

International perspectives on climate certification of food –

Recognition of equivalent certification systems

Stockholm, May 2012

Introduction

A Swedish initiative was started in 2007 by the two standards organisations KRAV and Svenskt Sigill in order to develop a climate certification for the food chain. Currently, the project is managed by these two organisations in cooperation with several major Swedish food companies: Milko, Lantmännen, the Federation of Swedish Farmers, Scan and Skånemejerier. The purpose is to present criteria for a certification system which will reduce the negative climate effects in food production and give consumers a chance to make conscious climate choices as well as strengthening the competitiveness of the food producers.

Establishing and communicating a new label on the market is very challenging. The approach that was developed included the production of a certification scheme intended as a plug-in-module for existing sustainability labels or standards for food production in order to insure quick introduction and impact on the market. The plug-in-module certifies measures leading to substantial reductions in climate impact. No carbon footprint is presented; the criteria are based on a scientific scan of climate impact in the food chain.

Food is a commodity that is traded with on a global basis. This poses challenges when a system promoting products with reduced climate impact is presented. Criteria presented so far have been developed for northern European conditions. A final chapter in the criteria document has been developed, presenting perspectives on import and trade with food products, and the following report describes the background and process involved with developing these perspectives and suggested criteria as presented in chapter 15 in the criteria document “Climate Certification for Food 2012:1”.

The aim of the chapter for recognition of equivalent certification systems, chapter 15, is to facilitate trade and consumers with climate certified products. Many products are today imported in their entirety or are a mixture of nationally produced ingredients together with imported ingredients. This report constitutes a background for the development of chapter 15 in the climate certification system, and describes different possibilities to recognise products produced outside Sweden as possible to certify and label as certified for the Climate Certification for Food (CCF).

The author of the document is Eva Mattsson, Grolink, and the report has been commissioned by Anna Richert, project manager, Svenskt Sigill. The work was carried out during 2011.

Goal

The goal of this report is to describe the process of developing the requirements for recognition of equivalent climate certification systems in chapter 15. The report also presents a background to why the requirements are formulated in the way they are and explains why the different parts have been included.

Project plan

The work started with an inventory of climate certification initiatives. The next step was to formulate criteria for recognition of other systems. The result was discussed internally and a final draft was formulated. The proposal for criteria was circulated for comments to a number of national and international organisations and institutions. Among these were:

Swedish Stakeholders:

- National Board of Trade
- Swedac

International stakeholders:

- BioInspecta
- Research Institute of Organic Agriculture - FiBL
- Rainforest Alliance/SAN
- Common Code for the Coffee Community Secretariat. 4C
- IMO
- IOAS
- GOMA/IFOAM
- ISEAL
- UTZ Certified
- FLO
- UNCTAD
- International Trade Centre.

There was also a separate meeting with the Swedish National Board of Trade to further explain the draft criteria and to get comments and input in the development process.

The draft criteria were presented at a workshop in Berlin on May 18, 2011 organised by the PCF World Forum. The title was Dialogue Forum Low Carbon Food Chain, Part 1, "Insights from Emerging Climate Measurement and Certification Schemes in Europe". At the workshop the 35 participants representing research, commercial companies, certification bodies and journalists were present, not only from Europe. Many valuable reflections and inputs were given which have been used in the process of developing the approach and criteria. Read more at <http://www.pcf-world-forum.org/events/>

Based on the input given the final document has been developed which was accepted by the board of the project Climate Certification for Food on November 29th, 2011.

Result

Climate aspects on international trade

Food is a global commodity. Environmental labelling of food has often been seen by producers and governments as hidden obstacles to trade especially in developing countries where food production often is the most important trade product. The National Board of Trade in Sweden has in several projects been engaged in supporting the fair treatment and fair conditions for developing countries and producers in these countries to reach markets in the north. <http://www.kommers.se/In-English/New-projects/Climate-Standard-Project/>

When discussing food, international trade and climate issues the focus is often the transport of food products (<http://www.kommers.se/Startsida-verksamhetsomraden/Handel-och/Klimat>). In the development of the CCF requirements most of the focus is given to the primary production, where a products main climate impact lies. However, the whole food chain is to be covered, and transports have a separate section where perspectives regarding reduced climate impact were developed. The transportation criteria include

Carbon emissions from the transportation of climate certified products shall not exceed 0,25 kg CO₂-equivalents/kg goods

Carbon emissions from transportation of fresh vegetables that can be produced on a regional scale shall not exceed 0,10 kg CO₂-equivalents/kg goods.

An adaption has also been made for products from countries with low Human Development Index.

With this scenario as a background it has been important to make the import requirements as neutral and open as possible.

How to recognise other products?

There are two main possibilities for accepting imported products as climate certified. They should either fulfil the same standard as used in Sweden or there has to be a system for recognition of other climate certification systems which fulfil the same goal and are equivalent to the requirements of the Climate Certification for Food (CCF).

The CCF is developed for conditions in Sweden and some of its features are only applicable for northern European circumstances while others are much more general and are applicable worldwide.

To use the CCF for certification of production systems outside Sweden is in one way a simple solution from the Swedish perspective. But it might not work so well for several reasons. One reason is that conditions might or will be different compared to the conditions in Sweden. One such example is erosion and another is exploiting native forest for farming land, which are not really issues from a Swedish point of view. In the proposal for recognition of imported products, we have suggested limiting the area where the CCF can be used without any changes to Scandinavia and Northern Europe.

Another reason for not only enforcing the full CCF standard to producers outside Sweden is that the foreign producers might also have to fulfil another standard for the same production to have the possibility to sell the products on their domestic market. Such double certification also often gives double certification costs, sometimes it is possible to combine the different certifications but it leads to costs both for keeping and fulfilling several systems. It might also be that two standards contradict each other in some details.

In the organic sector this is a well known problem that a producer has to be certified to two or more standards, and it is cumbersome and expensive. There is therefore also a strong discussion in the organic sector how to develop better functioning systems for getting products to move between different markets. The concept of production being produced in systems recognised as equivalent instead of requiring exactly the same requirements for all products has been more and more accepted. The most current example is the EU commission recognising certification bodies of organic production working in third countries (The Organic Standard, issue 127 November 2011)

Yet one more reason for not only enforcing the full standard is that as Sweden is a small market and it might be difficult to persuade producers and certification bodies elsewhere to follow a special standard which is requested by one market. It might be much more successful to accept other systems certification of products.

Are there other systems to recognise?

One of the first pieces of work in developing requirements for recognition of other climate certification systems was to try to identify other systems similar to the CCF requirements. Even if a thorough survey was carried out, very little was found. There is a huge activity in the climate area, but little to almost nothing related to development of a certification system.

There was several calculation systems found where a figure of CO₂ emission can be put on a product (PAS 2050, ISO, GHG Protocol). Another type of interesting calculation system is the Cool Farm Tool (www.fcfn.org.uk/research-library/agriculture/emissions-reductions/cool-farm-tool) which is applicable directly on the farm to calculate emissions with the intention to follow up how different crops and farming practises affect greenhouse gas emissions. It is simple and at the same time designed for use in temperate and tropical conditions. It can't be used as an equivalent to CCF but can be a useful tool for on farm calculations for climate gas emissions.

There was one system which has quite some similarity in set up and functioning to the CCF. It is the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) / Rainforest Alliance climate module which is an add-on module to the regular SAN standard (www.clima.sanstandards.org). The SAN climate system is now under a two year trial phase. A certification for cattle according to SAN/Rainforest Alliance has been launched in the summer of 2012. There are also activities among some other certification systems as UTZ Certified and Fairtrade Labelling Organisation, but there are so far no published standards. These systems will cover products as coffee, tea cocoa, sugar, soya, palm oil and probably more tropical products. For products in temperate regions there were no systems found which could be assessed for possible recognition as equivalent. This makes it much more difficult to develop a system for recognition of other climate certification system as it is difficult to foresee how new systems will be developed and function in the future. This has made the proposal wider and more flexible to try to be open for a broad range of systems and solutions.

The proposal for recognising products produced outside Sweden

The proposal consists of several different options. There are four different options for climate certification combined with a requirement for a certification of basic sustainability.

Basic Sustainability

The Climate Certification for Food is formulated as an add-on system to sustainability certifications such as KRAV or Svenskt Sigill/Swedish Seal. When certified products from other climate certification systems should be approved for the CCF it is important that both the general sustainability included in KRAV and Sigill is included together with a climate certification module.. In the proposal for the requirements the basic sustainability the following areas should be covered:

- General sustainability including economics, social conditions and ecological aspects.
- Responsible use of the ecosystem
- Fertilisers shall be used responsibly.
- Pesticides and GMO to be used with caution
- Protect biodiversity
- Ensure social accountability
- Good animal husbandry

Other requirements for a basic sustainability system are that they should be internationally recognized third party certification scheme. The evaluation of a system is proposed to be done by the International Organic Accreditation System (IOAS) which is an international accreditation body mainly working with accreditation of organic certification bodies but also of Rainforest Alliance and ISO 65. Based on an evaluation report made by the IOAS, Sigill Kvalitetssystem can take the decision to acknowledge, for the Swedish market, a standard covering basic sustainability. In the future with a bigger number of assessments more accreditation bodies can be involved but as a start it is proposed that the IOAS can do the assessments. It can also be other organisations taking the decisions on inclusion of systems, but to get a simple first acceptance system it is proposed that Sigill Kvalitetssystem takes on this role.

To get an easier start there are some well-known systems which are included as approved. These can be found in 15.1.6.

Certification to the original standard – option 1

If an operator can prove that the CCF requirements are applicable to the conditions to those in Northern Europe the operation can be directly certified to the CCF. It is of course simpler for the producer as there is not needed to develop another standard.

Certification to an approved climate certification standard – option 2

A climate certification standard can be found equivalent to the CCF requirements. A certification body or a standards owner can get their standard assessed to the requirements in annex 1. The International Organic Accreditation Service will do the assessment and Sigill Kvalitetssystem can take the decision. As for the decision on basic sustainability systems there is as a start only one body doing the evaluation and one body taking decisions, in future it might be more. There are so far no accepted climate certification standards.

The annex 1 is a strongly trimmed down and rewritten document based on the CCF requirements. The function of annex 1 is to be the ground for assessing other climate certification standard, with the intention to get a base for deciding if it can be accepted or not. The text in the annex is written as a standard for a standard, and should therefore not be used directly for certification. It could also function as the base for someone setting up a climate standard.

The CCF requirements have been made more general and internationally applicable to function in their new role in annex 1. It is a delicate balance to make the requirements strict enough to not let in much too weak production and on the other hand not forcing out good production in systems which might have non-foreseen features which should be not be prohibited. As some of the requirements might be difficult to fulfil, there is also a possibility for the assessed system to set up time limits for the introduction of a requirement. In the CCF document there are several time limits for when a certain requirement has to be introduced, all these have been deleted.

The chapter on transport in annex 1 covers the transport in the country of production while the CCF “normal” requirements cover the transport from the country of production to the country for final sale. There are no requirements for labelling in annex 1, if products will be sold under CCF the labelling requirements shall be used.

Agricultural production in developing countries option 3

The use of energy differs largely between agriculture in developed and developing countries. The table shows the difference in use of energy.

Table 1 Energy use and efficiency in Developed and Developing Countries

	Energy (MJ) per hectare	Energy (MJ) per ton grain	Energy (MJ) per farm worker
Developing countries	4 019	2 009	4 144
Developed countries	13 062	4 856	137913

Source: FAO 2000

The facts described in the table above are the base for the wording in 15.2.3 where farmers in countries with a Human development index is under 0,700 are exempt from the criteria in the CCF. Option 15.2.3 is only open for smallholder producers certified in groups. Smallholder farmers don't have big machinery and use little inputs in their production. There are a required minimum number of farmers in the group. The reason is that it is difficult to define how big or small a smallholder farmer is, and there are also systems where bigger farms and plantations are certified as groups. A smallholder farmer in an extensive farming system might have several hectares of land while a highly commercial flower or herb farm might be smaller in size. Therefore it is not possible to regulate that it is smallholder farmers in the group by setting a requirement on farm size. Instead the number of farmers have been used as it is very uncommon that these more intensive farms actually get together in such a big number as 25.

There is a request for the producers to be certified to a system which either is organic or is a full member of ISEAL, this includes systems like UTZ Certified, Fairtrade labelling organisation, Rainforest Alliance, Union of Ethical Bio Trade and others. The idea behind this is to get producers which are certified to well-known and well recognised systems and all full

ISEAL Alliance members. ISEAL Alliance is the global association for social and environmental standards and many of the members are setting standards which are used for certification of smallholder farmers.

Paragraph 15.3.4 is limiting the range of products which can be certified in this option. It will not be possible to accept products from another country if there already is a commercial production in the country of sales. The word commercial is used to avoid comparison of the imported product with private garden vegetable growing etc.

Single products or producers – option 4

The option 15.2.4 for verification of single products or producers is set up to give the possibility for innovative producers to export a product fulfilling the requirements of the CCF approved but without using the resources to get a whole certification system approved. It is limited to 25 producers, when groups gets bigger they will have to set up a system with a recognised climate certification system as in option 15.2.2. This option is foreseen as a possibility for larger producers with more intensive production compared to the small scale farmers in groups in low HDI countries. A group of fruit or wine producers can be one example.

Conclusions

The system proposed is based on experiences from the organic sector where accepting of products certified to other standards and the problems with it are a well known area. The proposed system for acceptance has four options for how another climate certification system or other products can be accepted. The four options will have to be combined with a basic sustainability system. The proposed system for accepting others systems or products is made quite generous and flexible but at the same time strict enough to keep the trust of the products. It is probably a higher risk anyhow that the requirements gets to cumbersome than to lax. As there are almost no other climate certification systems developed, it has been a major difficulty to foresee which problems that can occur with the proposed system. The case might be that the requirements for accepting other climate certification systems have to be revised or details have to be added. It will be important that the owner of the system is prepared to take on such revisions or changes. Time will show what kind of development will take place in the climate certification sector.

Literature/projects

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Web links of interest

GOMA www.goma-organic.org

Fairtrade International www.fairtrade.net/

IFOAM www.ifoam.org

IOAS www.ioas.org

ISEAL www.isealalliance.org

ProTerra www.cert-id.com/ProTerra-Certification.aspx

Rainforest Alliance www.rainforest-alliance.org

RSPO www.rspo.org

RTRS www.responsiblesoy.org

UTZ Certified www.utzcertified.org

Union of Ethical Bio Trade www.ethicalbiotrade.org