

A Comparative Case Study of the Legitimacy of Two Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSI)
for Sustainability in the Beef Industry in North America

By

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Author Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revision, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Veronica Souza Miranda Moreira

Abstract

The beef industry is considered one of the most unsustainable of the food sectors, due to the extensive and diverse issues surrounding its environmental, social, and economic performance. Moreover, the rise of the global population, the consequent increase in the demand of meat products, and the change in terms of food habits and concerns recently observed in consumers, has increased the debates around beef sustainability even further. Within this context, industry actors within Canada and the United States, which are important beef-producing countries, are implementing private voluntary standards and certification interventions aimed at improving the sustainability performance of their supply-chains through multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI). The national Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) initiative is focusing on the Canadian market, while the U.S. transnational Grasslands Alliance initiative, is targeting both the American and the Canadian markets. This study analyses the legitimacy of the governance and interventions development processes of these MSIs. Legitimacy implies the acceptance of an intervention's process and practices by the members of the supply-chain being governed by an MSI. Lack of legitimacy is associated with 'greenwashing' claims, authority denial, limited adoption of interventions, and ultimately works against improvements in the sustainability of the beef industry.

Both the governance and the interventions development processes of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance were evaluated and compared against a mature MSI – the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) – in terms of input legitimacy using the good global governance principles of participation, transparency, and accountability of the Global Administrative Law (GAL). This analytical framework was expanded by adopting the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) codes of good practice to define the three GAL's principles. By conducting a qualitative content analysis and two case studies, it was identified that both initiatives have to evolve significantly in terms of good global governance principles, and that input legitimacy is more evident in CRSB than in Grasslands Alliance, as the former demonstrated more commitment with the participation principle than the latter. The comparison with RSPO revealed the need to monitor the changes in terms of the local context, mostly in terms of notions of legitimacy and engagement with vulnerable stakeholders. Furthermore, there is the challenging task of balancing the implementation of governance changes without compromising the efficiency, and thus the output legitimacy, of an MSI throughout its life time.

Key words: Standard, certification, governance, legitimacy, beef, sustainability, GAL, ISEAL

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Dedication

For Maria Eduarda

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The livestock sector, which includes the beef industry, is an important contributor to the global economy, being responsible for 1.4% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2005. Nevertheless, they are also major sources of negative environmental impacts in terms of land use, climate change, water resources, and biodiversity (Steinfeld, Gerber, Wassenaar, Castel, & De Haan, 2006). For example, in terms of negative social impacts, these sectors and industries have also been associated with slave labor in some regions of Brazil (Freitas, 1994). Thus, in order to pressure members¹ of the supply-chain linked to the livestock sector and the beef industry to promote changes, civil society representatives, primarily non-governmental organizations (NGO), are acting as ‘watchdogs’, raising public awareness of the sustainability threats caused by this industry. Greenpeace, for instance, recently used drones to reveal the inadvertent use of fresh water by a dairy farm in New Zealand (Scoop Regional, May 2018, & Zeal, n.d.).

As a response to these civil society concerns, organizations associated with the livestock sector and the beef industry – producers, processors, and retailers – have been trying to address sustainability through global private governance interventions along the supply chain, such as through standards² developed through international multi-stakeholder commodity roundtables (Gibbs et al., 2016, p. 32). Examples of such governance interventions aimed at greening commodity supply chains include the standards, and respective monitoring mechanisms (i.e. certifications³) developed by Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSI) such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS). Roundtables are a special system of global governance and consist of:

...private arrangements with the aim of improving the sustainability of a global commodity chain. They are multi-stakeholder platforms where private parties – businesses

¹ A person or organization that participates in an initiative such as multi-stakeholder or roundtable and has the right to decide about their governance.

² Standards are “the measures by which people, practices, processes, and products are judged” (Busch and Bingen, 2006, p.3)

³ “the provision by an independent body of written assurance (a certificate) that the product, service or system in question meets specific requirements” (ISO, n.d.).

and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – have decision-making power (Schouten and Glasbergen, 2011, cited by G. Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012).

Complementarily, a multi-stakeholder platform is a particular type of global private governance initiative, where:

NGOs, multilateral and other organizations encourage companies to participate in schemes that set social and environmental standards, monitor compliance, promote social and environmental reporting and auditing, certify good practice, and encourage stakeholder dialogue and ‘social learning’ (Utting, 2002, p. 61).

Whether or not they are associated with a roundtable system of global private governance, MSI and the rule-making power exerted by their supply-chain interventions (e.g. private voluntary standards and certifications) are viewed as a change in terms of environmental and sustainability regulation, from governments to private institutions, in “attempts to democratize politics and simultaneously foster more effective policies” (Bäckstrand, Khan, Kronsell, & Lövbrand, 2010, p. 4). Going even further, Roberts (2011, p. 143) claims that voluntary standards and certifications are the only interventions that attempt to substitute the government in all the five stages of the regulatory process: Agenda-Setting; Standards-Setting; Implementation; Monitoring; and Enforcement.

However, certain issues such as the lack of an inherent rule-making power analogous to the state in these initiatives has been generating important concerns about the *legitimacy* of multi-stakeholder interventions in establishing the ‘new rules of the game’ in terms of global private governance in the sustainability realm. According to Bodansky (1999), legitimacy is “...a quality that leads people (or states) to accept authority - independent of coercion, self-interest, or rational persuasion - because of a general sense that the authority is justified” (p. 600). Additionally, certain critiques related to the limited scope of some of those initiatives – they claim to be sustainable, but in fact only focus on some aspects of sustainability while neglecting others – are leading to greenwashing claims and legitimacy criticisms (A Seed Europe, 2005; Latham, Jonathan, 2012). Even more mature MSI suffer from criticisms associated with this ‘sustainability selectivity’ that can damage their legitimacy, such as deforestation and child labor issues not being properly addressed by RSPO (Kaye, 2017).

Democracy is another debatable aspect of these non-state initiatives. The establishment of a democratic environment in terms of global private governance is regarded as an intrinsic aspect of

multi-stakeholder sustainability initiatives (Bäckstrand, 2006a; Hemmati, 2012). Nevertheless, some authors disagree that these initiatives are democratic, citing concerns related to power asymmetry, such as the incapacity to offset power imbalances among stakeholders (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Fuchs, Kalfagianni, & Havinga, 2011) and the disproportional power usually exerted by large retail chains during the decision-making process (Fuchs et al., 2011). Private voluntary sustainability interventions led by MSI have also been the focus of some criticism, specifically related to: 1) the limited power engagement capacity of individual organizations to influence other organizations to green their supply chains through standard and certification interventions (Cox, Sanderson, & Watson, 2001); 2) the high costs of implementation for small producers (Brandi et al., 2015; Klooster, 2006); 3) the lack of appropriate engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the earliest stages of development (Winters et al., 2015); and, 4) stakeholders who incur the costs but do not receive the benefits of these interventions (DeFries, Fanzo, Mondal, Remans, & Wood, 2017).

Notwithstanding the concerns associated with private voluntary standards and certifications developed by MSI, these interventions have been a common practice in the food-related sectors since the adoption of food safety standards and certifications in the early 1990s. In the beef industry, for instance, the Codex Alimentarius and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) are the primarily food safety standards and certifications (FAO, n.d.; Hulebak & Schlosser, 2002). In the scope of private global governance, these “elements of governance” (Ponte & Gibbon, 2005, p. 2) (i.e. interventions), are attempts to translate and enforce consumers’ demands, as “voluntary standards, certification, and labeling systems are private governance institutions that set minimum standards for firms, products, or facilities to meet one or more consumer preferences” (Roberts, 2011, p. 84). Additionally, private voluntary standards and certifications are a growing phenomenon, with an exponential growth rate observed in the last two decades predominantly in agribusiness, due to pressures to comply with third-party certification⁴ exerted by retailers on their upstream supply-chain (Hatanaka, Bain, & Busch, 2005). Nevertheless, retailers’ incentives alone cannot explain the growth of these interventions. In general terms, standards, and consequently certifications, are regarded not only as good methods

⁴ where an external party, not related to the party being assessed, conducts an independent analysis (RESOLVE, 2017, p. 12)

for improving business efficiency (Tanner, 2000; Golan et al., 2001; Sanogo and Masters, 2002; Fagan, 2003; cited by Hatanaka et al., 2005, p. 355), but also as ways of modeling and adjusting practices and behaviours (Busch, 2000). In the sustainability realm, private voluntary standard and certification interventions can facilitate the process of due diligence, reduce transaction costs (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015), promote sales increases of desired products (Chkanikova & Lehner, 2015; Roberts, 2011), foster habitat conservation, and induce premium prices for small producers (DeFries et al., 2017) and certified products (Roberts, 2011).

Thus, in an attempt to address, among others, the legitimacy of private voluntary standards and certifications interventions in the sustainability realm, the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) was formed in 2002 by a coalition of social and environmental NGOs involved in the private voluntary standard-setting movement: Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), International Organic Accreditation Services (IOAS), Marine Aquarium Council (MAC), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Social Accountability International (SAI), and the Rainforest Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) (Derx & Glasbergen, 2014a). Through the enforcement of its procedural best practices in terms of "standard setting, certification and accreditation, and impact evaluation, which are built around the concepts of transparency, inclusiveness, consensus and accountability" (Djama et al., 2011; Cheyns, 2011, cited by Ponte, 2014, p. 262), ISEAL "acts as a market watchdog protecting the legitimacy of the sustainability standards movement" (Reinecke et al., 2012, p. 804). For some observers, compliance with ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice improves both the governance process⁵ and the perceived legitimacy of sustainable interventions, primarily private voluntary standards and certifications (Glasbergen, 2011). Because of its oversight role over the development of these sustainable interventions, ISEAL is characterized by some authors as "part of the institutionalization of the sustainability field" (Loconto & Fouilleux, 2014, p. 167) and classified as a private meta-governance regulator (Derx & Glasbergen, 2014b; L. Fransen, 2015; Glasbergen, 2011) with a 'de facto' rule-making power. Notwithstanding some criticism, such as compliance with its codes not necessarily leading to sustainability outcomes

⁵ How an organization is managed, structured, and organized. The governance process is usually state in governance-related documents such as by-laws.

(Ponte, 2014, p.262), mostly in terms of private voluntary standards and certifications, ISEAL seems to fill the regulative gap left where the governance over sustainability interventions changes from states to private institutions.

Regardless of whether they are associated with ISEAL, some private national and transnational organizations are trying to intervene positively in their supply-chains by developing private voluntary sustainability standards and certifications in the food sector. For example, to date there are 38 sustainability standards associated with the meat sector registered in the Sustainability Map website (International Trade Centre, n.d.). In relation to the North American beef industry, the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) and the Grasslands Alliance are two MSIs that are trying to intervene in the sustainability of their supply-chains through the development of new private voluntary standards and certifications. CRSB, a national MSI associated with a transnational one, the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), launched its private voluntary standards and certifications for the beef industry in Canada in December 2017 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-i). In 2015, Grasslands Alliance, a transnational multi-stakeholder initiative, began the development of its private voluntary standards and certification for the beef industry in North America. Although CRSB is an ISEAL subscriber (i.e. initial level of association), Grasslands Alliance has no association with ISEAL. These two new initiatives are about to increase the number of private voluntary sustainability standards and certifications in the North American market. Thus, legitimacy becomes even more relevant due to the public distrust and confusion related to the rising number of private voluntary standards and certifications (Loconto & Fouilleux, 2014, p. 168) and the risk of greenwashing accusations. It is likely that the initiative demonstrating greater legitimacy, with respect to its governance and intervention development processes, will be better positioned to enforce the adoption of their private voluntary standards and certifications by the beef industry supply-chain and thus promote improvements in the sustainability of this industry.

This study adopts Global Administrative Law (GAL) as an analytical framework to assess the legitimacy of the CRSB and Grasslands Alliance initiatives, both in terms of their governance and of their private voluntary standard and certification development processes. GAL and its principles of participation, transparency, and accountability - the latter two related to democratic

mechanisms of private governance control (Beisheim & Dingwerth, 2008) is a project of the Institute for International Law and Justice (IILJ) at the New York University School of Law:

The Global Administrative Law (GAL) Project is focused on an emerging field of research and practice: the increasing use of administrative law-type mechanisms — in particular those related to transparency, participation, accountability, and review — within the regulatory institutions of global governance. (“Global Administrative Law,” n.d.)

GAL is an emerging field of study aimed at understanding the impacts and implications of public and private interventions promoted by national, transnational, and international organizations in global governance (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005). Additionally, the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability of GAL are most closely associated with good governance practices⁶ (Gisselquist, 2012; Woods, 1999, 2000). Because of its focus on various global governance themes (i.e. trans governmental network (Hamann & Ruiz Fabri, 2008), private regulation (Joerges, Sand, & Teubner, 2004), non-state actors’ regulation (Cassese, 2004), and standard interventions (Mattli & Büthe, 2005; Meidinger, 2006), GAL has been viewed as a relevant framework for analyzing standards and certifications developed by non-state transnational organizations:

The emerging field of global administrative law, which considers accountability mechanisms for administrative action stemming from non-state actors exercising regulatory functions, such as NGOs, private institutions and international organisations, as well as for traditional state actors, would have been useful as an additional theoretical prism through which to view current transnational labelling and certification activities. (Young, 2006, p. 177)

GAL is regarded as a suitable theoretical perspective for analyzing interventions operated in the global governance arena, notably private voluntary standards and certifications run by transnational organizations. It has been adopted for analyzing indicators (Koh, 2016) and standard-setting (Kanevskaia, 2016; Mattli & Büthe, 2005), but there are no studies that use GAL to assess the legitimacy of the governance, standard, and certification processes of sustainability initiatives in their earlier stages of development. This is an important research gap that the present case study aims to fill in. In the scope of the present research, using GAL complements other research that studies the legitimacy of MSIs because it applies the widely regarded concepts of good global

⁶ The acts and decisions made to keep the governance process functioning. For instance, conducting periodic general meetings and the disclosure of the decisions made at these meetings in the minutes are governance practices.

governance – participation, transparency, and accountability – to analyze and compare two sustainable MSI in their very early stages of development.

It is desirable to have new and legitimate MSIs that improve the sustainability of the beef industry. Moreover, legitimacy is even more relevant in the presence of increasing competition to impose interventions, which seems to be the case for the beef industry in North America in the near future: “the ‘regulatory competition’ is to an important degree decided by the public’s perception of the legitimacy of the said norms and governing entities” (Hachez & Wouters, 2011, p. 681). Additionally, it is important to consider legitimacy from the earlier stages of implementation of governance and sustainability interventions as it is easier to promote governance improvements in the developing stage than in more advanced stages of the initiatives (Ponte, 2014, p. 270).

Legitimacy is relevant because it is the main focus of most of the literature around standards and certification that adopt an institutionalist approach (Ponte, 2014, p. 264), has a huge influence in private global governance arrangements (Bennett & Bennett, 2016; Bernstein & Cashore, 2007), is one of the principles of social responsibility (Wood, 2010), and can justify “policy development and enforcement measures” (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, p. 351). Additionally, the perceived lack of legitimacy can be linked to greenwashing claims, raise questions about the democratic aspect of the initiatives, concerns associated to unequal distribution of power among stakeholders, among other issues, that have the potential of ruining the plans of sustainability initiatives in their initial stages of development. In fact, some greenwashing concerns have already been raised with respect to beef sustainability standards and certification in North America (Gelbard, 2018). GRBSB, for instance, has been viewed as an industry-led greenwashing initiative (Friends of the Earth, n.d.), and its principles and criteria for sustainable beef have been criticized for lacking an outcome-based approach (Gelbard, 2014). Thus, the primary objective of this study is to assess and compare the legitimacy of both governance and interventions – private voluntary standards and certifications – of two sustainability MSI, a national and a transnational one, in their efforts of greening the beef industry supply-chain in North America, through the lens of GAL within ISEAL context.

1.1 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 evolves from the overall context presented in the introduction to the background section, where information regarding both the beef industry and the main initiatives aimed at ‘greening’ this industry in North America are presented. The next section, literature review, discusses the analytical framework adopted for evaluating the legitimacy of the two initiatives that are the focus of the study: CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. The research question and objectives are presented in the last section of Chapter 1.

Next, in Chapter 2, the method adopted for conducting the qualitative content analysis in order to answer the research question and meet the objectives of the study is detailed. The checks on validity and reliability are presented.

In Chapter 3, the results about adherence to the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance are revealed, and the main findings regarding the three principles are presented. The level of adherence to the principles and their implications in terms of legitimacy are analyzed and discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the contributions and conclusion of the study, as well as recommendations for both similar initiatives and further research. Limitations of the study are also described in this Chapter.

2. Background

The beef industry is an important economic contributor to some countries, particularly Canada and United States of America (U.S.A.) – some of the major global players of this industry. The U.S.A. is the largest producer of beef, followed by Brazil, European Union, China, and India, while Canada is positioned in 12th in the 2017 World Beef Production Rank (Cook, 2018a). Canada and the U.S.A. have also a prominent role in terms of exports, being positioned in 6th and 4th place respectively, in the 2017 ranking of major exporting countries (the top countries are Brazil, India, Australia, and New Zealand is in 5th place) (Cook, 2018b). In 2017, Canada was ranked as the 8th largest beef consumer globally, with an annual per capita consumption of 57.7 pounds. The U.S.A. is among the top 5 beef consumers globally, with an annual per capita consumption of 79.3 pounds of beef in 2017 (Cook, 2018c).

The beef industry is a major contributor to Canada's GDP. Beef production contributed CAN\$16 billion to Canada's GDP in 2016 (Canada Beef, 2017), and considering the beef and cattle industry together, the economic contribution was CAN\$1.794 trillion in 2017. Thus, the beef and cattle industry together are positioned 11th in the ranking of industries that most contributed to the Canadian GDP in 2017 (Beef2Live, 2018). In 2017, Canada had a total of 11.9 million beef cattle (Beef2Live, 2018) while the U.S.A. had 31.2 million beef cattle in 2016 (National Cattle Beef Association, n.d.). In a ripple effect, the meat and poultry industry contributes to 6% of the U.S.A.'s GDP, and generates US\$ 864.2 billion annually to the economy (North American Meat Institute, n.d.).

Despite the economic relevance of the beef industry for Canada and U.S.A., there are important environmental issues associated with this industry. In Canada, some of the main environmental issues are greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, contamination of air and water, nutrient recycling, and preservation of surrounding pasture ecosystems (Environmental Footprint of Beef Production - Beef Cattle Research Council, n.d.). In the U.S.A., the "dead zone" formation in the Gulf of Mexico due to runoff of agricultural pollution into the sea is an important environmental issue (Tilman et al., 2001, p. 283). Moreover, beef industry activity is also a major promoter of deforestation (Fearnside, 2005) and slave labor in Brazil (Nepstad et al., 2006, p. 1600). Additionally, there are increasing concerns about the safety of the beef, and the millennial generation is driving the establishment of standards related to animal welfare (Agweb, n.d.). The rise of the global population and the consequent increase in the demand for meat-related products has the potential to amplify these issues even more. Thus, stakeholders have been putting much pressure on this business, pushing the beef industry to address the environmental, social and economic aspects of its business sustainability.

To address such overarching issues, global members of the beef industry supply chain, governmental institutions, NGOs, producers, processors, retailers, consumer's representatives, among other stakeholders, have been trying to promote several joint initiatives to make the beef industry more sustainable. The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), a transnational MSI implemented to address the sustainability aspect of the beef industry, is one of the leading initiatives. Canada and U.S.A. are among its most active members and are the major actors in this industry that are implementing some sustainability interventions. The Canadian Roundtable for

Sustainable Beef (CRSB), one of the national roundtable constituencies of GRSB, defined the sustainable beef indicators for beef production and primary processing stages of the supply chain in Canada and released them for public consultation in 2017 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-g, n.d.-j). After this process, at the end of 2017, CRSB launched its standards and certification for the beef industry in Canada. The U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB), another national roundtable constituency of GRSB, is addressing issues such as indicators and goals for progress, verification, and sustainable solutions. The Grasslands Alliance, the result of a coalition between Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Food Alliance, and Rainforest-Alliance (RA), is currently seeking public comment on the first standard draft – principles, criteria, and indicators – for a future certification scheme for Beef Cattle and Bison Ranch and Farm Grazing Operations in North America: Canada and the U.S.A. All of these transnational and national MSIs comprise the adoption of indicators, private voluntary standards, and certifications interventions to improve the sustainability performance of the beef industry. The proliferation of these initiatives requires an evaluation of their legitimacy. Thus, information about the governance structure of the transnational and national MSIs acting to improve the sustainability of the beef industry in North America is presented in the following section.

2.1. Transnational MSI

2.1.1. The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB)

The process for establishing the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) was formally initiated in November 2010 when the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), McDonald's and other global stakeholders decided to join efforts to form a multi-stakeholder initiative with the ultimate objective of improving the sustainability of the beef industry. Following similar roundtable initiatives aimed at developing sustainability standards for agricultural commodities, such as palm oil, soy, biofuel, and cotton, the GRSB was officially launched in February 2012 by WWF, Solidaridad, Rainforest Alliance, Cargill, McDonalds, Walmart, among other founding members (Beef Central, 2017; Brassett et al, 2012; McLaughlin, 2011; Nepstad et al., 2013; WWF, n.d.).

The GRSB currently consists of 61 members in six stakeholder groups: Producer and Producer Group, Commerce and Processing, Retail, Civil Society, Roundtable, Observing and Consulting Members (GRSB, n.d.-b). GRSB aims to 'green' the global beef value chain by playing

a leadership role and working collaboratively with its members in the pursuit of sustainability solutions. GRSB acts on the strategic level, and all its work is backed up by its vision – “We envision a world in which all aspects of the beef value chain are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable” – and mission: “The mission of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef is to advance continuous improvement in global beef value chain sustainability, through leadership, science, and multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration” (GRSB, 2014, September, p. 13). The purpose of GRSB is to guide the establishment of sector-based sustainability initiatives through both their definition of sustainable beef and their objectives, principles, and criteria (Figure 1) (GRSB, 2014, September, p. 14), which are the tools to be used by the industry in order to improve beef sustainability on a global scale (GRSB, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-a; Kashmanian & Moore, 2014).

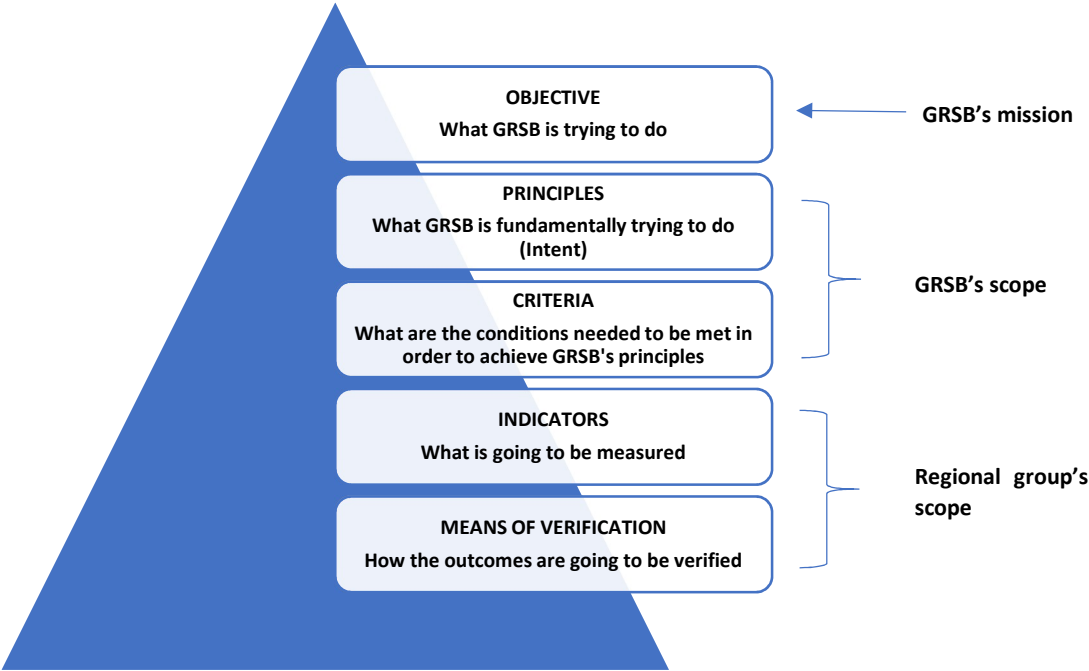


Figure 1: GRSB's work scope (GRSB, 2014, September, p. 14)

Most of the GRSB's work is conducted by its Technical Working Groups. The working groups are nominated by the executive board, who also guides their scope of action, and all their resulting projects must be presented and approved by the GRSB's members. A working group was nominated to develop the principles and criteria – the baselines – for defining sustainable beef.

After eighteen months of work, considering periods for public consultation and revisions, the Principles and Criteria Working Group presented the primary global definition of sustainable beef in 2014 during the first GRSB's Global Conference on Sustainable Beef held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The following definition, approved by 96% of the GRSB's members, was presented at this milestone event:

The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef defines sustainable beef as a socially responsible, environmentally sound and economically viable product that prioritizes Planet (relevant principles: Natural Resources, Efficiency and Innovation, People and the Community); People (relevant principles: People and the Community and Food); Animals (relevant principle: Animal Health and Welfare); and Progress (relevant principles: Natural Resources, People and the Community, Animal Health and Welfare, Food, Efficiency and Innovation). (GRSB, 2016, p. 1)

The five core principles that define sustainable beef – Natural Resources, People and the Community, Animal Health and Welfare, Food, and Efficiency and Innovation – encompass the three pillars of sustainability stated in GRSB's vision: environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.

Each principle has a set list of criteria – “an element or set of conditions or processes by which a system characteristic can be evaluated” (GRSB, 2014, November, p. 4) – that should be observed in order to accomplish what is determined by the principle. The five principles and the thirty-six criteria for sustainable beef form the framework that defines sustainability for the industry globally (GRSB, 2014, November 1). According to GRSB, the adoption of the framework, which was built in a multi-stakeholder environment and in collaboration with the members of the value chain, creates commitment with sustainability improvement and thus has the potential of transforming the sustainability of the beef industry on a global scale.

GRSB believes that a “one-size-fits-all approach to beef production will not work to improve industry sustainability” (GRSB, 2014, November 1, p. 1). Due to the variety of beef production systems around the world, GRSB believes that neither standards nor certifications should be on its scope of work. GRSB's work is bounded within its sustainability framework, i.e. principles and criteria, thus allowing the national roundtables and other regional initiatives to take responsibility to further develop their own indicators and means of verification based on their unique contexts (e.g. political, geographical, etc.).

GRSB is a subscriber of the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL), an NGO that establishes not only principles for sustainable private standard systems implementation, but also good practices for standard-setting, assurance (certification and accreditation) and impact evaluation through its Credibility Principles, ISEAL Codes of Good Practice, and Good Practice in Claims and Labeling. ISEAL offers three levels of membership – subscriber, associate, and full member – with ‘subscriber’ being the initial level of association, defined as “individuals and organisations who support ISEAL's mission and are part of a community that works together to achieve it.” (ISEAL, n.d.-c).

2.1.2. Grasslands Alliance

The other transnational multi-stakeholder organization that is developing sustainability interventions – private standards and certifications – for the beef industry in North America, Canada and U.S.A., is Grasslands Alliance, an initiative formed by a coalition between “the Food Alliance, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Rainforest Alliance with support from other non-profit organizations, ranchers and farmers, scientists, and other stakeholders,” with contributions from the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN). The Food Alliance is an NGO that aims to improve the sustainability of the agriculture and food industry through a voluntary third-party certification program. Its first certification occurred in 1998 “with a single apple grower selling in three Portland grocery stores”, and since then has grown to certify more than 500 farms and ranches in Canada, Mexico, and 25 U.S. states who manage over 6.8 million acres of range and farmland and 35 food processing and distribution facilities (Food Alliance, n.d.-a).

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), another Grasslands Alliance founding member, is an NGO dedicated to “safeguard the earth—its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends” through a series of programs that tackle several sustainability problems such as climate change, environmental justice, food and agriculture practices, water shortage, among others. Founded in 1970, NRDC counts on “more than three million members and online activists with the expertise of some 500 scientists, lawyers, and policy advocates across the globe” to fight for a better sustainable environment on earth. Working as research center, advocacy group, litigator, promoter of innovative business practices, and partnership builder, NRDC has through its programs achieved some impressive results in the

U.S.A. Some examples are the commitment of 42 percent of the U.S. chicken industry to responsible antibiotic practices; the protection of approximately 38,000 square miles of mid-Atlantic ocean water habitat from harmful fishing practices; and the conservation of more than 3 million tons of water through NRDC's Clean by Design program (NRDC, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

The third Grasslands Alliance founding member, the Rainforest Alliance, is an international NGO comprising of a “network of farmers, foresters, communities, scientists, governments, environmentalists, and businesses dedicated to conserving biodiversity and ensuring sustainable livelihoods” (Rainforest Alliance, n.d.-a). As well as NRDC, but in a global perspective, Rainforest Alliance tackles several sustainability issues related to deforestation, wildlife protection, climate change, the livelihood of local communities, food and farming, and human rights. The Rainforest Alliance was created in 1986 after a global conference about deforestation and has a long history of engagement to save worldwide rainforests and was one of the founding members of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). It also has large involvement with sustainability certification, launching its first agriculture certification for banana farms in Costa Rica and Hawaii in 1992. Since then, the Rainforest Alliance has expanded its scope of work: in August 2017, it assumed the ownership of the shared RA/SAN certification system and now certifies the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) third-party standards. With a presence in 78 countries, the positive impact in terms of sustainability improvements due to the Rainforest Alliance initiatives are notable and include: 103,966,028 acres of land under sustainable management; 1,311,001 farms using Rainforest Alliance’s methods to protect ecosystems, workers and local communities; and earnings of US\$130,573,000 for Indigenous and forest communities through their sustainable forest enterprise initiatives (Rainforest Alliance, n.d.-c). Rainforest Alliance is an ISEAL full member, which means it reached the highest level in ISEAL membership. This means that they commit to demonstrate their full compliance with the ISEAL Assurance Code within the first two years and achieving full compliance with the Impacts Code within three years (ISEAL, n.d.-b).

Although it is not clear when the Grasslands Alliance emerged as an entity between these three organizations, it seems that it is the outcome of intense debates around beef sustainability in North America that date back from 2012, when “NRDC began researching standards for more sustainable livestock production in the United States” (Grasslands Alliance, n.d.-c; ISEAL, n.d.-a). The Grasslands Alliance is currently working on a long-term governance structure in

partnership with their partners and other stakeholders (Grasslands Alliance, n.d.-a). However, Food Alliance is the organization that currently manages the Grasslands Alliance initiative.

The Grasslands Alliance origins have a management focus. NRDC first identified best management practices (BMPs) to remedy important supply-chain impacts of poor management practices in the U.S livestock production and then consulted stakeholders in order to verify the economic and social barriers to enhance ranch and farm management. Next, NRDC analyzed current certifications programs applicable to farms and ranches and realized that the options available had some important gaps: Food Alliance presented low market acceptance and RA/SAN certification system covered only tropical areas (Grasslands Alliance, n.d.-c). Thus, NRDC, Food Alliance, and Rainforest Alliance defined that the future Grasslands Alliance’s standard will be a fellow RA/SAN standard for beef in Central and South America, with adaptations for the peculiarities of the farms and ranches in North America. In terms of development of the initiative, Grasslands Alliance is currently in the public comment phase of the first standard draft (principles, criteria, and indicators), and the period for public consultation ended on December 31, 2017 (Grasslands Alliance, n.d.-d).

2.2. National MSI

2.2.1. The Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB)

National MSIs also are working to make the beef supply chain in North America more sustainable. In Canada, the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) is the primary initiative. CRSB, a GRSB member that started its activities in 2013 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-r), declares as its mission “To facilitate the framework for the Canadian beef industry to be a global leader in the continuous improvement and sustainability of the beef value chain through science, multi-stakeholder engagement, communication and collaboration” (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-k). CRSB has more than 100 members segmented in the “Producer and Processor Associations; Food and Agriculture Businesses; Retail & Food Services Companies; Non-Governmental Organizations; Observers & Ex-officio” (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-e) constituencies. These members elect the CRSB’s Council, comprised of representatives of each constituency group, and four committees – Indicator Committee, retired in January 2018 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-m); Verification Committee, retired in January 2018 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-

s); Communications and Marketing Committee; and Scientific Advisory Committee – guide the development of CRSB’s core projects. Figure 2 demonstrates CRSB’s governance structure, regulated by memberships and Council, guided by committees, and supported by staff (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-e).

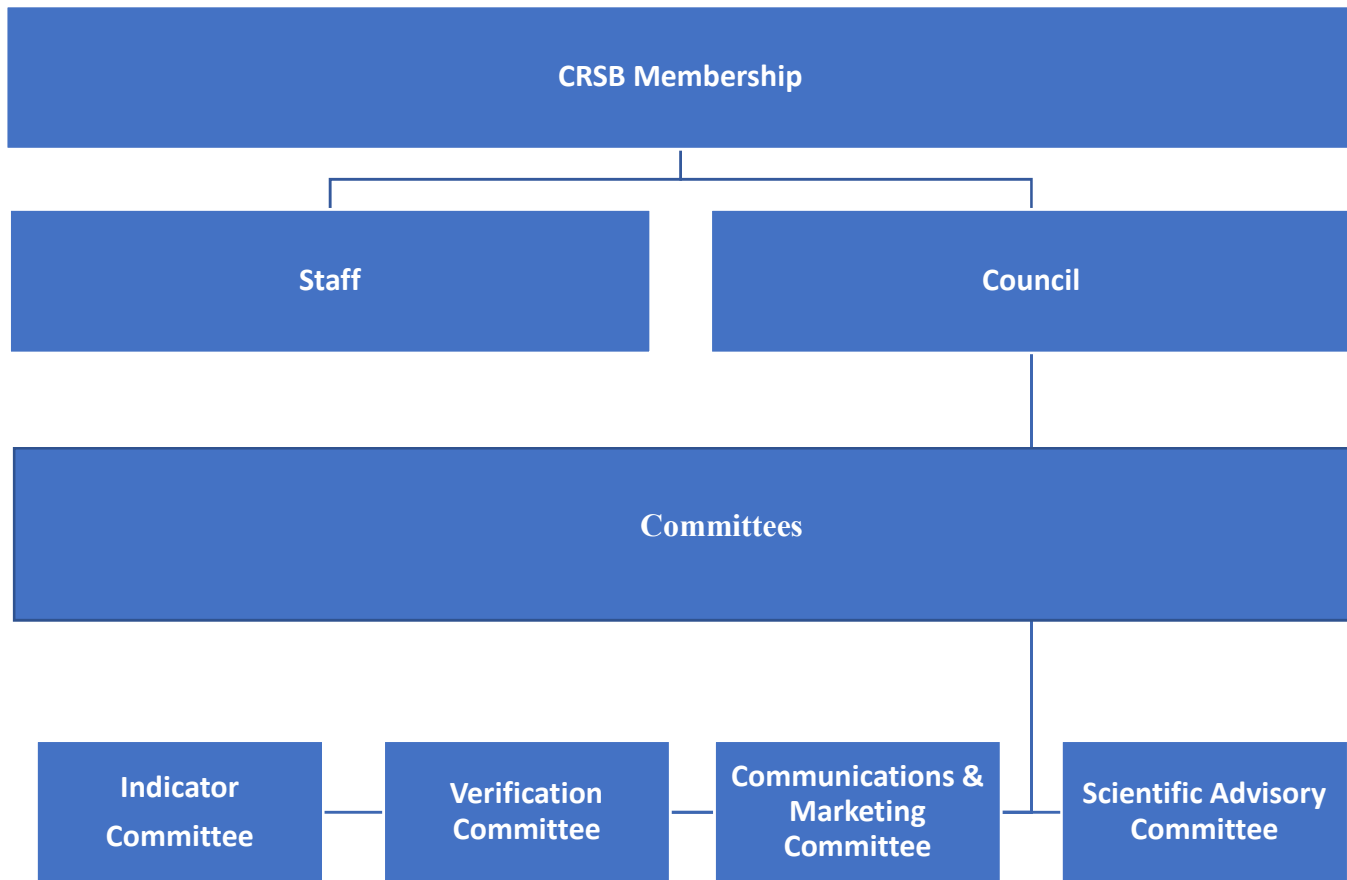


Figure 2: CRSB’s governance structure (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-e)

CRSB has focused its activities on three core projects: sustainability benchmarking, certification framework (formerly the verification framework), and sustainability projects (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-d, n.d.-n). A Steering Committee conducted CRSB’s first project, a two-year cradle-to-grave study that benchmarked the environmental, social

and economic performance of the Canadian beef industry (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-h), and released its first National Beef Sustainability Assessment and Strategy Reports in May 2016. These reports not only showed where the beef industry in Canada is presenting good results in terms of sustainability, but also indicated aspects of that business that needs improvement, thus providing “a baseline to monitor and measure progress in future assessments” (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-p). CRSB’s Scientific Advisory Committee will be in charge of conducting future assessments every five to seven years. The outcome of the first reports was the definition of ten sustainability goals to improve the beef industry in Canada through CRSB’s certification framework and sustainability projects (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-o). Table 1 presents the overarching, environmental, social, and economic goals set by CRSB for improving the sustainability of the beef industry in Canada (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-p).

Table 1: The 10 Sustainable Goals defined by the CRSB (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-p)

Overarching	
Goal 1	Build a stronger and more united Canadian beef sustainability community
Environmental	
Goal 2	Reduce the greenhouse gas footprint of Canadian beef per unit of product produced
Goal 3	Enhance ecosystem services and biodiversity on lands managed by beef producers
Goal 4	Enhance riparian health and reduce the water footprint of beef production
Goal 5	Reduce post-harvest meat waste
Social	
Goal 6	Promote farm safety and responsible working conditions
Goal 7	Promote excellence in animal care
Goal 8	Support the further development, monitoring and dissemination of best practices regarding antimicrobial use
Economic	
Goal 9	Increase the financial viability of beef production in Canada
Goal 10	Increase demand for Canadian beef through consumer awareness of sustainable beef production

The sustainability projects represent the commitment of CRSB to facilitate initiatives aimed at improving the sustainability of the beef industry. These projects are founded on the strategies and goals outlined in the sustainability benchmarking as well as on the CRSB's *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-q). Currently, the CRSB is conducting one sustainability project – a collaborative partnership with ranchers to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-q) – that addresses goals 3, “Enhance ecosystem services and biodiversity on lands managed by beef producers”, and 4, “Enhance riparian health and reduce the water footprint of beef production” (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-p). .

One of CRSB's goals was to translate GRSB's objectives, principles, and criteria for beef sustainability into local indicators through its Indicator Committee. Nevertheless, the first organization to reach this intent was McDonald's Canada. In parallel and in collaboration with CRSB, the leading fast-food chain, in an attempt to speed up CRSB's indicator and framework development processes and to help meet McDonald's goal of sourcing all of its food sustainably, launched in January 2014 the Verified Sustainable Beef Pilot to evaluate the sustainability of the Canadian beef supply chain from ‘birth to burger’ (“McDonald's Sustainable Beef Pilot,” n.d.). The two-year-old project, which involved 170 participants, was concluded in 2016, and “tracked the journey of nearly 9,000 head of Canadian cattle, or the equivalent of 2.4 million patties” (“First-ever Pilot to Verify Sustainable Beef in Canada Concludes,” n.d.). McDonalds' pilot results were shared with CRSB, which has since carried the responsibility of “mapping the path forward for verified sustainable beef in Canada” (“First-ever Pilot to Verify Sustainable Beef in Canada Concludes,” n.d.). CRSB accomplished that challenge through the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework project.

In order to launch the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*, in parallel with McDonalds' pilot, the following development process was undertaken by CRSB. The Indicator Committee developed tools for the evaluation of beef production and the primary processing stages of the beef supply chain in Canada. Guided by GRSB's Principles and Criteria (P&C), the Indicator Development Process started in November 2014 the Phase 1 - Process Design & Research, followed by Phase 2 - Drafting the Indicators & Stakeholder Consultations (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-r). After concluding the consultation on sustainability indicators for beef

production at the beginning of 2017, public consultation for the 1st draft of the sustainability indicators for primary processing closed in August 2017 (White, n.d.-a). After refinements on the 1st draft of indicators for primary processing made by CRSB’s Council and Members, a second and final round of public consultation ended on November 4th, 2017 (White, n.d.-c). After the final Phase 3 – Indicator Approval, the “long-awaited *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* and CRSB standards were released on December 6th and 7th, 2017 at the CRSB Annual General Meeting in Edmonton, Alberta (White, n.d.-b). Indeed, this tool has been very much expected and demanded by the industry (Blair, 2017; Kienlen-a, 2017; Kienlen-b, 2017) as future projects related to the sustainability of the beef industry in Canada, such as a sustainable beef label, depend on the framework to be implemented.

Following the guiding principles of credibility, effectiveness, economic viability, valuable, and alignment demonstrated in Table 2 (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-l), the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* was launched with the purpose of being “a tool for producers and processors to demonstrate the sustainability of their operations and support retail and food service companies in their sustainable sourcing efforts”. Three of the four CRSB’s committees – Indicator, Verifications, and Communications and Marketing Committees – guided the development of this tool. Aspects such as “indicators development, verification protocol – scoring framework for the indicators and assurance manual – chain of custody requirements, claims and labeling guidelines, and a process for establishing equivalency with other tools and programs” are addressed by the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-t).

Table 2: Certified Sustainable Beef Framework’s guiding principles (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-t)

Principle	Description
Credible	to all stakeholders securing trust through robust assurances, transparency, inclusivity and vigorous scientific review
Effective	in driving the advancement and understanding of sustainable beef production
Economically Viable	for the CRSB to manage and stakeholders to use
Valuable	to industry participants and consumers
Aligned	with the Five Principles of Sustainable Beef as set by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

The CRSB's *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* is comprised of four key parts: 1-The Standards; 2-Assurance Protocols; 3-Chain of Custody Requirements; and 4-Sustainability Claims. Standards for beef production and processing cover the indicators audited on farms and ranches and in beef processing facilities, respectively. The Assurance Protocols specify the certification process requirements. Chain of Custody Requirements covers technical and administrative requisites for tracking certified operations. Finally, Sustainability Claims gives the guidelines for proper communication of Certified Sustainable Beef (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-b).

Like GRSB, CRSB is an ISEAL subscriber, which means it is not mandatory that CRSB observe even the baseline criteria of ISEAL Codes of Good Practice. Nevertheless, according to CRSB, the work of the Indicator Committee was “partially guided” by the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards (Version 6.0) (Beef, n.d.-a).

2.2.1.1. The Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration (CBSA) Pilot

The goal of the beef industry in Canada is to be able to launch in 2018 a label for sustainable beef, backed up by an auditing process, to be adopted by retailers and restaurants (Southwick, 2017). It will be necessary to evaluate the entire supply-chain, thus moving on from the first verification pilot from ‘birth to burger’ conducted by McDonald’s Canada and evolving on CRSB’s *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*. In that sense, the Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration (CBSA) pilot was launched in October 2017 and has been managed by a beef processor, Cargill, an auditing organization (i.e. Verified Beef Production Plus (VBP+)), and a beef tracker (i.e., Beef InfoXchange Systems (BIXS)).

CBSA is an innovative project, as it involves payment as an incentive for the participants in the pilot. CBSA’s methodology comprises the following stages: VBP+ conducts an initial auditing in the farms before they join the pilot; BIXS tracks the animals to ratify they were growing on VBP+ operation before being transported and processed by Cargill. McDonald’s, Loblaw, and Cara, the participating customers, buy the meat and subsidise the producer with credit for having the right to commercialize verified sustainable beef (Stockford, 2017). During 2018, the participating customers will payback to Cargill, on a quarterly basis, financial credits per pound of sustainable beef delivered. Cargill thus will distribute the money back to members of the supply-chain according to the number of cattle heads qualified by the pilot (CBSA, n.d.).

After recruiting cattle producers, cow-calf operations, backgrounders, and feedlots (“Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration Pilot,” n.d.), the CBSA pilot was launched and some good results were already reported by VBP+:

In the first quarter, producers earned a financial payback of \$10 per head on qualified sustainable animals, and in total successfully certified over 550,000 pounds of beef. In the second quarter, the payback on certified animals rose to \$20.11 per head. As more operations, especially cow-calf operations, become eligible, that payback could grow again. The really exciting part is we’re starting to prove that not only can this system verifiably track cattle through a sustainable chain of custody, now it can also move financial credits back down that chain to each person supplying certified sustainable animals. (Lowe, 2018)

CBSA is currently “testing and validating the audit and traceability systems needed to meet the requirements of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* — basically the standards producers, processors and retailers will have to meet to produce and market certified sustainable beef products” (Lowe, 2018). Thus, the CBSA pilot is an important step for the proper adoption and implementation of CRSB’s *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* along the beef supply-chain in Canada.

2.2.2. *The U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB)*

Formed in March 2015, The U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB) has 105 members distributed in five constituencies – Producers, Allied Industry, Packers/Processors, Retail, and Civil Society – comprising representatives of all the U.S. beef value chain (U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-b). The USRSB has defined as its main objectives to “establish sustainability indicators, recognize methods to verify sustainable beef, create a program philosophy for implementing sustainability objectives, generate field projects that prove sustainability concepts, and establish goals for progress” (U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-a).

The USRSB is currently producing its Sustainability Assurance Framework, which determines the operational scope for both USRSB and other organizations working to improve the sustainability performance of the beef industry’s value chain in the U.S. The framework shows the limits of USRSB efforts, as well as demonstrates the way other actors will work in conjunction with the American Roundtable. The Sustainability Assurance Framework is a four-year-old project, comprising the development of the following core initiatives by the USRSB team: High Priority Indicators and Sustainability Metrics, conducted by the Indicator Working Group;

Sustainability Assessment Guides and Outreach and Education Effort, conducted by the Engagement, Measurement & Progress Working Group (USRSB, 2017). The Sustainability Assurance Framework also includes Second Party Certification and Third-Party Verification initiatives, but their implementation is projected to occur only after the conclusion of the USRSB's four-year-old projects, which are expected to be concluded in 2019. Those initiatives are projected to be implemented by other business of the U.S. beef value chain with the support of the USRSB's Engagement, Measurement & Progress Working Group (USRSB, 2016).

Like GRSB and CRSB, USRSB is an ISEAL subscriber. In alignment with GRSB's vision and mission, USRSB understands that a broad beef sustainability standard is not feasible due to the variety of ecosystems of beef production. Thus, standard-setting is not on the USRSB's scope. Additionally, as the work of the USRSB is still in the very early stages of development, this multi-stakeholder initiative will not be considered for analysis in this research.

3. Literature review

The specific objective of this literature review is to relate the current knowledge and issues regarding MSIs, sustainability standards and certifications, and GAL, in order to define and validate the analytical framework to be adopted for conducting the research. The governance context around MSI and interventions and the 'new' concept of GAL are presented, global governance related-themes linked to GAL are addressed, and previous research applying GAL are described.

3.1. Global Governance and Transnational Organizations

The globalization of markets, as well as the absence of adequate governmental response to critical issues brought by globalization, such as sustainability issues, has resulted in a rise in transnational organizations with significant rule-making power (Bartley, 2007; Büthe, 2004; Kahler & Lake, 2004; Pollack & Shaffer, 2001). Although the difference between international and transnational organizations may seem indistinguishable (Colas, 2013), international organization is defined as "an organization established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law and possessing its own international legal personality" (International Law Commission, n.d.), while a transnational organization can be regarded as a particular type of international institution, but having: status of authority (Kahler & Lake, 2003); broad regulatory,

administrative, and rule-making power (Bartley, 2007); scope of influence that transcends their operational limits and, in some cases, the states' borders. In some cases, such organizations are literally taking administrative decisions on behalf of countries (Bartley, 2007; Tripathi, 2011) and consequently reshaping the *status quo* of governance structures within the states and globally. According to Kingsbury et al. (2005), these organizations can range from:

“regulation-by-non-regulation (*laissez faire*), through formal self-regulation (such as by some industry associations), hybrid private-private regulation (for example, business–NGO partnerships in the Fair Labor Association), ... and inter-governmental organizations with direct governance powers (as with determinations by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees of individuals' refugee status, or the WTO dispute resolution system for trade conflicts)” (p. 2).

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a primary example of a private organization that has been dictating the global rules for forest management. Through its sustainability criteria for forest use, as well as its private voluntary standards and certification for wood-related products, FSC exercises a type of hybrid private-private regulation in the global governance of the forest industry (Pattberg, 2005).

This “new world order” (Slaughter, 2009), brought about by transnational organizations with significant rule-making power, is establishing a unified global state of regulation and has shaped the rise of the concept of global governance, a term considered imprecise and ambiguous for some authors (Finkelstein, 1995; Latham, 1999). ‘Global’ can be translated as “international, interstate, intergovernmental, or even, often, transnational” (Finkelstein, 1995, p. 367); however, ‘governance’ is a more comprehensive term related to setting the guidelines and regulations of the players (Finkelstein, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Kjær, 2004; Rhodes, 1996). Notwithstanding its ambiguity, global governance is conceptualized by Finkelstein (1995) as “any purposeful activity intended to ‘control’ or influence someone else that either occurs in the arena occupied by nations or, occurring at other levels, projects influence into that arena” (p. 368).

3.2. Good Governance Principles

Because of the proliferation of transnational organizations or initiatives that are practicing global governance, it is important to understand what are considered good global governance practices. Good governance practices, which create legitimacy, are associated with the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability (Gisselquist, 2012; Woods, 1999, 2000), and are

the main way of dealing with the side effects of globalization (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005; O'Rourke, 2006).

In their review and synthesis of the governance concept, Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie, & Tkaczynski (2010) ranked involvement – a synonym for participation – transparency, and accountability among the most frequent elements cited in studies of systems of governance. At a broader level, Grindle (2010), in his critiques about the concept of ‘good governance’, cites the example of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP, in an attempt to encourage good governance practices between countries, lists among others participation, transparency, and accountability as the most important characteristics of good governance systems (UNDP, 1997, p. 12, cited by Grindle, 2010). Likewise, the World Bank cites participation, transparency, and accountability as characteristics capable of improving its own governance system (Mundial, 2007).

The following section provides an overview of the concepts of legitimacy and the principles of good governance.

3.2.1. Legitimacy and Good Governance

Legitimacy has been studied through various theories and frameworks. Some studies analyze the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of MSIs (Bäckstrand, 2006b; Gulbrandsen, 2005), and focus on their governance, implementation, and legitimacy deficits (Bäckstrand et al., 2010; Partzsch, 2011). Others propose that MSI studies should be segmented based on whether they involve legitimacy or power issues (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014), arguing that the pursuit of legitimacy is the primary focus of studies founded on institutionalists literature, “based mainly on management and organization studies” (Tamm Hallstrom 2004; Fransen and Kolk 2007; Ponte et al. 2011, cited by Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 412), while studies involving power issues is of concern in the political-economy literature (Busch, 2000; Hatanaka et al., 2005) and post-structural approaches. The post-structural approach is segmented into governmentality approaches (Foucault, 1980, cited by Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 413), and convention theory (Dupuy et al. 1989; Boltanski and Thevenot 2006 [1991], cited by Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 413; Ponte & Gibbon, 2005). Regarding the latter, standards and certifications are analyzed in terms of the norms surrounding their developments.

Regardless of the various approaches to analyze MSIs, legitimacy can be defined and categorized in a variety of ways. Rooted in network governance studies, Human & Provan (2000) and Drori & Honig (2013) see *internal* legitimacy as that which involves those in the organization via “the acceptance or normative validation of an organizational strategy through the consensus of its participants, which acts as a tool that reinforces organizational practices and mobilizes organizational members around a common ethical, strategic or ideological vision” (p. 347). Nevertheless, greenwashing and open-washing⁷ claims, originating mostly from external actors acting as ‘watchdogs’, is a reality. Thus, *external* legitimacy is about gaining the respect and trust of a broad set of stakeholders, such as customers, governments, NGOs, and local communities, as articulated by Provan & Kenis (2008):

Any form of governance must be responsive to external expectations. By doing such things as attracting customers, securing funding, dealing with government, and so on, network governance can provide the external “face” of the network. Outside groups can see that the network is an entity in its own right, and not simply a group of organizations that occasionally get together to discuss common concerns. Having external legitimacy can also reinforce the commitment of network participants, who are more likely to see themselves as part of a viable network. Establishing external legitimacy is a critical role of network governance, since individual participants (other than a lead organization), acting on their own, will generally not be seen by outsiders as representing the full network. (p. 243)

In contrast, most legitimacy concerns in terms of global governance have roots in political science studies, where debates centre on *democratic* legitimacy. For instance, in analyzing aspects of democracy and effectiveness in the European Union, Scharpf (1999) differentiated between *input* legitimacy (related to the process) and *output* legitimacy (related to the quality of the normative outcomes) (Bernstein, 2011, p. 24). Input legitimacy focuses on democratic aspects of the decision-making process and is concerned with ensuring the participation of a broad and representative set of individuals during the development of norms and regulations. Output legitimacy, on the other hand, focuses on the problem-solving capacity of the outcomes (i.e. norms and regulations) to produce effective results on the ground.

Evolving from this fundamental view of democratic legitimacy, Bekkers, Dijkstra, & Fenger (2016) came up with the concept of *throughput* legitimacy, which is positioned between input and

⁷ “The term “openwashing” is used to describe efforts by organizations to present a public image of transparency and accountability, while maintaining questionable practices in these areas.” (Brockmyer, 2016, p. 102)

output legitimacy, and which is concerned with the validity of the suite of processes and procedures that led to a normative and binding outcome. However, throughput legitimacy, which is evaluated in terms of ample participation, transparency, the efficiency of the decision-making process, and accountability (Schmidt, 2013, p.2) had been criticized by Fuchs et al. (2011) for being ‘too embracing’ for methodological purposes:

The problem with the concept of throughput legitimacy is the combination of the aspects of transparency and responsiveness (or in our terms accountability), as well as of positive and normative criteria, which inhibit its systematic empirical application. (Fuchs et al., 2011, p. 359)

Additionally, Fuchs et al. (2011) point out another problem with output legitimacy, which inherently defines legitimacy based on its ‘effectiveness’. In this case, they argue that because private governance tends to be more ‘effective’ in terms of outcomes than, for instance, public governance, then it has output legitimacy, even at the cost or neglect of other aspects, such as participation, transparency, and accountability. Similarly to Fuchs et al. (2011)’s criticism of output legitimacy, Ponte (2014) claims that in some cases, initiatives that are less democratic but highly enforceable can be considered as having output legitimacy, because their interventions have positive sustainability impacts, but probably not input legitimacy. Therefore, output legitimacy, which implies ‘results’, can ultimately lead to ‘not so democratic’ initiatives, that do not allow ample participation of stakeholders in its decision-making process, that are not fully transparent about their actions, and that are not very committed to accountability to be regarded as legitimate. On the other hand, more democratic but very bureaucratic initiatives, such as MSIs, can have input legitimacy due to their inherent participative aspect, but outcome legitimacy can take longer to be achieved, as the impacts of their interventions might take longer to be realized.

Hence, it is not surprising that democratic aspects of a process highly determine the legitimacy of norms and regulations according to many scholars (e.g. Mayntz, 2010; Pierre & Peters, 2005; Weber, 1978; cited by Hachez & Wouters, 2011; Bodansky, 1999). Thus, in a cause-effect relationship, a binding normative system is only regarded as legitimate if its development process respects democratic conventions:

The EU debate illustrates one important basis of legitimacy: democracy. Indeed, although dissatisfaction with democracy is common in Western countries, it is still no exaggeration to say that democracy has become the touchstone of legitimacy in the modern world. (Bodansky, 1999, p. 599)

Moreover, some authors do not recognize the general definition of legitimacy, but only *democratic* legitimacy, as an aspect to evaluate the authority of a rule-making entity, thus making a strong linkage between these two terms. For instance, according to Keohane (2003) “We live in a democratic era, and I share the widespread belief that rules are only legitimate if they conform to broadly democratic principles, appropriately adapted for the context” (p. 3). Thus, it is widely believed that in terms of private governance and their resulting interventions, democratic legitimacy, as opposed to legitimacy, is the important ideal. Democratic legitimacy here refers to the process that allows broad participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process, and their voices and aspirations are reflected on the outcomes. Thus, democratic legitimacy can be seen as a synonym of input legitimacy.

3.2.2. *Participation and Good Governance*

It is widely believed that a democratic and legitimate governance setting, where the engagement of a broad set of stakeholders is stimulated, has the potential of producing real impacts on the ground. From public governance (Bovaird, n.d.; Brockmyer, 2016) to global value chain governance in the agri-food sector (Vellema & van Wijk, 2015), the co-creation⁸ concept has evolved from customer-organization interaction strategies aimed at the development of products that translate consumer values (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) to wide-ranging interactions with all stakeholders to co-create global and sustainability governance systems (Miller & Wyborn, 2018). In the forest sector, for instance, the engagement of local communities, from the earliest stages of development of MSIs, have resulted in better social and environmental outcomes (Suiseeya & Caplow, 2013). Thus, it is important to include all groups affected by MSIs from the initial stages of development through the design and implementation of sustainability interventions.

There are various levels and types of participation. In that sense, *inclusiveness* – defined by Boström (2006) as “the combination of the individual qualities and the members power resources that create the capacity for action as well as the credibility and authority of an initiative” (p. 354) – is both a criteria for *deliberative* democracy (Dryzek, 2009) and an important strategy for

⁸ A management strategy that allows the collaboration of a broad set of actors in the production of a joint outcome (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004)

participation and good global governance practices. Inclusiveness is thus a way to assure authority and legitimacy to MSIs, based on the assumption that “it favours sharing knowledge and expertise among stakeholders” (Cheyns, 2011, p.2).

However, there are degrees of stakeholder engagement, or inclusiveness, primarily identified by Arnstein (1969) in her continuum of stakeholder’s involvement, which ranges from information dissemination, or manipulation, to engagement, or citizen empowerment. In fact, the continuum of inclusiveness revealed by Fransen & Kolk (2016) in a recent study confirms the existence of variations in terms of stakeholder’s participation in the governance and standard-setting process of different MSIs. For instance, if a consultation regarding the standard-setting does not provide feedback or show accountability to those who participated in the process, it cannot be truly regarded as an engaging or involving process, and instead, may be seen as manipulative behavior.

The disappointment with participative and collaborative models of governance with respect to lack of inclusiveness and their capacity to produce sustainability outcomes are addressed by studies of the deliberative democratic capacity of similar initiatives (Bäckstrand et al., 2010; Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009; Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016; Greetje Schouten, Leroy, & Glasbergen, 2012; Selfa, Bain, & Moreno, 2014). The definition of *deliberative capacity* is “the extent to which a political system possesses structures to host deliberation that is authentic, inclusive, and consequential” (Dryzek, 2009, p. 1382). It claims that the demands of all relevant and affected groups must be appropriately addressed in the governance process (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016, p. 101). In this regard, a fierce criticism related to the deliberative capacity of roundtable initiatives is made by Schouten et al. (2012): that is, they fail in terms of inclusiveness and thus, are deliberative, but are not democratic (p. 43). In a broader perspective, with respect to environmental governance, the “deliberative turn” movement from states to private institutions ultimately revealed some democratic and outcome deficits. For instance, according to Bäckstrand et al. (2010) “there is no guarantee that deliberative governance arrangements will deliver green outcomes” (p. 225), and the authors see this turn more as a privatization movement of environmental resources than as a real “deliberative turn” towards more participation and engagement of stakeholders.

The deliberative ideal subscribed by multi-stakeholder arrangements is derived from the prominence of democratic economies in these initiatives and their familiarity with this decision-making method. Thus, the institution of a democratic governance process is regarded as

fundamental to reach legitimacy (Clark, 2007). The idea behind deliberative democracy is to focus on extensive and inclusive deliberation as an alternative to the absence of a democratic system of representation and votes (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016, p. 92). By allowing broad stakeholder participation for sharing knowledge and expertise, all the voices and concerns are heard, and the most informed and best decision is reached through consensus, thereby instilling authority and legitimacy (Greetje Schouten et al., 2012). The deliberative democratic process is also transparent and holistic, and the particularities of the local context are considered.

The problem is that deliberative democracy, while conferring legitimacy to an initiative, rarely translates to strong sustainability outcomes (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). In fact, too much deliberation and democracy can compromise the effectiveness of MSIs, by focusing too much on process and not enough on outcomes, which can “increase the governance costs and decrease the organizational autonomy of transnational rulemaking organizations” (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009, p. 714).

Ultimately, it is challenging to include concerns of all stakeholders in the decision-making process as in reality there are “constraining factors such as availability of experts and other resources” (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016, p. 119). Nevertheless, there is a degree of inclusiveness in stakeholder participation in the governance process of multi-stakeholder arrangements (Greetje Schouten et al., 2012) that include notions of scope (“the range of stakeholder types that are included as members” (p. 43)) and quality (“linked to the equality of opportunities for stakeholders to participate in decision-making in an adequate way” (Dingwerth, 2007, p. 29, cited by Greetje Schouten et al., 2012, p. 43)). However, there is still selectivity in some roundtable initiatives, where more technical and pragmatic approaches are adopted to the detriment of more radical approaches to sustainability, that ultimately demands not reconciliation but instead drastic changes and breaking away from the current system of sustainability governance (Greetje Schouten et al., 2012, p. 49). Thus, despite being broadly regarded as the best approach to reach democratic ideals and improve the legitimacy of multi-stakeholder arrangements, deliberative democracy not only creates complexities in the decision-making process, which can compromise their capacity to produce sustainability outcomes, but also is limited in terms of the ability to include all stakeholders and more embracing approaches to sustainability.

3.2.3. *Transparency and Accountability and Good Governance*

Most studies that involve transparency and accountability are related to democratic and legitimacy aspects of governance (e.g. Bäckstrand, 2006b; Fuchs et al., 2011; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Transparency is largely regarded as a good mechanism for increasing the trust in and promoting better outcomes for governments, corporations, and institutions (Hood & Heald, 2006). Once limited to politics, transparency has evolved to become a value demanded by the market as it is also a way of reducing the risks of business investments (Heald, 2006). According to Fuchs et al. (2011), *internal transparency* is demonstrated by allowing participation in the initiative and access to information to members, while *external* transparency can be demonstrated by allowing the public to have access to information related the initiative.

Fox (2007) distinguished between opaque and clear transparency. *Opaque* transparency is related to the disclosure of information that in fact does not inform about the decision-making process or the outcomes of an initiative and thus is not reliable. In that sense, this type of transparency is an open space for greenwashing and open-washing claims. *Clear* transparency, on the other hand, offers reliable information about performance, responsibilities, and financial data through policies and programs that facilitate the access to information.

Transparency is viewed as one of the most important elements for improving the accountability of NGO governance arrangements (O'Rourke, 2006, p. 909), a concept that likely can be extended to multi-stakeholder initiatives. Accountability is 'a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences' (Bovens, 2007, p. 450). It evolved from initial concerns about the disclosure of financial information to donors and investors to "a broader notion of corporate governance in relation to the whole range of stakeholders (Kolk, 2008, p. 3). According to Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & Colle (2010), there are two drivers for accountability: environmental protection trends reflected in sustainability business reporting; and regulatory demands that forced organizations to be more due diligent and exert more of an oversight role in economic, social and environmental aspects of the business.

Although accountability is perceived as a way of conferring legitimacy to organizations, it alone does not assure legitimacy (Buchanan & Keohane, 2006). For example, the World Bank, is

highly accountable only to some of its biggest supporting countries, which can be seen as binding the bank to these countries' agenda, while ignoring the countries that are subject to its regulation (Grant & Keohane, 2005). In fact, this gap in terms of appropriate participation of all affected countries, align with ethical concerns about the established accountability practices, can explain the perception of questionable legitimacy of this renowned global institution. Indeed, the lack of a contestation mechanism applicable to the final terms of accountability revealed by the World Bank example is viewed by Buchanan & Keohane (2006) as *narrow* accountability (p. 425). In comparison, *broad* accountability is viewed as an intricate network of accountability interactions which involves pondering various viewpoints and contexts (Romzek (1996), cited by Ospina, Diaz, & O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 28).

Keohane (2003) proposes a more straightforward classification of two forms of accountability. *Internal* accountability, defined within principal-agent theory, refers to an accountability relationship among members associated with the same institution. The system of responsibilities and authority observed in the highest bodies⁹ of the governance structure, such as the accountability a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has with the Board of Directors, for instance, is an example of internal accountability. On the other hand, *external* accountability, is associated with managers and the ones externally affected by their deliberations. The adoption of third-party audit organizations and certification bodies is a way of demonstrating external accountability through intermediate organizations (Fuchs et al., 2011, p. 358).

In contrast, Mashaw (2006) proposes *ideal-type* accountability regimes of governance (i.e. in the public, market, and social spheres), and is based on a set of accountability-related questions: Accountability to whom? Who is accountable? How is accountability conducted? Accountability for what? Which accountability standards? What are the expected effects of the accountability? Each ideal-type regime implies a specific set of answer to these questions. Thus, different actors and accountability systems (Bovens, 2007) have their own logic, which must be acknowledged for accountability strategies purposes. For example, in public systems, accountability relates to providing a public good for the community (Kramarz, Cosolo, & Rossi, 2017). In contrast, in private systems, accountability involves a variety of shareholders that might be concerned about economic benefits (Widerberg & Pattberg, 2017, p. 73). Adding to this, Fox (2007) sees

⁹ A group of people that lead an organization and has the power to define its governance process and practices.

accountability, or answerability, as *soft* when organizational actions are being justified, and as *hard* when the possibility of sanctions is added. Another system of accountability regimes that evolved from Mashaw's (2006) work was pictured by Chan & Pattberg (2008) in their accountability and global environmental governance case study with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):

Public accountability regimes encompass political (for instance electoral) systems, bureaucratic systems and legal systems ... The marketplace accountability regime includes labor markets, capital markets and product markets... social accountability systems can be more or less formal (ranging from accountability systems in families to membership organizations) and resemble networks, constituting cultures and subcultures, wherein obligations are often informed by judgments of appropriateness. (p. 105)

According to Chan & Pattberg (2008), the perceived state failure in addressing social and environmental global issues led to the evolution from public accountability regimes to marketplace accountability regimes which, in turn, due to accountability gaps perceived in the interventions produced by marketplace accountability regimes by civil society, evolved to more socially related accountability regimes such as "civil-society and hybrid public-private networks" (Chan & Pattberg, 2008, p. 107) – where MSI are positioned – in an evolutionary shift in terms of authority.

In this regard, MSI and sustainability interventions are bound to a socially related accountability regime, or "soft laws" (Lobel, 2006, p. 968) that are "infinitely negotiable, continuously revisable, often unspoken; oscillating between deep respect for individual choices and relentless social pressure to conform to group norms" (Mashaw, 2006, p. 125). The need both to provide broad accountability and to comply with soft laws reinforces the perceived complexity of multi-stakeholder systems of governance and the usual claim that these arrangements are slow in terms of delivering outcomes.

Finally, given the free access to much institutional information and data, promoted mostly by the internet, accountability strategies can put a lot of pressures on managers, which is even more prominent in a multi-stakeholder governance model, as managers have to be accountable to not only customers and shareholders, but also to a broader set of stakeholders. While this pressure can somehow reduce the chances of managers engaging in opportunistic behavior (Phillips, Freeman, & Wicks, 2003), it can lead to governance problems such as the "problem of many eyes" (Bovens, 2007, p. 455), as managers have to be accountable to a diverse and overarching set of forums, each one with their own requirements, and the "problem of many hands" (Thompson,

1980), as several stakeholders, in several forums and committees, produce together several policies and procedures, making it hard to define who is responsible for the final outcome. Thus, these problems can bring even more complexity to multi-stakeholder arrangements.

3.2.3.1. Relationship between Transparency and Accountability

Ultimately, the aim of transparency strategies is to achieve accountability. The association between transparency and accountability has been made by various researchers (e.g. Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Fox, 2007; Kosack & Fung, 2014). Mena & Palazzo (2012) argue that input legitimacy in MSIs requires both internal accountability, whereby those that are part of the initiative accept the authority of the MSI, and external accountability, whereby those that are outside of the MSI process view the initiative as having the right to regulate. Therefore, they conclude that the input legitimacy of MSIs is shaped by stakeholder inclusion, procedural fairness, consensual orientation, and transparency.

In contrast, Fox (2007) contests the concept of ‘transparency in the promotion of accountability’, distinguishing between ‘clear’ and ‘opaque’ transparency, and ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ accountability, to identify “what kinds of transparency lead to what kinds of accountability, and under what conditions” (p. 663). To Fox, the ideal conditions in terms of governance process and sustainability interventions is the establishment of clear transparency and hard accountability. Similarly to Fox (2007), Kosack & Fung (2014) identified four varieties of transparency: freedom of information (FOI) or right to information (RTI); transparency for responsible corporate behavior; regulatory transparency; and transparency for accountability (T/A). What Kosack & Fung (2014) added to Fox (2007) study is the idea of performance comparison. While FOI/RTI and transparency for responsible corporate behavior offer to the public data about the performance of institutions, regulatory transparency and T/A provide indices that allow public comparison among possible and competing interventions, which can be viewed as an evolution of Fox's (2007) idea of sanctions in the absence of accountability. The disclosure of performance indicators, such as the impact of standards and certifications, an example of T/A, not only allow some sort of comparison but also the ability to sanction competing interventions. The interventions that do not demonstrate being outcome-based, or that do not deliver sustainability results on the ground, could be seen as another greenwashing or open-washing initiative and, as a result, end up not being widely adopted.

3.3. Global Administrative Law: A Model of Good Governance

Concerns around the phenomenon of transnational organizations determining the ‘rules of the game’ created debates around the need of an instrument to control and regulate this new governance model, which led to the development of the Global Administrative Law school of thought (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005), that embraces the broadly regarded principles of good governance: participation, transparency, and accountability. Global Administrative Law (GAL) has its roots in international and administrative law, and is fundamentally focused on the rules, principles, and mechanisms of administrative law and as such, encompasses notions of participation, transparency, accountability, and review (“Global Administrative Law,” n.d.) and their applicability to global governance. In order to fill the apparent gap of an analogous administrative law mechanism applicable to global governance (Mattli & Büthe, 2005), GAL claims that global governance should be regarded as administration, and thus must be “organised and shaped by principles of an administrative law character” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 355) with the ultimate objective of addressing the “accountability deficit in the growing exercise of transnational regulatory power” (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005, p. 16).

This accountability deficit in transnational organizations is leading to the rise of two parallel and different approaches to tackle this problem: an extension of the administrative law of the states to the regulation produced globally that is affecting the nations; and an adaptation of the administrative law to the global regulation (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005). According to GAL, to properly address the accountability deficit in terms of transnational regulation in the “global administrative space” (p. 18), a unified adaptation of the institutionalized procedures and norms domestically adopted within the states – the concept of administrative law – should be applied to the governance system of transnational organizations to standardize, organize, and control their powerful global influence (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005).

The emergence of GAL can be seen also as tentatively dealing with the consequences of globalization, notably global interdependence in terms of:

...security, the conditions on development and financial assistance to developing countries, environmental protection, banking and financial regulation, law enforcement, telecommunications, trade in products and services, intellectual property, labor standards, and cross-border movements of population, including refugees (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005, p. 16).

Decisions on these issues, once made by states, are now being made in global forums – mostly “transnational administrative bodies” (p. 16) – but the implementation and compliance with the *de facto* regulation produced and established by these global forums is a responsibility of the institutions located within a state’s boundaries. Particularly, GAL is concerned with the rise of regulation produced by private international standard-setting bodies, not subject to the control of the regional government or their legal systems (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005). Private organizations are being ‘encouraged’ to comply with the interventions, mostly indicators, private voluntary standards, and certifications, defined by these transnational organizations. The Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) is an example of a private international body that is trying to regulate beef sustainability, by defining at the global level what should be regarded as sustainable beef by their country members, as well as the objectives, principles, and criteria for sustainable beef, which should then be translated into regional supply-chain management interventions.

Despite being a relatively new idea, Global Administrative Law (GAL) phenomena can be conceptualized as:

...comprising the mechanisms, principles, practices and supporting social understandings that promote or otherwise affect the accountability of global administrative bodies, in particular by ensuring they meet adequate standards of transparency, participation, reasoned decisions and legality and by providing effective review of the rules and decisions they make (Kingsbury, 2005, cited by Tripathi, 2011, p. 362).

Although GAL is fundamentally linked not only to international and administrative law and upholds good governance practices of participation, transparency and accountability, it is still criticized because it is also linked to organizations with an imperial character. This is because it has “the capacity to guide conduct by providing incentives and permitting the imposition of sanctions even when they lack independent coercive powers” (Cohen and Sabel, 2005, cited by Tripathi, 2011, p. 357). In this way, GAL promises to ensure the democratization of international law by normalizing how these imperial institutions function and are organized, in order to assure the accomplishment of the basic premises of globalization “to promote democratic ideals, ensure free trade, equal opportunity, and free flow of information” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 358). Therefore, in the era of rule-making transnational organizations — a type of imperial institution – GAL can be seen as the guardian of globalization and democratic ideals. Through its normative commitment with “internal administrative accountability, protection of private rights or the right of the states,

and promotion of democracy” (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005), GAL attempts to regulate and to confer legitimacy to the governance structures of those emerging, and eventually not broadly democratic, imperial institutions.

The control of the governance systems of imperial institutions is a debatable and controversial aspect of the emerging Global Administrative Law (GAL) school of thought. By exerting its normative power over the governance of those institutions, GAL can be seen as maintaining the *status quo*, mainly the liberal ideas of capitalism and the dominance of both the global North over the global South and “the capitalist classes at the expenses of subaltern peoples” (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005, p. 52). This critique of GAL enhances the classical opposition between law reformists and revolutionists. By improving the accountability of transnational organizations with an imperial character, GAL is seen by law reformists as exercising its normative commitment with the rule of law in order to give voice to the concerns of disregarded groups. In contrast, in the view of revolutionists, this promotes the stabilization of the current international order, when in reality what is needed is a radical change of the existing global order (Kingsbury, Krisch, & Stewart, 2005, p. 52). The stabilization of a new global order through the adoption of acceptable structures of dominance had been discussed by Chimni (2004), who claims that through the adoption of legal, political, sociology, and ethical worldwide acceptable norms, a global state is not just arisen, but also being accepted and consolidated within the states’ borders. Thus, according to Chimni (2004), “the social effectiveness of general norms is ensured by the enforcement power of international institutions conjoined with a fragmented and incommensurate structure of states, emphasizing the *continuing significance of sovereign states* even as the global state emerges” (p 5).

Despite these criticisms, GAL still offers a good model of global governance for MSIs acting in the transnational and national arena. The local context, like the geopolitical environment, not only influence but also are influenced by MSI interventions. Thus, the legitimacy of an MSI can be affected if these particularities are not properly considered and addressed along both its governance process and interventions development.

3.4. The role of local context in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives and Interventions

Stakeholder requirements are driven by the local context, reflecting political, geographical, cultural, economic, business, and other considerations. These requirements can vary significantly

in different parts of the globe, and therefore understanding and including the local context is crucial in understanding the development and outcomes of MSIs.

In a broad perspective, the global North is more concerned with environmental issues, while in the global South, social issues are the prevalent sustainability concerns (Barkemeyer et al., 2013). In a more narrow scope, the local political, cultural, and social aspects can affect notions of legitimacy as “criteria of legitimacy are contingent on historical understandings at play and the shared norms of the particular community or communities granting authority” (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, p. 351). For example, Iceland fish producers and state allies developed a national non-governmental alternative to the transnational Marine Stewardship Council that reflected nationalism of its fishery industry and also attempts to create a program more reflective and responsive to local needs (Foley, 2017), while developing countries, such as Indonesia and Colombia, are concerned with power inequalities between the poor and less affluent and the powerful and dominant stakeholders (Köhne, 2014; Selfa, Bain, & Moreno, 2014).

Thus, a fit also between local notions of legitimacy and the policies and enforcement mechanisms translated into sustainability interventions is desired as it can enhance the perceived legitimacy (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, p. 352) of a multi-stakeholder initiative and influence the broad adoption of its interventions among members of the supply chain. Additionally, shifts in terms of local notions of legitimacy should be monitored, and governance arrangements, notably stakeholder engagement in the decision-making process, need to evolve and change either to keep, or even enhance, the perceived legitimacy of the initiative among local stakeholders and the broad public (Bennett & Bennett, 2016). This type of shift would also ensure political legitimacy, according to Bernstein & Cashore (2007).

Local context can also affect the relevance or importance of science-based versus value-based approaches to addressing sustainability issues. Perceptions, opinions, and values (Manning, 2013, p. 11) vary from place to place, while science tends to be more global. Stakeholders from the north do not necessarily have the same values as stakeholders from the south, as already revealed by the comparison between some sustainability standards and certifications studies conducted in developed and developing countries (Foley, 2017; Köhne, 2014; Selfa et al., 2014). Additionally, Indigenous and traditional knowledge is often left out of deliberations. In that sense,

it is desirable to reach a ‘fit’ between local context values and organizational values, the latter reflected in the governance processes and sustainability standards and certifications interventions.

In line with this ‘fit’ feature is the convention theory framework which, in an “interpretative approach to conventions” (Batifoulier, 2001, cited by Ponte & Gibbon, 2005, p. 24), postulates that “all action is justified in relation to common sets of principles” (Boltanski and Thevenot (1991), cited by Ponte & Gibbon, 2005, p. 7). In that sense, conventions (i.e. current and local social norms and standards) impose a relationship of mutual influence between individual and organizational decisions. Moreover, in convention theory, “at any particular time and locality, there may be multiple justifications of action operating at the same time” (Ponte & Gibbon, 2005, p. 7). Different from the rule of law, where enforcement is assured through a judicial system, the coercive capacity of conventions is less straightforward and conferred by potential social sanctions. The loss of a certification credential due to non-conformity with the standards, which can lead to public rejection and loss of market share, for instance, is a practical example of conventions’ normative sanction.

Finally, the local business context is also important, in terms of drivers for sustainable supply chains (e.g. competitive advantage, reputation loss as well as stakeholder concerns (e.g. environmental and social pressure groups, consumer demands)) (Seuring & Müller (2008), p. 1703). Furthermore, Seuring & Müller (2008) suggest that “focal companies”¹⁰, which receive the blame for environmental and social issues that occur downstream and upstream of their supply chains, usually adopt the strategy of demanding the members of their supply chain to comply with environmental and social standards (Seuring & Müller, 2008, p. 1704). Unilever, for instance, is a focal company that, pressured by their consumers and stakeholders, led and had a prominent role in the development of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). Thus, focal companies are a type of ‘transnational-national’ organization that, influenced by both global and local context, tend to lead the implementation of sustainability interventions upstream and downstream of their supply chains.

The fact that MSIs and their interventions are heavily influenced by local context, partly explains the proliferation of these types of initiatives and interventions on a global scale and their

¹⁰ Defined by Seuring & Müller (2008) as “those companies that usually (1) rule or govern the supply chain, (2) provide the direct contact to the customer, and (3) design the product or service offered” (p. 1699)

consequent governance-related problems. In particular, the local context is most influential on the levels of interaction and negotiation with local actors, so that there is an adequate balance between the interests of all stakeholders involved in the process. Nevertheless, multiple interpretations of the guidelines of a global governance system are inevitable so as to reflect the environmental and social realities of each geographical setting (Arce & Viteri, 2013; Bain et al., 2013; Tallontire et al., 2011). Thus, the role of local context must be considered to evaluate and understand the successes and failures of MSIs.

3.5. Evaluation of Good Governance in Multi-stakeholder Initiatives

Studies that examine global governance as practiced by various MSIs and their interventions (i.e. standards and certifications) tend to use the broadly recognized key principles of good global governance: participation, transparency, and accountability (African Development Bank, 1999; Grindle, 2010; OHCHR, n.d.; The Asian Development Bank (ADB), 1998; World Bank, n.d.). Legitimacy is determined by adherence to good governance practices, and the pursuit of legitimacy exerts a huge influence over private global governance arrangements (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Bennett & Bennett, 2016). For example, in Bernstein & Cashore's study of non-state market driven (NSMD) governance initiatives, they found that their pursuit of political legitimacy was defined as "the acceptance of shared rule by a community as appropriate and justified" (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, p. 348).

The analysis of good governance based on participation, transparency and accountability, has been observed in the food retail business (Fuchs et al., 2011), and the natural resource management field, mostly forest law and management and water management literature (Khanal, 2007; Markell, 2010; Montgomery, 2013; Secco, Da Re, Pettenella, & Gatto, 2014; Stojanovska, Miovska, Jovanovska, & Stojanovski, 2014). In general, evaluation of MSIs are concerned with the process of developing MSIs (i.e. input legitimacy) and of the outcomes of the MSIs (i.e. output legitimacy).

3.5.1. Input Legitimacy Concerns of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

As previously defined, input legitimacy focuses on democratic aspects of the decision-making process and is concerned with ensuring the participation of a broad and representative set of individuals during the development of norms and regulations. In general, researchers have found

MSIs to have a democratic deficit when it comes to their standard-setting and governance processes, specifically with respect to not engaging stakeholders, power imbalances, and lack of deliberative democratic capacity.

With respect to participation, MSIs do not always promote the expected level of stakeholder engagement (Fransen & Kolk, 2016). This is because MSIs tend to adopt a *strategic* approach to engaging with stakeholders, because of the challenges in including all stakeholders. That is, those involved “use the expedients of urgency, reaching consensus, and pragmatism to steer deliberation trajectories in specific directions, define categories of ‘stakeholder’ and frame acceptable formats of engagement.” (Ponte, 2014, p. 262). For instance, Cheyns (2011) study on inclusiveness in RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) and RTRS (Roundtable for Responsible Soy) in Asia and Latin America revealed that the strategic engagement approach adopted by these MSIs ended up having an exclusionist effect, and particularly limited the voices of local and smallholders communities wanting to deliberate principles of justice. Although inclusion is ideal, Köhne’s (2014) study shows that engagement and participation beyond the main stakeholders is a challenging task in a multi-stakeholder approach.

Furthermore, there is often a lack of engagement of producers in the governance process (Bennett, 2017; Bennett & Bennett, 2016; Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). The inclusion of producers in the highest bodies of a multi-stakeholder initiative is viewed as a best practice (Lloyd et al., 2008) and is seen as important to not only address the democratic deficit of MSIs (Bennett, 2017) but also to achieve moral legitimacy in the international arena (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). The inclusion of small-scale producers is a matter of social justice and their inclusion in the governance process can foster knowledge and expertise sharing, and thus produce better outcomes (Bennett, 2017). Nevertheless, there are indications that small-scale producers are not properly engaged in MSIs, particularly those producers located in developing countries (Bennett, 2017). Specifically, in Bennett & Bennett’s (2016) socio-political case study, they analyzed whether and how legitimacy shaped decisions about including producers in the governance of the Fair-Trade standards and certifications. They found that the pursuit of external legitimacy was the main driver for including and excluding producers from the governance process over the years. In another study, Bennett (2017) identified the prominent influence of focal companies at the highest levels of decision-making in MSIs to the detriment of producers’ involvement (Bennett, 2017).

Closely linked to weak stakeholder engagement is the presence of power imbalances amongst different stakeholders in MSIs (Cashore, Auld, & Newsom, 2004; Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Foley, 2017; Fuchs et al. 2011; Köhne, 2014; Selfa, Bain, & Moreno, 2014). In their study of food retailers, Fuchs et al. (2011) highlighted the democratic deficit in terms of the lack of voice and the power imbalance between small farms located in developing countries and retailers located in developed countries. This latter aspect reinforces the traditional inequality between the global south and the global north extensively discussed in global governance literature, particularly in forest management (Barkemeyer, Figge, & Holt, 2013; Ebeling & Yasué, 2009; Higman, Nussbaum, AGUILAR, Nardelli, & Scrase, 2002; Marx & Cuypers, 2010; McDermott, 2013). Similarly, Bernstein & Cashore (2007) provide the example of Unilever, a multi-national corporation, which exerted a lot of influence on the highest bodies of Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and created doubts about the democratic aspect of this NSMD initiative among some environmental and social groups. These concerns limited the adoption of MSC and prompted this MSI to promote governance reforms to overcome its deficit in terms of democracy and thus be perceived as more legitimate.

Another concern related to participation is the lack of deliberative democratic capacity (Bäckstrand et al., 2010; Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009; Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016; Greetje Schouten, Leroy, & Glasbergen, 2012), and related to this, the inability of some deliberative members to influence outcomes (Cheyns, 2011; Djama et al., 2011 cited by Ponte, 2014; Silva-Castañeda, 2012). For instance, in the forest sector, the enforceable market capacity of a non-state market driven initiative – FSC certification – was deeply studied and testified by Cashore, Auld, & Newsom (2004), but more recent studies in the agriculture-related sector has shown that this binding characteristic of some multi-stakeholder arrangements is usually associated to a ‘quasi’ participative governance process. The deliberations derived from the decision-making process of those arrangements are usually a reflection of the voices of a select group of powerful stakeholders (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014).

Nevertheless, the inadequate level of stakeholders’ participation and engagement even in deliberative governance arrangements is believed to be one of the causes of the emergence of conflicts among stakeholders (Gulbrandsen, 2005). This was shown in Köhne’s (2014) ethnographic study on land-related conflicts between rural communities and big palm oil producers

certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in Sumatra, Indonesia. The power asymmetry between rural communities and certified producers and the lack of participation and engagement conferred to the communities into the scheme caused the rise of land conflicts.

Thus, MSIs can reinforce established power structures (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014) and intensify power asymmetries among stakeholders (Fuchs et al., 2011; Partzsch, 2011), and thereby limit capacity to overcome the established political *status quo*, notably in developing countries. Selfa et al. (2014) revealed that the unequal distribution of power and associated social injustices that existed because of state laws was amplified by the adoption of Bonsucro biofuel certification by powerful sugar cane and ethanol producers in Colombia. In other words, this MSI was influenced by the political context in Colombia, and is in line with Seuring & Müller's (2008) claim that legal demands or regulations exert huge influence over initiatives and interventions. Similarly, in Indonesia, Köhne (2014) showed that the RSPO regulation ended up helping powerful and certified organizations to better impose their claims in land disputes with small farmers, while in Colombia, there was manipulation of state laws such that the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) standards were set by powerful economic groups for their own benefit and to the detriment of the overall community (Selfa, Bain, & Moreno, 2014). Nevertheless, despite some evidence on the contrary (Foley & McCay, 2014, p. 10), these issues may be less pronounced in developed countries. In the Icelandic fishery sector, Foley (2017) demonstrated how the power of a coalition of local stakeholders, including the state, led by an influential fishing association, led to the successful development of a national sustainability standard and certification intervention.

Thus, the local political and social context, can positively or negatively influence the governance process of MSIs with respect to democratic process and participation. Even when some less affluent groups participate in the decision-making process of MSIs, their capacity to influence the outcome is limited because some issues brought to the table by these more vulnerable groups are viewed as inappropriate to the overall sustainability debate. For example, local communities that brought political issues that impacted their livelihoods, such as land rights and GMOs, to RSPO and RTRS forums, respectively, ended up being disqualified by the MSIs through claims of militancy or idealism acts (Cheyns, 2011). This situation reveals not only a conflict between the already discussed notions of legitimacy among the stakeholders of both initiatives but also the denial of the political influence over their outcomes.

3.5.2. Factors Affecting Output Legitimacy of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

The democratic legitimacy gap in MSIs has been blamed for the lack of positive sustainability outcomes (Fuchs et al. 2011; Ponte, 2012; 2014), or output legitimacy. For example, when Suiseeya & Caplow (2013) applied a procedural justice framework to their study of forest carbon projects, it revealed that the lack of proper stakeholder engagement, particularly non-engagement with vulnerable groups, compromised the ability of standards, aimed at promoting social justice in global forest governance, to produce effective outcomes. Ponte (2012) also highlighted that the MSC's lack of input legitimacy resulted in a lack of robust environmental results, the exclusion of labour and other socio-economic problems from its scheme, and insufficient engagement with fisheries in developing countries. Indeed, Ponte saw the MSC initiative as a way of creating a market for sustainable certified fish rather than as a means to generating effective sustainability outcomes.

Despite conferring legitimacy to an initiative, deliberative democracy does not assure sustainability outcomes (Bäckstrand et al., 2010). In fact, power asymmetry is usually a reality in such arrangements and the inadequate level of stakeholders' participation and engagement even in deliberative governance arrangements can reduce the prospect that members will exert influence on the outcomes (Cheyins, 2011; Djama et al., 2011 cited by Ponte, 2014). According to Dingwerth & Pattberg (2009), by overemphasizing deliberations and other aspects of good governance, MSIs end up focusing more on process rather than on outcomes, which can "increase the governance costs and decrease the organizational autonomy of transnational rulemaking organizations" (p. 714).

Thus, the inherent complexity of multi-stakeholder arrangements, particularly if they are highly democratic, limits their market expansion and, consequently, their capacity of producing sustainability outcomes (Ponte, 2014). In fact, top-down, business-led, and less democratic initiatives, may have more power than MSIs to generate sustainability outcomes (Ponte, 2014).

Nevertheless, when legal demands/regulation aligns with the goals of MSIs in a broad, participative, and inclusive governance process from the first stages of their development, the prospects for promoting sustainability impacts on the ground are greater. Foley's (2017) study of the production and power phenomenon in Iceland's fishery industry that led to the successful implementation of the Iceland Responsible Fisheries (IRF) program, through "the integration of

social relations of production, state–producer collaboration, and globalized governance and trade norms” (p. 923), is a notable example of the positive influence of state participation in a sustainable MSI intervention.

It is worth noting that MSIs might perform better in rich and democratic countries than in poor and ‘not so democratic’ ones, because in general, industries can afford to implement standards and certifications and have access to capacities and resources sometimes unavailable for developing country industries. Additionally, many of these countries have strong social and environmental regulations and educated citizens that coexist in a sense of community and mutual respect. In this context, injustice is less tolerated, and representative democracy is the norm. Thus, MSIs may be more democratic and have more impact in these countries. On the other hand, this raises doubts about the capacity of MSIs to produce positive impacts in countries that struggle with broad political and social problems such as corruption and power imbalances among poor and vulnerable and rich and powerful individuals. In such a difficult environment, other types of initiatives, such as state-related sustainability interventions and law enforcement, could be preferred and stimulated as those might be the only ones capable of producing real outcomes in developing countries.

3.6. Evaluation of Governance using GAL

The good governance principles of GAL have already been used to analyze governance strategies of transnational organizations. For example, Koh (2016) used the GAL framework to evaluate the adherence to good governance practices of an international governance regime, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Statistics Office (ASEANstats). The author viewed this indicator regime as a powerful method of governance for modelling behavior by “...regulating and influencing a state’s behaviour through the exercise of either diagnostic or mobilizing power...” (Koh, 2016, P. 162). In evaluating the indicator-building process using GAL, Koh aimed not only to understand ASEAN’s regulatory power through indicators, but also to explain how it may be “moderated, supervised, or kept in check” (Koh, 2016, p. 179). The author findings show that ASEAN has an authoritative potential, but the lack of good governance practices can impede its expansion.

Standards are recognized as a good governance practice, being widely adopted by several business sectors to regulate organization’s behaviors in a supply-chain. Moreover, GAL is

evolving in the study of trans-governmental regulation and administration, including in private standard-setting activities (Thompson, 2012, p. 137). For instance, Kanevskaia (2016) used GAL to analyze the standard-setting development process of a hybrid organization, through an analyses of the legal framework of three standard-setting technology institutions. The analysis highlighted the value of using GAL to analyze the legitimacy of standard-setting initiatives to show: the *de facto* powerful control produced by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) standards; and the participation, transparency, and accountability gaps of these institutions.

Another noteworthy study by Mattli & Büthe (2005) was a comparison between the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), a private transnational organization responsible for the establishment of international accounting standards, and the U.S. Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB), a private national organization responsible for determining accounting principles (Kingsbury, Krisch, Stewart, et al., 2005, p.11) that should be followed by businesses in the U.S.A. Mattli & Büthe (2005) proposed a framework based on the Global Administrative Law (GAL) principles and a modified Principal-Agent (P-A) theory¹¹ to study the influence of the macro-political climate (Latham, 1999, p. 25) on strengthening or loosening up administrative law procedures and on influencing how several public and private principals handled delegations to a private agent: one acting internationally – IASB – and the other acting nationally, in the U.S.A. – FASB. Mattli & Büthe (2005) demonstrated that there is great potential for both P-A and governance problems to be solved by applying principles of administrative law, in the case of FASB, and Global Administrative Law (GAL), in the case of IASB.

Nevertheless, GAL is still an evolving analytical framework and its application to the evaluation of MSIs is still a relatively new concept.

3.7. Thesis objectives and Rationale

The primary aim of this case study is to evaluate the legitimacy of both the governance and the standard and certification development processes of two North America's multi-stakeholder

¹¹ “Agency theory is directed at the ubiquitous agency relationship, in which one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), who performs that work” (Eisenhardt, 1989).

sustainable beef initiatives – CRSB, a national initiative linked to a broader transnational initiative, and Grasslands Alliance, a transnational initiative, and compare and evaluate these initiatives with respect to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) so as to confront their practices with a benchmark MSI. This thesis focuses mostly on good governance aspects related to the organizations (i.e. internal governance, such as who is governing CRSB and Grasslands Alliance, who's excluded, etc.), but also on good governance aspects related to the rules produced by the organizations object of the case study (i.e. standards, principles, criteria, certification, implementation). In both cases, the development stage is the focus of the present study.

Thus, this thesis tries to answer the following two research questions:

1. *To what extent do the two MSIs demonstrate input legitimacy in their governance processes and in the sustainability interventions they are developing?*

The input legitimacy is important as it can confer authority on these initiatives in terms of defining sustainable beef for the entire industry.

2. *What can be learned about input legitimacy by comparing the governance processes and interventions of these two MSIs to an established initiative (i.e. RSPO)?*

RSPO was used as a benchmark because it is an old and consolidated initiative, founded in 2004, with full ISEAL membership status, and it has implemented lots of processes and practices to address several criticisms of its governance process over the years, such as lack of proper engagement with smallholders.

The Global Administrative Law (GAL) principles of participation, transparency (particularly external transparency, which is the focus of this thesis), and accountability is the analytical framework adopted for analyzing legitimacy. This analytical framework is expanded by using ISEAL definitions of these principles, as described in the following chapter. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Evaluate the extent to which participation, transparency, and accountability in the governance process can be regarded as organizational principles;
- Evaluate the extent to which participation, transparency, and accountability principles influence the private voluntary standard and certification development processes;

By evaluating whether the participation, transparency and accountability principles of Global Administrative Law (GAL) are presented in the earliest stages of development of the

governance, private voluntary standard, and certification development processes of a national and a transnational MSI, this thoughtful and evidence-based approach will improve, in terms of legitimacy construction, both governance and private voluntary standards and certification structures in future sustainability initiatives, not only in the beef industry but also in other food systems. This knowledge may 1) serve as a benchmark tool for organizations acting in other types of meat industries and food systems who are interested in demonstrating the legitimacy of their initiatives; 2) assist retailers and end-users to analyze the private voluntary standards and certifications available in the market and to decide which one to select based on participation, transparency, and accountability criteria; 3) challenge other consolidated private voluntary standard and certifications initiatives to evaluate the need to reassess the legitimacy of their already established governance structures in terms of participation, transparency, and accountability principles.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative content analysis is the method adopted in the present case study to evaluate whether and how the development of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance, a national and a transnational multi-stakeholder initiative, respectively, demonstrate the GAL principles of participation, transparency, and accountability. The criteria defining each principle was developed based on ISEAL best practices both for governance processes and for the development of private voluntary standards and certifications. Particularly, this study follows Harris's (2001) eight steps for conducting a qualitative content analysis research using secondary data. The documentation that is publicly available on the CRSB and Grasslands Alliance websites was examined. As the Grasslands Alliance governance structure is still being developed and therefore there are no governance-related documents, the documents of the Food Alliance, which is managing the Grasslands Alliance, were examined.

1. Qualitative Content Analysis Methodology

According to Weber (1990), there is no straightforward way of conducting Content Analysis (p. 13). Nevertheless, after evaluating the potential of using organizational secondary data in business ethics studies, Harris (2001) proposed a process for conducting Qualitative Content Analysis research, which aims to address the validity and reliability aspects of this type of method, using eight steps, as outlined below.

Step 1 - Identify research questions and constructs

The focus of the present study is to answer the research question *To what extent do good global governance principles guide both the governance process and the interventions being developed by two MSIs aimed at making the beef industry in North America more sustainable, and what can we learn in terms of input legitimacy by comparing them to an established initiative (i.e. RSPO)?* The constructs were derived from legitimacy as defined by Global Administrative Law (GAL).

Step 2 - Identify the texts to be examined

According to Koppell (2010), scholars will likely find evidence of an organization's competitive strategy within its governance structure and associated texts, which reflect the principles that drive organizational practices (Bennett & Bennett, 2016, p. 337). Moreover, 'Rules and conditions of participation' are the main organizational governance instruments (Ponte & Gibbon, 2005) and are stated in by-laws, statutes, and other governance-related documents. Thus, more than 1,500 pages of governance-related documents available on the internet (i.e. by-laws, annual reports, news, and websites from CRSB, Grasslands Alliance, and Food Alliance) were selected for analysis.

Step 3 – Specify the unit of analysis

According to Holsti (1969, p. 116, cited by Harris, 2001, p. 198), the unit of analysis is “the specific segment of content that is characterized by placing it in a given category”, and it must be consistent with the research question (Insch, Moore, & Murphy, 1997, p. 10). Thus, paragraphs were adopted as the unit of analysis, as answering the research question implied a fine and detailed examination of the governance-related documents to find evidence of the GAL's criteria.

Step 4 – Determine the categories to be used

The definition of the categories for codes came from the Global Administrative Law (GAL) and its three principles of good governance practices: participation (“Allowing stakeholders to participate in the firm” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 319)), transparency (“The perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender” (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016, p. 1788).), and accountability (“A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's (past or future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct” (Schedler, 1999)).

Step 5 – Generate the coding scheme

In order to generate the coding scheme, best practices (Table 3) for each of the three categories of GAL were identified and extracted from the ISEAL codes and guidelines, specifically, from its three Codes of Good Practice – Setting Social and Environmental Standards (ISEAL, 2010), Assessing the Impacts of Social and Environmental Standards Systems (ISEAL,

2014a), and Assuring Compliance with Social and Environmental Standards (ISEAL, 2018a) – Principles for Credible and Effective Sustainability Standards Systems (ISEAL, 2013a), and Sustainability Claims Good Practice Guide (ISEAL, 2015). ISEAL best practices in terms of participation, transparency, and accountability were selected to define the criteria for the GAL principles because ISEAL codes and guidelines are broadly recognized as the best instruments available for standard-setting initiatives acting in the sustainability realm to confer legitimacy to both their governance process and interventions: private voluntary standards and certification.

The first version of the coding manual was developed by taking the best practices in Table 3 and developing criteria related to participation, transparency, and accountability using ISEAL aforementioned documentation. This process yielded 13 criteria for participation, 11 criteria for transparency, and 10 criteria for accountability (see Criteria in Table A.1 Appendix A). In this step, the first version of the data collection form (Table A.2 Appendix A) was also developed and the coding rule was defined, such that organizational initiatives that had the presence of a best practice should be coded as ‘1’, and its absence should be coded as ‘0’. It was decided that multiple classifications of documents, paragraphs, and criteria would be acceptable during the coding process, i.e. documents and paragraphs could be allocated to more than one criterion, and a criterion could be allocated to more than one document and paragraph.

Table 3: Summary of Best practices for Global Administrative Law (GAL) using ISEAL Codes and Guidelines (ISEAL, 2010, 2013a, 2014a, 2015, 2018)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principles

Best Practices Based on ISEAL Codes and Guidelines

1. Participation

The organizational environment is inclusive and non-discriminatory, promoting stakeholder's involvement in the governance processes. External perspectives are taken into account, for example by making an intended sustainability claim available for stakeholders to provide feedback. Impartiality in relation to the promotion of stakeholders' participation in the governance process is observed, and all of them, despite their size and/or geographic location, are treated fairly and objectively. Even in draft form, getting external input in the standard-setting process helps to ensure that there is a common understanding of the intent of the standard, and better informs stakeholder's participation in the standard development stage. The standard system and certification scheme are accessible and affordable, with reduced barriers to implementation. Active inclusion of stakeholders in the assurance process increases the transparency and thus public confidence in the process and can be a vital source of information.

2. Transparency

A governance process that is transparent is impartial and is under the scrutiny of stakeholders so has less risk of corruption or conflict of interest. The most effective strategy in the presence of a conflict of interests is being transparent around the potential conflict. Transparency also builds confidence in the organizational processes as the public is more trusting of institutions that are open.

3. Accountability

The organization provides accountability to stakeholders and to those who are affected by, and are meant to benefit from, its activities. Ensuring the participation in, and the transparency of, organizational activities and processes is a way to be accountable to the general public. A clear accountability process assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors. Being an ISEAL full member is a best practice in terms of accountability. One of ISEAL's objectives is to solve the perceived accountability gap of private standard-setting NGOs. ISEAL promotes the accountability of its members through its codes and guidelines.

Step 6 – Pilot study and revision

In this step, tests on semantic and face validity, as well as on reliability, should be conducted in order to validate the categories and the coding scheme before proceeding with the real case studies (Harris, 2001, p. 199). Semantic validity certifies whether the phrases coded in a specific category have the same meaning and “relate to the category in a similar fashion” (Harris, 2001, p. 194). Face validity, on the other hand, confirms whether the categories seem to evaluate the constructs that they are “intended to measure” (Weber, 1990 and Babbie, 1995, cited by Harris, 2001, p. 195). For instance, a criteria has semantic validity if it is related to the category that it is supposed to be measuring. A criteria evaluating participation cannot be together in a group with other criteria related to a category evaluating accountability. Furthermore, the categories have face validity if their group of criteria are accurately evaluating what they are supposed to evaluate, i.e. the group of criteria within the participation category are adequately evaluating participation, and not something else. Finally, checks on reliability have the objective to validate the replicability and consistency of the method. In other words, a study can be considered reliable if similar results are observed by applying the same research method several times in other studies by other researchers (Hagood, 1941, p. 219, cited by Harris, 2001, p. 194).

First Pilot Study

After filling the coding manual with codes, as described in Table A.1 (Appendix A), one pilot was conducted by the principal researcher by applying the first version of the data collection form (Table A.2 Appendix A) to the governance-related documents available on the internet of The Accountability Framework (AF) initiative. The AF is an initiative that tackles the problems of deforestation and human rights violations in the supply chain of agriculture and forest industries. It was selected for the first pilot of the Content Analysis because it is a sustainability initiative analogous to the CRSB and Grasslands Alliance initiatives. Among CRSB’s core projects is the verification framework (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-t). Similar to the AF, CRSB’s verification framework set the principles for the development of both the private voluntary standards and certification that forms CRSB’s *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-r). Rainforest Alliance (RA), a founding member of AF, is also one of the NGOs that formed the Grasslands Alliance, a coalition that is setting the private voluntary standards and the certification for sustainable, climate-friendly beef production in North

America (Grasslands Alliance, n.d.-d). Those aspects were regarded as strong arguments for considering AF for the first pilot of the Content Analysis.

During the first pilot of the Content Analysis, the text describing criteria was refined as follows:

- Participation: Criteria 1.6, 1.7, and 1.8 was adjusted in order to reflect not only practices related to standard development but also governance-related practices.
- Transparency: Criteria 2.4 of the transparency principle was reduced – the words internal and external were removed – with the purpose of simplifying the concept of stakeholders. Two more criteria – 2.13 and 2.14 – were added to the transparency principle. The first pilot was conducted with an initiative that has among its members organizations with broad experience in terms of the development of governance practices related to sustainability, and the disclosure of Theory of Change – “a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context” (“What is Theory of Change?,” n.d.)– and Project Workflow was observed in the Accountability Framework (AF) initiative.
- Accountability: The text of criteria 3.1, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.7 of the accountability principle were also adjusted. The text of criteria 1 of the accountability principle was adjusted in order to consider either the organization’s object of the case study or at least one of their founding members as an ISEAL full member. Being an ISEAL full member is a demonstration of high commitment to the principle of accountability, as it is very demanding to follow all its principles, codes and guidelines. Having at least one of its founding members as an ISEAL full member is evidence that the principle of accountability is within the governance system of the organization object of the case study. The text of criteria 3.4 and 3.5 of the accountability principle were adjusted to expand the possibilities of communication channels and governance documents to be analyzed. Similarly, to the text of criteria 2.4 of the transparency principle, the text of criteria 3.7 of the accountability principle was reduced – the words internal and external were removed – to simplify the concept of stakeholders. Finally, the sub-categories were adjusted to be aligned with the new text of each criteria and the code ‘Not Applicable’ (NA) was added to both the coding manual and the data collection form in order to allow the eventual purge of criteria not related to the organizations object of the case study.

After the first pilot, the coding manual had 13 criteria for participation, 13 criteria for transparency, and 10 criteria for accountability. Table A.3 (Appendix A) and Table A.4 (Appendix A) show the second version of the coding manual and data collection form, respectively, after the refinements.

Second Pilot Study

From the second versions of the coding manual and the data collection form, a second pilot was conducted by three coders, including the principal researcher, with the Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard Project (VCS) Initiative (SD VISTa) (Verra, n.d.-a). The objective of the second pilot was to train the two new coders in the coding procedure, and to conduct semantic and face validities reviews.

The Sustainable Development Verified Impact Standard Project (VCS) Initiative (SD VISTa) aims to develop a standard to be adopted by organizations that want to properly assess and communicate the social, environmental, and economic impacts of their projects. SD VISTa main targets are project developers who need to demonstrate the sustainability outcomes of their projects to investors, buyers and other stakeholders in a consistent and transparent manner. SD VISTa is a initiative conducted by Verra, a NGO founded in 2005 by “environmental and business leaders who saw the need for greater quality assurance in voluntary carbon markets” (Verra, n.d.-b). Verra’s SD VISTa initiative will produce not only a standard for sustainability projects to demonstrate their outcomes effectively, but also a certification scheme preceded by an initial assessment process conducted by an independent third-party audit. The initiative is currently in the public consultation stage for its standard, an aspect that motivated its selection for the second pilot as Grasslands Alliance is in the same stage as SD VISTa.

After the second pilot, some adjustments were made in the text of the second versions of both the coding manual and the data collection form. The order for some criteria were modified to reflect a more logical sequence of evaluation. For instance, criteria 1.6 of the participation principle became criteria 1.1, as the mapping of stakeholders is a prior stage from which other organizational practices should evolve. Criteria 1.1, prerequisites for stakeholder participation, became criteria 1.2 of the participation principle, as this stage can only be properly conducted after mapping the stakeholders. Examples were included in both criteria 1.1, 1.4, and 1.5 of the participation principle, and criteria 3.2, 3.7, and 3.8 of the accountability principle for clarification purposes. Further explanations were also added between ‘round brackets’ (()) for some criteria. That was the case for criteria 1.3 of the participation principle. The coders decided to make clear that the practice for improving stakeholder’s participation should be correlated with the membership segmentation – bodies – derived from the mapping process stated in criteria 1.1. The same occurred for criteria

3.5, 3.6, and 3.9 of the accountability principles, where a list of possible names of governance documents – by-law, statute, rules of procedures – that should be examined was added. Some criteria were divided in two in order to increase the accuracy of the coding process. Criteria 1.8 of the participation principle was split to both contemplate the occurrence of consultation practices not only in the present but also in the past and investigate the existence of a formal process for public consultation in the governance documents. The same happened in criteria 2.8 of the transparency principle: it was divided to contemplate in one criteria who is evaluated and in the other one the existence of an evaluation process in the standard system. The coders identified the need to include one more criteria in the transparency principle, criteria 2.13, to consider the practice of giving feedback to the public about the results of the consultation process. Additionally, criteria 1.13 of the participation, 2.5 of the transparency, and 3.10 of the accountability principles were removed due to their excessive level of subjectivity. Next, the sub-categories were adjusted accordingly, and three columns were added to the data collection form with the purpose of facilitating the referencing procedure of the coding process: Reference – Document/Page/Paragraph/Item/Title – Key Words, and Comments. After conducting the second pilot, the coding manual had 13 criteria for participation, 14 criteria for transparency, and 9 criteria for accountability. Table A.5 (Appendix A) and Table A.6 (Appendix A) display the third version of the coding manual and data collection form, respectively.

Third Pilot Study

The third pilot was conducted by two coders, one of them being the principal researcher. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) initiative was chosen, and the third version of the data collection form was used in this stage. The objectives of the third pilot were to allow the coders to practice the knowledge gained from the second pilot, to test the procedures of the coding process, to check validity, and to assess the reliability of the two coders' decisions.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a not-for-profit NGO initiative that aims to “transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm” (RSPO, n.d.-b), by acting in several sectors of the palm oil value chain: producers, processors, traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, investors, banks, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). RSPO defines environmental and social criteria that shall be met by organizations in order to receive the Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) certificate. Founded in 2003, RSPO is one of the oldest ‘roundtable

format' sustainability initiative, counting nowadays with 3,698 members, and having certified near 20% of the palm oil produced worldwide. RSPO was chosen for the third pilot due to its experience in sustainability private voluntary standard and certification development process. Additionally, as an ISEAL full member, RSPO must comply with ISEAL's principles, codes, and guidelines, being thus a benchmark in terms of the adoption of participation, transparency, and accountability principles.

Some final adjustments were made in the text of the third versions of the coding manual and the data collection form after the third pilot. The texts of criteria 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 of the participation principles, as well as criteria 2 and 6 of the accountability principle, were adjusted in order to become more clear. Criteria 13 of the participation principle become criteria 12 of the transparency principle. Information regarding the cost for implementing the certification system were considered by the coders to be more related to the transparency principle. Criteria 14 of the participation principle was removed due to its high-level subjectivity. Criteria 5 – Public information about the membership costs is available on the website – was added to the transparency principle, as the coders, while conducting the third pilot, considered it a primary information that must be available for public consultancy. Criteria 12 was removed from the transparency principle, as criteria 10 and 11 of the participation principle already covered the aspect of stakeholder's engagement in the certification system. The text of the criteria 14 – now criteria 15 – of the transparency principle was adjusted not only to turn it more clear, but also to not limit to one year the demonstration of organizational accomplishments in a timeline. Criteria 7 of the accountability principle was removed, as the release of relevant decisions made by the organization is an aspect already covered by criteria 2 of the accountability principle. Finally, some words were added by the coders to the key word column of the data collection form in order to guide the principle researcher in the process of finding relevant documents to be analyzed during the next stage: Step 7 – Collect the data. After the third pilot, the coding manual had 12 criteria for participation, 15 criteria for transparency, and 8 criteria for accountability. Table A.7 (Appendix A) and Table A.8 (Appendix A) show the fourth and final version of the coding manual and data collection form, respectively, after the refinements.

The results from the coding process conduct by coders one and two are displayed in Tables A.9 (Appendix A) and A.10 (Appendix A), respectively. The inter-rate reliability (IRR) among the

two coders was calculated using ReCal (ReCal, n.d.) tool. ReCal2 calculates the IRR among two coders through, among others, the percent agreement reliability coefficient. The percent agreement coefficient was adopted to evaluate the IRR, and the result was 80%, thus in the range 77% to 97% to be regarded as acceptable (Harris, 2001).

Step 7 – Collect the data

The actual set of governance-related documents from CRSB, Grasslands Alliance, and Food Alliance were coded by the principal researcher using the fourth version of the data collection form (DCF) in the form of a spreadsheet. The documents available on the internet were meticulously searched and analyzed in order to detect the presence of good governance principles of the Global Administrative Law (GAL), where participation, transparency, and accountability concepts were defined and operationalized by referring to ISEAL best practices, in the governance, private voluntary standards, and certification processes and practices of these two MSIs.

The coder conducted a detailed examination of a broad set of governance-related documents from CRSB, Grasslands Alliance and, when necessary, Food Alliance, such as by laws, statutes, webpages, reports, news, to find answers for the 35 questions related to participation, transparency, and accountability principles covered by the criteria column of the DCF. As Grasslands Alliance does not have a formal governance structure, and being managed by one of its founding members, the Food Alliance, by-laws and others governance-related documents of the latter were analyzed. The words contained in the key word column of the DCF were used as a guide to find the relevant documents to be analyzed, and the set of documents found and used to answer each question were registered in the reference column of the DCF. Regarding the documents and paragraphs analyzed and registered in the reference column of the DCF, the presence of evidence that satisfied the criteria of the DCF was coded as '1', and the absence of evidence was coded as '0' in the respective best practice column of the DCF. Questions considered not applicable by the coder were not only coded as 'N/A' in the same best practice column of the DCF but also expurgated from the calculation of the scores. The coder's notes for each question were registered in the comment's column of the DCF. A maximum score of 35 – being 12 for participation, 15 for transparency, and 8 for accountability, was achievable for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Finally, the data related to the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability collected by the coder for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance are shown in Chapter III, in tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

Step 8 – Assess validity and reliability

Checks on validity and reliability were done in Step 6, during the first, second, and third pilots.

CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

In this chapter the findings revealed by the qualitative content analysis conducted with the two MSIs, CRSB and Grasslands Alliance, are presented.

1. Participation

Overall, CRSB demonstrated more good governance practices related to the participation principle (9 out of 12) than did the Grasslands Alliance (3 out of 12) (Table 4). Criteria 1.1 to 1.4, related to stakeholder identification, membership, and representation, were present only for the CRSB. Based on these criteria, the CRSB initiative seems to be pursuing a very participative governance model, willing to give voice to its stakeholders in the decision-making process. For example, for Criteria 1.4, members vote for the CRSB Council Chair, who is the person that leads the CRSB Council, and for their representatives on the CRSB Council.

Table 4: Presence of Criteria for Participation and Details for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Coding: 1 = present, 0 = absent.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Code	CRSB	Code	Grasslands
1.1	There is public information about the process for identifying stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (i.e. development of a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members, etc.)	1	Demonstrates that a mapping process was conducted in the earlier stage of establishment of the initiative.	0	Lists some stakeholders to whom the standards and certification should be valuable and mentions membership but does not describe them .
1.2	There is public information about prerequisites and limitations for participation of all stakeholders in the governance process (membership).	1	Members must support its vision, mission, and principles , agree on improving sustainability, and pay annual fees.	0	There is no information about prerequisites/limitations for participation in the governance process.
1.3	There is public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise).	1	Efforts for engaging with stakeholders are presented in 2017 Annual Report .	0	There is no evidence of a document that highlights the engagements efforts.
1.4	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders .	1	Members vote for the CRSB Council Chair (CRSB has a Council instead of a Board) and for their representatives on the CRSB Council.	0	It is not clear whether the Board represents all stakeholders. The latter are not described.
1.5	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevant (i.e. Advisory Committees) bodies allows the participation of, and review by, all stakeholder groups through their representatives.	1	Members make appointments to the Council , partake in Technical Working Groups , advise the Council during meetings and general assembly , and vote /approve actions requiring membership input.	1	Board decisions and meetings are governed by consensus among board members. Disagreements are documented in minutes, or decisions are tested for a period of time.
1.6	There is a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process .	0	Despite having a Communications and Marketing Committee, no evidence of a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process were identified.	0	No evidence of a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process are available.
1.7	There is a process (e.g. a vote), that allows members of the organization to participate in revisions (e.g. of governance documents or standards).	1	Votes are adopted in General Assembly, Meetings of the Council, Committees, Technical Working groups, and Representatives elections.	1	Votes are adopted to remove members of the Board and Directors, to fill governance seats, and to approve debt incur requested by the Executive Director and staff.
1.8	There is a process of public consultation related to governance-related practices (e.g. the standard-setting).	1	The process of public consultation is stated in the standard documentation .	0	There is no evidence of a process of public consultation for any governance-related practices.
1.9	There is evidence that public consultation related to governance-related practices is occurring or has occurred .	1	Indicator and Communication and Marketing Committees conducted 3 public consultations about indicators in 2017 .	1	Conducted 1 public consultation about standards that ended on December 31, 2017.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Code	CRSB	Code	Grasslands
1.10	There is public information about how stakeholders can participate in the certification system.	1	Stakeholders: Assurance protocol specifies their responsibilities in the certification process and Certification Body Requirements lists the procedures for conflict resolution.	0	No information about how stakeholders participate in the certification system.
1.11	There is public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the certification system.	0	No evidence of practices for improving stakeholder's participation, such as smallholders, in the certification system.	0	No information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the certification system.
1.12	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the certification system , either as participants in the audit and review, or as observers during the assessment process.	0	No information about how stakeholders are engaged in the certification system, either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process.	0	No information about how stakeholders are engaged in the certification system, either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process.
Total of Participation Criteria Present		9		3	

Seats on the Council are allotted to at least one representative of each Organization Type (Table 5), which range from those involved in the beef supply chain to other stakeholders, such as NGOs.

Table 5: CRSB’s Council Membership. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c, p. 5)

Membership Category	Organization Type	Council Seats
Chair	Member/Observer/Ex-Officio	1
Supply Chain Stakeholder	Producer Organizations	3
	Processors	2
	Retail and Food Service	2
Associate Members	NGO	2
Members at Large	Food & Agriculture Business	1
	Any Member of the CRSB	1
Ex-Officio	Government	As requested
Observers	Scientific Advisors and Youth	As requested

Both CRSB and Grasslands Alliance meet criteria 1.5, which addresses the extent of representation and participation in the decision-making process. However, each initiative approaches this differently. CRSB members partake in various ways (e.g. technical working groups) and provide advice to the Council and then vote on actions requiring membership input. The main forum for decision-making processes is CRSB’s General Assembly, where according to the by-laws, "the deliberations of the General Assembly meetings shall be recorded in minutes signed by the Chair and approved by the General Assembly" (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c, p. 4). In contrast, the Grasslands Alliance decision-making occurs at the level of the Board, which is governed by consensus among board members. If consensus is not reached, disagreements are documented in the minutes, or decisions are tested for a period of time. Thus, the Grasslands Alliance consensus and test period approach in the decision-making process seems to be an extra effort to reach internal legitimacy (Drori & Honig, 2013), being so regarded as more appropriate according to the literature as this demonstrates commitment with stakeholder engagement, the ideal level of stakeholder’s involvement (Arnstein, 1969).

Although the CRSB seems to uphold best practices by including stakeholders in decision-making through representatives at the General Assembly, minutes were not publicly available and so it was not possible to evaluate the quality of stakeholder participation in the decision-making

process of CRSB. Additionally, the absence of the minutes made it difficult to evaluate stakeholder's participation for improving the governance process. Furthermore, neither CRSB nor Grasslands Alliance seem to have a policy or process to allow stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process (Table 4, Criteria 1.6), but if the minutes of the General Assembly were publicly available, this could have provided some examples of this practice.

The CRSB, through its already retired Indicator Committee and Communication and Marketing Committee, has begun and finalized in 2017 a consultation process (Table 4, Criteria 1.8 and 1.9), which included two rounds of public consultation for both CRSB standards for beef production and primary processing stages of the beef supply-chain. In the standard documentation available on its website, CRSB states the progress of public consultations, but it seems that this initiative still does not have a structured public consultation process implemented.

The CRSB's Indicator Committee (see Acknowledgments) developed the Standard through a multi-stakeholder, collaborative approach, which included two rounds of public consultation, that align with the five GRSB principles. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, 2017b, p. 9)

Indeed, as stated in the CRSB 2017 Annual Report, the 2nd draft of the Sustainability Indicators for Beef Production was released for public consultation on March 2017. From June to August 2017, CRSB released the 1st draft of the Sustainability Indicators for Beef Processing for public consultation. Finally, on October 2017 the 2nd and final draft of the Sustainability Indicators for Beef Processing was released for public consultation (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-a, p.16). Nevertheless, the complete absence of information regarding the feedback to the public about the consultation stage of the standards can be seen as a lack of full engagement of stakeholders. In fact, regarding Arnstein (1969) continuum of stakeholder's involvement, this situation evidences an absence of proper information dissemination to stakeholders by CRSB.

Furthermore, there was no evidence that either CRSB or Grasslands Alliance have a process for improving stakeholders' participation in the certification system or that stakeholders are engaged in the certification system, either as participants in the audit and review, or as observers during the assessment process (Table 3, Criteria 1.11 and 1.12). However, in some cases, the absence of a criteria is related to where the initiative is in terms of its maturity. For instance, the CRSB is still waiting for the results and conclusions of The Canadian Beef Sustainability Acceleration (CBSA) Pilot to start its *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* certification system.

Nevertheless, due to the importance of the broad adoption of the certification system in order to realize sustainability outcomes, both initiatives could be starting to elaborate on how to improve participation of stakeholders in their certifications from the earliest stages of implementation.

2. Transparency

Similarly to what was observed during the evaluation of the participation principle, CRSB demonstrated more good governance practices (8 out of 15) than Grasslands Alliance (5 out of 15) (Table 6) in relation to transparency. According to Fuchs et al. (2011), “transparency can be internal and external, i.e. information available only to members and information available to the general public” (p. 358). As the present thesis focuses only on external transparency, this aspect can explain the low score for both initiatives, as the documents accessible only to CRSB, Grasslands Alliance, and Food Alliance members were not in the scope of the present study.

There was no information on the CRSB and Grasslands Alliance websites on the requirements these MSIs follow to ensure transparency in the governance process (Table 6, Criteria 2.2). This is a curious aspect of the governance process of those initiatives as transparency is stated as a guiding principle of their certification systems. In the case of CRSB, the transparency principle is within the credible guiding principle of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*: “credible to all stakeholders, securing trust through robust assurances, transparency, inclusivity and vigorous scientific review” (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-b). Likewise, Grasslands Alliance/Food Alliance (GAFA) addresses transparency in the certification system through one of its eight guiding principles: “Maintain transparency and the chain of custody” (Food Alliance, n.d.-c). Nevertheless, stating transparency as a guiding principle only of the certification system is not sufficient to assure governance transparency, which is defined as “access to information on decision-making structures and processes” (Fuchs et al., 2011, p. 358).

Table 6: Presence of Criteria for Transparency and Details for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Coding: 1 = present, 0 = absent.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Code	CRSB	Code	Grasslands
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1	Information regarding the governance structure of CRSB can be found in various documents.	1	Grasslands Alliance has no governance structure so far, but Food Alliance's by-laws provides information about the governance process.
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	0	Transparency is within one of the guiding principles (credible) of the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework, but public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency is not available on the website .	0	Transparency is one of Food Alliance guiding principles but is more related to the certification system. No information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency are available on the website.
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	0	There is a Conflict of interest Policy related to the certification system . In the governance level , it might be addressed in the codes of ethics, but this document is not available on the website .	0	There is a Code of Ethics related to the certification system (inspectors) to deal with conflict of interests, but it is not publicly available . No information on how it is dealt in the governance.
2.4	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	1	Despite presenting the definition of organizational stakeholders on the website, the information is not consistent in all the documents available.	0	No clear definition of organizational stakeholders is available on the website, and there is no information about the process for identification of stakeholders.
2.5	Public information about the membership costs is available on the website	1	The Annual Revenue of each Organization Type defines the Annual Member Fees (2016/17) to be paid.	0	No information about the membership costs is available on the website or by-laws, only information regarding certification costs.
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website				
2.6	1. Information regarding the standard development process	0	No information regarding how the CRSB standard development process was conducted.	0	No information regarding how Grasslands Alliance and Food Alliance standard development process were conducted.
2.7	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	1	Information about the Sustainable Beef Production Standard and the Sustainable Beef Processing Standard is available.	1	Information about, for instance, Food Alliance Sustainability Standard for Livestock Operations is available.
2.8	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	NA	As CRSB standards were just launched, no impact is available to be monitored.	0	Food Alliance states some "general" impacts, but no concrete results and milestones reached are presented.
2.9	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims	1	A chain of custody audit is conducted on processors willing to sell beef with a CRSB sustainable claim.	0	The "Supply chain verification requirement" policy, with the requirements for labeling packaged products, is not available.
2.10	5. Information about who is evaluated	1	Beef producer or primary processor in Canada are evaluated.	1	Beef cattle and bison, ranches and farms, in North America, are evaluated.
2.11	6. Information about the process of evaluation	1	The information is in the Assurance Protocol.	1	The information is in the Food Alliance Producer Certification Program Standards and Procedures Manual.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Code	CRSB	Code	Grasslands
2.12	Public information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website	0	No information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website. CRSB lists only the type of audit and who should pay for them.	1	The information regarding the certification fees is available on Food Alliance Producer Certification Program Standards and Procedures Manual.
2.13	A Theory of Change is available on the website	0	A Theory of Change is not available on the website	0	A Theory of Change is not available on the website
2.14	There is evidence that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated into the initiative	0	There is no evidence that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated into the initiative.	0	It seems Food Alliance never conducted a public consultation about their standards, and Grasslands Alliance yet did not develop the standard after the public consultation.
2.15	A Timeline demonstrates organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices	1	The 2016 Annual Report presented a timeline for the beef operations indicators development process.	0	There is no timeline to demonstrate organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices.
Total of Transparency Criteria Present		8		5	

CRSB and Grasslands Alliance are not fully transparent about the mitigation procedures that would be followed in the case of a conflict of interest (Table 6, Criteria 2.3). CRSB addresses conflict of interest that occurs in the certification system, with mechanisms to mitigate and manage their occurrence, through its Conflict of Interest Policy (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-f). CRSB's by-laws also make a reference about a Code of Ethics Policy (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c) that might address the issue of conflict of interest in the governance level, but this document is not available on the website. Similarly, GAFA has a Code of Ethics that addresses the conflict of interest that might occur in the certification system: "inspectors are bound by a code of ethics designed to ensure: Confidentiality of the information provided by the applicant; no conflict of interest exists between the applicant and the inspector; professionalism in representing Food Alliance" (Food Alliance, n.d.-b). Nevertheless, this code of ethics is not publicly available on the website. Thus, by not providing information about mitigation procedures in the occurrence of a conflict of interests that arise in the governance level, both initiatives demonstrate a lack of commitment with respect to governance and external transparency (Fuchs et al., 2011).

Neither CRSB nor Grasslands Alliance provide structured information regarding the standard development process on their websites (Table 6, Criteria 2.6), nor demonstrate how they incorporated the feedback received from the public consultation on the initiative (Table 6, Criteria 2.14). CRSB explains that its current affiliation to ISEAL as a subscriber does not bind it to comply with all ISEAL good practices, such as the disclosure of information on both the standard development process and the adoption of the feedback received from the public consultation.

Wherever possible, the CRSB has followed the ...ISEAL...Standard-Setting and Assurance Codes to ensure good practices are followed throughout the framework development process. The CRSB is currently a subscriber to ISEAL, which is an initial step to full membership commonly used by programs in their early development stages. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-b)

Indeed, the commitment with some ISEAL good practices can be observed in CRSB's certification system, such as a description about its Standards revision process on the website:

Revisions to a Standard are at the sole discretion of the CRSB. In the event that a Standard does not address a specific circumstance, or further clarification within a Standard is required, anyone can complete the CRSB Request for Revision to the Standard form and submit it to CRSB. The CRSB shall review all revision requests and may update the Standard if they determine an update is appropriate. The final decision on the request for revision will

be documented in CRSB meeting notes or via electronic vote. Revision requests will be handled in a timely manner based on the three to five year review cycle policy of the CRSB. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, 2017, p. 23)

Likewise, GAFA states on its website some general procedures followed when developing its standards:

Food Alliance often contracts with independent consultants to create standards. The concepts and practices found in the standards generally come from “best management practices” identified through research at public agencies and land grant universities. In addition to consultants, Food Alliance staff are advised in the standards development process by our Stewardship Council, a volunteer group of farmers, ranchers and other representatives of the food industry, university and agency researchers, and advocates for farm labor, animal welfare, the environment and consumer affairs. (Food Alliance, n.d.-d)

The lack of information regarding both the standard development process and the adoption of the feedback received from the public thus demonstrates that CRSB and Grasslands Alliance are not following the general practice usually observed in MSIs of encouraging stakeholders engagement more in the standard development than in the governance process (ISEAL, 2015; Potts et al., 2014, cited by Bennett, 2017, p. 65).

The CRSB and the Grasslands Alliance did not meet criteria 2.13, related to the establishment of a Theory of Change (ToC). The concept of Theory of Change, according to ISEAL, is described below.

A planning and management tool that defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks—interchangeably referred to as outcomes or results is depicted on a map known as a pathway of change/change framework, which is a graphic representation of the change process (adapted from www.theoryofchange.org). (ISEAL, 2013)

ToC defines the baseline in terms of inputs, outputs, and the aspirational outcomes from the adoption of the sustainability standards, which are expected to improve over time. Additionally, ToC can be adopted as the primary step of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) programme, an important practice for demonstrating compliance with 9 out of 10 ISEAL’s Principles for Credible and Effective Sustainability Standards Systems: 1. Sustainability; 2. Improvement; 3. Relevance; 4. Rigour; 5. Engagement; 6. Impartiality; 7. Transparency; 9. Truthfulness; 10. Efficiency (ISEAL, 2013). Being an important feature to control and demonstrate the sustainability outcomes of standards, ToC would help to solve the issue of what seems to be opaque transparency – absence

of clear and reliable information about decisions and outcomes – assist in reaching clear transparency, and thus improve the reliability of both initiatives (Fox, 2007), and demonstrate transparency for accountability (T/A) (Kosack & Fung, 2014).

3. Accountability

Both initiatives had very low scores in relation to the good governance practices associated with the accountability principle: CRSB scored 2 out of 8 and Grasslands Alliance 3 out of 8 (Table 7). This may be because of the type of ISEAL affiliation that each initiative has. It is assumed that the full adoption of ISEAL codes of good practices by MSIs aimed at developing private voluntary standards and certifications to address sustainability provides legitimacy and accountability to their governance processes (Dowdle & Dowdle, 2006; Paiement, 2017). Hence, a high weight was given to ISEAL full membership affiliation through Criteria 3.1, which states that at least one of the initiatives' founding members shall be an ISEAL full member. Rainforest Alliance, one of Grasslands Alliance founding members, is an ISEAL full member.

CRSB did not demonstrate a proper accountability process that assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors (Table 7, Criteria 3.3). According to its by-laws, CRSB receives some donations from other organizations:

The Executive Director of the CRSB serves at the pleasure of the Council. All other members of the Administrative Staff report to the Executive Director. Tasks include but are not limited to ... (vi) Coordinating with institutions and organizations. Supporting projects with other organizations and donor agencies serving GRSB stakeholders and any interested party. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c)

The aforementioned statement, citing GRSB instead of CRSB, seems to be an error. GRSB is only mentioned in this part of CRSB's by-laws. Probably CRSB used GRSB by-laws to write its own document and forgot to change GRSB to CRSB in this part of the text. Thus, it has been assumed that the correct text would be "... Coordinating with institutions and organizations. Supporting projects with other organizations and donor agencies serving *CRSB* stakeholders and any interested party" (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c, p. 9). Additionally, it is stated in CRSB's by-law 17: "Funding & Financial Obligations: (c) The CRSB is funded by membership dues and project funding" (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c, p. 10).

Table 7: Presence of Criteria for Accountability and Details for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Coding: 1 = present, 0 = absent.

Criteria #	Criteria Description	Code	CRSB	Code	Grasslands
3.1	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations, is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	0	CRSB is an ISEAL subscriber .	1	Rainforest Alliance is an ISEAL Full Member .
3.2	There is an accountability process/mechanism, a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report) implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website	1	CRSB gives accountability regarding its activities through reports and news/announcements.	0	Food Alliance gives accountability only regarding its finances, a legal requirement for NGO in the U.S.
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	0	Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), which is neither an independent auditor nor a financial audit company, spearheaded CRSB and ratified CRSB's budget .	1	The responsible use of financial resources is addressed in Article 8, Funds and Private Foundations of Food Alliance's by-laws .
3.4	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable about organizational activities	0	No channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, were evidenced.	0	No channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, were evidenced.
3.5	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1	The Executive Director reports to the Council. The CRSB Council is appointed by the CRSB membership and is comprised of 11 individuals that represent each Organization Type.	1	The Executive Director reports to the Board, which is comprised of food-related stakeholders.
3.6	The organization has a mechanism to deal with dispute (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	0	CRSB has no mechanism to deal with dispute.	0	Food Alliance has no mechanism to deal with dispute
3.7	Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e. inclusiveness) of performance , that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	NA	CRSB's measures of performance are going to be conduct in about five years , considering as a baseline the National Beef Sustainability Assessment benchmarks.	0	No public information about operational and social indicators are available on the website.
3.8	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	NA	CRSB explicitly states that the legal aspects are not in the scope of the certification system.	0	There is no evidence that the accountability process is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices.
Total of Accountability Criteria Present		2		3	

Thus, the evidence of financial donation receipt stated in CRSB's by-laws indicates the need for compliance with Criteria 3.3.

CRSB and Grasslands Alliance did not meet Criteria 3.6, related to the establishment of a mechanism to deal with a dispute. As stated in the evaluation of the transparency principle, CRSB has a Conflict of Interest Policy and GAFA has a Code of Ethics to deal with disputes and conflicts relative to the certification system, but neither of these initiatives have a similar mechanism related to the governance process nor disclose appropriate information related to the status of their disputes and conflicts. Besides addressing the aforementioned transparency issues, the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to deal with disputes in the governance process would help to manage the inherent "problem of many eyes" (Bovens, 2007), or too many people to be accountable to, usually experienced by managers in MSI.

Neither initiative demonstrated disclosure of operational and social measures of performance (Table 7, Criteria 3.7). The novelty of CRSB explains the absence of these measures of performance. In 2016, CRSB conducted a preliminary benchmark assessment regarding the status of the beef industry in Canada in terms of economic, social, and environmental aspects. According to CRSB, this initial assessment will be the base for future evaluations:

The first National Beef Sustainability Assessment, released in October 2016, benchmarked the current status of the Canadian beef industry across environmental, social and economic parameters, and provided a baseline to monitor and measure progress in future assessments. The assessment informed the development of the CRSB's Sustainability Strategy to help target future work, particularly under the CRSB's Sustainability Projects pillar. (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-p)

Thus, Criteria 3.7 was considered as 'not applicable (NA)' to CRSB. Nevertheless, it was considered applicable to GAFA. Even though Food Alliance is already an advanced initiative, it did not demonstrate measures of performance through a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, the starting point for the establishment and control of operational, social, and other measures of performance:

An ongoing process through which an organisation draws conclusions about its contribution to intended outcomes and impacts. A monitoring and evaluation system consists of a set of interconnected functions, processes and activities, including systematic collection of monitoring data on specified indicators and the implementation of outcome and impact evaluations. (ISEAL, 2014a)

The absence of data regarding operational and social measures of performance demonstrates not only an important gap in terms of broad accountability (as defined by Romzek (1996), cited by Ospina, Diaz, & O'Sullivan, 2002) for the GAFA initiative but also a lack of fit with the evolutionary notion of social accountability (Chan & Pattberg, 2008) where acclaimed multi-stakeholders initiatives should be positioned. In other words, GAFA seems not to be full accountable to all its stakeholders.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

This section discusses and compares the results presented in Chapter 3 related to the good governance principles of participation, transparency, and accountability for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance to RSPO.

1. Participation

As a subscriber of ISEAL, CRSB stated that it partially followed the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards during the process of developing the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework*, and this is shown by this study, as CRSB met the majority of the criteria of the participation principle. In contrast, Grasslands Alliance met only 3 of the 12 criteria. Currently, Food Alliance is managing Grasslands Alliance and does not even have minimum ISEAL status. In fact, among the three Grasslands Alliance founding members, only the Rainforest Alliance has ISEAL status, being a full member (ISEAL, n.d.-d).

CRSB demonstrated to be a real multi-stakeholder initiative. Of particular interest is that it allots 3 out of 12 seats on the Council for producers (Table 4, Criteria 1.5; Table 5), conferring the highest level of representativeness to this stakeholder group. Other stakeholder groups have only 1 or 2 seats on CRSB's Council. The inclusion of producers in the decision-making process of the highest bodies is considered by the literature as a best practice (Lloyd et al., 2008). Additionally, including producers in the highest bodies of the governance structure is not only a way to address the democratic deficit usually perceived in MSIs (Kingsbury et al., 2005; Tripathi, 2011) but also a way to encourage information sharing and to generate effective sustainability results on the ground (Bennett, 2017), thus conferring output legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999) to an initiative.

Both initiatives have adopted what is considered institutional best practices in their governance process, that is they have “an executive board or a board of directors; an assembly or council, often with specific chambers that represent different stakeholder interests; technical advisory committees of appointed experts; and an executive director with support staff that handle the day-by-day operations” (Ponte, 2014, p. 262).

Nonetheless, CRSB still needs to evolve in relation to some basic governance practices. The RSPO provides the minutes of the General Assembly, which clearly show actions and decisions

made (RSPO, n.d.-b, p.9). Although the CRSB by-laws state that stakeholders can participate in the decision-making process, it does not provide the minutes of the General Assembly, which could compromise the external legitimacy (Provan & Kenis, 2008) of this initiative. Furthermore, the absence of the minutes did not allow an evaluation of the quality of participation according to the ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969), and is also a concern as it could signal a lack of transparency.

While CRSB and Grasslands Alliance do not seem to have a process that allows stakeholders to give suggestions for improving governance (Table 4, Criteria 1.6), the RSPO initiative allows member representatives to propose improvements to the governance process during the General Assembly meeting, and decisions are registered in publicly available minutes. For example, during RSPO's General Assembly that occurred on November 10th, 2016, the representative of the Indonesia Growers Caucus, Edi Suhardi, proposed a resolution to the non-discrimination clause in the code of conduct, stating that:

The resolution calls for the RSPO to honour and implement the code of conduct and to ensure the RSPO adopts the principle of non-discrimination. So far, there have been indications that the RSPO has treated members differently or discriminatorily. For example, some complaints were treated (attended to) faster, others took longer to resolve. Some members have been pushed to abide by certain rules where others are not. We want RSPO to explicitly say that it will uphold the principle of non-discrimination. If you look at the RSPO document, this is not explicit. (RSPO, n.d.-b, p.9)

After some debate, the majority of RSPO members voted in favor of the proposed adjustments, which was registered in the minutes (RSPO, n.d.-b, p.10). Although this process is not formalized within the RSPO, a formal stakeholder engagement policy is considered a best practice for these types of initiatives (Lloyd et al, 2008, p. 43), and would be useful for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance since it would allow these initiatives to address issues of improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (Table 4, Criteria 1.3) and allowing stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process (Table 4, criteria 1.6), and would thus show stronger adherence to the participation principle, and improve their input legitimacy (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Indeed, CRSB seems to have recognized the need to engage more stakeholders, as in 2017 they: made efforts to engage with academia, with the establishment of CRSB's Scientific Advisory Committee; added 16 new members/observers; and conducted two

rounds of public consultation on the indicators (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-a).

A formal stakeholder engagement policy that sets up who, how, and when stakeholders would participate in governance-related activities, would establish the norms to be followed by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance when engaging stakeholders and help to address the accountability issues of the “problem of many eyes” (Bovens, 2007) and the “problem of many hands” (D. F. Thompson, 1980) inherent in MSIs. This could be particularly helpful for CRSB, as it is undertaking efforts to increase its membership base, which could add more complexity to the decision-making process. Additionally, formal engagement policies can improve governance efficiency, one of ISEAL credibility principles:

Areas where stakeholders have a voice in decision-making are clearly defined, and it is clear how they are engaged. There can be a tension between meaningful stakeholder engagement and efficiency of the standards system. It is important to determine the most appropriate opportunities for stakeholder engagement, but not to engage stakeholders unnecessarily at the expense of efficiency. Conversely, arguments regarding efficiency are not used as excuses to avoid meaningful stakeholder engagement. A balance must be achieved. (ISEAL, 2013)

Nevertheless, a major challenge as noted by ISEAL, and also discussed by researchers (e.g. Cheyns, 2011; Ponte, 2014), is to reach an adequate balance between the level of stakeholder participation and the efficiency of the governance process.

Neither CRSB nor Grasslands Alliance’s certification systems allow stakeholders to participate in the audit and review nor in the assessment process as observers (Table 4, Criteria 1.12). These are regarded by ISEAL as optional good practices (ISEAL, 2018, p. 14), and even more mature sustainability initiatives, such as RSPO, do not seem to allow more in-depth participation of stakeholders in the certification system. RSPO is currently working on improving its assurance system, more specifically due to concerns about “the quality, independence and credibility of RSPO assurance system and RSPO’s systems of supervision” (RSPO, n.d.-e). Those concerns, debated and voted during the RSPO 12th General Assembly (GA12) over the “Resolution 6h – Ensuring quality, oversight and credibility of RSPO assessments” (RSPO, n.d.-c, p. 10), lead to the establishment of the Assurance Task Force (TF) by RSPO Secretariat. The revision of RSPO’s Public Reporting and Stakeholder Engagement by TF is an indication that this initiative is planning to include more stakeholders in the certification system. This could be seen

as an attempt to comply with the ISEAL optional good practice related to stakeholder's involvement in the assessment process.

Improving the participation of stakeholders in the governance process, giving to them even more voice by allowing an active role in the certification system, can confer even more input and output legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999) to the initiative and differentiate a particular standard and certification scheme from similar competitors. Moreover, the search for legitimacy and the competition among certifications schemes are one of the main drivers for improving stakeholder participation in similar initiatives (Bennett & Bennett, 2016). Thus, CRSB and Grasslands Alliance should consider furthering the engagement of stakeholders in the certification system as a strategy to not only comply with an ISEAL optional good practice, but also to leverage their comparative advantage.

The CRSB and Grasslands Alliance initiatives are still in their early stages compared to the RSPO, which began in 2004. As these initiatives evolve, they can try to adopt advanced governance processes and practices to improve participation, such as establishing a stakeholder engagement policy¹², identifying stakeholders that are struggling to implement the certification system, and implementing strategies to facilitate certification. For instance, RSPO, probably due to criticisms from NGO's regarding the lack of voice given to smallholders on the decision-making process (Cheyns, 2011), implemented a Comprehensive Smallholder Strategy to deal with that issue (RSPO, n.d.-a, p. 41). More ambitious governance practices, such as allowing a more depth participation of stakeholders in the certification system, giving to them a more active role during the audit and review (ISEAL, 2018, p. 14), for instance, are desirable and can confer to the initiative a strategic advantage. Overall, from the RSPO experience, we can learn that an MSI to be 'all inclusive' must give voice to all stakeholders, including more vulnerable groups such as smallholders, on their decision-making forums. Thus, despite being located on developed countries, CRSB and Grasslands Alliance could conduct periodic checks to see if some vulnerable groups should be involved on their deliberations.

¹² It is a way to demonstrate commitment with the accountability principles of the stakeholder engagement standard: Inclusivity, Materiality and Responsiveness: "Inclusivity is about engaging at all levels" (p. 11), materiality is about determining the importance of the issues to be addresses, and responsiveness is about "the decisions, actions, performance and communications related to those material issues" (p. 12) (Accountability A.A., 2015)

2. Transparency

As observed during the assessment of the participation principle, the absence of the minutes of the General Assembly of CRSB and GAFA might have compromised the evaluation of some criteria of the transparency principle and could explain in part the low score received by both initiatives. For instance, members' actions and decisions registered in the minutes could have demonstrated that the governance processes of these initiatives were transparent and that the conflict of interest arising at the governance level were properly addressed (Table 6, Criteria 2.2 and 2.3). Even though CRSB and Grasslands Alliance did not present robust practices for improving governance transparency as RSPO, such as codes of conduct (RSPO, n.d.-k) and complaint systems (RSPO, n.d.-f), and did not disclose their Code of Ethics Policy to address conflict of interest that arise in the governance level, the minutes would had allowed a better assessment of these criteria. The availability of the minutes would also have improved external transparency (Fuchs et al., 2011).

RSPO address governance transparency through, among other, their codes of conduct and complaint systems. In the RSPO Codes of Conduct for Members and Supply Chain Associates, governance transparency is directly addressed, at a more broad and strategic level, in the transparency, reporting, and claims section, item 2 of both codes. For example, RSPO's Code of Conduct for Members states that "Members will commit to open and transparent engagement with interested parties, and actively seek resolution of conflict" (RSPO, n.d.-k). In a more narrow and operational level, governance transparency is addressed by RSPO through its Complaints System, "a fair, transparent and impartial process to duly handle and address complaints against RSPO members or the RSPO system itself" (RSPO, n.d.-f). In the RSPO's Complaints System, complaints are registered, their status are available for public view, and even the minutes with registers of the decisions made monthly by the RSPO's Complaints Panel are displayed on the website.

RSPO's codes of conduct and complaint system are not only practical examples of ways to tackle governance transparency at both the strategic and operational levels of the governance process but also can be seen as mechanisms for addressing transparency for responsible corporate behavior (Kosack & Fung, 2014) concerns. CRSB and Grasslands Alliance demonstrated governance transparency only at the strategic level of the certification system by stating

transparency as a principle of the *Certified Sustainable Beef Framework* (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-b) and as a GAFA certification system guiding principle (Food Alliance, n.d.-c). They lack governance transparency not only at the operational level of the certification system but also at both the strategic and operational level of the governance process, an aspect that according to studies can compromise the internal (Drori & Honig, 2013) and external (Provan & Kenis, 2008) legitimacy of both initiatives.

Indeed, in the scope of the certification system, a transparent policy to address conflict of interest is a requirement not only demanded by ISEAL but also by ISO and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) (ISO/IEC, 1996). In the scope of the governance process, however, it is also important to have a policy to broadly address conflict of interest involving internal and external stakeholders (Lloyd et al, 2008, p. 63). Thus, the establishment and disclosure of policies to address conflict of interest in the scope not only of the certification system but also of the governance process would confer internal and external (Fuchs et al., 2011) transparency to CRSB and Grasslands Alliance initiatives.

More developed MSIs, such as RSPO, usually establish and publicly disclose on their websites a formal procedure that informs about the processes related to standard development and review (RSPO, n.d.-l), a requirement associated with Criteria 2.6 (Table 6). Additionally, ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards determines some steps that should be followed when setting standards. ISEAL lists some Desired Outcomes, “the results that standard-setting organisations should seek to achieve” (ISEAL, 2014b), that were not fully evidenced by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. For instance, ISEAL’s Clause 4.1, Standard-Setting Procedures, demands that “The standard-setting organisation follows transparent procedures that are improved over time.” (ISEAL, 2014b). This primarily Desired Outcome demands that a standard-setting organization defines the procedures for standard development and review, taking into consideration stakeholders’ inputs, and leave them available for public view on the website. Nonetheless, CRSB and Grasslands Alliance did not fully comply with this ISEAL requirement.

CRSB did not disclose whether the feedback received from the public during the consultation stage was adopted by both initiatives (Table 6, Criteria 2.14). Although CRSB demonstrated having a process for standard review, it did not demonstrate a formal process for standard development. In contrast, GAFA showed that it follows some general procedures for standard

development but did not have a formal process for standard development and review. Full compliance with this crucial ISEAL requirement related to standard development and review process would likely solve what seems to be a problem of opaque transparency (Fox, 2007) for both initiatives.

Despite being a common practice among MSIs aimed at improving sustainability (Accountability Framework, 2016; RSB, 2014; RSPO, n.d.-m), the establishment of a Theory of Change (ToC) by standard-setting organizations in order to demonstrate their sustainability aspirations is not a compulsory ISEAL requirement:

Governance and Operations: The sustainability objectives underpin and inform all decisions and actions taken by the standards system. The standard setter also clearly defines its approach to achieving these objectives and determines the appropriate operational model for the context in which they are working. The scheme owner may use a 'theory of change' to define and explain its strategy. (ISEAL, 2013b)

The novelty of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance initiatives might explain the absence of a ToC. Nevertheless, similar MSIs, such as the Accountability Framework (AF), that like CRSB and Grasslands Alliance is in the earliest stages of development, established and disclosed a Terms of Reference (TOR) document that presents and maintains updated not only general information, purposes, and milestones of the initiative, but also its ToC (Accountability Framework, 2017). In fact, TOR, a requirement stated on ISEAL's Clause 5.1, Terms of Reference, which demands that "The standard-setting organisation has clearly articulated what the standard aims to achieve and why the standard is needed" (ISEAL, 2014b), was not evidenced by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Thus, the establishment of both ToC, a desired ISEAL practice, and TOR, a compulsory ISEAL requirement, would demonstrate not only external (Fuchs et al., 2011) and clear (Fox, 2007) transparency with relation to their sustainable strategy, but also output legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999) regarding the impacts and outcomes promoted by the initiatives over time, as a ToC serves as a clear baseline of an effective monitoring and evaluation programme.

The transparency principle was one of the most compromised by the absence of the minutes. Criteria related to conflict of interest, for instance, could had been evidence in practice through the register of the acts of the highest bodies in the minutes, as it was the case for RSPO. Additionally, of particular concern is the non-compliance with some ISEAL basic requirements, or Desired Outcomes, such as information about the standard development process. Notwithstanding, as both

initiatives evolve over time, it is expected that they become even more aligned with ISEAL requirements related to the transparency principle, such as the development and disclosure of a Terms of Reference (TOR) that, among others, defines their Theory of Change (ToC). These important practices, if applied by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance, would not only confer clear transparency (Fox, 2007) to both initiatives but also improve their perceived legitimacy.

3. Accountability

To be an ISEAL full member (Table 7, Criteria 3.1), and to comply with all its principles and codes of good practices, can be regarded as the best practice for MSIs willing to demonstrate a commitment to the accountability principle. In that sense, Grasslands Alliance is well positioned as Rainforest Alliance, one of its founding members is an ISEAL full member and can thus exert a positive influence in Grasslands Alliance future governance process. Regarding CRSB, they are subscriber to ISEAL, which is an early stage of affiliation, and it is expected that CRSB evolves to ISEAL full membership and thus improve its commitment to the accountability principle in the course of time.

Being transparent about, among other aspects, organizational financial performance is important to promote trust between stakeholders and the general public (Manning, 2013, p. 14). In that sense, financial accountability is an aspect of great concern for CRSB. As it receives some donations, the implementation of transparent and accountable financial governance procedures is needed. Moreover, to have the financial accounts audited annually by an independent auditor and to make them publicly available, as RSPO has done through its Finance Standing Committee – RSPO's Annual Financial Reports are endorsed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the independent financial auditing organization (RSPO, n.d.-h) – is an usual practice related to accountability.

CRSB, on the other hand, has their finances audited not by an independent auditor, but by one of its members, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), as stated in CRSB's by-laws: "(h) The CRSB budget will be approved by the CRSB Council and ratified by the CCA Board of Directors (for audit and accounting purposes) at the CCA Annual General Meeting" (Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, n.d.-c, p. 10). This seems not only inappropriate but also not to be in the scope of CCA activities to act as a financial auditing organization (CCA, n.d.-a).

Notwithstanding, CCA states that it “...spearheaded the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (CRSB)...” (CCA, n.d.-c), which is another odd aspect of the governance process of CRSB in relation to not only accountability, but also participation, as it can evidence a power imbalance problem in the governance structure. CRSB’s by-laws mention CCA only in this particular part of the text, and this accountability relationship between CRSB and CCA is not mentioned on the former’s website. Additionally, neither CRSB disclose its audited finances nor CCA, which annual audited financial reports are available for public view on its website, present any financial information about CRSB accounts (CCA, n.d.-b). Moreover, CCA’s finances are not audited annually by an independent auditor, but by a nominated auditor.

The lack of transparency in terms of financial accountability can have a negative impact on the external legitimacy (Provan & Kenis, 2008) of CRSB. Thus, basic adjustments in CRSB’s financial practices, to make them clearer and more compliant with aspects of financial accountability, are needed to not only fix some errors in the by-laws – it seems that where it is written GRSB should be written CRSB – and missing information but also reflect improvements in its finance-related governance processes.

Issues were observed with respect not only to financial accountability, but also governance accountability. CRSB and GAFA have in place policies that deal with dispute and conflict in the certification system, but not in the governance process, and they are not transparent in relation to how resolution of disputes and conflicts occur. To have a dispute resolution mechanism (Table 7, Criteria 3.6) is a practice that can demonstrate a commitment to not only accountability but also the transparency principle, two governance principles that are very correlated (O’Rourke, 2006; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Disputes and conflicts can arise in a multi-stakeholder environment and need to be properly addressed. Dispute resolution mechanisms, related to democratic mechanisms of control (Beisheim & Dingwerth, 2008), have been adopted by more mature MSIs to address potential disputes and conflicts related to the governance process and the certification system (e.g. ASI, n.d.; Bonsucro, n.d.; RSPO, n.d.-e). For instance, besides the RSPO Complaints System described previously in the discussion about the transparency principle, RSPO offers to its members a mediation service – The Dispute Settlement Facility (DSF):

The Dispute Settlement Facility is RSPO’s in-house facilitation service to support RSPO members (notably growers), local communities and other stakeholders to effectively use mediation as a means to help resolve disputes. It facilitates disputant parties to gain access

to information, contacts, know-how and experiences to assist them to resolve palm oil production-related disputes in cases where at least one party is an RSPO member. It also aims to resolve disputes between companies and communities on matters specifically relating to RSPO Principles & Criteria 2.2, 2.3, 6.4, 7.3, 7.5, 7.6 (No 2). (RSPO, n.d.-g)

Similar to its Complaints System, RSPO maintains a DSF website with, among others, its Terms of Reference (TOR), the list of DSF Advisory Group members, the minutes with registers of the decisions made by the Advisory Group, and the list and the status of current disputes (RSPO, n.d.-g). RSPO's Complaints System and DSF are mechanisms that demonstrate the concern of this initiative regarding ensuring transparency, accountability, and legitimacy to its governance process, as through them RSPO manages and keeps stakeholders informed about disputes and conflicts resolutions. The implementation of a comprehensive dispute settlement mechanism by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance is important to better demonstrate their governance legitimacy, as it can not only address dispute properly but also evidence a serious commitment with transparency and accountability principles.

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, associated with Criteria 3.7 (Table 7), is an important practice for demonstrating the sustainability of the outcomes and enhancing the legitimacy of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. CRSB demonstrated that it might implement an M&E system as it evolves over time. Food Alliance, which manages Grasslands Alliance, on the other hand, is a consolidated initiative that did not present a mechanism similar to an M&E system to monitor and control its impacts. As previously mentioned, an M&E system is one of ISEAL's most relevant practices, needed to demonstrate compliance with the majority of its Principles for Credible and Effective Sustainability Standards Systems. Indeed, more consolidated MSIs tend to adopt and implement an M&E system to be accountable with respect to their inputs, outputs, and intended impacts (Rainforest Alliance, n.d.-b; RSPO, n.d.-j). RSPO, for instance, has an M&E system in place to track the progress of RSPO's certification system, and their results are presented and publicly available through RSPO Impact Reports (RSPO, n.d.-j). For example, RSPO's 2017 Impact Report presents both operational measures of performance, like results and projections regarding GHG emissions of certified palm oil producers, as well as social measures of performance, like results relative to the inclusion of smallholder in RSPO certification system (RSPO, n.d.-i). The implementation of an M&E system to control and give accountability regarding CRSB and Grasslands Alliance sustainability measures of performance is a way of

evidencing compliance with most ISEAL principles, an important step towards improving the external legitimacy (Provan & Kenis, 2008) of those initiatives.

In summary, the unclear and unusual financial accountability relationship between CRSB and Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), where the latter spearheaded the former and is responsible for auditing its accounts, needs to be addressed. Ideally, CRSB should both have an independent auditor validating its accounts and leave its financial reports available for public view on its website. The adoption of a broad dispute resolution mechanism by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance, to address disputes in the certification system and in the governance process, is an important practice to demonstrate transparency and accountability to stakeholders. Finally, a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is an important practice to give accountability about CRSB and Grasslands Alliance outcomes and to demonstrate output legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999).

4. Conclusion

The good global governance principles of GAL – participation, transparency, and accountability – were identified to some extent in the governance process and interventions – standards and certifications – development process of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. In line with the MSI literature, which seems to focus more on participation than in transparency and accountability, CRSB seems to be more concerned with participation than with the other two principles of good global governance. Participation had a great weight in the overall better performance evidenced by CRSB when compared to Grasslands Alliance and, as input legitimacy is very much associated to the participation principle, this aspect of CRSB's governance process not only mostly explains its better performance but also can have a positive influence on its input legitimacy.

Regarding the comparison to RSPO, this thesis reveals that both initiatives have to evolve significantly in terms of good global governance practices. But it seems it is going to happen in the course of time as CRSB and Grasslands Alliance are MSIs in their initial stages of development. Nevertheless, in terms of input legitimacy, the RSPO comparison demonstrated the importance of monitoring variations in the local context, particular in terms of notions of legitimacy and engagement with disadvantaged stakeholders' groups, such as small farmers and producers. The latter aspect, in particular, is a usual source of conflict that can compromise the

perceived authority and thus, the legitimacy of an MSI if this group of stakeholders are not properly engaged in the decision-making process. In the initial stage of an MSI, it seems that a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and the leadership of focal companies – which is the case for CRSB with McDonald’s and Cargill – seems to be a more appropriate strategy as it allows the quick promotion and implementation of the standards and certification in the beef industry and stimulate the earlier adoption of key members of the beef supply-chain. But as CRSB and Grasslands Alliance become more mature, they should reassess this strategy and check the need to engage with more disadvantaged stakeholders’ groups, mainly small farmers and producers, and review the influence of focal companies in the governance process. Nevertheless, the future and inherent challenge for CRSB and Grasslands Alliance will be to do all of this without compromising the efficiency and thus, the output legitimacy of the initiatives.

CHAPTER 5. CONTRIBUTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CONCLUSION

1. Contribution of Research

Situated in the research field related to the global private governance exerted by non-state national and transnational organizations with *de facto* rule making power, this study filled a research gap regarding the adoption of the principles of GAL – participation, transparency, and accountability – as an analytical framework to assess the level of legitimacy of the governance processes as well as the processes of developing private voluntary standards and certifications. Additionally, no study has operationalized GAL’s principles using ISEAL best practices. This lack of association between GAL and ISEAL can be viewed as a research gap of the academic literature that was addressed by this thesis.

By applying a qualitative content analysis methodology and secondary data assessment in the governance-related documents available on the internet, this exploratory case study was conducted with two organizations acting in the beef industry, which is broadly recognized as an important contributor to negative social and environmental impacts. To date, MSIs developing sustainable private voluntary standards and certifications for the beef industry have only occurred in North America, and these organizations are in their earliest stages of the development process. The legitimacy assessment conducted by the present study at the earliest stages of these initiatives can be adopted as a framework for future similar research not only in the food but also in other economic sectors, and thus contribute to the development of effective sustainability initiatives and interventions in other industries by assuring that good global governance practices are observed from the development stage.

2. Contribution to Practice

CRSB and Grasslands Alliance would benefit directly from the results presented in this case study. As these MSIs and their sustainable interventions evolve over time, they can use the findings presented in this thesis to improve their governance, private voluntary standards, and certification processes in terms of legitimacy, notably in respect to the good governance principles of participation, transparency, and accountability. This study can be particularly useful for CRSB to

evolve from an ISEAL subscriber to and an ISEAL full-member, as important practices required to reach the ISEAL full-membership status are discussed in this thesis. Some examples are the establishment of a Standards Development and Revision Procedures, Theory of Change (ToC), and Terms of Reference (TOR). Despite having an ISEAL full-member – Rainforest Alliance – as one of its founding members, which can exert a positive influence on its future governance structure, Grasslands Alliance can benefit from this study as well. Grasslands Alliance is so far a multi-stakeholder coalition, evolving to an initiative that is currently defining its governance structure. Thus, the findings presented in this thesis can be used by Grasslands Alliance as guidelines for establishing effective and legitimate governance processes and practices.

Other organizations related to the food sector that are trying to mobilize the members of their supply chain and organize themselves around a multi-stakeholder type of global private governance to tackle sustainability issues, might also benefit from the present study. Particularly, those that object to adopting similar interventions – private voluntary standards and certifications – can use the results of this thesis to implement good governance processes and practices that take into account the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability from their earliest stages of development.

3. Opportunities for Further Research

The present study relied on secondary data as input for the qualitative content analysis method, so future studies using primary data would complement the present thesis. For instance, interviews or surveys with members of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance could be used in future research with the objective of gathering data relative to their knowledge and perceptions regarding good global private governance principles, particularly participation, transparency, and accountability. Based on that, the prospect of their initiatives to implement sustainability interventions that reflect those principles could be evaluated, thus creating a link between survey or interview results and the likelihood of present and future interventions implemented by CRSB and Grasslands Alliance being both perceived as legitimate and adopted by the members of the beef industry supply-chain.

Future research adopting a quantitative content analysis method would add to the arguments made in the present exploratory study. A list of words associated with the principles of

participation, transparency, and accountability of GAL, within ISEAL or other similar context, would be generated with the help of a quantitative content analysis software. This tool would then help the researcher to find the list of words in a broad range of governance-related documents, ideally not the limited ones available on the internet – secondary data – but also surveys and other complementary primary data sources. The scores received by CRSB – 75% for participation, 57% for transparency, 33% for accountability, and 54% overall – and Grasslands Alliance – 25% for participation, 33% for transparency, 38% for accountability, and 31% overall – as a result of this thesis would then be validated. This type of research approach would serve to provide a narrower and detailed assessment of the legitimacy of the MSI object of the present case study.

This thesis focused on input legitimacy. Thus, future research could look at the output legitimacy of CRSB and Grasslands Alliance. Additionally, they could also assess and compare the input and output legitimacy of both MSI in the course of time.

Similar qualitative and quantitative studies would not only have their findings used to complement and compared the ones presented in this thesis but also be applied to other food sectors. Furthermore, the applicability of GAL analytical framework, within ISEAL or other similar context, preferable in a qualitative content analysis research method, in other words, a research design similar to the present study, could also be tested in other food sectors to assess the legitimacy of their sustainability interventions. Combining the findings of future research and the present thesis would collaborate even further to improve the academic literature related to legitimacy – or the lack of legitimacy – and global private governance exerted by national and transnational non-state actors intervening in the sustainability of their supply-chains.

4. Limitations

Due to the novelty and consequent exploratory nature of the present study, both a qualitative content analysis and case study approach were adopted. This study relied on a thoughtful examination of secondary data – the governance-related documents made publicly available on CRSB, Grasslands Alliance, and when necessary, Food Alliance websites – to find in the text of these documents parts associated with the principles of participation, transparency, and accountability, in order to do the coding process, and thus answer the research question. There are

some limitations related to the research approach and method – qualitative content analysis and case study. The limitations of this study lie within this context.

4.1. Limitations of the Research Approach

It is important to have a clear definition of what to be analyzed in any research project. It can be an even more critical aspect in research designs that involve qualitative content analysis that rely on secondary data and case studies approach to the problems. So, it is crucial to evaluate the quality of the documents that are going to be selected as input for the research regarding authenticity, credibility, and representativeness (Scott, 1990, cited by Byrman & Bell, 2016, p. 334). As mention previously, organizational principles are declared in the governance-related documents, which texts can reveal the competitive strategy of an organization (Bennett & Bennett, 2016, p. 337). The governance-related documents made freely available on the websites of the organizations objects of the case study were selected as input for the research. Thus, it can be inferred that these documents are authentic, derivate from incontestable sources; credible, as the information contain within their texts are accurate and free from misrepresentation; and representative, as they typically contain information about organizational principles and practices.

4.2. Limitations of the Method

4.2.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

A common problem in content analysis research is the possibility of being regarded as atheoretical (Byrman & Bell, 2016, p. 335). To avoid this problem, a robust literature review regarding GAL was conducted to keep the focus of the researcher on the analytical aspect of the study along the process, particularly when coding the governance-related documents of the organizations object of the case study: Step 7 – Collect the data of Chapter II. By doing so, an equilibrium between theory and practice was assured to the present study.

Divergences in terms of data interpretation among different coders in a content analysis research is another important issue of this method (Byrman & Bell, 2016, p. 334). To address this limitation, three pilots were conducted, as already described in Step 6 – Conduct a pilot study and revise of Chapter II. Checks on semantic and face validity made during the first and second pilot resulted in adjustments in both DCF and coding manual. The first pilot was conducted by one coder, and after a training conducted by the principal research and a debate about the text of the

DCF, three coders worked on the second pilot. A third pilot was conducted with two coders, being one of them the principal researcher, and checks were made not only regarding semantic and face validity, but also reliability. The result from the third pilot was considered reliable, as the percentage agreement coefficient among the two coders was 80%.

A critique associated with qualitative content analysis studies is the lack of information about how the themes are gathered: “the processes by which the themes are extracted in a qualitative content analysis are often left implicit, although they are usually illustrated with quotations from the text in question” (Bryman & Bell, 2016, p. 322). Thus, to overcome this critique, quotations extracted from the text of the governance-related documents analyzed were used to illustrate the findings and reinforce the arguments made during the discussion.

4.2.2. Case Study

A usual criticism made by scholars regarding case studies refers to the impossibility of generalizability of the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2016, p. 44). Nevertheless, as mentioned previously, particular context is an important aspect to be considered when developing private voluntary standards, certifications, and other sustainability interventions in the beef industry, due to the diverse amount of issues faced by the players acting in this business in different regions of the world. Thus, generalization is not one of the objectives of the present research. Furthermore, the framework developed is a contribution that is illustrated through the case study.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed at answering the research question: *To what extent do good global governance principles guide both the governance process and the interventions being developed by two MSIs aimed at making the beef industry in North America more sustainable, and what can we learn in terms of input legitimacy by comparing them to an established initiative (i.e. RSPO)?* To accomplish this intent, an exploratory study was conducted through a research design that combined qualitative content analysis and case study methodologies. The novelty of the present study was in developing and applying a framework that operationalized the GAL principles with ISEAL best practices as the analytical construct. The results of the present study revealed that CRSB demonstrates more of the principles associated with legitimacy than Grasslands Alliance, but both initiatives have to evolve in terms of legitimacy. CRSB is well-positioned in terms of the participation principle but needs to evolve more in respect to the transparency principle and exert even more efforts to improve in terms of accountability. Grasslands Alliance demonstrated important gaps in terms of participation and has to evolve considerably with respect to transparency and accountability principles. Evolution in terms of ISEAL affiliation can help both initiatives to move forward with respect to legitimacy.

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APPENDIX A

Coding Manuals and Data Collection Forms of the Content Analysis

Table A.1: Coding Manual (Version 1) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle.

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence
		Stakeholders are engaged in the governance process	Stakeholders are not engaged in the governance process
#	Criteria	Code	Code
1.1	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website	1	0
1.2	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the Executive Board ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders	1	0
1.3	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest body allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through elected representatives	1	0
1.4	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website	1	0
1.5	Channel of communication available for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process	1	0
1.6	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise in the standard-setting stage are available on the website	1	0
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, standards revisions available on the website	1	0
1.8	Public consultation about the standard-setting process is available on the website	1	0
1.9	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0
1.10	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0
1.11	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1	0
1.12	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website	1	0
1.13	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable	1	0

Table A.1: Coding Manual (Version 1) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence

		The governance process is transparent	The governance process is not transparent
#	Evidence	Code	Code
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1	0
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1	0
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests available on the website	1	0
2.4	Clear definition of organizational internal and external stakeholders available on the website	1	0
2.5	The information available on the website is of high-quality, presented in clear and accessible formats	1	0
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website	1	0
2.6	Information regarding the standard development process	1	0
2.7	Information regarding the content of the standard	1	0
2.8	Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	1	0
2.9	Information about standard claims and the traceability system that support those claims	1	0
2.10	Information about who is evaluated and under what process	1	0
2.11	Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage	1	0

Table A.1: Coding Manual (Version 1) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence
Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		The organization shows accountability to stakeholders of its activities	The organization does not show accountability to stakeholders of its activities
#	Evidence	Code	Code
3.1	The organization is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	1	0
3.2	There is a formal accountability framework implemented extendable to its member and wider society available for public consultancy on the website	1	0
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability framework assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1	0

3.4	There is a channel of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that sends emails regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable for organizational activities	1	0
3.5	By-law states a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership	1	0
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute	1	0
3.7	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding the decision-making process to its internal (i.e. managers) and external stakeholders through not only mandatory but also voluntary disclosures.	1	0
3.8	Public information about operational and social measures of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1	0
3.9	There is evidence that the accountability framework contemplates the verification of regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices	1	0
3.10	Standard's claims are reasonable	1	0

Table A.2: Data Collection Form (Version 1).

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0
1.1	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website		
1.2	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the Executive Board ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders		
1.3	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest body allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through elected representatives		
1.4	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website		
1.5	Channel of communication available for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process		
1.6	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise in the standard-setting stage are available on the website		
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, standards revisions available on the website		
1.8	Public consultation about the standard-setting process is available on the website		

1.9	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website		
1.10	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website		
1.11	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website		
1.12	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website		
1.13	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable		

Table A.2: Data Collection Form (Version 1). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website		
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website		
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests available on the website		
2.4	Clear definition of organizational internal and external stakeholders available on the website		
2.5	The information available on the website is of high-quality, presented in clear and accessible formats		
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website		
2.6	Information regarding the standard development process		
2.7	Information regarding the content of the standard		
2.8	Information regarding the impact intended with the standard		
2.9	Information about standard claims and the traceability system that support those claims		
2.10	Information about who is evaluated and under what process		
2.11	Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage		

Table A.2: Data Collection Form (Version 1). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Best Practice	
		Presence	Absence
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0
3.1	The organization is registered at ISEAL’s website as a full member		
3.2	There is a formal accountability framework implemented extendable to its member and wider society available for public consultancy on the website		
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability framework assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors		
3.4	There is a channel of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that sends emails regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable for organizational activities		
3.5	By-law states a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership		
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute		
3.7	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding the decision-making process to its internal (i.e. managers) and external stakeholders through not only mandatory but also voluntary disclosures.		
3.8	Public information about operational and social measures of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website		
3.9	There is evidence that the accountability framework contemplates the verification of regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices		
3.10	Standard’s claims are reasonable		

Table A.3: Coding Manual (Version 2) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle.

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation	Best Practice		
	Presence	Absence	NA
	Stakeholders are engaged in the governance process	Stakeholders are not engaged in the governance process	

#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
1.1	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.2	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the Executive Board ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders	1	0	NA
1.3	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest body allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through elected representatives	1	0	NA
1.4	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.5	Channel of communication available for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process	1	0	NA
1.6	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise is available on the website	1	0	NA
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website	1	0	NA
1.8	Public consultation about the standard-setting or another governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
1.9	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.10	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.11	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1	0	NA
1.12	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website	1	0	NA
1.13	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable	1	0	NA

Table A.3: Coding Manual (Version 2) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
	The governance process is transparent	The governance process demonstrates lack of transparency		
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA

2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests available on the website	1	0	NA
2.4	<i>Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website</i>	1	0	NA
2.5	The information available on the website is of high-quality, presented in clear and accessible formats	1	0	NA
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website	1	0	NA
2.6	Information regarding the standard development process	1	0	NA
2.7	Information regarding the content of the standard	1	0	NA
2.8	Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	1	0	NA
2.9	Information about standard claims and the traceability system that support those claims	1	0	NA
2.10	Information about who is evaluated and under what process	1	0	NA
2.11	Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage	1	0	NA
2.12	<i>A Theory of Change is available for public consultation</i>	1	0	NA
2.13	<i>A Project Work Flow demonstrates organizational main goals and activities for at least a one-year period</i>	1	0	NA

Table A.3: Coding Manual (Version 2) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		The organization gives accountability to stakeholders about its activities	The organization does not give accountability to stakeholders about its activities	
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
3.1	<i>The organization, or at least one of its founding members, is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member</i>	1	0	NA
3.2	There is a formal accountability framework implemented extendable to its member and wider society available for public consultancy on the website	1	0	NA
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability framework assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1	0	NA
3.4	<i>There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable for organizational activities</i>	1	0	NA

3.5	<i>Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership</i>	1	0	NA
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute	1	0	NA
3.7	<i>There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding the decision-making process to its stakeholders through not only mandatory but also voluntary disclosures</i>	1	0	NA
3.8	Public information about operational and social measures of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1	0	NA
3.9	There is evidence that the accountability framework contemplates the verification of regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices	1	0	NA
3.10	Standard's claims are reasonable	1	0	NA

Table A.4: Data Collection Form (Version 2).

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA
1.1	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website			
1.2	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the Executive Board ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders			
1.3	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest body allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through elected representatives			
1.4	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (membership) are available on the website			
1.5	Channel of communication available for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process			
1.6	<i>Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise is available on the website</i>			
1.7	<i>There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website</i>			
1.8	<i>Public consultation about the standard-setting or another governance process available on the website</i>			
1.9	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website			

1.10	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website			
1.11	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website			
1.12	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website			
13	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable			

Table A.4: Data Collection Form (Version 2). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website			
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website			
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests available on the website			
2.4	<i>Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website</i>			
2.5	The information available on the website is of high-quality, presented in clear and accessible formats			
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website			
2.6	Information regarding the standard development process			
2.7	Information regarding the content of the standard			
2.8	Information regarding the impact intended with the standard			
2.9	Information about standard claims and the traceability system that support those claims			
2.10	Information about who is evaluated and under what process			
2.11	Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage			
2.12	<i>A Theory of Change is available for public consultation</i>			
2.13	<i>A Project Work Flow demonstrates organizational main goals and activities for at least a one-year period</i>			

Table A.4: Data Collection Form (Version 2). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA
3.1	<i>The organization, or at least one of its founding members, is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member</i>			
3.2	There is a formal accountability framework implemented extendable to its member and wider society available for public consultancy on the website			
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability framework assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors			
3.4	<i>There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable for organizational activities</i>			
3.5	<i>Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership</i>			
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute			
3.7	<i>There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding the decision-making process to its stakeholders through not only mandatory but also voluntary disclosures</i>			
3.8	Public information about operational and social measures of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website			
3.9	There is evidence that the accountability framework contemplates the verification of regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices			
3.10	Standard's claims are reasonable			

Table A.5: Coding Manual (Version 3) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle.

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation	Best Practice		
	Presence	Absence	

		Stakeholders are engaged in the governance process	Stakeholders are not engaged in the governance process	NA
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
1.1	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (<i>i.e. development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...</i>) is available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.2	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for <i>participation of all stakeholders</i> in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.3	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (<i>based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise</i>) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.4	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the <i>highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors)</i> ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders	1	0	NA
1.5	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the <i>highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevant (i.e. Advisory Committees) bodies</i> allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through <i>their representatives</i> .	1	0	NA
1.6	<i>There is a process</i> for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website	1	0	NA
1.8	<i>There is a process of public consultation</i> about the standard-setting or other governance <i>practices</i> available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.9	<i>There is evidence that</i> public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance <i>practices is occurring or has occurred</i> .	1	0	NA
1.10	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.11	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.12	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1	0	NA
1.13	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website	1	0	NA

Table A.5: Coding Manual (Version 3) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency	Best Practice	
	Presence	Absence

		The governance process is transparent	The governance process demonstrates lack of transparency	NA
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	1	0	NA
2.4	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	1	0	NA
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website	1	0	NA
2.5	1. Information regarding the standard development process	1	0	NA
2.6	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	1	0	NA
2.7	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	1	0	NA
2.8	4. Information about standard claims and the <i>verification/traceability</i> system that support those claims	1	0	NA
2.9	5. <i>Information about who is evaluated</i>	1	0	NA
2.10	6. <i>Information about the process of evaluation</i>	1	0	NA
2.11	7. Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage	1	0	NA
2.12	A Theory of Change is <i>available on the website</i>	1	0	NA
2.13	<i>There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative</i>	1	0	NA
2.14	A <i>Timeline/Project Work Flow</i> demonstrates organizational main goals and activities for at least a one-year period.	1	0	NA

Table A.5: Coding Manual (Version 3) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
		The organization gives accountability to stakeholders about its activities	The organization does not give accountability to stakeholders about its activities	NA
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
3.1	The organization, or at least one of its founding members <i>organizations</i> , is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	1	0	NA

3.2	There is a formal accountability <i>process/mechanism, such as method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report)</i> implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website	1	0	NA
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability <i>process/mechanism</i> assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1	0	NA
3.4	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable/ <i>knowledgeable about organizational activities</i>	1	0	NA
3.5	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (<i>see by-law, statute, rules of procedures</i>)	1	0	NA
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute (<i>see by-law, statute, rules of procedures</i>)	1	0	NA
3.7	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding its <i>decisions</i> to stakeholders (<i>i.e. annual report</i>)	1	0	NA
3.8	Public information about operational (<i>i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow</i>) and social measures (<i>i.e. inclusiveness</i>) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1	0	NA
3.9	There is evidence that the accountability <i>process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements</i> that can affect its local practices (<i>see by-law, statute, rules of procedures</i>)	1	0	NA

Table A.6: Data Collection Form (Version 3).

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation		Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable	Document/Page /Item/Title/ Paragraph		
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
1.1	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (<i>i.e. development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...</i>) is available on the website.						
1.2	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for <i>participation of all stakeholders</i> in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.						
1.3	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (<i>based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise</i>) are available on the website						
1.4	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the <i>highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors)</i> ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders						
1.5	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the <i>highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevant (i.e. Advisory Committees) bodies</i> allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through <i>their representatives</i> .						

1.6	<i>There is a process</i> for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.						
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website						
1.8	<i>There is a process of public consultation</i> about the standard-setting or other governance practices available on the website.						
1.9	<i>There is evidence that</i> public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance practices <i>is occurring or has occurred.</i>						
1.10	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) are available on the website						
1.11	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) are available on the website						
1.12	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website						
1.13	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme is available on the website						

Table A.6: Data Collection Form (Version 3). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable	Document/Page/Item/Title/Paragraph		
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website						
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website						
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website						
2.4	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website						
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website						
2.5	1. Information regarding the standard development process						
2.6	2. Information regarding the content of the standard						
2.7	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard						

2.8	4. Information about standard claims and the <i>verification/traceability</i> system that support those claims						
2.9	5. <i>Information about who is evaluated</i>						
2.10	6. <i>Information about the process of evaluation</i>						
2.11	7. Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage						
2.12	A Theory of Change is <i>available on the website</i>						
2.13	<i>There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative</i>						
2.14	A <i>Timeline/Project Work Flow</i> demonstrates organizational main goals and activities for at least a one-year period.						

Table A.6: Data Collection Form (Version 3). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable	Document/Page Item/Title/ Paragraph		
#	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
3.1	The organization, or at least one of its founding members <i>organizations</i> , is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member						
3.2	There is a formal accountability <i>process/mechanism, such as method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report)</i> implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website						
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability <i>process/mechanism</i> assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors						
3.4	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable/ <i>knowledgeable about organizational activities</i>						
3.5	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (<i>see by-law, statute, rules of procedures</i>)						
3.6	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presence of dispute (<i>see by-law, statute, rules of procedures</i>)						
3.7	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding its <i>decisions</i> to stakeholders (<i>i.e. annual report</i>)						
3.8	Public information about operational (<i>i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow</i>) and social measures (<i>i.e. inclusiveness</i>) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website						

3.9	There is evidence that the accountability <i>process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)</i>						
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Table A.7: Coding Manual (Version 4) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle.

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
#	Evidence	Code	Code	
1.1	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (i.e. development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...) is available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.2	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for participation of all stakeholders in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.3	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise) are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.4	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders	1	0	NA
1.5	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevant (i.e. Advisory Committees) bodies allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through their representatives.	1	0	NA
1.6	There is a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website	1	0	NA
1.8	There is a process of public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices available on the website.	1	0	NA
1.9	There is evidence that public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance practices is occurring or has occurred.	1	0	NA
1.10	Public information about <i>how stakeholders</i> participate in the <i>certification system</i> are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.11	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the certification system are available on the website	1	0	NA
1.12	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the <i>certification system</i> either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1	0	NA

Table A.7: Coding Manual (Version 4) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
		The governance process is transparent	The governance process demonstrates lack of transparency	
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
2.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
2.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1	0	NA
2.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	1	0	NA
2.4	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	1	0	NA
2.5	<i>Public information about the membership costs is available on the website</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>NA</i>
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website	1	0	NA
2.6	1. Information regarding the standard development process	1	0	NA
2.7	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	1	0	NA
2.8	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	1	0	NA
2.9	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims	1	0	NA
2.10	5. Information about who is evaluated	1	0	NA
2.11	6. Information about the process of evaluation	1	0	NA
2.12	<i>Public information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>NA</i>
2.13	A Theory of Change is available on the website	1	0	NA
2.14	There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative	1	0	NA
2.15	A Timeline demonstrates organizational main goals and activities <i>of governance-related practices</i>	1	0	NA

Table A.7: Coding Manual (Version 4) - Criteria developed from best practices for each GAL principle. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Best Practice		
		Presence	Absence	NA
		The organization gives accountability to stakeholders about its activities	The organization does not give accountability to stakeholders about its activities	
#	Evidence	Code	Code	Code
3.1	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations, is registered at ISEAL’s website as a full member	1	0	NA
3.2	There is a <i>accountability process/mechanism, a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report)</i> implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website	1	0	NA
3.3	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1	0	NA
3.4	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable/knowledgeable about organizational activities	1	0	NA
3.5	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1	0	NA
3.6	The organization has a <i>mechanism to deal with</i> dispute (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1	0	NA
3.7	Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e. inclusiveness) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1	0	NA
3.8	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1	0	NA

Table A.8: Data Collection Form (Version 4). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation	Best Practice	Reference	Comments
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		Pr esence	A bsence	Not Applicable	Documen t/Page/ Item/Titl e/ Paragrap h	K ey Words	
	Evidence	C ode=1	C ode=0	Cod e=NA			
.1	Public information about the process for identification of stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (i.e. development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...) is available on the website.						
.2	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for participation of all stakeholders in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.						
.3	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise) are available on the website						
.4	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) ensure the representativeness of all stakeholders						
.5	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevant (i.e. Advisory Committees) bodies allows the participation and review of all stakeholders group through their representatives.						
.6	There is a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.						
.7	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website						
.8	There is a process of public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices available on the website.						
.9	There is evidence that public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance practices is occurring or has occurred.						
.10	Public information about <i>how stakeholders</i> participate in the <i>certification system</i> are available on the website						
.11	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the <i>certification system</i> are available on the website						

.12	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the <i>certification system</i> either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website						
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Table A.8: Data Collection Form (Version 4). (Cont.)

	Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency	Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
		Presence	Absence	Not Applicable	Document/Page/Item/Title/Paragraph		
	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
.1	Public information about the governance process available on the website						
.2	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website						
.3	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website						
.4	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website						
.5	<i>Public information about the membership costs is available on the website</i>						
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website						
.6	1. Information regarding the standard development process						

.7	2. Information regarding the content of the standard						
.8	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard						
.9	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims						
.10	5. Information about who is evaluated						
.11	6. Information about the process of evaluation						
.12	<i>Public information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website</i>						
.13	A Theory of Change is available on the website						
.14	There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative						
.15	A Timeline demonstrates organizational main goals and activities <i>of governance-related practices</i>						

Table A.8: Data Collection Form (Version 4). (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability	Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
	Presence	Absence	Not Applicable	Document/Page/Item/Title/		

					Paragrap h		
	Evidence	C ode=1	C ode=0	Cod e=NA			
.1	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations, is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member						
.2	There is a <i>accountability process/mechanism, a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report)</i> implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website						
.3	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors						
.4	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable/knowledgeable about organizational activities						
.5	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)						
.6	The organization has a <i>mechanism to deal with</i> dispute (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)						
.7	Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e. inclusiveness) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website						
.8	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)						

Table A.9: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 1 – Pilot 3 – RSPO.

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation			Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA			
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
1	GS	Public information about the process for identification of affected stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (i.e. development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...) is available on the website.		0		https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are	Board of Governors, steering committee, advisory committee	"About RSPO" menu provides a list of everyone involved. Infographic "who we are" provides details of all who is involved. There is no "process" defined for identifying. Does not describe a process, per se, but does show transparently who's involved through membership categories, and the structure of membership and their interconnections, such as advisors to board and standing committees membership
2	G	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for participation of all affected stakeholders in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.	1			https://rspo.org/members https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-Membership.pdf	membership, Membership rules	"Membership" menu on main page provides extensive information under various sub-menus. Very transparent membership categories. (Ordinary, affiliate, supply chain associate). Code of conduct for membership requirement. Searchable member database or shows a list of all members. Includes a hot button to apply for membership, type of membership and cost. There's a clear PDF describing members
3	G	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise) are available on the website	1			https://www.rspo.org/smallholders ; https://rspo.org/news-and-events/news/stakeholders-collaborate-on-rspo-theory-of-change ; https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review/1st-public-consultation-revised-rspo-principles-and-criteria	participation engage engagement, inclusion, collaborate, collaboration	Series of web public consultations on principles and criteria, face to face public consultation, roadshows
4	G	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the highest body (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) ensure the representativeness of all affected stakeholders	1			https://www.rspo.org/about/who-we-are/board-of-governors		provides information on number of seats and sector, and the members are elected through the general assembly.
5	G	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest (i.e. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevante (i.e. Advisory Comittes) bodies allows the participation and review of all key stakeholders group through their representatives.	1			https://rspo.org/about/how-we-work	decision-making; possible alternative "how we work"	
6	G	There is a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.		0				
7	GS	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review		In line with ISEAL best practices, that the standards remain relevant and reflect stakeholder understanding of good sustainability practices, the RSPO P&C 2013 will be completely reviewed again and subsequently submitted for ratification by the General Assembly of RSPO by November 2018. Prior to the revision in 2018, any changes to the standard must be through recommendation made by the appointed RSPO Taskforce (as below) and approved by the General Assembly of the RSPO. Should you have queries on the matter, please send it through our askRSPO system and we will revert to you as soon as possible. includes TOR, members and timeline for review process
8	GS	There is a process of public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices available on the website.	1			https://rspo.org/news-and-events/news/stakeholders-collaborate-on-rspo-theory-of-change ; https://rspo.org/certification/principles-and-criteria-assessment-progress	public consultation principles criteria standards theory of change	ToC and Principles and Criteria consultation, plus a range of face to face and roadshows
9	GS	There is evidence that public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices is occurring or has occurred.	1			https://rspo.org/news-and-events/news/stakeholders-collaborate-on-rspo-theory-of-change ; https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review/1st-public-consultation-revised-rspo-principles-and-criteria	collaborate participate/participation	
10	S	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation how stakeholders participate in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) certification system are available on the website	1			https://www.rspo.org/files/resource_centre/RSP0%20certification%20syst_ems_2007_revised%204.2.4%208%201a_Oct%202011_FINAL.pdf	certification stakeholder consultation	p. 7,9,12
11	S	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) certification system are available on the website	1			https://www.rspo.org/files/resource_centre/RSP0%20certification%20syst_ems_2007_revised%204.2.4%208%201a_Oct%202011_FINAL.pdf		to me these are the same as previous. This document seems to have both. I'm not sure if I interpreted this properly.
12	S	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) certification system, either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1			https://www.rspo.org/files/resource_centre/RSP0%20certification%20syst_ems_2007_revised%204.2.4%208%201a_Oct%202011_FINAL.pdf ; https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-ProducerCertification.pdf		to me these are the same as previous. This document seems to have both. I'm not sure if I interpreted this properly.
13	S	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme to implement the certification system are available on the website (MOVE TO 2. TRANSPARENCY?)		0		https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-ProducerCertification.pdf ; https://rspo.org/smallholders/rspo-smallholders-support-fund		doesn't provide actual costs, just how they are determined; small holder fund available
14	S	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable (?)						
SUBTOTAL			10	2	0			

Table A.9: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 1 – Pilot 3 – RSPO. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency			Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA	Document/Page/Paragraph/Item/Title		
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
1	G	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/about/how-we-work ; https://rspo.org/about/s/rspo.org/key-documents/supplementary-materials/minutes-reports-of-rspo-ga-ega	strategy, vision, mission, objectives, policies	
2	G	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/about/how-we-work		not sure about this one
3	G	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/members/dispute-settlement-facility ; https://rspo.org/members/dispute-settlement-facility/workflow	settlement	See: Who can use the Complaints System
4	G	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/about/how-we-work ; https://rspo.org/members/categories	stakeholders; governance	seems redundant from above
5	G	Public information about the membership costs is available on the website	1			https://rspo.org/members/apply	membership, cost	
	S	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website						
6	S	1. Information regarding the standard development process	1			https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/standards-setting-process ; https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are/standing-committees/standards-and-certification	standard-setting	
7	S	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	1			https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-certification-systems	standard	see document 3
8	S	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard		0		https://rspo.org/about/impacts ; https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports ; https://rspo.org/about/impacts/measuring-and-evaluating	impact	impacts achieved only
9	S	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims	1			https://www.rspo.org/files/resource_centre/RSPO_Guidelines_on_Communications_Claims_110531.pdf ; https://rspo.org/palmtrace		PalmTrace; mass balance, identity preserved; segregated; book and claim
10	S	5. Information about who is evaluated	1			https://rspo.org/palmtrace		
11	S	6. Information about the process of evaluation	1			https://rspo.org/certification/supply-chains ; https://rspo.org/certification		
12	G	A Theory of Change is available on the website	1			https://www.rspo.org/about/impacts/theory-of-change		use simple ways to communicate ToC
13	GS	There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative	1			https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review/1st-public-consultation-revised-rspo-principles-and-criteria ; https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-principles-and-criteria		
14	G	A Timeline/Project Work Flow demonstrates organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices at least a one-year period .		0				
SUBTOTAL			12	2	0			

Table A.9: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 1 – Pilot 3 – RSPO. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability			Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA			
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA	Document/Page/Paragraph/Item/Title		
1	G	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations , is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	1			https://www.rspo.org/news-and-events/news/roundtable-on-sustainable-palm-oil-approved-as-iseal-full-member https://www.isealliance.org/community-members/roundtable-sustainable-palm-oil-rspo		
2	G	There is a formal accountability process/mechanism, such as a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report) implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website		0				
3	G	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1			https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are/standing-committees/finance	financial report	includes financial reports and audited accounts
4	G	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send informations regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable / knowledgeable about organizational activities	1			e.g http://www.rspo.org/sites/default/files/2007%20November-December.pdf		several newsletters; also numerous impact reports, roundtable reports
5	G	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)		0				
6	G	The organization has an appeal mechanism in the presenece of to deal with disputes (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1			https://rspo.org/members/dispute-settlement-facility/status-of-disputes ; https://rspo.org/members/complaints/status-of-complaints/view/53 ; https://rspo.org/members/complaints	conflict, complaint, dispute	see in particular View a visual summary of how the complaints system works (PDF)
7	G	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding its decisions to stakeholders (i.e. annual report, minutes) (3.2 ALREADY COVERED THIS ASPECT)						
8	G	Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e. inclusiveness) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1					
9	GS	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1			https://rspo.org/certification/national-interpretations	by-law, local law	through national interpretation of P&C
SUBTOTAL			6	2	0			
TOTAL			28	6	0			

Table A.10: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 2 – Pilot 3 – RSPO.

		Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 1. Participation	Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA			
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA	Document/Page/Item/Title/Paragraph		
1	GS	Public information about the process for identification of affected stakeholders through an initial stakeholder mapping exercise (ie development a list of bodies: steering groups, executive boards, members...) is available on the website.	1			1) https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-Overview.pdf / FACT SHEET - Overview of RSPO / RSPO Membership / page 4 all the paragraphs 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 4. Memberships / page 3	Members/membership/stakeholders	This is an old initiative. Despite not having a process in place, the governance documents demonstrate that a mapping process was conducted in the earlier stage of RSPO establishment. See "Types of memberships"
2	G	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for participation of all affected stakeholders in the governance process (membership) are available on the website.	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 6. Admission of RSPO Members / page 4 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Membership Rules 2016 / 3.0 Application for Membership / page 5	Admission/Application/Member/membership	For examples, see: 1) Item (e), page 5 2) Item 3.5, page 5 It is of concern what is written in 1) page 5: "(b) The Chief Executive Officer may reject any application request without having to inform the interested party of the reasons motivating such decision."
3	G	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the governance process (based on the membership bodies derived from the mapping exercise) are available on the website	1			1) https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-Overview.pdf / FACT SHEET - Overview of RSPO / Involving smallholders / page 3 2) https://www.rspo.org / RSPO Smallholder Engagement Platform 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports / 2017 Impact Report / Engagement with Local Communities and Intermediary Organisations / page 10	Involvement/Involving/Smallholders/Encourage/Engage/Improve Participat	They even have a platform to engage with smallholders
4	G	There is evidence that the requirements for participation in the highest body (ie. Executive Board/Board of Directors) ensure the representativeness of all affected stakeholders	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 11. Board of Governors / page 11	small/vote	It can be observed clear evidence of a mechanism that ensures the representativeness of small growers in the decisions made by the General Assembly
5	G	There is evidence that the decision-making process of the highest (ie. Executive Board/Board of Directors) and relevante (ie. Advisory Comities) bodies allows the participation and review of all key stakeholders group through their representatives.	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 7. Rights of RSPO Members / (a) Ordinary Members / (i) "Ordinary Members shall have voting rights at the General Assembly" 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 9. Ordinary General Assembly / (a) Composition / (i) "The Ordinary General Assembly shall be comprised of all RSPO Members" 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 11. Board of Governors / page 11	small/vote	It can be observed clear evidence of mechanisms that allow the participation of small growers in the decisions made by the General Assembly
6	G	There is a process for stakeholders to give suggestions for improving the governance process available on the website.	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/supplementary-materials/minutes-reports-of-rspo-ga-eg / RSPO GA13 Meeting Minutes 2016 / Resolution 6b - Resolution to adopt "Non-discriminatory entitlement and responsibility for RSPO members under a specific sector or membership category". / page 8 2) https://www.rspo.org/about-ga14/	Minutes/meeting/report/channel of communication/proposals/resolutions	Despite not finding a formal process, the minute demonstrate that proposals (proposed resolutions) for improving the governance process are made and decided by members representatives during General Assembly meeting. See debate that starts on page 8.
7	GS	There is a revision process, such as vote, that allows the participation of all the members of the organization in, for instance, revision of governance documents and standards available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 9. Ordinary General Assembly / (a) Composition / (v)	revision/vote	Votes can be made at a General Assembly, whether by itself or by proxy, or by other electronic means (E-vote)
8	GS	There is a process of public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices available on the website.	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-national-interpretations 2) https://rspo.org/certification/national-interpretations/public-consultations 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-certification-systems/RSPO Certification System 2007 / 3. Public Consultation / page 27	public consultation	The process National Interpretation of the International RSPO Principles and Criteria encompass Public Consultation
9	GS	There is evidence that public consultation about the standard-setting or other governance-related practices is occurring or has occurred.	1			1) https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review/1st-public-consultation-revised-rspo-principles-and-criteria	public consultation	
10	S	Public information about prerequisites and limitations for stakeholders' participation how stakeholders participate in the assurance processes (certification and accreditation) certification system are available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-certification-systems / RSPO Certification System 2007 / 4.2. Assessment process / page 14 2) 1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-certification-systems / RSPO Certification System 2007 / 4.3. Gathering evidence from stakeholders during certification assessments / page 17	certification system/stakeholder	
11	S	Public information about the process for improving stakeholders' participation in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) certification system are available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports / 2017 Impact Report / RSPO Smallholder Strategy Update / page 12 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports / 2016 Impact report / pages 41 - 44	improve stakeholder/certification system	RSPO Smallholder Support Fund (RSSF) and group certification are some of the initiatives in place to improve smallholders participation in the certification system.
12	S	There is evidence that stakeholders are engaged in the assurance process (certification and accreditation) certification system, either as participants in the audit and review or as observers during the assessment process on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports / 2017 Impact Report / RSPO Certification Systems: Enhancing Quality, Credibility and Oversight / page 37 2) https://www.rspo.org/about/who-we-are/task-forces/assurance-task-force 3) https://www.rspo.org/about/who-we-are/task-forces/assurance-task-force / Assurance Task Report Progress Report 2nd Quarter / 5. Q2 2017 Progress Updates on Activities undertaken by the Assurance Taskforce / ACTIVITY 3: Develop and institute a transparent and robust system for monitoring the quality of assessments / No. 3.2 - Task "To develop the minimum guideline and checklist for Partial Certification and stakeholder consultation then provide training for growers	audit/stakeholder/	There is a task force implemented to address some issues related to the assessment process, and more involvement of stakeholders in the audit process is on the scope of this initiative.
13	S	Public information about the costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme to implement the certification system are available on the website (MOVE TO 2. TRANSPARENCY?)		0		1) https://askrspo.force.com/s/article/What-are-the-costs-of-certification	certification cost	There are no information regarding the cost of certification. RSPO recommends to contact a accredited Certification Bodies to get a quotation.
14	S	The costs for implementation of the standard system and the certification scheme are reasonable (?)						
SUBTOTAL			11	1	0			

Table A.10: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 2 – Pilot 3 – RSPO. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency			Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA			
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA	Document/Page/Paragraph/Item/Title		
1	G	Public information about the governance process available on the website	1			1) https://www.rspo.org/files/pdf/Factsheet-RSPO-Overview.pdf / RSPO Governance Structure / page 4 2) https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 4. Memberships / page 3	Governance	Information regarding the governance structure of RSPO can be found in various documents.
2	G	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/members/complaints 2) https://www.rspo.org/file/resolutions/GA10-Resolution6f.pdf 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Code of Conduct for Supply Chain Associates 2015 / 2. Transparency, reporting and claims / page 2 4) 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Code of Conduct for Members 2015 / 2. Transparency, reporting and claims / page 2	Transparency	Transparency is addressed in the codes of conduct and in the complaint system.
3	G	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	1			1) http://rspo.org/sites/default/files/RSPOCertification-systems.pdf / 4.5. Conflict of interest / page 15 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Code of Conduct for Supply Chain Associates 2015 / 2. Transparency, reporting and claims / page 2 3) 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Code of Conduct for Members 2015 / 2. Transparency, reporting and claims / page 2	Conflict	Conflict of interest is addressed in the certification system, with mechanism to mitigate and manage their occurrence. See 1, item 4.5.1. In the governance level, it is addressed in the codes of conduct, where it is stated that members must commit to actively seek the resolution of conflicts. See 2 and 3, item 2.2.
4	G	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/WHO-WE-ARE/ / 1st paragraph 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 4. Memberships / page 3 + 5. RSPO Membership Fee / (c) The Membership Fee Structure is as follows / page 4	Stakeholder	It is stated at the "About Us" part of RSPO website: "7 sectors of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations (NGOs)"
5	G	Public information about the membership costs is available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ / RSPO Statutes 2015 / 5. RSPO Membership Fee / (c) The Membership Fee Structure is as follows / page 4	Membership	
	S	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website						
6	S	1. Information regarding the standard development process	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/standards-setting-process/ / RSPO Standard Operating Procedure for Standards Setting and Review, June 2017	Standard	There is a procedure that describe how RSPO standards are set and reviewed
7	S	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-supply-chain-certification/ / RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standards (Revised June 2017) 2) https://www.rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-principles-and-criteria/ / RSPO P&C for the Production of Sustainable Palm Oil (2013)	RSPO Standard	RSPO P&C is the certification standard that applies to all Oil Palm Growers, thus covering the production side of the supply chain. The standards of the Supply Chain Certification System (SCCS) covers the rest of the supply chain.
8	S	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/impacts/measuring-and-evaluating-impacts/ / Impacts System Report - 2013	Impact	RSPO has a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system for measuring and analyzing impacts.
9	S	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/sustainable-palm-oil 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-supply-chain-certification/ / RSPO Supply Chain Certification Standards (Revised June 2017) 3) https://www.rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-principles-and-criteria/ / RSPO P&C for the Production of Sustainable Palm Oil (2013) 4) https://www.rspo.org/palmtrace	Claim/traceability	Claims: 1 - broad claims (address deforestation, biodiversity protection, etc) 2 and 3 - specific claims (standards). In order to receive the RSPO certification, a third-party verification is conducted by an independent, accredited Certification Body. Additionally, RSPO has a traceability system, Palmtrace, to assure the transparency of the claims (see 4).
10	S	5. Information about who is evaluated	1			1) https://rspo.org/certification 2) https://rspo.org/members/supply	certification system	To be certified, an organization needs to become an RSPO member. Members that are certifiable are growers and supply chain organizations.
11	S	6. Information about the process of evaluation	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/certification/rspo-certification-systems/ / RSPO Certification System 2007	assessment	Item 4.2. Assessment process
12	S	7. Information about the various ways in which stakeholders can engage (1.10 AND 1.11 ALREADY COVERED THIS ASPECT)						
12	G	A Theory of Change is available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/impacts/theory-of-change	theory of change	
13	GS	There are evidences that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated on the initiative		0		1) https://rspo.org/news-and-events/announcements/extraordinary-public-consultation-on-rspo-supply-chain-certification-standard 2) https://rspo.org/news-and-events/announcements/revised-rspo-supply-chain-certification-documents-june-2017 3) https://askrspo.force.com/s/article/Who-developed-the-RSPO-Principles-and-Criteria	public consultation	There are no evidences of feedback regarding the public consultation. The decisions are ratified by members in the General Assembly. There are no minutes regarding the general assembly meeting that ratified the supply chain standards in June 2017.
14	G	A Timeline/Project Work Flow demonstrates organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices at least a one-year period.	1			1) https://rspo.org/principles-and-criteria-review#ln	timeline	
SUBTOTAL			13	1	0			

Table A.10: Data Collection Form (Version 4): Coder 2 – Pilot 3 – RSPO. (Cont.)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability			Best Practice			Reference	Key Words	Comments
			Presence	Absence	NA	Document/Page/Paragraph/Item/Title		
#	SC	Evidence	Code=1	Code=0	Code=NA			
1	G	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations , is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	1			1) https://www.isealliance.org/community-members?P65B0%5D=community_status%3A176		
2	G	There is a formal accountability process/mechanism, such as a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report) implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/key-documents/roundable-reports 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/supplementary-materials/minutes-reports-of-rspo-ga-ega 3) https://rspo.org/key-documents/supplementary-materials/minutes-reports-of-rspo-bog 4) https://rspo.org/key-documents/impact-reports 5) https://rspo.org/news-and-events	Report/accountability/news/announcements	RSPO gives accountability regarding its activities through reports and news/announcements
3	G	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are/standing-committees/finance 2) https://rspo.org/key-documents/membership/ RSPO Statutes 2015 / 9. Ordinary General Assembly / (d) / page 9	Finance/accountability	1) RSPO has their accounts audit annually by an independent auditor. The annual audited accounts of RSPO are available for public view on the website. RSPO Annual Financial Reports were all endorsed by the financial auditor. 2) It is also stated in the statute that The Board of Governors shall cause to be prepared and present to the annual General Assembly, among other, "proper accounts, duly audited, of all funds, property and assets of the RSPO for the twelve months ending on (RSPO's financial year end) immediately preceding such annual General Assembly;"
4	G	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send informations regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable / knowledgeable about organizational activities	1			1) https://rspo.org/	Newsletter	At the end of all pages of the website, it is possible to sign to receive RSPO Newsletters. An email for inquiries is also provided, and there is a link to follow RSPO in some social medias.
5	G	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/who-we-are/board-of-governors	Governance	The Chief Executive Officer reports to the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors is comprised of 16 members, designated by the General Assembly for 2 years.
6	G	The organization has an appeal mechanism in-the-presence-of to deal with disputes (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1			1) https://rspo.org/members/complaints 2) https://rspo.org/members/dispute-settlement-facility	Dispute	1) RSPO Complaints System is the mechanism adopted by RSPO to solve dispute against any RSPO member or the RSPO system itself. 2) RSPO offers to its members the Dispute Settlement Facility services, that encourages the adoption of mediation in case of dispute.
7	G	There is evidence that the organization reports relevant information regarding its decisions to stakeholders (i.e annual report, minutes) (3.2 ALREADY COVERED THIS ASPECT)						
7	G	Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e inclusiveness) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website	1			1) https://rspo.org/about/impacts/measuring-and-evaluating-impacts	performance	The MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) SYSTEM tracks the progress of RSPO activities. The Annual Impacts reports presents the results.
8	GS	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	1			1) https://rspo.org/certification/national-interpretations	National/regional/legal/law	National and Local Interpretation of RSPO standards are conduct. The method is described in the RSPO Certification Systems document.
SUBTOTAL			8	0	0			
TOTAL			32	2	0			

Table 12: Data Collection Form (Version 4): CRSB and Grasslands Alliance - Transparency (Coments)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 2. Transparency		Comments	
	Criteria	CRSB	Grasslands
	Public information about the governance process available on the website	Information regarding the governance structure of CRSB can be found in various documents.	Grasslands Alliance has no governance structure so far, but Food Alliance's by-laws provides information about the governance process.
	Public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency to the governance process available on the website	Transparency is within one of the guiding principles (credible) of the Certified Sustainable Beef Framework, but public information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency is not available on the website.	Transparency is one of Food Alliance guiding principles but is more related to the certification system. No information about the requirements the organization follows to ensure transparency are available on the website.
	Public information about mitigations procedures in the occurrence of conflict of interests are available on the website	There is a Conflict of interest Policy related to the certification system. In the governance level, it might be addressed in the codes of ethics, but this document is not available on the website.	There is a Code of Ethics related to the certification system (inspectors) to deal with conflict of interests, but it is not publicly available. No information on how it is dealt in the governance.
	Clear definition of organizational stakeholders available on the website	Despite presenting the definition of organizational stakeholders on the website, the information is not consistent in all the documents available.	No clear definition of organizational stakeholders is available on the website, and there is no information about the process for identification of stakeholders.
	Public information about the membership costs is available on the website	The Annual Revenue of each Organization Type defines the Annual Member Fees (2016/17) to be paid.	No information about the membership costs is available on the website or by-laws, only information regarding certification costs.
	Public information about organizational activities related to the standard system available on the website		
	1. Information regarding the standard development process	No information regarding how the CRSB standard development process was conducted.	No information regarding how Grasslands Alliance and Food Alliance standard development process were conducted.
	2. Information regarding the content of the standard	Information about the Sustainable Beef Production Standard and the Sustainable Beef Processing Standard is available.	Information about, for instance, Food Alliance Sustainability Standard for Livestock Operations is available.
	3. Information regarding the impact intended with the standard	As CRSB standards were just launched, no impact is available to be monitored.	Food Alliance states some "general" impacts, but no concrete results and milestones reached are presented.
	4. Information about standard claims and the verification/traceability system that support those claims	A chain of custody audit is conducted on processors willing to sell beef with a CRSB sustainable claim.	The "Supply chain verification requirement" policy, with the requirements for labeling packaged products, is not available.
0	5. Information about who is evaluated	Beef producer or primary processor in Canada are evaluated.	Beef cattle and bison, ranches and farms, in North America, are evaluated.
1	6. Information about the process of evaluation	The information is in the Assurance Protocol.	The information is in the Food Alliance Producer Certification Program Standards and Procedures Manual.
2	Public information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website	No information about the costs to implement the certification system are available on the website. CRSB lists only the type of audit and who should pay for them.	The information regarding the certification fees is available on Food Alliance Producer Certification Program Standards and Procedures Manual.

3	A Theory of Change is available on the website	A Theory of Change is not available on the website	A Theory of Change is not available on the website
4	There is evidence that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated into the initiative	There is no evidence that the feedback from the public consultation was incorporated into the initiative.	It seems Food Alliance never conducted a public consultation about their standards, and Grasslands Alliance yet did not develop the standard after the public consultation.
5	A Timeline demonstrates organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices	The 2016 Annual Report presented a timeline for the beef operations indicators development process.	There is no timeline to demonstrate organizational main goals and activities of governance-related practices.

Table 13: Data Collection Form (Version 4): CRSB and Grasslands Alliance - Accountability (Comments)

Global Administrative Law (GAL) Principle: 3. Accountability		Comments	
	Criteria	CRSB	Grasslands
	The organization, or at least one of its founding members organizations, is registered at ISEAL's website as a full member	CRSB is an ISEAL subscriber.	Rainforest Alliance is and ISEAL Full Member.
	There is a <i>accountability process/mechanism, a method for providing accountability (i.e. accountability report)</i> implemented, extendable to its member and wider society, and available for public view on the website	CRSB gives accountability regarding its activities through reports and news/announcements.	Food Alliance gives accountability only regarding its finances, a legal requirement for NGO in the U.S.
	There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism assures the responsible use of financial resources to organizational donors	Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), which is neither an independent auditor nor a financial audit company, spearheaded CRSB and ratified CRSB's budget.	The responsible use of financial resources is addressed in Article 8, Funds and Private Foundations of Food Alliance's by-laws.
	There are channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, that send information regularly to stakeholders, making them accountable about organizational activities	No channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, were evidenced.	No channels of communication, such as electronic newsletter, were evidenced.
	Governance documents state a mutual accountability process among its members: i.e. the Executive Director reports to the Executive Board made up of elected representatives from its membership (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)	The Executive Director reports to the Council. The CRSB Council is appointed by the CRSB membership and is comprised of 11 individuals that represent each Organization Type.	The Executive Director reports to the Board, which is comprised of food-related stakeholders.

	<p>The organization has a <i>mechanism to deal with</i> dispute (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)</p>	<p>CRSB has no mechanism to deal with dispute.</p>	<p>Food Alliance has no mechanism to deal with dispute</p>
	<p>Public information about operational (i.e. meeting milestones, deliverables, progress workflow) and social measures (i.e. inclusiveness) of performance, that supplements organizational financial indicators, are available on the website</p>	<p>CRSB's measures of performance are going to be conduct in about five years, considering as a baseline the National Beef Sustainability Assessment benchmarks.</p>	<p>No public information about operational and social indicators are available on the website.</p>
	<p>There is evidence that the accountability process/mechanism verifies / is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices (see by-law, statute, rules of procedures)</p>	<p>CRSB explicitly states that the legal aspects are not in the scope of the certification system.</p>	<p>There is no evidence that the accountability process is compliant with regional legal requirements that can affect its local practices.</p>

