

Oversight Committee Minutes

Extraordinary meeting 29: 25 October 2022 Teleconference meeting

Present:

OC members: Martin Boon, Marike de Peña, Theresa Glammert-Kuhr, Richard Kwarteng, Iresha Sanjeevanie, John Young (Chair)

Excused: Martin de la Harpe (proxy to John Young), Sugumar Raman

Fairtrade International Standards & Pricing: Eleonora Gutwein, Oksana Forkutsa, Christine Knickelbein

Disclaimer:

The Fairtrade International (FI) Oversight Committee (OC) aims to reach consensus, but decisions may not always reflect the opinions of all members.

Item 1 – Opening

The chair opened the meeting and stated that the quorum was met.

Agenda: The agenda was agreed upon unanimously.

Conflict of interest: No conflict of interest was identified.

Ground Rules:

The chair reminded the OC about the ground rules for the meeting:

- All confidential information shared within the committee is kept confidential and should not be circulated or disclosed outside the committee. This does not apply to public minutes.
- All decisions will be based on consensus whenever possible.

Item 2 – Exception to use Red HML material

In its meeting on July 15, 2022, the OC decided to delegate the decision making on exceptions to the Hazardous Material Red List to Fairtrade International Standards & Pricing (S&P).

The OC is informed of the decisions and in case of any concern, the OC members can indicate this to S&P within 5 days after the decision is shared by S&P.

S&P followed the agreed process and informed the OC about the decisions for 17 tea and wine producers taken in October. The OC raised their concerns regarding the exceptions granted for the use of Glyphosate as some of them were granted for two years instead of one. The OC met with the project manager (PM) to address and discuss their concerns for the 2-year extensions and to find an agreement.

During the meeting, the PM explained why 2 different timelines are proposed for the glyphosate exceptions:

There are no equal alternatives to glyphosate except for manual weeding which is not always feasible on large areas (e.g. 3 ha). Also, no blanket spraying is happening, instead the glyphosate is directly applied on the weeds or on rows. There is scientific proof that in the case of wine grapes very low residues are found in the grapes (wine). Both crops are perennial evergreen woody crop / woody perennial vines.

Therefore, the following decisions had been taken:

For weeding in crop area (2-year extension until July 2024)

- Specifics: climate/geographical conditions, IPM plan, spot application, proof of low residues left in the product, existing practices (e.g., organic)
- 9 organizations (wine grapes & tea)

For weeding in crop area (1-year extension until July 2023)

- Specifics: overall plan to reduce the use (application amount)
- 7 organizations (wine grapes & tea)

For weed control in non-cropped areas (1-year extension until July 2023)

- during block rest period and at the start of land preparation.
- 1 Organization (flower & vegetables)

Clarification: 1 year from the date the chemical was moved to the Red List which was July 1, 2022, which means a 1 year extension would go until July 2023 and a 2 year extension would be until July 2024.

Discussion:

The OC agreed with the one-year extensions (deadline July 2023) but raised their concerns about the cases where an extension for 2 years was proposed.

An extension for 2 years was considered too long as producers had been informed already in 2020 (more than 2 years in advance) that certain materials should not be used anymore starting July 2022.

It was commented that in some cases alternatives could be found but that it required extra inputs. This problem was deemed solvable as there are examples around the world with different climates where it works. Some producers just needed more time to find a solution and implement it. It was pointed out that the problem of using this material was not only about residues in the product but also damaging the soil. A damaged soil would be more vulnerable to other diseases and then more pesticides would be needed, and the cost would be even higher. Production practises needed to change, which would eventually reduce costs.

It was commented that in Asia manual weeding and machinery cost were very high and that cover crops would not work in the field of tea. Which is why it was suggested to allow producers to use the material for a limited time, but with the PN to support with further research. The PN is very committed to support to find a solution. Tea Network Asia & Pacific committed to support the PN as well.

The OC agreed that the extensions for glyphosate should not go further than December 2023, so that producers' fields would be free of glyphosate starting 2024. This would apply to all new cases (except for the use for devitalisation), not the already approved ones.

The same approval conditions would apply as for the previous ones (PN monitoring, progress against phase out plan, check by the Assurance Provider (AP)). There would not be the possibility of extension.

It was also raised that it would be important to decide a deadline for accepting extension applications. December 2022 was suggested to be a good cut-off date. It was agreed to further discuss and to make a final decision.

Decision:

The OC approved the exception for the use of the Glyphosate material for the 17 organisations.

Under the condition: Producer Organizations to submit progress report every 6 months to respective PN. The AP to check and inform PNs and S&P in case of not sufficient progress made.

- The exceptions for the use of glyphosate for devitalisation and for other materials are granted until July 2024.
- The exceptions for the use of glyphosate in general are granted until December 2023.
- There is no possibility of extension.
- All new incoming applications will be handled with these deadlines.
- All new incoming applications will follow the process agreed in the July OC meeting.

The OC unanimously approved the decision.

In addition, the OC mandated the Assurance Manager to discuss with the AP how the agreed monitoring could be handled better in line with the AP's regular processes.

Next steps:

- Report the decisions to the SC
- Oct - Nov 2022: S&P to inform PNs about the outcome of the OC decisions
- Oct - Nov 2022: S&P to inform the AP about the exceptions
- Q4 2022: PNs to develop transparent communication with the Producer Organisations (PO) about the exceptions granted
- Q4 2022: PNs to work with POs on a monitoring plan for the phasing out of the materials