RDS International Working Group Call
January 10, 2018

Agenda
- Geography
- Structure of the Standard
- Parent Farms
- Animal Welfare
- Social Responsibility
- Environmental/Chemical

Geography
- goal is to be a global standard: do not want to exclude any region, even through the type of criteria
- certified units by region: note that the chart shows the certificate owners: they may also cover additional sites in different regions
- majority of sites are in Asia
- 2016 data: 2040 industrial farms in Asia, 1040 farms in Europe – plus regions covered by small farm group model, and a small number coming on board in the US
- Current language: "The standard is intended for application in any region where ducks and geese are raised, as well as any region where down and feather materials may be collected. The standard shall not include any criteria that de facto excludes any region."
- Comment: there are small brands starting up in South America, so it will be important to keep the global scope
- there will be a tension between making the standard globally applicable, and in keeping the criteria strong
- **Please send comments if you would like to see the current geographic scope of the standard adjusted.**

Structure
- Current model is pass/fail, with critical major, major, minor and recommended – with 50% minimum for minors -
- Our theory of change: all farms sit along a bell curve from poor to best practices.   Our goal is to move the industry towards best practices. The standard defines what they are, and give a means for brands to communicate their needs, and to engage with the supply base.
- Our goal is not to just set the bar and reward those already following best practices, but to drive the industry towards the best practices: industry and engagement
- Current version of the RDS is pass-fail, but we can also look at Continuous Improvement: set minimum to advanced criteria to recognize improvements
- Challenge in possibly having multiple levels – animal welfare is considered more black-and-white about what is okay and what is not.
- Comment: What is the incentive for the suppliers to move along the curve towards better practices?
  - Current model will only drive improvement by increasing the requirements of the standard, but sites are not required to increase their compliance rate. We can look

at moving minors to majors, recommendations to minors etc. – also at increasing the minimum level needed to more than 50%,
  - o We can also look at increasing the score needed each year.
- Comment: We will need to look at the revisions made first, before deciding whether the continuous improvement model is needed.
  - o Ideally, we would decide first whether the standard will be pass/fail or continuous improvement, and then make the decisions on the criteria with that in mind.
- Comment: What roles do the standard need to fill?
  - o give security to brands – pass/fail
  - o improve global practices – continuous
  - o communicating with end consumers – need to educate that claims are not black and white
- **Please send comments if you would like to see the current pass/fail structure shifted to continuous improvement.**

Parent Farms

Current Scope:
- "hatchling to finished product"
- Parent farms to be audited when they are a source of down or feathers

Optional Parent Farm Certification:
- The optional Parent Farm Module includes milestones towards full inclusion of parent farms.
- Allows brands to communicate this to consumers.

Possible Additions
- Set milestones for including parent farms in future versions
- Set a mechanism to identify brands or companies certifying to the parent farms
- Applicable for industrial and small farm, collector-based channels.

Risk-Based Parent Farm Auditing Approach
- Introduce a set of indicators that identify supply chains where parent farm certification is recommended or required. These indicators may include:
  - o Regions or species where live-plucking at the parent farm is more likely or most likely to occur.
  - o Regions, species, or business models where it is possible to identify parent farms, and also possible to hold them accountable for audit results.

Required Parent Farm Certification
- Auditing of industrial supply chains starts at the parent farm, whether or not the parent bird down is used in products. This certification may be communicated to the consumer in some form.

Discussion
- We need to balance out the benefits of parent farm certification with the costs and even the ability to audit them.

- Comment: cost is a huge issue – down processors that are doing parent farm certification are seeing a very significant cost both for the certification and to create the linkage – not always the greatest impact
- Comment: mandatory parent farm certification could have a big impact on the availability of RDS down – also complications in managing the supply: what happens if an issue is discovered
- Comment: Parent farms a very important part of the supply chain – if they are not controlled, there is the chance the RDS down is linked to farms that have done live-plucking. If the purpose of the standard is to stop live-plucking, then why would we ignore them? Also, if we just start by focusing on the goose farms, that could help limit costs. For 7 million animals, there would be about 300,000 parent animals. Where traceability is possible (S/H have contracts with parent farms), then parent farm certification should be done.
- Comment: There are different risks within different regions – we need to look at where these are to see where it makes sense.   The farms that are doing live-plucking and force-feeding are simply choosing not to be RDS certified – we are essentially segregating supply chains, rather than changing them. If we make mandatory parent farm certification we may simply exclude our ability to connect with those supply chains that are doing it.
- Comment: agree that parent farms are critical – but we need more information – get feedback from the audits to understand what is possible in terms of traceability
- Comment: do we have evidence that live-plucking is a serious issue? (i.e. widespread, common practice)
- Comment: quantity is not that relevant - there is evidence that live-plucking happens, but no official data. There are anecdotal reports that live-plucking is happening where there are RDS supply chains. This puts the standard at risk for its credibility. Note that there is still the chance that processors are buying live-plucked down directly, as it may be sold without invoices.

Next Steps:
- We will create a task group to look more deeply at the parent-farm certification model.
- Please send a note if you are interested in participating in this smaller group.