering, reporting and workshop activities will be organized in the form of an open knowledge-sharing project. The Knowledge Sharing activities will provide a unique forum dedicated to facilitating dialogue and collaboration among voluntary initiatives towards best practice for improved impact and efficiency throughout the sector.

Research:

The SSI Project will conduct cross-cutting research and analysis on the performance of voluntary sustainability initiatives and the appropriate policy responses needed to support the continued growth and development of sustainable commodity markets, production and trade.

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The State of Sustainability Initiatives Project is a joint project of: AIDEnvironment, IIED, IISD and UNCTAD, under the auspices of the Sustainable Commodity Initiative.



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