

RMS Standards Maintenance

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General

The Recycled Material Standard (RMS) was developed by GreenBlue and NSF International to provide a rigorous and widely available scheme for consistent labeling of recycled materials. GreenBlue is the scheme owner and is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and improvements for the RMS program.

This document serves as a record of the RMS standards development process and sets forth the policy for the continuous maintenance process.

Introduction

GreenBlue's Recycled Material Standard (RMS) is a voluntary, market-based program that enables consistent labeling of products and packaging that contain or support the use of recycled material, either through a certified chain of custody or via the certificate trading system known as the Attributes of Recycled Content (ARCs).

The Standard intends to address challenges that participants in the recycling industry and value chain face in trying to incorporate higher levels of recycled content into products and packaging. The Standard does so by providing a consistent framework with flexible certification options that enable verified content claims, mass-based allocation claims, and certificate trading.

RMS standards are intended to be science-based, provide transparency, and offer credibility for manufacturers in making claims related to the use of recycled content in their product(s) and/or supply chain(s).

The following standards were developed with the assistance of NSF International using a consensus body approach under the NSF International Standards Development and Maintenance Policies.

- RMS Framework, May 2021
- RMS Plastic Module, May 2021
- RMS Plastic Material Classifications, May 2021

References

The following references were utilized as guidance throughout the standard development process.

- ISEAL Credibility Principles, June 2013
- ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Good Practice Version 6.0
- WWF Principles for Standards and Certification Schemes
- NSF International Standards Development and Maintenance Policies, 2018

Development History and Key Milestones

The RMS was developed with full transparency with input from a broad range of stakeholders from inception.

In September of 2018, the first exploratory workshop was held with Sustainable Packaging Coalition members at SPC Advance (a program of GreenBlue). Based on a strong positive response, several additional workshops were held along with contextual interviews of numerous supply chain members and other standard setting organizations.

Prior to forming the RMS Advisory Committee, a decision was made to focus on plastics as the first material module for the standard and stakeholder mapping was conducted to establish the desired composition of the committee.

Committee members were selected by soliciting volunteers through notification in GreenBlue newsletters and on the Sustainable Packaging Coalition website as well as through direct outreach to ensure that all relevant stakeholder groups were adequately represented.

The RMS Advisory Committee held the official kick off meeting in October 2019 in conjunction with the Sustainable Packaging Coalition event held in Denver, CO. A press release announcing the initiation of the standard provided the names of committee members, a description of the scope of the project and contact information for both NSF International and GreenBlue staff.

The team set out to establish a broad framework as well as a plastics module, with a focus on resins used in packaging. The standard can also be applied for the same materials in markets other than packaging (e.g., the use of recycled plastic in toys, the automotive sector, or building products).

The Advisory Committee met regularly to review draft sections of the standard. Several topics were further supported by ad hoc committees comprised of Advisory Committee members and additional plastics manufacturing supply chain members.

Updates on progress were issued through conference presentations, newsletters, website postings, and articles in trade publications.

Numerous individual company presentations were offered in response to requests. Additional presentations were made for trade associations including American Chemistry Council, American Forest and Paper Association, Association of Plastics Recyclers, Plastics Industry Association.

A series of mock audits was conducted with participants across the full value chain throughout the summer and early fall of 2020. Feedback from this phase was used to further clarify requirements in the standard.

In preparation for public comment, two webinars (free and open to the public) were held in October and November of 2020 to review key aspects of the standard and to address commonly asked questions. The webinars were recorded and made publicly available for any interested parties.

A public comment period was held for more than sixty days from mid-November of 2020 to mid-January 2021 to gather input from interested stakeholders. Over 200 comments were received from more than 30 organizations including trade associations and NGOs.

All comments were taken into consideration as part of the standard development process.

A final draft of the standard went through a balloting process with the Advisory Committee and was approved for release in March of 2021.

The RMS Framework, RMS Plastic Module and RMS Plastic Material Classification were released to the public in May of 2021 on the website at www.RMSCertified.com.

Henceforth, standards with the RMS program will be maintained in a continuous maintenance process under oversight by the RMS Advisory Committee as described herein.

Maintenance Principles

The RMS maintenance process is grounded in the key principles of transparency, collaboration and continuous improvement.

The RMS has adopted a continuous maintenance process in the spirit of openness and continuous improvement in an effort to ensure that the standards meet the expectations of stakeholders.

RMS Standards and relevant documents are made available at www.RMSCertified.com so that all interested stakeholders can participate in the ongoing maintenance process.

Our consensus driven approach strives for agreement among materially affected parties and aims for more than a simple majority view, but unanimity is not necessary. All views, whether supportive or objecting, are considered so that an effort can be made toward resolution.

The RMS Advisory Committee will be managed with balanced representation to ensure that no single stakeholder group dominates the process.

RMS Advisory Committee

The RMS Advisory Committee is a multi-stakeholder group that serves as the consensus body for development of the original RMS Framework and Plastic Module as well as ongoing maintenance of the standards.

The committee is comprised of individuals representing brands, manufacturers, nonprofit groups and sustainability services. Any party interested in participating in the Advisory Committee may contact GreenBlue for consideration.

The primary responsibilities of the Advisory Committee are to:

- Provide independent perspectives and expertise to the ongoing maintenance of the RMS Program
- Review RMS documents (including the RMS Framework and Material Modules) for objectivity and credibility
- Review evidence pertaining to the RMS Complaints and Appeals process
- Contribute to strategy and planning for the program
- Participate in performance monitoring and impact evaluations
- Review the RMS Annual Progress Report

GreenBlue staff participates as a non-voting member in the Advisory Committee and is ultimately responsible for:

- Overseeing compliance with these Procedures
- Maintaining a roster of Committee membership
- Providing administrative services related to Committee activities
- Documenting actions and decisions made by the Advisory Committee
- Distributing documents relevant to the activities of the Advisory Committee
- Performing other functions as required by these Procedures

Balloting

Revisions to the standard shall be approved by the advisory committee through a formal balloting process. Proxies are not allowed and each voting member will have the ability to cast a single vote with the following options:

- a) Affirmative.
- b) Affirmative with comments (comments shall be considered editorial).
- c) Negative with reasons including specific wording on recommended changes to resolve objections.
- d) Abstain. Abstentions should also be accompanied by an explanation but no further action is required.

Affirmative ballots must be received from two-thirds of those voting before revisions shall be adopted.

Continuous Maintenance

The RMS is on a continuous maintenance schedule, meaning that any part of the standard is open for comment or proposals at any time. Any properly submitted proposals shall be considered and acted upon in accordance with the established revision cycle for the RMS.

Requests for Interpretations of Standards

Written inquiries requesting interpretation of RMS Standards may be submitted to GreenBlue. GreenBlue will maintain a compilation of interpretations to help inform guidance documents and implementation tools.

Any revisions to the standard resulting from requests for interpretations shall be processed in accordance with these Policies.

Revision Cycle

Revised versions of the RMS will be published no more than annually, if a revision has been approved by the Advisory Committee. If revisions occur more frequently than annually, an addendum will be published on an as-needed basis. In the event that no revisions are issued for a period of four years, action to revise, reaffirm, or withdraw the RMS shall be initiated during the fourth year.

Revision Process

Any party directly and materially affected by the standards may request a revision to RMS standards at any time.

Requests for clarifications, interpretations, or proposed revisions can be made by contacting:

GreenBlue
600 Water Street E. Suite C
Charlottesville, VA 22902
Phone: 434.817.1424
E-mail: rms@greenblue.org
Web: <https://www.rmscertified.com>

Such requests shall include documentation describing the relevant issue and need for revision. Required information includes

- the submitter's name, affiliation and contact information
- reference to the appropriate standard
- proposed text (e.g. wording to be added, revised or deleted)
- the reason for the proposed revision

Public Consultation

Upon revision of the standard, a draft of revised documents will be made available for public consultation. All comments received shall be compiled and a written synopsis of how each material issue has been addressed will be issued.

Notification of Revisions

Certified participants will be notified by email of all pending changes along with details pertaining the required conformance deadline. Notifications will be delivered to the primary contact listed in the RMS Certificate Database.

In most cases, participants will be required to conform to any standard revisions by their next audit. Unless otherwise stated, certified participants will have at least 90 days to address any revisions to RMS standards.

In cases where revisions have been announced, participants may request extensions to their audit cycle in order to allow for the minimum 90-day adoption period.