



ISCC 201 System Basics

System Basics

for the certification of sustainable biomass and bio-energy

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System Basics for the certification of sustainable biomass and bioenergy

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1 Introduction

The generation of energy from biomass has lately often been associated with land-use competition, increasing commodity prices and deforestation of rainforest. Until today, the international markets for agricultural products and bioenergy have not come up with a label for food, liquid biomass or biofuel from sustainable production. Thus, consumers do not have the possibility to choose between sustainable and non-sustainable products. The price is what makes a product successful, not its quality. The market offers no incentives for sustainably producing farmers and bioenergy producers.

To overcome this deficit, policy has launched initiatives to help to differentiate biomass for energy production. This shall avoid unwanted ecological and social side effects of the expanding biomass production in various regions of the world. Certification is an instrument to distinguish sustainable products from non-sustainable ones on the market. It puts customers in the position to opt deliberately for sustainability and greenhouse gas reduction. Hence, certification supports responsible farms and processing companies and reduces the risk of unsustainable production.

ISCC is such a certification system allowing a differentiation of sustainable products from non-sustainable ones including information on the greenhouse gas emissions at the different stages of the value chain.

The certification of sustainable biomass for energetic use is a complex procedure. The ISCC certification system describes procedures and standards that allow an easy handling for the users; at the same time, it meets the requirements of the reference documents, namely the German sustainability ordinances¹ and the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC).

Its sustainable production is a precondition for bioenergy use to be further expanded. The use of biomass for fuel, heat or electricity bears a big potential for climate protection and can reduce the dependency on energy imports. Sustainability standards will also be introduced on a voluntary or legal basis for the traditional markets as well as in the chemical-technical industry.

Independence, transparency and international scope are the characteristics of ISCC. The ISCC logo reliably distinguishes sustainable biomass and bioenergy from non-sustainable ones. ISCC provides a platform for the necessary dialogue. The essential characteristics of the ISCC system are:

- Globally applicable certification system for sustainability and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Not restricted to certain types of biomass only; rather covering all relevant raw materials
- Multi-stakeholder approach (farmers, processors, trade, industry, NGOs, associations, research institutions, authorities)
- Learning system

¹ Ordinances regarding the requirements for a sustainable production of biofuels and the production of liquid biomass for the production of electricity, such as the Biomass-electricity-Sustainability Ordinance and the Ordinance on Requirements for the Sustainable Production of Biofuels

- ISCC regulations for sustainability audits
- Traceability based on mass balances
- Registry of production sites, certificates and statements of conformity
- Greenhouse gas balancing
- Cooperation with other recognized certification systems
- Based on the concept study and subsequent pilot projects of the years 2006 to 2009
- Supported by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection and the Agency for Renewable Resources

2 Scope

The system basics described hereafter are effective for the ISCC certification system for the certification of biomass, bioliquids and biofuels.

The requirements described in System Basics and the other documents that make up the certification system relate to all relevant elements of the value chain.

Country-specific issues are taken into account when drawing the sample (EU Member States that are subject to direct payments minimum 3 percent, other states minimum 5 percent) and within the the risk management process framework. Guidelines for certification bodies and economic operators/system participants on the measures to be taken with regard to country-specific issues are provided in the ISCC 300 “Country-specific Advice and Guidelines” documents.

Further country-specific matters relating to the use of the standards in the EU can be found in ISCC documents 202, 205 and 207.

The remaining ISCC specifications for each stage of the value chain are the same for all relevant countries in terms of both the proof of sustainability in biomass production required from economic operators/system participants and the process of verifying sustainability requirements by the certification bodies. Exceptions to the above are also specified in the ISCC 300 “Country-specific Advice and Guidelines” documents.

Certifications must not be carried out in any Member State of the European Union where national regulations are in force that preclude the auditing of economic operators by certification bodies in the field of sustainable biomass production. Information on the above is can also be found in the ISCC 300 “Country-specific Advice and Guidelines” documents.

The documentation structure of the ISCC system is shown in the following table.

	Nr.	Name	Content
Governance documents	101	ISCC Statutes	The statutes govern the basic organisation and control of the institution ISCC e.V.
Technical documents	102	National and Regional Initiatives	Rules for the implementation of National and Regional Initiatives

	Nr.	Name	Content
	103	Quality Management	Description of the quality management of the ISCC system
	201	System Basics	This document describes the basic functions and processes of the ISCC system. A more detailed description of the contents can be found in further documents
	202	Sustainability Requirements – Requirements for the Production of Biomass	The sustainability requirements specify the standards for sustainable crop cultivation
	202-02	Self declaration of EU farms of their compliance with the ISCC sustainability requirements	
	202-03	Self declaration of non-EU farms of their compliance with the ISCC sustainability requirements	
	203	Requirements for Traceability	The listed requirements allow for the traceability of the biomass. The data that must be declared at the individual elements in the supply chain is named
	204	Mass Balance Calculation Methodology	The detailed traceability is possible by a mass balance methodology which is described in this document
	205	GHG Emission Calculation Methodology and GHG Audit	This document describes the detailed calculation methodology for GHG emissions and defines for certification bodies how to audit the requirements

	Nr.	Name	Content
	206	Regulations to issue Proofs of Compliance with Sustainability Requirements	A special form of traceability data are proofs of compliance with sustainability requirements. The document describes the requirements on the issuance of these proofs of compliance.
	207	Risk Management	Requirements on a risk assessment and the consequences which are derived from it
	208	Requirements for the logo use	Rules regarding the rights and duties related with the use of the ISCC brand
	251	Requirements for Certification Bodies	Certification bodies audit the compliance with the ISCC standards. The document describes the requirements on certification bodies and which tasks they have to fulfil
	252	Regulations to carry out Audits	This document defines which audits the certification bodies have to conduct and which contents they have to consider
	253	Complaints, Appeals and Arbitration	In case of conflicts affecting ISCC this document provides procedures for arbitration
	254	Cooperation with other Certification Systems	Rules for the organisation of the cooperation with other certification systems
		ISCC Audit Procedures	Detailed guidelines on how to carry out audits and for use during audits and when preparing audit reports.
	300	County-specific information and guidelines	Country-specific information relating in particular to the preparation of the audit and the appraisal of country-specific risks.

	Nr.	Name	Content
Reference documents	401	DIRECTIVE 2009/28/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC	This Directive describes among other things the legal framework conditions in the EU with respect to the requirements of a sustainable production of biomass and bioliquids
	402	Ordinance on Requirements Pertaining to Sustainable Production of Biofuels (Biotreibstoff-Nachhaltigkeitsverordnung – Biotreibstoff-NachV)	These ordinances nationally implement the Directive 2009/28/EC
	403	Ordinance on requirements pertaining to sustainable production of bioliquids for electricity production (Biotreibstoff-Nachhaltigkeitsverordnung – Biotreibstoff-NachV)	
	404	Administrative regulation Biomassestrom-Nachhaltigkeitsverordnung (BioSt-NachVwV)	Administrative regulation for the recognition of certification systems and certification bodies according to the BioSt-NachV
	405	BLE-Guideline Sustainable Biomass Production	Summary of information with respect to sustainable production of biomass and bioliquids and the legal requirements

Table 1: Structure of the ISCC documentation

3 Normative references

All documents listed in the previous paragraph 2 are considered relevant references.

4 The ISCC certification system

4.1 Organisation

4.1.1 International level

The legally registered ISCC association is the responsible body for the ISCC system. Whoever is involved in the production, the processing and use of sustainable biomass can become member of this association; also other stakeholders interested in the ISCC certification system can become members, NGOs or scientific institutions, for instance. The executive power and the operative management of the system are assigned to the ISCC System GmbH (ISCC limited liability corporation).

The General Assembly of the ISCC association incorporates all stakeholders and interested parties. The Board is constituted by members of the General Assembly. It represents the different groups participating in ISCC. The Board again may delegate the competencies to an Executive Board, which are necessary for an effective and stakeholder orientated management of the organisation. Technical Committees may be appointed by the Board as to support them in the handling of certain topics.

The structure of the organisation as well as the rights and duties of the involved actors are defined in document ISCC 101 ISCC Statutes.

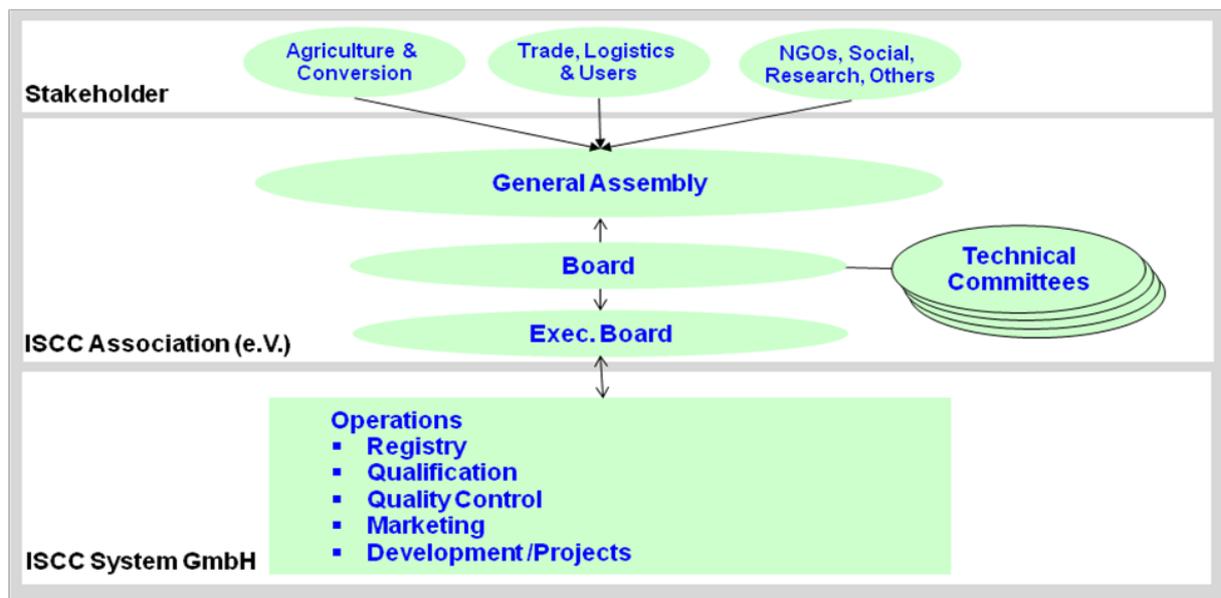


Figure 1: Interaction between stakeholders, association and operational certification system

4.1.2 National and regional level

Initiatives to promote and support the ISCC system can be formed under the umbrella of ISCC at national and regional level. Depending on the intensity of its activities, such initiatives can be an ISCC Contact Point, a National or Regional Technical Working Group or an ISCC Office.

The initiatives work and function according to the ISCC association's regulations. They are approved by and committed to ISCC through contracts.

The national or regional initiatives play an important role where international standards require an adjustment of ISCC standards on account of specific national or regional conditions. Such adjustments must always be recognized by the national authority.

The initiatives must act in a way to take into account the respective stakeholder interests of the countries under the terms of the General Assembly.

Detailed regulations to this are to be found in document ISCC 102 National and Regional Initiatives.

4.2 The processes of the certification system at a glance

The processes of the ISCC System and the related terminology are guided by two basic requirements:

For the relevant elements of the supply chain for the production of biomass and bioenergy the system constitutes an instrument for the implementation of the requirements of the Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC as well as the German sustainability ordinances (ordinance on requirements pertaining to sustainable production of biofuels (Biotreibstoff-Nachhaltigkeitsverordnung – Biotreibstoff-NachV) and ordinance on requirements pertaining to sustainable production of bioliquids for electricity production (Biomassestrom-Nachhaltigkeitsverordnung – BioSt-NachV)). The rules included in these ordinances are the basis for several structures and processes of the system.

At the same time the organisation of the certification systems should enable an implementation as easy as possible for the participating elements of the supply chain. The implementation should be orientated at current methods in international applicable certification systems.

The terminology and procedures in the system reflect the focus on a global application of the system. Specifics respectively special terminologies occurring from the implementation of the ordinances are pointed out where reasonable or necessary.

The subsequent figure 2 shows an overview of the processes in the ISCC System.

Based on the German sustainability ordinances the competent authority in Germany for the recognition of certification systems and certification bodies is the Bundesanstalt für Landwirtschaft und Ernährung (BLE).

Certificates can be issued by the certification bodies for all relevant elements of the supply chain. Preconditions for this issuance of certificates are the application for certification by the relevant elements of the supply chain and the positive participation in an audit which is conducted by an independent certification body, recognized by BLE and cooperating with ISCC.

Farms have to provide evidence for the sustainable origin of the produced biomass. The subsequent elements of the supply chain have to meet the particular requirements regarding traceability, mass balance and GHG emission calculation.²

² The sustainability ordinances (BioSt-NachV und Biotreibstoff-NachV) use a specific terminology for the relevant elements of the supply chain. They distinguish between interfaces on one hand and enter-

- (2) requirements concerning the greenhouse gas emission savings and its calculation methodology,
- (3) requirements concerning the traceability and mass balance to provide consistent evidence of the provenance of the biomass.

These certification criteria and the respective processes are specified in the ISCC Documents according to an internationally valid standard.

In countries applying the ISCC system, these standards can be further specified and explained in guidelines by national or regional initiatives. National or regional specifications are always subject to recognition by the BLE.

4.2.2 Sustainability requirements

Cropping for biomass production must comply with sustainability requirements. These requirements are:

- (1) Protection of areas of high conservation value
- (2) Protection of areas with high carbon stock
- (3) Protection of peat land
- (4) Sustainable management of the farm

The standards that must be complied with by the farms are described in document ISCC 202 Sustainability Requirements for the Production of Biomass.

4.2.3 Requirements concerning the greenhouse gas emission savings

To qualify for this certification system, the produced liquid biomass respectively biofuel must grant greenhouse gas emission savings of 35 percent. To prove this, each element of the supply chain must calculate its greenhouse gas emissions (or use a default value) and pass the figures on to the next interface in the chain. The last interface in the chain must finally calculate and substantiate the overall savings of the liquid biomass respectively biofuel.

Requirements for the assessment of the greenhouse gas emission savings are specified in document ISCC 205 GHG Emissions Calculation Methodology and GHG Audit.

4.2.4 Requirements concerning the traceability

The provenance of the sustainable biomass used to produce liquid biomass respectively biofuels must be traceable through the different stages of production and supply right down to the biomass production. This is done according to traceability systems and documented evidence/ surveillance statements, which ensure that provenance, quantity and the related greenhouse gas emissions can be clearly identified for each stage. The documented evidence/ surveillance statements must also prove that the quantity taken from a stage of production or supply does not exceed the quantity received by the same stage within a certain period.

Traceability systems allow intermingling of sustainable biomass, liquid biomass and biofuels with non-sustainable products even if their greenhouse gas emissions differ as long as certain maximum emission values are not exceeded.

The specific requirements for traceability systems are documented in document ISCC 203 Requirements for Traceability; the methodology for the mass balance calculation is described in document 204 Mass Balance Calculation Methodology.

4.3 Certification procedure

The workflow of the certification process complies with the requirements of ISO Guide 65 (ISO 45 011). The applied audit procedures comply with the requirements of ISO 19011.

4.3.1 Participants in the certification system (relevant elements)

Enterprises of the value chain of liquid biomass and biofuels can be participants in the ISCC certification system (see figure 3).

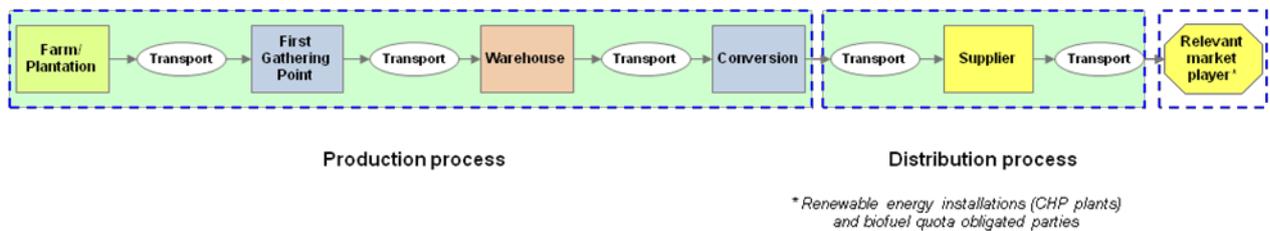


Figure 3: Different elements and sections of the supply chain

The relevant elements of the value chain are:

- (1) **Farms/ plantation:** Farms/ plantations are companies or sites that possess one or multiple fields and deliver biomass produced on these fields to the first gathering points. They also conduct the respective documentation on fields and delivery documents. In the certification system these companies or sites have a special status: They can either apply for participation in the certification system and receive – if audited successfully – a certificate for sustainable cropping; or they become part of the system as supplier for a first gathering point. In the latter case, they sign a self declaration towards the first gathering point to comply with the ISCC standards; they will then be audited as supplier sample of the first gathering point. Self-declarations for farms/plantations are valid for a maximum of one year.
- (2) **First gathering points:** Enterprises that first receive the biomass needed for the production of bioliquids and biofuels from companies and sites that grow and harvest this biomass. First gathering points either trade in or further process this raw material. An important characteristic of a first gathering point is the fact that it determines the incoming biomass exactly according to quality and amount and that it documents this information and returns it to the suppliers. First gathering points must be physically visited for an audit. Concreted gathering points of multiple suppliers which are for example equipped with a mobile weighing machine during harvest are no first gathering points. First gathering point always refers to the economic operator that holds a contract with the farms/plantations, even if this operator is not physically in possession of the biomass.
- (3) **Warehouses:** Warehouses in the ISCC system store sustainable biomass (solid, liquid or gaseous). At the same time, they can be part of other elements of the value chain or act autonomously.

- (4) **Conversion units:** Oil mills, refineries and ethanol plants as well as other factories refining bioliquids respectively biofuels to a quality that is required by power plants respectively for supplying biofuels to the market.
- (5) **Suppliers:** A supplier in the ISCC system is an element of the value chain that supplies sustainable liquid biomass or biofuel to other suppliers, to a plant run according to the Renewable Energy Act (EEG) or to a distributor which has to fulfil quota obligations. The sustainability of the supplied liquid biomass or biofuel must be proved and documented.
- (6) **Transport:** Enterprises transporting the biomass between the above mentioned enterprises and to the power plants, storing the biomass or trading in it.
- (7) **Plant run according to the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG) / distributor which has to fulfil quota obligations:** Also the last user of the sustainable bioliquid or biofuel is allowed to apply for a certificate and thus provide evidence for the use of sustainable biomass.

4.3.2 Provisions for small and very small entities

Special provisions are valid for small and very small entities.

The entity or operational unit is defined as a small entity if it only has one production site and is only handling a maximum of 500 metric tons of biomass per year or the equivalent amount of liquid biomass. The certification of small entities is required every three years. The issued certificates are valid for 36 months and not for 12 months.

The entity or operational unit is defined as a very small entity if it only has one production site and is only handling a maximum of 250 metric tons of biomass per year or the equivalent amount of liquid biomass. The certification of very small entities is required every five years. The issued certificates are valid for 60 months and not for 12 months.

4.3.3 Application for certification

The relevant elements of the supply chain that want to participate in the ISCC system apply at a certification body recognized by the BLE and cooperating with ISCC for the conduction of a certification procedure. Before they apply, they make sure they comply with the requirements and provide the necessary documentation.

Most important for farms are especially the requirements of documents ISCC 202 Sustainability Requirements for the Production of Biomass, ISCC 207 Risk Management and the corresponding Audit Procedures. Specifically relevant for the other elements of the supply chain are the standards ISCC 203 Requirements for Traceability, ISCC 203-01 Checklist for the Control of the Requirements for Traceability, ISCC 204 Mass Balance Calculation Methodology, ISCC 205 GHG Emission Calculation Methodology and GHG Audit and ISCC 207 Risk Management.

The requirements for certification bodies are specified in document ISCC 251 Requirements for Certification Bodies.

4.3.4 Conduct of audits

The certification bodies carry out certification audits as well as surveillance audits at all relevant elements of the supply chain. They audit the compliance with the requirements specified for the respective elements. The results of these audits must be documented in audit reports.

Certification bodies also conduct audits (surveillances) in farms that supply the first gathering points of a value chain.

The regulations specifying how to carry out audits are fixed in document ISCC 252 Regulations to carry out Audits.

4.3.5 Issuance of certificates and statements of conformity

4.3.5.1 Issuance and publication of certificates and statements of conformity

Upon positive evaluation of the audit results, the certification body issues certificates or statements of conformity to the relevant elements of the supply chain. Depending on the requested certification procedure, farms can receive a statement of conformity.

Certificates always relate to a legal entity and a location. This means, for example, that a single certificate can cover an oil mill and refinery owned by the same company and located in the same place. If the oil mill and the refinery are separate legal entities (even if the parent company is identical) then two certificates are required.

If a company owns an external tank farm, then despite the fact that this is at a different location it may be covered by the same certificate provided the following conditions are satisfied:

- The tank farm is exclusively for the use of the conversion facility
- The tank farm is integrated into the mass balance of the conversion facility
- The tank farm is located within the borders of the country

ISCC publishes its certificates and statements of conformity on its websites.

4.3.5.2 Certificates and statements of conformity

The BLE templates must always be used when issuing certificates.

Certificates and statements of conformity must at least include the following information:

- (1) A unique certification code number composed of at least the registration code of the certification system, the certificate number and the interface number,
- (2) the date of issue of the certificate and
- (3) the name of the certification system in which the certificate/statement of conformity was issued.

4.3.5.3 Validity

Certificates and statements of conformity are valid over a period of twelve months from the date of issuance. Special provisions are valid for small and very small entities. In these cases the validity of issued certificates is three, respectively five years from the date of issuance.

4.3.5.4 Resignation

The certificate holder or holder of a statement of conformity can resign from participation in the ISCC system any time by giving notice to the certification body.

4.3.5.5 Withdrawal

In case of serious violation against the ISCC specifications, the certification body may withdraw the certificate. Certificates cannot be withdrawn retrospectively.

4.3.5.6 Issuance of surveillance statements to farms

After a positive evaluation of the surveillance in a farm supplying a first gathering point, the farm, if it desires so, can receive a statement of conformity that it is in compliance with the ISCC standards.

4.3.5.7 Protection of legitimate expectation

Protection of legitimate expectation applies to all elements of the value chain that are covered by a valid certificate/statement of conformity (e.g. warehouses).

Protection of legitimate expectation shall not apply to deliveries that are made following the withdrawal of the certificate/statement of conformity. The recipient of the goods that are denoted as sustainable must therefore check whether the date on the delivery note or proof of sustainability falls within the period of validity of the certificate. This check should be made via the ISCC website.

For sustainable goods that were supplied from a certified first gathering point, protection of legitimate expectation shall apply even in cases where it transpires after delivery that the self declaration made by the farmer is not valid (i.e. the farmer has not satisfied the requirements for self declaration), provided that the purchaser did not act with gross negligence or premeditation when purchasing the goods.

Until 31 December 2010, the transitional provisions allow for biomass to be transferred from the first gathering point to the next interface before the first gathering point has been certified. Protection of legitimate expectation shall not apply to such goods until the first gathering point is covered by a certificate.

4.4 Risk management

On different application levels, the ISCC system uses an adapted risk management to guarantee compliance with the requirements with high probability. The respective regulations are listed in document ISCC 207 Risk Management.

4.5 Logo use

After a positive outcome of the certification procedure, the relevant elements can apply for the use of the ISCC logo. The ISCC logo labels the provenance of the biomass, biofuels and bioliquids from sustainable production.

Conditions of ISCC logo use are explained in document 208 Requirements for the logo use.

4.6 Arbitration procedure

An arbitration body is set up by the Board in case of complaints regarding the standard development process and in case of disagreement regarding the interpretation of the ISCC certification requirements.

The arbitration procedure is regulated in document ISCC 253 Complaints, Appeals and Arbitration.

4.7 Transitional regulations

In accordance with the guidelines set out by the responsible federal ministry in Germany, an exception shall apply until 31 December 2010 meaning that it is sufficient when certification of an interface in accordance with §2, Para. 3 of the Biomass Sustainability Ordinance (Biomasse-NachV) and/or Biomass Electricity Sustainability Ordinance (BioSt-NachV) (“first gathering point”) is presented to the downstream interface (e.g. oil mill) at a time no later than the point at which the biomass supplied by the first gathering point is processed by the next downstream interface and the last interface presents proof of sustainability. Until 31 December 2010, first gathering points must therefore be certified at a point in time no later than that at which the last interface presents proof of sustainability for the goods that it supplies. This means that until 31 December 2010 the act of simply transferring the biomass from the first gathering point to the next interface is therefore permissible by way of exemption even if the first gathering point has not yet been certified at that point in time. Proofs of sustainability cannot be issued for biomass from first gathering points that are not yet certified. The transfer of the biomass to the next interface before certification is available is permitted until 31 December 2010 by way of exemption only on the condition that the first gathering point is able to present comprehensive documentation relating to the relevant suppliers (farmers’ self declarations etc.) and/or such documentation can be presented by the suppliers for the purpose of verification within the scope of a mass balance calculation to be carried out at a later date. It must be ensured that appropriate records of the flow of goods are kept and retained in accordance with the mass balance specifications, including the values required in order to calculate the potential for greenhouse gas minimisation. It should be noted that downstream interfaces cannot present their proof of sustainability for sustainably sourced biomass until such time as the certificate is available for the upstream interface (first gathering point). For biomass that was already supplied in 2010 by the first gathering point, but for which a certificate covering the period up to 31/12/2010 is not available, this means that the downstream interfaces must in the first instance remove this quantity from their mass balance (sustainable biomass). The quantity may then only be added back in (activated) when the relevant first gathering point is able to present a valid certificate. In other words, the biomass that was supplied in 2010 is not automatically irrevocably classified as non-sustainable, but rather temporarily classified as such until a certificate is made available by the first gathering point. This must also be traceable in the mass balance. By contrast, from 01/01/2011 onwards deliveries of sustainable biomass may only take place if a valid certificate is available at time of delivery or at time of transfer/processing.

4.8 Special rules for wood

Wood that has been sourced from a forest/woodland in Germany in accordance with the regulations for properly managed, sustainable cultivation may be considered to be suitable for the purposes of the Biomass Sustainability Ordinance (Biokraft-NachV).

For cultivation operations in the timber sector that come under the jurisdiction of the European Union and that satisfy the criteria of §51 of Biokraft-NachV, at least 3% of the cultivation operation must be inspected on site. This inspection shall be limited to §§4 to 6 of Biokraft-NachV. For all other cultivation operations in the timber sector, at least 5% must be inspected on site each year by the certifying body. FSC and PEFC certificates may be used for documentation purposes within the scope of the inspection by BLE-approved certification bodies.