



# BIODIVERSITY CRITERIA IN STANDARDS AND QUALITY SEALS OF THE FOOD SECTOR

## Background

In addition to climate change, the loss of biological diversity is one of the most important challenges of our time. Up to 1,000 times more species die out due to human intervention than would through natural extinction. Many eco-systems which supply us with vital resources and services due to their biological diversity are threatened. The preservation and protective use of biological diversity are not exclusively linked to the environment, but are also key requirements for industrial production processes, services and quality of life.

The food industry and the food retail sector exercise significant influence over biological diversity. However, biodiversity, ecosystem services and their protection are still not given due priority in companies.

Biological diversity comprises complex interaction of ecosystems, biological diversity and genetic diversity. Companies' direct and indirect impacts on biological diversity are often just as complex and reducing the harmful effects presents a challenge to the entire management.

Quality seals and standards distinguish products or services which meet specific criteria. They therefore serve as an important orientation for employees responsible within the company for purchasing and quality assurance. Seals and standards communicated to the end consumers also fulfil a guidance function. However, only few seals and standards comprise sound criteria for the preservation of biodiversity so far, i.e. they do not guarantee enhanced performance in this area of action.

## Project objectives

The "Integration of biodiversity criteria in standards and quality seals in the food sector" initiative is designed to strengthen the preservation of biological diversity. The idea is not to develop an independent biodiversity label, but rather to integrate the criteria into existing quality systems and sustainability standards.

## Project schedule

Relevant seals and standards will be directly incorporated and existing criteria will be analysed for their relevance in protecting biological diversity. At the same time, project partners will investigate as to which extent existing biodiversity criteria are addressing critical issues and which areas call for urgent action to further develop the seals and standards.

The results will be summarised in a "**Baseline report**" and discussed with representatives of standards organisations and a range of companies of various sizes from the food sector.

In the next step, the Lake Constance Foundation and the Global Nature Fund will **draw up recommendations and specific criteria** for the protection of biodiversity. The recommendations will focus predominantly on seals and standards for product groups, which production and processing have a specific relevance for biodiversity.

A working group consisting of representatives from standards organisations and certifiers, REWE Group and other companies from the food retail sector will support the Lake Constance Foundation and the Global Nature Fund in drawing up these recommendations. In addition, the recommendations will be presented and discussed in a large scale stakeholder forum with the aim of integrating stakeholders and secure broad support.

The **final version of the recommendations and criteria** in German and English should be released in July 2014. Seal and standards organisations and companies with own systems will be invited to participate in a workshop for discussing specific actions for the implementation of the recommendations.

This workshop is **also designed to explore possible synergies** such as a joint development of biodiversity criteria or common and/or co-ordinated monitoring systems. Concerted seals and standards would have the advantage of a more efficient use of scarce resources and a more comprehensive coverage of complex issues such as monitoring of effects of biodiversity criteria. Furthermore, certified organisations, especially small-scale farmers, would substantially benefit from co-ordinated seals and standards.

The recommendations for action and criteria will be communicated to the industry through trade associations and **presented at trade fairs and events**. The project partners will offer advice and support for the seal and standards organisations wishing to integrate the biodiversity criteria. **The ambitious goal of the environmental organisations:** The relevant seals and standards of the food sector will have integrated the criteria for protecting biological diversity by the end of the project in March 2015, and implement them into the next criteria revision.

## Further information is available at:

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