TSC® Sustainability Program Principles

Purpose of Project
The purpose of the project was to develop principles used by The Sustainability Consortium® (TSC®) and the supply chain to evaluate sustainability programs. "Program" refers to a wide range of sustainability efforts including rating systems, certification schemes, or assessment tools.

Intended Application of the Principles

- The intended application is to provide TSC research associates with consistent and transparent guidance for evaluating whether a sustainability program has been developed and is being managed in a credible way. This evaluation will be used to screen programs recommended within the Sustainability Measurement and Reporting System.
- For individual companies using the Sustainability Measurement and Reporting System to develop their own policies, the intended application is to offer guidance, or a starting point, for evaluating whether a sustainability program has been developed and is being managed in a credible way.
- The principles will be listed within the Related Information section of TSC Key Performance Indicators of The Sustainability Measurement and Reporting System.

Principles (introductory language and principles are to be applied as a set):

The following principles identify concepts that form the foundation of effective sustainability programs, including rating systems, certification schemes, or assessment tools. These principles can be used as high-level guidance regarding key qualities to take into account when initially considering whether a sustainability program has been developed and is being managed in a credible way.

These principles are not intended to determine the credibility, rigor, or effectiveness of a program's content or its ability to address sustainability issues of interest. Moreover, the principles are not intended to determine equivalency between programs. TSC does not specifically endorse the programs suggested but, rather, recommends them based on their aligning with TSC's eight principles, which are a starting point for evaluating how a program has been developed and is being managed.

It is important to note that certification schemes, rating programs, and other types of tools serve different purposes and are not directly comparable. For users seeking to evaluate a certification or eco-labeling program, TSC recommends consulting the following guidelines:

- *ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards*
- *ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards*
- *ISEAL Credibility Principles*
- *ISO Guide 59:1994--Code of good practice for standardization*
- *ISO/IEC 17007:2009--Guidance for drafting normative documents suitable for use for conformity assessment*
- *ISO 17067:2013--Conformity assessment – Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes.*
- *WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade--Annex 3: Code of good practice for the preparation, adoption and application of standards*
- *Fisheries and Aquaculture:*
  - *FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Inland Capture Fisheries*
  - *FAO Guidelines for the Eco-labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries*
  - *FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification*

Intent	Version 1 Principles
1. Conflict of interest	A program must have a publicly declared owner and have been developed by a third-party organization external to the financial relationship between the buyer and seller of all product covered by the program.
2. Transparency into methods	The methodology and metrics must be transparent and publicly available for review. This includes, for example, the methods development process, the assurance and scoring methodology, and the monitoring and evaluation methods for the program.
3. Effectiveness of methods/process	The methodology for the program must be scientifically based, meaning that the methods are repeatable, adaptable to regional conditions, designed to evolve in response to emerging data, outcome oriented, and build on the most up-to-date science. Objective data, whether collected for the program requirements or to confirm compliance, must be available for analysis in order to demonstrate proven effectiveness and consistency of application over time.
4. Multi-stakeholder input into methods	The methodology and processes used by the program must include a multi-stakeholder process that is publicly available for review and that allows for diverse stakeholder input throughout program development and implementation. Efforts to include representatives from civil society, government, industry, and academia should be demonstrated.
5. Transparent and multi-stakeholder governance	The program must have a governing body made up of diverse stakeholders and have a transparent and consensus-oriented system of rules, procedures, and management for carrying out the program that is publicly available for review. Efforts to include representatives from civil society, government, industry, and academia should be demonstrated.
6. Relevant to key sustainability issues	The program must clearly communicate what it seeks to address and be relevant to a particular issue that has been identified as a key environmental or social impact within the life cycle of the relevant product category.
7. Periodic review	The program must include a known frequency of periodic third-party review of the governance, decision-making processes, methodology, and metrics, which includes a publicly available process for inviting and responding to stakeholder comment and, if appropriate, making improvements.
8. Verify progress towards addressing impacts	The program must include monitoring and evaluation programs that use publicly available performance indicators that encourage improvements in practices and demonstrate and verify progress towards addressing the key environmental or social impacts it is seeking to address.

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