

WORLD CASTOR SUSTAINABILITY FORUM

(A subsidiary company of The Solvent Extractors' Association of India formed under S.8 of Companies Act 2013)

World Castor Sustainability Forum (WCSF) Workshop on Auditor's Protocol Training for Stakeholders and Certification Bodies (CS) 23rd October 2024, (Ahmedabad, Gujarat)

Workshop Overview

The "Auditor Protocol Workshop" organized by WCSF on October 23, 2024, focused on guiding Certification Bodies (CBs) in the structured protocols necessary for auditing sustainable castor farming practices. While the primary aim was to instruct CBs, the workshop also provided insights valuable for implementation partners and ICS advisors, offering a clearer understanding of the standards and practices used by CBs in auditing processes.

1. Utility of the Workshop

- **Guidance for Certification Bodies:** The workshop provided a thorough framework tailored for Certification Bodies, detailing every aspect of audit planning, sample size determination, time allocation, and compliance scoring, which are essential for evaluating farms' adherence to sustainability standards.
- **Insight for Implementation Partners:** Although primarily intended for CBs, the workshop offered implementation partners a valuable perspective on certification protocols, aiding their understanding of how CBs conduct audits and enforce standards in sustainable castor farming.
- **Enhanced Accountability:** The structured approach promoted in this workshop not only supports transparency for CBs but also indirectly benefits ICS teams and implementation partners, as it encourages more standardized and consistent evaluation and reporting.

2. Effectiveness of the Workshop

- **Efficient Audit Planning:** The workshop presented comprehensive guidelines on audit planning, including specific methodologies for sampling and timeline allocations based on the size of farm groups, thereby streamlining the audit process and improving efficiency.
- **Structured Non-Compliance Classification:** By introducing a detailed classification system for non-compliance issues, the workshop enabled CBs to systematically categorize issues and set priorities for corrective action. This approach supports efficient, focused remediation efforts that are essential to maintaining program standards.
- **Quantitative Compliance Scoring:** Performance indicators and compliance scoring were introduced as quantitative tools to measure and track sustainability efforts. This data-driven approach enhances audit accuracy and allows all stakeholders to objectively assess the success and areas for improvement within the program.

3. Key Learnings and Understanding

- **Audit Protocol Requirements:** For CBs, the workshop underscored the importance of a consistent, metric-driven approach to audits, ensuring that all compliance assessments meet standardized requirements and yield meaningful insights on sustainability.
- **CB Qualifications and Experience:** Emphasis was placed on the qualifications necessary for auditors, ensuring they possess the expertise required to evaluate complex sustainability criteria.

within castor farming. This ensures audits are conducted with the specialized knowledge crucial for upholding program standards.

- **Sampling and Audit Duration:** A square-root methodology for determining sample sizes and audit durations based on farm group sizes (e.g., 1-250 farmers requiring 2.5 audit days) standardizes the process and minimizes variability across audits, making it more manageable and consistent.

- **Audit Reporting and Re-Certification:** Clear guidelines on reporting and re-certification processes were outlined, emphasizing the need for ongoing surveillance audits and continuous improvement. This supports the program's commitment to fostering long-term sustainability in castor farming.

4. Recommendation for Further Collaboration

- **Need for Pre-Audit Meetings:** Following the selection of a Certification Body by WCSF members or the program's implementation companies, it is recommended that a meeting be held between the chosen CB, the implementation partner, and the ICS team. This meeting would serve as a preparatory session to align on critical aspects of the audit, including understanding CB's audit protocols, reviewing prior audit activities, and identifying necessary documentation. Such a meeting would enhance clarity and streamline the audit process, ensuring that all requirements and expectations are fully understood before audit activities commence.

Conclusion

The "Auditor Protocol Workshop" proved valuable by delivering structured, actionable insights to Certification Bodies responsible for assessing sustainable castor farming practices. Additionally, the protocols shared in the workshop provided implementation partners with a useful understanding of the certification standards followed by CBs. This comprehensive framework is poised to enhance the effectiveness, consistency, and credibility of the auditing process, supporting WCSF's commitment to sustainable agriculture.

