



Amazon and the Cerrado situation

Statement from RTRS

September 2019

The fires in the Amazon and the Cerrado are currently the topic of major concern globally, and even goes far beyond Brazil, including the Argentinian, Bolivian and Paraguayan Chaco.

Sustainable agricultural practices provide a concrete contribution to solving sustainability issues in soy production by improving production methods at farm level and enabling all stakeholders in the soy supply chain to also take responsibility.

As a multistakeholder platform to discuss and develop solutions, aiming to reach consensus, on the key economic, social and environmental impacts of soy, RTRS believes it is essential that further destruction to the rainforest be avoided and encourages collaboration with other associations and existing initiatives to discuss, together with governments and the private sector, ways to implement existing instruments and to provide benefits and support to producers and organisations who strive for more sustainable agricultural practices. Ongoing work to catalyze actions towards zero deforestation and conversion of forests and natural vegetation must be enhanced.

Since 2006, RTRS has worked steadfastly to ensure that sustainable soy production practices and better land management systems are instituted wherever certified sustainable soy is cultivated.

The RTRS zero deforestation and zero conversion scheme forbids unsustainable agricultural practices in soy production and does not permit practices that contribute to deforestation or that allow conversion of any natural land; this means that no conversion of any natural vegetation, steep slopes and areas designated by law to serve the purpose of native conservation and/or cultural and social protection is permitted.

The RTRS certification standard is active in the Amazon and the Cerrado.

According to RTRS records, in 2018 across Brazil there were 1.041.886 hectares and 3.919.545 tons of RTRS certified soy, and 595,782 hectares of protected areas. In the Amazon alone, 205.895 hectares and 708.755 tons were certified with the RTRS certification and 168.124 hectares of protected areas were recorded. And, according to the same records in the Cerrado region in that same year there were 835.990,57 hectares and 3.210.789 tons of RTRS certified soy, and 427.658 hectares of protected area.

For each hectare of soybean crops 0.59 hectares are preserved forest, which shows that producers who introduce sustainable and responsible practices preserve native vegetation areas, even when the regulatory framework allows for conversion.

So far, and according to our records, we can confirm that neither the RTRS certified farms nor the protected areas were affected by fires.

Soy production should not jeopardize global biodiversity - that is our starting point. RTRS believes we must work together in a combined approach to achieve truly sustainable (soy) value chains.



How collaboration and sustainable practices contribute to solving sustainability issues in soy production

How RTRS certification contributes to achieving sustainable soy supply chains

• Is the RTRS certification standard active in the Amazon and the Cerrado?

According to RTRS records, across Brazil there were 1.041.886 hectares and 3.919.545 tons of RTRS certified soy in 2018, and 595,782 hectares of protected areas.

In the Amazon alone, 205.895 hectares and 708.755 tons were certified with the RTRS certification and 168.124 hectares of protected areas were recorded.

And, according to the same records in the Cerrado region in 2018 there were 835.990,57 hectares and 3.210.789 tons of RTRS certified soy, and 427.658 hectares of protected area.

• What does RTRS support in relation to deforestation?

As an organization representing stakeholders of the soy chain from across the world, RTRS believes it is critical to implement existing instruments and mechanisms in favor of producers who introduce sustainable and responsible practices that preserve native vegetation areas, even when the regulatory framework allows for deforestation and conversion. Finance, regulation and market demand are all factors in making incentives work and in encouraging greater production and demand for responsible soy in all the world's major markets.

Responsible soy should be the sustainable and profitable choice for producers.

• How does the RTRS certification expressly forbid the clearing of land by burning?

The RTRS Production Standard (indicator 4.2.1) expressly forbids the burning on any part of the property of crop residues, waste, or as part of vegetation clearance.

• How is the RTRS certification standard guaranteeing zero deforestation and zero conversion criteria?

RTRS offers a soy certification standard, which guarantees zero deforestation and zero conversion; is a soy scheme with zero-conversion explicitly in its criteria.

RTRS production standard does not permit agricultural practices that are unsustainable and that contribute to deforestation or allow conversion of any natural land. This means that no conversion of any natural vegetation, steep slopes and areas designated by law to serve the purpose of native conservation and / or cultural and social protection is permitted. Since June 2016, no conversion of any natural land is allowed.

Producers must provide objective evidence during the audit to comply with these requirements and this usually includes aerial pictures, maps and other satellite images that can prove no deforestation or conversion was carried out.



• **How is the RTRS certification standard enforced?**

RTRS certification scheme is entirely transparent and is independently verified and audited.

RTRS' transparent and trusted certification and verification system, and assessments that are overseen by an accredited certification body (and which are publicly available), reduce any supply chain risk.

Producers have surveillance audits and the certification is delivered by independent third-party auditors (certification bodies approved by RTRS) that carry out 'on-the-ground' 'at farm level' audits. These auditors are trained under RTRS requirements.

At the same time, these certification bodies also must to be accredited and monitored by national or international Accreditation Bodies who will annually verify that the certification bodies are working according to the RTRS certification requirements.

Once a company or site has passed the initial audit, it receives a certificate valid for five years. Its compliance is also monitored annually by follow-up audits also carried out by qualified lead auditors.

• **What are the key achievements of RTRS certification standard?**

According to 2018 RTRS records:

- Over 7,000 certified RTRS producers worldwide in 8 countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Mozambique, Paraguay, Uruguay, United States.
- 4.5million tons of certified soy (an 8% of increase on 2017's total)
- 2.8 million tons of RTRS certified soy was sold in 2018 (a 28% increase on 2017's total)
- An increase of 278% of mass balance sales in 2018 on 2017's total
- Buyers from across 12 different countries
- 25 new buyers
- 4 new production & supply chain certification models, including non-GMO and Regional Credits

Collaboration

• **What has the industry committed to do/done to prevent/forbid land clearance by fire?**

The industry has been committed for more than a decade to eliminate deforestation from its supply chains. These commitments include, but are not limited to:

- The **Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), which in 2010** approved a public commitment on achieving **Zero-Net Deforestation by 2020** in companies' supply chain of soy and other deforestation-related commodities;
- The **New York Declaration on Forests (NYDF), which is the result of an alliance** of governments, companies, indigenous peoples and NGOs, ahead of the UN Climate Summit 2014. The voluntary commitment, endorsed by more than 50 companies, of whom 19 are RTRS members, includes a private-sector goal of eliminating deforestation from the production of agricultural commodities such as palm oil, soy, paper and beef products by no later than 2020;



- The **Cerrado Manifesto, launched at a national level by more than 60 NGOs in 2017**, to demand action from companies to eliminate conversion of natural habitats from their supply chain. The Manifesto, which RTRS endorsed, calls on companies and investors to take urgent action to ensure their soy and beef supply chains are making no contribution whatsoever to deforestation and the conversion of natural areas to agriculture. At international level, in response to the Cerrado Manifesto, consumer goods companies launched the **Statement of Support (SoS Cerrado Manifesto)**, which has close to 130 signatories among global brands and investors.
- While the Amazon Moratorium was successful in helping stop soy encroachment in that biome, expansion continued to grow over natural habitat in other regions. In 2016, **Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF)** launched the **Collaboration for Forests and Agriculture (CFA)**, an effort to engage companies in committing to source deforestation-free soy and cattle from Amazon, Cerrado and Gran Chaco biomes. The international NGOs leading CFA (World Wildlife Fund – WWF, The Nature Conservancy – TNC, and National Wildlife Federation – NWF) and their local partners engaged nationally and internationally with companies.
- On the traders' side, ADM, Bunge, Cargill, LDC, COFCO International and Glencore chose the **World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)** to host and launch the Soft Commodities Forum (SCF) and decided to prioritize the challenge of eliminating deforestation in the Cerrado from their supply chains.
- Global attention has been focused on the Mato Grosso region of Brazil since the 2015 UN Climate Change conference. This led to the creation of the **Produce, Conserve and Include (PCI) Strategy** in 2018 in Brazil. The PCI Strategy is based on a wide set of targets that aim to conciliate a sustainable low carbon economy with environmental conservation and social productive inclusion, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

All these initiatives demonstrate that collaborative work with organisations, NGOs, governments and the private sector is the best way to achieve the goal of tackling deforestation in the (soy) supply chain and to ensure that soy production comes from sustainable sources.