The Greenpeace International report entitled “Destruction: Certified”, published on March 10th, has some significant shortcomings and factual mistakes related to the RTRS certification scheme, which had been discussed with Greenpeace prior to publication. Unfortunately, these inaccuracies were not addressed in the final report.

Find here below some important clarifications.

1 - High level of assurance

- The RTRS certification scheme, ruled by RTRS Accreditation and Certification Procedures, is robustly implemented and controlled.
- The certification unit are the farms where soy is grown, and audits are based on an evaluation of the critical risk points.
- Only independent and accredited Certification Bodies are allowed to perform RTRS audits and issue certificates (at the moment there are 8 Certification Bodies recognized by RTRS: https://responsiblesoy.org/certificacion?lang=en#entes_c)
- Each certificate is valid for 5 years and every year producers are audited to confirm continued conformance with the standard.
- Certification Bodies must be accredited and monitored by national or international Accreditation Bodies that will annually verify that the certification bodies are working according to RTRS certification requirements.
- Producers shall not be evaluated by the same assessor on more than three consecutive evaluations (including surveillance audits)
- The Standard for Responsible Soy Production as well as the Accreditation and Certification Procedures is built under a multistakeholder decision-making process and approved by RTRS members, which include producers, industry, trade and finance and the civil society representatives through a consensus-based approach.
- According to Profundo´s benchmark “Setting the bar for deforestation-free soy in Europe. A benchmark to assess the suitability of voluntary standard systems”, commissioned by the IUCN in 2019:
    - RTRS has included the largest number of provisions on optimizing the standard’s level of assurance.
    - Among eight deforestation free standards, RTRS came out as one of the top two for including the largest number of provisions on forests, wetlands, and biodiversity protection, in combination with a high level of assurance.

2 - High level of transparency

- Two weeks prior to an initial audit, a Public Consultation is done and posted in RTRS´ website.
- After the audit is done, a publicly-available report, summing up the performance of each certified producer with respect to the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production requirement is posted on RTRS website.
- A profile of each RTRS certified producer is publicly available on RTRS website.
- All acquisitions, whether physical or via credits, is publicly disclosed in our website.

3 - RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production is zero deforestation and zero conversion

- As stated in RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production, the conversion of any natural land is not allowed, this means that RTRS is a zero deforestation and zero conversion standard.
- RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production is zero deforestation (indicator 4.4.1.): from May 2009 onwards, **the following areas have not been cleared or converted,** a) native forests, b) riparian vegetation, c) natural wetlands, d) steep slopes, e) areas designated by law to serve the purpose of native conservation and/or cultural and social protection.
- RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production is zero conversion (indicator 4.4.2.): After 3rd June 2016, **no conversion is allowed in any natural land** (And with this we mean: All land with natural, native vegetation, including, but not limited to, native forests (according to RTRS definition), riparian vegetation, natural wetlands, grasslands, savannahs, prairies, *cerrado* and woodlands), steep slopes and in areas designated by law to serve the purpose of native conservation and/or cultural and social protection.
- RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production is voluntary and its deforestation and conversion requirements go beyond the local laws.
- To guarantee zero deforestation and zero conversion in soy production, producers must provide objective evidence during audits - conducted by accredited and independent third parties (certification bodies) - showing compliance with the requirements of the production standard; this includes aerial pictures, maps and other satellite imagery to prove that no deforestation or conversion has taken place.
- In addition to the above, the RTRS certification system is a truly holistic approach that guarantees responsible business and agricultural practices, preserving biodiversity, soil and water.

In 2020, RTRS began the multistakeholder process of reviewing the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production Version 3.1 and its 106 indicators, as part of its commitment to continuous improvement and in compliance with ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice.

4 - RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production protects human rights

The RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production guarantees workers' rights, while respecting the customs and cultures of indigenous peoples and improving the well-being of local communities:

- Respect for sites that carry special cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance for local communities and indigenous people.
- Responsible labor conditions, which means that no force or child labor is allowed; workers receive equal remuneration for work of equal value, access to training, benefits, etc.
- Responsible relationships with local communities, including not just the channels commonly available for communication and open dialogue on topics related to farm activities, but also opportunities for growth and employment within local communities.

As mentioned above, as part of the multistakeholder revision process of the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production Version 3.1, RTRS is analyzing many new criteria related to social, indigenous and local communities aspects, among others, as part of its commitment to continuous improvement.

5 - RTRS is ISEAL Community Member

- RTRS expressed its commitment to ISEAL in June 2010, when we joined as a subscriber.
- In 2019, we committed to applying for ISEAL membership, as a demonstration of credibility and transparency.

• In 2020, RTRS became the first certification system in the soy sector to comply with ISEAL eligibility criteria and become a Community Member.
• ISEAL Community Members are committed to improving their systems, building trust and demonstrating transparency. This means that annually RTRS must report the improvements of its system to ISEAL in order to become ISEAL Code Compliant.
• The application for ISEAL Community Membership has a significant impact on the scheme´s system, as new procedures and requirements were developed to comply with ISEAL requirements, such as RTRS Theory of Change and the Monitoring & Evaluation System, among other new developments.
• As an ISEAL Community Member, RTRS will work to continually improve its certification system by taking part in ISEAL's learning, collaboration, and innovation activities.
• RTRS is planning and working to apply for ISEAL Code Compliant membership in the near future.

6 - Supporting responsible soy

• Once certified against the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production, the producer is granted credits equivalent to the volume of certified soy production (1 ton of RTRS-certified soy is equivalent to 1 credit).
• Organizations willing to support responsible soy production and to balance the impact of soy used in their products can buy RTRS credits. Credits can be acquired from a specific farm, region or country (information is available on RTRS website).
• RTRS has a specific claiming requirement for organizations that acquire RTRS Credits: RTRS procedures do not allow any other claim than "Supporting responsible soy", meaning that although credits are linked to certified responsible soy (once certified against the RTRS Standard for Responsible Soy Production, the producer is granted credits equivalent to the volume of certified soy production) no physical certified soy is involved in the supply chain.
• Credits are a mechanism that encourages producers to produce sustainably and implement good agricultural practices, providing them direct support to preserve forests, improve biodiversity, protect social aspects.
• RTRS credits serve as a transition to RTRS physical flow.

7 - RTRS Traceability system: RTRS Chain of Custody certification

• RTRS Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard describes the requirements for the different traceability systems an organization can implement to keep control of RTRS-certified material inventories, either soybeans or soy byproducts.
• It can be applied across the entire supply chain and it is mandatory for organizations wishing to receive, process and trade RTRS soy.
• In other words, in order to acquire RTRS certified physical soy, the entire supply chain has to be certified against the RTRS Chain of Custody (CoC) Standard
• The Chain of Custody Standard allows companies to trace the origin of the RTRS certified soy they acquire.
• Chain of Custody certified companies can implement either a Mass Balance or a Segregation accounting system.
• Every player in the supply chain is annually audited to verify compliance against the Chain of Custody standard and identify any potential misuse of the RTRS certified material.
• RTRS has a specific claiming requirement for organizations that acquire physical soy: RTRS procedures allow specific claiming for Certified Soy – Mass Balance and for Certified Soy-Segregation (including non-GMO scope), both linked to RTRS Chain of Custody certification scope.

8 - Impact of acquiring RTRS certified material (credits or physical soy)

- Sustainable agricultural practices occur at farm and area level, and the certified material triggers incentives.
- RTRS certification systems impact at territory level; have the potential to transform regions/areas, fostering sustainable producing regions.
- The incentive that RTRS certified material brings along (price, management efficiency, trainings, decrease in work accidents, etc.) can be invested by producers in actions and activities beyond soy production and beyond the certified farm, since for the accomplishment of the various indicators in the certification scheme, producers must carry important activities that will eventually change the territory overall.

9 - What is the relevance of claims and labels?

It is of critical relevance and deserves sound and transparent procedures in place.

RTRS has a Use of the Logo & Claims Procedure in force, which rules how stakeholders can claim RTRS certified material, among others.

This year, in line with RTRS´ continuous improvement perspective and due to its relevance for all players across the soy value chain, including end consumers, the procedure will be properly and professionally revised and dully updated.