Round Table on Responsible Soy

RT14 SHAPING GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Demand for Responsible soy: Policies and Finance
June 11-12 2019. Utrecht, The Netherlands
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A record turnout marked the start of the Round Table on Responsible Soy Association (RTRS) annual two-day conference, being held at the headquarters of Rabobank in Utrecht from 11 to 12 June 2019.

With over 250 registered global delegates from every part of the soy supply chain, the conference for 2019 had a core theme of increasing demand for responsible soy and the role to be played by financial institutions, governments and supply chains.

The event was being hosted by long-standing RTRS member Rabobank, the Dutch international bank headquartered in Utrecht – a global leader in food and agriculture financing, which is known for its strong stance on sustainability.

Rabobank’s Berry Marttin, a member of the Managing Board, opened the event with RTRS President Marina Born. As a Dutch banker who also runs a family-owned farm in Brazil, he was uniquely able to speak as someone with hands on experience of virtually every link in the soy chain from field to fork.

“Let’s start with the conclusion we have to take – that we have to produce soy sustainably. A sustainable world is the only one which has a future.”

Berry Marttin, Rabobank

Marttin outlined a number of measures his farming-focused bank is introducing to help growers transition to responsible soy, including a dedicated fund called The AGRI3 Fund for those looking to change their practices. The bank is also looking to set up a new client rating system that will place sustainability ratings (called an ‘e-rating’) alongside financial robustness for the first time.

He cited the twin challenges of feeding a growing global population (with 150 people added to the world population every minute) while bringing down a carbon footprint for the world’s food production which stands at 12 gigatonnes of carbon, and which needs to get down to four gigatonnes. Farming can become carbon positive, the conference heard.
A theme that would re-occur during the conference was shared responsibility, and in Rabobank’s introduction it was a clear priority. To achieve sustainability across the value chain, action needs to be shared and cannot sit with just the consumer in terms of increased price, or with the grower in terms of increased cost.

Rabobank’s future global view includes a consideration of human nutrition, the distribution of global hunger, what future nutrition needs to look like and how we balance that against a reduced carbon footprint.

Part of that reduced carbon footprint will include action to sequester more carbon in the land through innovative farming practices that will in the future promise a return in terms of tradable carbon, and the bank is researching how it could make that carbon tradable.

“Farming – our business – is a volatile business. There are price fluctuations. There is climate change. You have to build resilience into your value chains.”

Berry Marttin, Rabobank

Transparency, growing consumer awareness and more open demands for higher levels of sustainability in the marketplace concluded the Rabobank opening address: how are consumers influenced? What is our plan for engagement? How can Rabobank support that?

“As a farmer’s bank, we look to be a leader. How can we support the world to feed itself sustainably? In a way that we don’t destroy the planet.”

Berry Marttin, Rabobank

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Berry Marttin, Rabobank
GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

The RTRS President Marina Born thanked Rabobank for its support in hosting RT14, and for its ongoing support for the Roundtable itself. With finance as a major theme for RTRS, alongside demand and global policies, it was particularly appropriate to gather together at the headquarters of a financial institution showing genuine global leadership on responsible soy.

With a vital role to play in stimulating a global dialogue and greater co-operation, Marina Born outlined plans to strengthen RTRS’ role by launching the Collaborative Soy Initiative convened by RTRS, which would gather different efforts and initiatives in a common place to foster the achievement of sustainable commitments globally. The challenge, she said, is to ‘engage more, better and deeper’.

The RTRS president then introduced the next keynote of the morning, Heleen van den Hombergh, a Senior Agrocommodities Advisor at IUCN in the Netherlands.

Ms. van den Hombergh outlined recent IUCN NL research into certification standards of soy. In harmony with Rabobank, she said that responsible and deforestation free soy is relevant for many aims: healthy harvests, preserving space for nature and tackling climate change.

Speeding up the adoption of sustainable soy has to be a priority. Could this be achieved by legal compliance only? The law offers protection, yes, but up to 110 million hectares can be legally deforested and many more grasslands and savannah can be converted across Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, she told delegates (IUCN NL 2019, An analysis of existing laws on forest protection). So legal compliance is important, but it’s not enough.

THE IUCN NL VISION

Heleen van den Hombergh outlined the vision of IUCN NL on elements necessary for the good governance of agrocommodities such as soy:

• Enabling finance – both green finance but also greening regular finance;
• Shifting consumption patterns and more land efficient production models – also for protein;
• Capacity building, among others with producers;
• Better landscape planning;
• Good monitoring; and last but not least
• Application of robust commodity standards, which she described as ‘oil on the wheel’ of good governance.

The Amsterdam Declarations Partnership and other platforms are striving for deforestation free value chains, but are we making sufficient progress? In 2017 only 22% of European soy use was verified by standards compliant with FEFAC soy sourcing guidelines, she told the conference, and within that only 13% was verified deforestation-free by standards (European Soy Monitor, IDH and IUCN NL 2019).
Profundo benchmarked for IUCN NL the standards that are compliant with the soy sourcing guidelines used by FEFAC. Is the standard deforestation free? Does it avoid conversion of valuable ecosystems? Does it protect wetlands? Also, what is its level of assurance, such as the quality and quantity of verification? There are many differences among the standards. Eight of the 17 standards examined can be called deforestation free (Profundo 2019, Setting the bar for deforestation free soy in Europe). RTRS stands out as a ‘market leader of quality’ if one combines the conservation criteria and level of assurance criteria, van den Hombergh told the delegates, but other standards also have a role to play, for example in physical non-GMO soy supply. Uptake of RTRS and other deforestation-free responsible soy standards should – and can – be improved in Europe.

“There are so many reasons not to act but there are many more reasons to take action.”

Heleen van den Hombergh, IUCN NL

Marking out RTRS as a market leader on quality of assurance, she told delegates that all the standards they had mapped out have a role to play. Through the work they had been carrying out, their conclusions could be forged into a number of calls to action for specific players in the soy chain:

**Traders** – be more transparent about the standards being applied.

**Retailers** – set the bar high on well-verified, deforestation and conversion free soy, address what van den Homberg called ‘risk landscapes’.

**Financial sector** – mobilise green finance for risk landscapes.

**European Union (EU) governments** – use green public procurement, a strong EU-wide action plan, and have national action plans too.

And also use ‘green diplomacy’ to support producing countries.
How does certification contribute to regional development? The case of Northeastern Brazil.

Moderated by Oswaldo Carvalho of the Earth Innovation Institute, RT14’s first panel session saw representatives from every link in the soy chain explore the specific case of Northeastern Brazil and the contribution responsible soy certification has made.

Discussion began with a Brazilian producer – Ani Heinrich Sanders of Grupo Progresso – and their farm’s efforts to be a model enterprise for the region, producing soy and corn.

The Grupo Progresso story covers 18 years of soy production in the Cerrado region, and for Ani Heinrich Sanders choosing to apply high environmental and social standards to soy production is part and parcel of the vocation that is farming; it has also meant they are recognised nationally and internationally as ‘making a difference’.

“The changes certification brought to us were many. It was a reward for our careful work for many years. A way to tell ourselves that what we were doing was worth it. Doing things correctly and to international standards. To do things the right way and to set an example.”

Ani Heinrich Sanders, Grupo Progresso

As producers of a range of commodities, as well as applying exacting environmental standards, the Grupo Progresso invests back consciously in the communities where they operate, helping the families that depend on agriculture and providing facilities such as educational spaces.

That wider community and municipality was given a voice on the panel by Ângelo Pereira, the Mayor for the Sebastião Leal Municipality of Piauí. He stressed that their relative isolation geographically had given them the strength to develop their own strategies and a sense of direction, in particular to promote their agricultural sector and to embrace responsible production. For the Sebastião Leal

“RTRS certification shows that our region can produce soy in one environmentally friendly way, in a way that is economically viable.”

Ângelo Pereira, Sebastião Leal Municipality of Piauí.

Municipality the production of responsible soy is a considerable source of local pride but, again, provides more than just environmental gains, with talent development, sports and leisure facilities, and community benefits stemming from working with partners like the Grupo Progresso. A recent focus on education in the region had flourished in 2017 with the Municipality achieving double the goals they had set for getting children into basic education.
As a region producing a large volume of protein for markets across the world, the road to certification and of embracing responsible soy has meant the use of the RTRS certification tool has been important. This point was stressed on the panel by Gisela Introvini, the Superintendent of FAPCEN and a board member of RTRS.

“If we take care of this environment, when these children grow up they don’t have to emigrate, they can stay in the region.”

Gisela Introvini, FAPCEN

For FAPCEN and its partners, new ideas and innovation are readily embraced in their efforts to create jobs and support the regional economy, while preserving the Cerrado and making sure that the nature-based economy continues to flourish for future generations. Their programmes include supporting women in agriculture, and supporting children in education.

Introvini also made a key point about the education of children in consumer nations, and that perhaps one important goal might be to get more consumers to understand that agriculture and food starts in the field, not on the supermarket shelves.

Gisela further remarks that MATOPI, in Brazil, is a region that produces a lot of protein for international markets. States like Maranhão and Piauí which are already pioneering agricultural frontiers, have reported that income from the soybean crop has brought huge social benefits including an increase in jobs and more money from taxes for the cities, protecting agribusiness. Gisela summarised that RTRS has brought value to these territories, bringing well-deserved visibility to producers, how they do business and the legacy they are hoping to leave for future generations.

Moving on from producers and the regional soy chain, Jorn Schouten, who leads on environmental commodities at ACT Commodities, was able to give a service provider’s view.

For ACT, demand is critical. Pressure from NGOs in particular has shifted consumer opinion, particularly in Europe, and so as a result brands are looking to source more sustainably over a very broad range of commodities. ACT has worked hard to create demand of responsible soy, which has led to growing supply in the Northeast of Brazil. ACT services also enabled leading supermarket chain, Lidl, to have an impact in the poorest states of Brazil, Maranhao and Piauí.

Consumer demand, transparency and a greater understanding of soy in the food system dominated much of the wider morning’s discussion and presentations, with Lidl’s Judith Kontrny revealing the Lidl Soy Initiative.

“We started this project in 2017 and quickly realised the challenge of soy being really a hidden commodity,” she said. “That’s why we wanted to move it from an expert discussion to one that could educate the consumer about soy.”

Judith Kontrny, LIDL
Working with RTRS, Lidl has recently announced its commitment to certified responsible soy across its supply chain in several European countries. It has worked with RTRS to particularly focus on some of the poorest producing areas in the Northeast of Brazil where certification has a very strong social component, as well as guaranteeing zero deforestation and zero conversion.

Kontny concluded her contribution to the panel discussion by revealing a new video by Lidl explaining to consumers their decision to source only responsible soy in several European countries. For Lidl the fact that soy is a ‘hidden commodity’ was an issue it wanted to overcome and it was time to move on from an ‘expert discussion’ to one that included consumers.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS
Oswaldo Carvalho. Research Associate. Earth Innovation Institute
Jorn Schouten, Environmental Commodities, ACT Commodities
Ani Heinrich Sanders, Producer, Fazenda Progresso - Grupo Progresso
Gisela Introvini, Superintendent, FAPCEN
Ângelo Pereira, Mayor, Sebastião Leal Municipality, Piauí, Brazil
Judith Kontny, Corporate Responsibility, LIDL
In the first morning of presentations and discussions, a major theme emerged of driving up demand for responsible, certified soy.

“If you want to create sustainability amongst producers, you have to send the right signals,” Juliana de Lavor Lopes, Sustainability, Communications and Compliance Director at Amaggi, told the conference.

Juliana presented research into the positive impact that RTRS certification has had on growers in Brazil, and she challenged the rest of the soy supply chain to deliver greater demand.

Through a survey of producers and major stakeholders RTRS had wanted to understand a) the positive impact certification was having and b) how RTRS could continue to develop its standard to match the ISEAL Impacts Code as a precursor to applying for ISEAL membership.

In total 52 farmers were interviewed. Of those interviewed 98 percent felt that better farm management was one result from certification, alongside better alignment with market demand and with legal compliance.

One finding from the survey, or one message, was that farmers were not feeling the level of demand they’d expect, particularly for the effort that they’d invested in certification. The message from the marketplace is simply not strong enough.

The survey will help RTRS evolve their certification tool. One development to watch in the future will be the use of the RTRS tool to help guide a reduction in Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, in addition to its current role in achieving positive social and environmental outcomes.
Panel Discussion on Demand

What changes are occurring in consumer markets and how will these impact supply chains?
What can we learn from specific examples about equitable cost sharing of responsible soy initiatives?

“We plan to be in the business for the long term. Sustainable production leads to better and more production. For the longer prosperity of the sector we need to make sure that production is carried out in a responsible way.”

Charton Locks, Aliança da Terra

Sharing responsibility, stimulating demand and capitalising on a resurgence in ecological thinking were all topics that came up as a panel sat at the end of the first morning of RT14 to discuss global demand for responsible soy.

Charton Locks, Director of Operations at Aliança da Terra, started out by emphasising that soy production was a complex chain, connecting a range of actors, all of whom had a role to play in responding to, and stimulating, demand. From the seed and agricultural suppliers to finance, technology, growing, processing and trade, the soy chain was complex.

As the conference heard that this year would be the ‘biggest RTRS certified harvest so far’ of responsible soy, Locks emphasised that what all this means is that, with the challenge of a complex supply chain and a hidden commodity for the end consumer, the major issue isn’t supply, it’s demand.

For Charton Locks and Aliança da Terra, the production end of the equation is fast-moving, adaptable and ready to respond to shifts in demand. The growers working through RTRS in Brazil were producing 4.9m tons of responsible soy and can boast 600,000 hectares of preserved forest.

Panel member Wei Peng, Head of Sustainability at Cofco International, also outlined climate change as a major issue for the future. As a link between farmers and the market, Cofco is a critical shackle in the chain, and according to Wei Peng, it realises that to be in business for the long term it has to act responsibly, and has to invest in sustainable production. This realisation is underpinned by the fact that climate change is already negatively impacting on yields.
The conference heard next that, from a consumer brand perspective, demand is growing significantly. Madeleine Eilert, Global Responsible Sourcing Leader for cereals, sugar and soya at Nestlé, told RT14 that its customers definitely want to know that the products they are buying have been made responsibly. Nestlé’s response to that demand is a responsible sourcing standard that reflects customer views, and has transparency as a priority; it can only act and change if it knows where products are coming from.

Eilert told delegates that, as a reputable brand, Nestlé needs to know with confidence that the raw materials it is buying are deforestation free, and free from exploitation of workers too. To achieve this, she outlined a philosophy of collaboration, saying that it could only have real impact by working together across the supply chain.

Wei Peng quickly agreed on this; there is a clear opportunity for collaboration, especially on monitoring and evaluation. Panel member Emma Keller, Head of Food Commodities at WWF-UK, similarly agreed but went further. “We need to move from collaboration and knowledge exchange to real, tangible action”, she told RT14. “It’s clear that responsible soy is not the norm and much more needs to be done. If there is a shared demand for a better world, then there is also shared responsibility and action.” Keller also emphasised the need to take action to avoid a reduction in demand. “Palm oil has become in some consumers eyes a demonised commodity,” she said, “and we absolutely don’t want that to happen with soy.”

Jaap Petraeus, Corporate Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Manager at FrieslandCampina, was pleased to emphasise that they used 100% responsible soy in dairy production in The Netherlands for FrieslandCampina.

“Our customers like Nestlé, Unilever and Danone all want to do business with companies that have strong policies on zero deforestation.”

Jaap Petraeus, Friesland Campina

For Petraeus, there was a new nexus emerging, particularly in the European market, of reducing GHG emissions, protecting biodiversity, and shifting towards more responsible sourcing of commodities like soy. For him, given the footprint of soy, the feed industry was the critical actor to target in terms of demand. Zero deforestation over 20 years and more must be proven. Full transparency in the sourcing areas is essential to claim GHG emissions reduction.

For the panel looking at consumer demand, one topic examined was communicating with consumers around more responsible sourcing. Could branding add value? Do we need a responsible soy label? Madeleine Eilert from Nestlé was not so sure about branding, particularly as most products did not have soy as an ingredient. If there was a global move towards more direct consumption of soy, rather than via meat and diary products, this could change.

“Across Europe there is a major trend for plant-based products, and we’ve launched our Incredible Burger in response”, she said.

Regardless of indirect or direct use of soy, the panel did feel there was a need for greater transparency with consumers and, if we need to drive up demand, tell more stories about the positive impact of certified, responsible soy.
“We need to do more to showcase responsible farmers and the landscapes they are protecting.”

Madeleine Eilert, Nestlé

Charton from Aliança da Terra strongly agreed. He said that the work of RTRS and others has not yet been communicated to consumers. The story of a rural producer that has made an investment in responsible production, who is looking after water sources, avoiding forest fires, treating workers well and preserving nature – this is a good story, he told delegates.

And a good story adds value.

Both Wei Peng and Charton Locks looked beyond the European situation to highlight that, while there may be consumption patterns shifting there, across the rest of the world there is a global increase in demand for beef and meat products, and a knock on increase in demand for soy. In terms of Chinese demand in particular Wei Peng reported that so far they’d not seen much interest from clients in China around responsible soy: “The market signal is simply not there yet.”

The panel said that the government position in China could be critical, as could be the fact that in 2020 the UN Conference on Biological Diversity would be taking place in Beijing.

For Emma Keller from WWF-UK, the role of governments worldwide continues to be key, playing an enabling role in transforming supply chains. In the UK, a new initiative on soy, supported by government, is galvanising action, particularly from retailers.

The final words from the panel on demand included a reminder from Wei Peng that payment for ecosystem services was still a clear future financing opportunity, which could be a game changer. Charlton Locks returned to the fact that 2019 would see the biggest level of responsible soy production to date, and that producers needed to see the market respond with a clear signal of demand.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS

James Allen, Director, Olab & GTC Facilitator (moderator)

Charton Jahn Locks, Director of Operations, Aliança da Terra

Wei Peng, Head of Sustainability, Cofco

Emma Keller, Head of Food Commodities, WWF-UK

Jaap Petraeus, Corporate Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Manager at Friesland-Campina

Madeleine Eilert, Global Responsible Sourcing Leader for cereals, sugar and soya, Nestlé
The Soy Hub

An overview of the latest thinking and doing on responsible soy

The RT14 afternoon session began with a series of quick-fire presentations on new developments, initiatives and technologies helping to progress responsible soy.

Soy Toolkit

Pedro Amaral from Proforest took delegates through their work on a ‘soy toolkit’ that helps companies understand which tools and initiatives are out there to help them source responsible soy. With a fast-evolving ecosystem of initiatives in the marketplace, according to Amaral, it can be daunting to keep track of everything that’s going on, even for those dedicated to the area.

The toolkit has five key elements: assess and plan; understanding supply chain risk; supplier engagement; purchase control systems; and monitoring, verifying and reporting.

www.soytoolkit.net

Grupo de Trabalho do Cerrado (GTC)

An overview of 2.5 years of work around the GTC was presented by James Allen of Olab (also RT14 facilitator), Frederico Machado from WWF Brazil and Renata Nogueira from Cargill.

Os integrantes do GTC têm trabalhado juntos para levantar e analisar dados sobre uso da terra no bioma Cerrado; em junho, será celebrado um acordo entre as partes envolvidas. Os parceiros enfatizaram que, nessa região, finalmente foi atingido o objetivo de fazer com que todos os atores da cadeia de suprimentos trabalhassem juntos. Renata from Cargill stressed that they were close to a breakthrough: "We have reached a point in the discussion around compensation that we have almost found a solution for preserving areas that could be legally converted. We are working on having the necessary solutions to end conversion in the Cerrado."

European Soy Monitor

Heleen van den Hombergh returned to the stage and with colleagues from the sustainable trade initiative IDH presented the hugely comprehensive European Soy Monitor report, which examines in depth the impact of Europe’s collective soy consumption.

Recognising that work to counter the externalities of soy production is only possible through the development of sustainable supply chains, the presenters outlined that their report on soy in 2017 showed that only 22% (76 million tons) of the total soy use in Europe was compliant with the FEFAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines (a baseline for responsible soy), and only 13% of European soy imports (4.2 million tons) was verified deforestation-free.

They stressed that certifications like RTRS, ProTerra, Donau Soja and Europe Soya, ISCC+, and CRS make it easier for companies to demand sustainable soy, but the production of sustainable soy still currently exceeds demand.

https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/publication/european-soy-monitor/
Integrated Pest Management
Gustavo Herrmann from Koppert Brazil presented on his company’s track record in deploying biological solutions across soy farming in Brazil, emphasising that, alongside crop rotation and chemical controls, biological solutions – introducing bugs – could result in fewer damaged grains and greater productivity, and was successful in 85% of areas where it is deployed.

https://www.koppert.com

Towards a Cross-Commodities and Landscape Approach
Laure d’Astorg from the Alliance for the Preservation of Forests presented the work the alliance has done, through a coalition of private sector partners, to encourage a landscape-based approach to supply chain sustainability for coffee, soy, rubber and other key commodities.

Six years ago their work started on palm oil in France, and now takes in a range of commodities and is expanding to work across Europe. Key developments include a French National Strategy on No Deforestation, a platform helping companies in France work on sustainable sourcing, and a project looking at zero deforestation labelling for consumers.

http://alliance-preservation-forets.org

UAVs for Biological Pest and Disease Controls
Nei Salis Brasil Neto of FT Sistemas presented alongside Koppert Brazil on how unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs or drones) were now being used alongside biological solution providers to help implement complex and up-to-the-minute data services in work on biological pest and disease controls.

http://ftsistemas.com.br

Insights into Soy Sustainability Policy Advocacy
Alex Ehrenhaus from Solidaridad took to the stage to present its work on tackling deforestation in Bolivia, particularly with small producers who make up 86 percent of the soy chain in that region.

In its work on strengthening policy development to reduce illegal deforestation, Ehrenhaus told the conference that this particular strand of work had reduced illegal deforestation from 67% to 43% in the areas in which they’ve been active.

Founded in 1969, Solidaridad Network is an international civil society organisation facilitating the development of socially responsible, ecologically sound and profitable supply chains. It operates through eight regional expertise centres in over 40 countries.

https://www.solidaridadnetwork.org

Promoting Sustainability Governance through Integrated Knowledge
Patricia Prado from the University of York in the UK presented the work being carried out by a consortium of British universities funded through the Global Food Security programme, called ‘IKnowFood’. Their programme looks to deepen the understanding of how to build resilience in food systems by creating positive social and environmental change.

For soy, their work has highlighted the need for more effective traceability, better understanding of where power resides in the soy supply chain and reflections on the fact that consumers are unaware that a meat-based diet leads to an increasing demand for soy – mostly produced in an unsustainable way.

http://www.iknowfood.org/
Global Forest Watch Pro
Identify, Monitor, and Manage Your Deforestation Risks

From the World Resources Institute (WRI) Ryan Sarsfield closed off the Soy Hub session with a demonstration of the WRI data tool, Global Forest Watch Pro.

Built to be used by supply chain managers and finance companies, the tool has every parcel of soy across South America visible, with historical data on conversion and all of South American data shortly for the last harvest year.

https://pro.globalforestwatch.org/
Panel Discussion on Finance

What does the value chain need and expect from finance organisations? How can these needs be better met?

Upstream, what impact can financial institutions have on land use?

What practical solutions do they have for influencing the market?

Downstream, how can financial institutions play a role in pushing for greater demand for responsible sourcing?

What role can investors play in encouraging banks to develop new products that are socially and environmentally responsible?

As a global fund manager with responsibility for the pension fund covering 4.5 million people, he asserted that their particular balancing act was to avoid portfolio risk while also recognising the need to be a sustainable investor.

Rabobank’s Director of Sustainability, Bas Rüter, was also on the panel and emphasised the institution’s drive to find innovative approaches to delivering sustainability as well as a return on investment.

This has led the Bank to partner up with UN Environment to launch their AGRI3 Fund, with the aim of unlocking at least USD 1 billion in finance towards deforestation-free, sustainable agriculture and land use. The overarching goal is to ‘de-risk’ an investment in responsible production models. Doing so, the fund can also play a part in addressing the climate crisis, with a focus on reduction in GHG emissions too.

Running for the next 5 to 10 years, the Fund will seek to support innovative schemes that promise zero deforestation, sustainable agricultural practices and that improve rural livelihoods too.

For Johnny Brom of Sail Ventures, this all has to become ‘business as usual’. His boutique investment company is the advisor to &Green. The Fund was launched in 2017 with US$100m of capital with a mission to prove that financing inclusive, sustainable and deforestation-free commodity production can be commercially viable and replicable.

The afternoon session of Day One of RT14 included a panel with representatives from a mixture of banks, investors and blended finance institutions.

Lucian Peppelenbos from APG Asset Management acted as moderator and launched the panel discussion by affirming the huge expectations many had for how finance could be a game changer on soy, both in terms of creating the right market conditions for greater demand, but also making it profitable to be a responsible producer.
“We find on the ground with farmers and traders, the risk doesn’t look very attractive. Long-term partnerships are needed to shift practice.”
Johnny Brom, Sail Ventures

A key point made by Johnny to the conference was that, in a large and complex sector, too much of the cost for more sustainable practice can fall on the smallest players in the value chain. To support a change in practice, longer-term partnerships need to be established with growers, to support their investment in sustainable practice.

Greater demand and consumer pressure is needed, too, according to Bas Rüter. Although a sustainable food supply remains a shared responsibility, that can have a stronger and more immediate impact than anything else for financiers and investors; the market has to move.

“The challenge has been companies thinking it’s all about additional costs but more likely it will be less risky and they need to see others leading the way.”
Peter van der Werf, Robeco

Robeco’s Peter van der Werf spoke next on the panel and outlined the balance they seek to achieve between being a responsible investor taking risk out of their portfolio and their need as a long-term investor to stay in a dialogue with companies that have yet to achieve zero deforestation. In terms of building demand for responsible soy, he said that from 2012 they’ve called on companies they actively engage with on the topic of a sustainable soy supply chain to set a minimum standard and achieve certification of the soy they are sourcing.

Danielle Carreira, Senior Manager at Principles for Responsible Investment, the world’s leading proponent of responsible investment, highlighted their work related to sustainable land use and deforestation.

“It’s about food security, water, human rights, biodiversity – as well as about climate change.”
Danielle Carreira, Principles for Responsible Investment

Data and transparency were challenges that the investor working group had highlighted, with difficulties emerging if there wasn’t enough data to manage a process of financial ‘de-risking’. She also suggested that a zero deforestation leaders index could be a welcome development.

Across the panel all contributors agreed that getting long-term value right is critical. If investors know that value will be there in the longer term, they will be able to invest. If there is also public funding support of better practice, it could tip the balance in favour of zero deforestation even faster.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS
Moderator - Lucian Peppelenbos, Senior Responsible Investment and Governance Specialist, APG Asset Management
Bas Rüter, Director of Sustainability, Rabobank
Danielle Carreira, Senior Manager of Environmental Issues, UNPRI
Johnny Brom, Engagement Specialist, Sail Ventures
Peter van der Werf, Director of Active Ownership, Robeco
Day one of RT14 drew to a powerful close with a series of compelling presentations from representatives of soy producers, beginning with Luiz Iaquinta from Fazendas Bartira in Brazil.

- Across a series of slides he outlined impressive figures for the positive impact RTRS-certified farms were having across Brazil.
- Each ton of RTRS soy has helped to preserve 157 trees and stop the release of 16 tons of carbon;
- Altogether RTRS-certified farms have preserved 616 million trees in natural forests and more than 64 million tons of carbon stocked;
- No tillage technology enables producers to reduce GHG emissions and remove more than 1.8 million tons of carbon yearly;
- Less water used in agrochemicals applications and absence of exposed soil;
- An area of natural forest equal to six times the Amsterdam area has been preserved;
- All RTRS farms have implemented waste management programmes and audits;
- RTRS farms employ 10,000 people directly and more than 25,000 indirectly; and
- There are several social programmes for local communities and an average of 60 hours of training each year for every employee.

And Luiz Iaquinta outlined the scale of the operations too:

- The average size of an RTRS-certified farm is 4,600 hectares;
- 85% of global RTRS production is from Brazil, where there are 226 certified farms operating across more than one million hectares; and
- Protecting a natural forest area costs farmers the equivalent of US$4 per hectare.

Having shown the enormous positive impact of certified production, he then went on to challenge the rest of the soy supply chain to work harder on both demand, and prices. We need to hear from the demand side, he said.

“We are paying out more than we are getting back from the market. What’s the price of sustainability? Less than 1%?”

Luiz Iaquinta, Fazendas Bartira
Solidaridad’s Country Coordinator for Mozambique was next to speak, Francisco Nhanale. They had certified the first 223 farmers in Africa under RTRS in 2017. They are now looking at expanding to Malawi and Zambia. Francisco Nhanale was very upbeat about the positive benefits they had seen flowing from RTRS certification:

- They’d seen maximised production alongside environment and social benefits;
- They were using certified seeds that lead to good yields;
- Record keeping was happening for the first time on many farms;
- There was more sustainable use of pesticides; and
- Other good agricultural practices had come about including crop rotation and a reduction in transport costs.

For Julio Fernández Speroni, a senior consultant from RTRS-certified producers in Argentina, the implementation of the RTRS standard is a ‘major piece of work’, but worth the effort. The additional cost of reaching the standard is offset by higher yields, fewer inputs and better social outcomes for workers and local communities.

Citing three growers in the Humid Pampas region, he spoke of their efficient use of land and water, their resilience to extreme changes in weather, and their commitment to biodiversity.

**PANEL PARTICIPANTS**

**MODERATOR** Ulises Martínez Ortiz. Professor UBA and Advisor of Fundación Vida Silvestre Argentina

Luiz Iaquinta. Quality, Certification, Healthy and Safety and Environmental Director. Fazendas Bartira. Brazil

Francisco Nhanale. Country Coordinator - Mozambique. Solidaridad

Julio Fernández Speroni. Senior Consultant from RTRS certified producers, Argentina
The RTRS Awards

RT14 also saw the inaugural RTRS Awards announced at the closing of day one of the conference. The new awards have been launched to help recognise leading contributions to sustainable soy practices. They were presented by the RTRS Executive Director, Marcelo Visconti.

Lidl won an award for driving more sustainable supply chains.

FAPCEN received two awards for its contribution to sustainable partnerships and for leading-edge soy production management.

“We have been overwhelmed by the calibre of the entries of high-profile consumer brands keen to engage and show their commitment to a sustainable soy future.”

Marcelo Visconti, Executive Director of RTRS.

And to mark the inaugural awards ceremony, RTRS also recognised one of its leading frontrunner organisations. Unilever, a member company that has been positioning itself as one of the main buyers of RTRS material since 2016, was given special recognition as the Major Buyer of RTRS Certified Material 2019. The award was accepted by Unilever’s Global Director of Sustainable Sourcing, Jan Kees Vis.

“Unilever has come a long way with RTRS since we co-founded the organisation. We’re very proud to be recognised with this award, which shows our firm commitment and support towards responsible production of soy.”

Jan Kees Vis, Unilever

The awards will return for the 2020 annual conference and nominations will open via email and the RTRS website.
Day One: The RTRS Awards.
Day One: Gallery.
RTRS has come a long way, its Executive Director told delegates on the opening of the second day of RT14. Marcelo Visconti thanked Rabobank once again for their support for the conference and for their ongoing and significant commitment to sustainability.

Marcelo told delegates that one of the key aspects of RTRS was its convening power as a true roundtable of all those involved in the soy value chain. The members and partners, many in the room, were its greatest strength, he remarks.

RTRS was created as a ‘safe space for a dialogue on social and environmental issues in the complex soy system’. After it was established RTRS members agreed on a comprehensive set of standards to deliver its vision and a certification scheme to achieve that vision. It was amongst the first credible processes for securing transparency in soy supply chains.

“Today,” said Marcelo, “RTRS continues its efforts to strengthen its role as a space for dialogue. It continues to play a critical role in linking supply and demand. Zero deforestation and conversion is now a central part of the standard.”

He re-emphasised the holistic value of the standard that RTRS champions, including a safe and healthy workplace, community benefits and good agricultural practice, among others.

And he built on a theme of the connections that RTRS succeeds in making. In the Northeast of Brazil RTRS has been the fulcrum linking European demand with local supply.

“We are always looking to the future. The ever-changing nature of what being responsible or sustainable actually means.”

Marcelo Visconti, RTRS
In its work around the Cerrado, RTRS has connected with other roundtables and other partnerships, to pursue a common goal. That connecting role will become more and more prominent, Marcelo stated. And RTRS continues to connect with a wider geographical scope of growers, too.

Next year, Marcelo announced, at RT15, the organisation will present a ‘Beyond 2020’ RTRS Strategy that will place innovation at the heart of the Roundtable’s future plans. The strategy will take in themes from multi-crop approach or broader geographical scope, to emission measurement in the farm.

Closing with a call to action, Marcelo urged that the next ten years were critical and that success would rely on getting more players on board, more committed producers certified and, vitally, see more demand for responsible soy.
Day two’s keynote address was from Richard Tipper, the Executive Chairman of Ecometrica, a leading data and sustainability reporting consultancy that ‘monitors the health of the Earth’.

He used his keynote to do some horizon scanning, and to highlight a number of ‘megatrends’ that could impact on the work of RTRS and its partners.

Shifting consumption patterns and major changes in dietary choices was the first megatrend highlighted by Richard. Although in some developing markets there is still an upward trend in the consumption of animal proteins, he noted that, across Europe, young people in particular are reducing meat and diary and moving towards plant-based products.

Driven by increasing environmental awareness, health issues and a concern for animal welfare, a more ethical view is becoming embedded in lifestyles. For the soy sector, this means they are consuming soy more directly and so as a result are far more interested in where it comes from.

**Climate change** is the global factor that, in part, has stimulated that shift in dietary patterns (and global commitments on zero deforestation and conversion). But it is also a factor on the resilience of agricultural systems and the need to develop adaptation plans for the changes in climate that cannot be avoided due to historical GHG emissions.

“At a landscape level in the next ten years we could start to move to incentives to achieve sequestration of carbon in the land. The restoration of ecosystems and the locking up of carbon has to be an area for growth in the next decade.”

Richard Tipper, Ecometrica

Richard also talked about a wider view of sector resilience. Alongside weather patterns, water stress and topsoil loss there are pests and diseases to counter, such as the current swine flu outbreak in China, which is already having an impact on demand for soy.

If there are major changes in how, where and how much soy is produced, he urged delegates to adopt an ‘opportunity mindset’, particularly for any transitions stimulated by changing demand – how big will the market be for **non-food products** based on soy, such as solvents, coatings and plastic replacements?

New products and innovation are a major opportunity, he told delegates, and recalled the innovative spirit shown by Henry Ford who, in the 1930s, had an ambition to combine agriculture with industry, which resulted in large-scale soybean experimentation. He even commissioned a suit made with soybean protein fibres, which he modelled for a photograph taken on July 30, 1941, Ford’s 78th birthday.
Closing with a call for collaboration, Richard Tipper stressed that the overarching challenge was to do more than just celebrate the very best initiatives, and move an entire sector forward to 100% zero deforestation and conversion, connecting and conserving areas of biodiversity and with improved social standards.
Panel on Public Policies

How are governments in consumer markets mobilising to accelerate commitments to responsible sourcing?

In what ways can jurisdictional and supply chain approaches complement one another?

How does RTRS’ work with jurisdictional certification link to landscape initiatives like Produce, Conserve and Include (PCI) and to multilateral commitments such as the Amsterdam Declaration?

Toby Gardner, a Research Fellow from the Stockholm Environment Institute, opened the panel on public policies and was its moderator. Public policy is too often developed in isolation from business and civil society, he challenged delegates. His other opening challenges were:

• What is the co-ordination, incentives and strategy that needs to happen between the demand and supply side of the equation?

• And where is it not happening?

• What can we do to overcome inertia on a price premium for example?

• Or if we shift away to alternatives to soy, what will that do to growers of responsible soy in Brazil?

• And critically, what measures are being taken to mobilise the uptake of responsible soy in Europe?

First to respond was Bettina Hedden-Dunkhorst, Head of Division for International Nature Conservation at the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, from Germany. She represented a consumer country and had four key points to make.

Her first point was that information, communication and awareness-raising in relation to sustainable sourcing are very important. There is, for example, only little awareness among German consumers about the environmental and social impacts of soy production in producer countries and the links to their meat consumption. The German National Programme on Sustainable Consumption (launched in 2017) outlines concrete measures on how to foster information, communication and awareness-raising among consumers.

Bettina’s second point was about the need for coherent policies in consumer countries to support sustainable sourcing. Perverse incentives and policies still exist that counteract sustainable production and consumption. In Germany, incoherent policies concern sectors like agriculture, environment, public health, and development cooperation.

The third point was that public procurement in consumer countries has a large potential to source more responsibly produced commodities. Germany’s public sector annually spends about 10% of the country’s GDP on public procurement (300-400 billion Euros). If thousands of public canteens would commit to source responsibly, including zero deforestation and conversion, the demand for responsibly produced products would be huge.
And fourth, demonstrating the link between responsible sourcing, and in particular of soy, to international debates and processes would help to increase the visibility and relevance of sustainable soy. International processes of relevance are: the Fridays for Future Initiative (climate change, deforestation); Convention on Biodiversity (biodiversity); Rio+20-10 Years Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Production and Consumption (with its six sub-programmes); and the UN Environment Assembly (Declaration on Sustainable Consumption and Production).

For Vincent van den Berk, who represents the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in the Amsterdam Declarations Partnership, awareness again was an issue. Soy is a ‘headache’ he said, because too little progress was being made when compared to other deforestation related commodities like cocoa and palm oil.

There are many questions in their parliament on deforestation. From an Amsterdam Declarations Partnership perspective they are trying to align agricultural support programmes with policy priorities. In the EU there is an action plan in the making to address deforestation and forest degradation from agriculture expansion. It has been announced that the related EU Communication published in July, looking at further action on deforestation including soy.

Vincent van den Berk also spoke of an EU protein strategy, which would address some key issues but which potentially could work against soy, addressing concerns that the European market is too dependent on imported soy; a discussion also happening in China.

In a follow-up discussion with the moderator Toby Gardner, France was cited as a good example where due diligence is applied to public policy development.

João Adrien, a former farmer and now advisor on sustainable agriculture at the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, spoke next on the panel.

“It’s about partnerships and investment. We are at a turning point on engaging with sustainability in agriculture. In Brazil we are doing a lot on this issue. How can we have incentives to consolidate production and preservation. We are facing this challenge.”

João Adrien, Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture

He spoke of how they’d been challenged by the UN to reduce GHG emissions but also increase production levels – not a simple challenge. How can we be more intensive and more sustainable at the same time? he asked.

Brazil was working harder on integrated crop management, and on tackling illegal deforestation, he said.

For the government of Brazil, however, it was key that the costs of sustainable production are shared right through the value chain of soy, and that there had to be an increase in demand and a price premium to drive up the market.

“The costs of sustainability have to be shared along the soy value chain. It cannot just be borne by the grower.”

João Adrien, Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture
Echoing others, he set out the key challenges and questions as he saw them:

- How can we drive forward incentives for low carbon agriculture?
- Could international funding invest on sustainable agriculture?
- How can we create value for preserved forests?
- And how can we finance reforestation?

At this point Fernando Sampaio, Executive Director for Produce, Conserve and Include (PCI) Strategy from Brazil, representing the Governor of the state of Maranhão, joined the conversation. Some poorer regions in Brazil see agricultural growth as their only opportunity for prosperity, he reminded delegates. He stated that sanctions and embargoes would not be the answer, but market demand.

“People say there is a value in the forests but we don’t see it. The market is not responding to that. In Matto Grosso state we can keep the forests preserved and increase production not based on sanctions but on partnerships.”

Fernando Sampaio, PCI

Vincent van den Berk said there needed to be a ‘level playing field’ across the European marketplace for responsible and deforestation free soy. Such a large market would be a premium in itself, providing for the demand that is currently lacking, and addressing the growing consumer’s concern about the way soy is produced.

Eduardo Lago, the Chief Executive Officer of EMAP, the Maranhão Port Authority Company that manages Port of Itaqui, pointed out that there was no lack of demand for regular soy. As the link between producers and the market, his port was well placed to judge material flows.

The port exported 4.9 million tons of soy in 2015 and this had grown to 8.5 million tons in 2019. China alone will be sourcing an extra six million tons of soy in the next five to six years.

“The State of Maranhão wants to work on solutions,” he said, “as the issues of climate change, deforestation and responsible soy were key issues for the state government.”

From the floor of the conference, a wide range of comments came in to echo the panel. Speakers again reiterated the need for a market signal. Also, what does ‘legal production’ mean? What about China? Why are retailers not following Lidl and specifying responsible soy?

“We can produce. We can segregate. We can give you non-GMO. The farmers are ready. The port is ready. The traders can trade it. We have millions of tons of responsible soy available. We just need the demand.”

Producer from Maranhão

João Adrien said that legislation from the EU could be a game changer if resources or investments are considered. If the demand for responsible soy is secured, then farmers would work quickly if the support is there.
“To close market will not fix the situation. It won’t change reality. We need to have incentives.”

João Adrien, Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture

The last commentary from the floor came from Juliana de Lavor Lopes Sustainability, Communications and Compliance Director at Amaggi and RTRS Executive Board member. She said that one way or another, through public policies, demand, or supply chain pressure, zero deforestation and conversion can be achieved and RTRS can provide a focus through certification and the global multi-stakeholder platform through which solutions can be brokered.

PANEL PARTICIPANTS
Toby Gardner, Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute
Bettina Hedden-Dunkhorst, Head of Division International Nature Conservation, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Germany
Fernando Sampaio, Executive Director, PCI. Representing the Governor of the state of Maranhão
Eduardo Lago, Chief Executive Officer, EMAP, Maranhão Port Authority Company
Vincent van den Berk, Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
João Francisco Adrien Fernandes, Former farmer and now advisor, at Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture
Closing Panel: Future of Supply Chain Collaboration

What opportunities exist for harmonising different certification schemes and commodity roundtables, with a view to simplifying the market and promoting greater uptake?

What are the links between roundtables, certification schemes and global initiatives such as the Accountability Framework and the Tropical Forest Alliance?

The final session of RT14 was dedicated to a range of players from other roundtables and alliances, moderated by the RTRS President, Marina Born.

“Tackling deforestation is not a simple problem, the scope and complexity of the challenge encompasses biodiversity and livelihoods. Companies alone can’t fix this urgent challenge. There is a need to deliver upon multiple outcomes whose importance is perceived differently by different groups. It’s time for a new approach, which involves moving from individual actions to collective action to tackle deforestation,” said Justin Adams, Executive Director of the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA), during his closing remarks.

Hosted at the World Economic Forum, the Tropical Forest Alliance is a neutral global public-private platform that brings together more than 150 consumer goods companies, governments, civil society organisations, indigenous peoples, and other environmental actors that seek to reduce tropical deforestation linked to commodity supply chains.

Jeffrey Milder, Director of Global Programs at the Rainforest Alliance, spoke next to present the Accountability Framework initiative (AFi), a collaborative effort of fourteen NGO partners to accelerate progress and improve accountability for ethical supply chains. The AFi has just launched the Accountability Framework, which provides common principles, definitions, and guidance for companies to set commitments, take action, and demonstrate results related to no-deforestation, no-conversion, and respect for human rights.

A founding principle of the AFi is not to duplicate existing efforts and effective approaches such as certification, but rather to better align the multitude of different standards and tools, while helping to fill gaps in guidance and good practice. This approach helps companies to achieve responsible production and sourcing across the entirety of their business, even when it spans across multiple commodities and continents. It can also help foster greater collaboration and alignment between different certification schemes and standards that are often working to address similar issues.

“We need to converge on common areas of progress. What does good look like? And our founding principle is not to duplicate efforts of others.”

Jeffrey Milder, Director of Global Programs at the Rainforest Alliance
The Executive Director for the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB), Ruaraidh Petre, spoke next. His was one of the last commodities to form a roundtable, and they were busy learning from others, he said, in particular to ensure that they have producers at the heart of their activities. They have national roundtables as well as their global body, and cover a very wide range of beef production systems.

Rolf Hogan, the Executive Director of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) introduced his organisation next, which like RTRS is a multi-stakeholder platform. The Roundtable grew out of action on biofuels and it has a strong connection with the aviation sector and reducing in GHG emissions.

Now RSB is also looking at packaging and other biomaterials, is a full member of ISEAL, and is just kicking off a major new three-year project with WWF and Boeing.

RSB can be applied to any agricultural crop and waste. RSB is interested in collaborating with RTRS around joint certification for cover crops and rotation crops planted with soy, as well as engaging global brands and new sectors in sustainability.

Finally the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) came into the conversation, represented by its Head of European Operations, Inke van der Sluijs. One of her responsibilities is market development in Europe and she told the delegates that she understands the importance – and the challenges – of driving up demand.

“We as roundtables need to evolve. From the start we looked at a certification standard. And then need to grow into a platform where we talk about partnerships. We need to show that we’re having an impact.”

Inke van der Sluijs, RSPO

She spoke of the need to evolve as roundtables, recognising that they all share the same or similar stakeholders, and that there could be benefits in working more together.

In the Q&A, the panel were directed straight into a key issue – how to avoid ‘demonisation’ of a commodity like soy, so that retailers and major food brands will not remove soy from their supply chains but support certified responsible soy instead.

Inke related her experience from the RSPO. She said it was critical that you tell the positive stories around responsible production before the overarching message for any campaign switches from supporting responsible growers to looking towards wholesale switches in commodities.

“As we go into 2020 it’s critical we cannot continue to provide air cover for the laggards. Leaders cannot be made more vulnerable. That won’t help. And we need to find ways to support and celebrate leaders.”

Justin Adams, Tropical Forest Alliance
Justin Adams emphasised the importance of a shared responsibility across the multiple stakeholders in 'cleaning up' supply chains of deforestation. He stated that, while it’s a painfully slow process, momentum is building. Many more players are signalling that deforestation must be removed from supply chains. He emphasised that TFA is here to support and provide a platform where partners can work collectively to accelerate action. Roundtables have an important role in deepening these discussions and encouraging action on the ground.

There is an unstoppable movement towards sustainability. People demand it. Governments respond with new regulations. Markets respond by insisting on verified products. And those that are lagging behind will progressively seek our support, he said.

If we only ever tell negative stories, we inhibit progress. Instead, let’s focus on elevating the positive stories, and prioritise action-oriented collaboration for a Forest Positive future.

**PANEL PARTICIPANTS**

Marina Born, RTRS President
Justin Adams, Executive Director, Tropical Forest Alliance
Jeffrey Milder, Director of Global Programs, Rainforest Alliance / Accountability Framework
Ruaraidh Petre, Executive Director, Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB)
Rolf Hogan, Executive Director, Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB)
Inke van der Sluijs, Head of European Operations, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)
Day Two: Gallery.
Day Two: Networking Events.
A SNAPSHOT OF THE CONFERENCE

To watch some of the highlights from RT14, visit:

https://youtu.be/XRkXtmtUk1g

https://youtu.be/hW2yWOzU1f8

https://youtu.be/htRt2KoNiQk