

Quarterly Partners Meeting FOLU India CREST 26 April 2022, 3 pm to 4:30 pm (IST)

Background

After the official launch of the CREST initiative at the India Sustainability Standards conference held in 2021, a quarterly Partners' Meeting under FOLU India CREST program was organised on 26 April, 2022. The lead up to the partners meeting entailed the holding of Stakeholder consultations. During this time, Centre for Responsible Business was identified as the Co-ordinating Unit for FOLU CREST. An agenda of the meeting was shared with all partners prior to the meeting and can be found in Annexure 1.

This meeting broadly touched upon the identification of commodities, the structure of the CREST initiative as well as proposed outputs by partners that in turn will be populated by the Co-ordinating unit in the activities schedule.

Summary of Proceedings

Discussion on Commodities

There was a discussion on the consideration of commodities to be prioritized. In this regard, there were inputs shared by IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative as well as WRI India. Rijit Sengupta from CRB and Mr. Vijay Kumar of FOLU India Country Platform further provided guidance on approaching outputs on commodities. Further, it was mutually agreed by all present to look at commodities despite temporary disruptions. Finally, to help prioritize the choice of commodities, a matrix-based approach was proposed and the implications of such an approach on funding was also highlighted.

- IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative asserted the search for commodities by looking at India's high import commodities as well as the commodities that are found in the deforestation portfolio; the companies list known as Forest 500 was also mentioned and reiterated the concept of monitoring commodity value chains
- Both IDH- The Sustainable Trade Initiative and WRI India highlighted the Importance to keep in mind the regional trade discussions as well as global geo-politics such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the respective policy implications both from an import and

- export perspective; the IDH - Sustainable Trade Initiative highlighted the importance of understanding the implications of regional trade agreements and geo-politics on an operating field basis and moving away from the enabler/barrier lens
- CRB highlighted the need to keep in mind the dynamism in the system and suggested playing some role in ensuring understanding both internally and externally the change brought on by such geo-political crisis and highlight the implications it has on commodities
 - FOLU India highlighted the importance of looking at commodities from an end-to-end basis as well as the overall ecosystem that the commodity operates in
 - The IDH - Sustainable Trade Initiative hopes that given the improving relations between Indonesia and India, an important area will be the domestic production agenda on palm oil
 - A number of approaches were mentioned to help identify commodities, which are as follows:
 - The IDH - Sustainable Trade Initiative made a suggestion to create a workbook of commodities which is built based on the organizational preferences
 - CRB and WRI India highlighted the importance of developing a scientific approach to help justify the choice of commodities to avoid bias as well as in relation to fundraising
 - CRB highlighted that as and when funding is available, a more detailed criteria approach can be developed but a starting point is to highlight the work being carried out by all the members on respective commodities and what has an interface with the FOLU India CREST via complementarities

Discussion on structure of CREST initiative

There was a brief discussion on the structure of the CREST initiative. This discussion touched upon the differences between the CREST initiative and the I-SPOC. Further, FOLU India also highlighted the importance of not worrying too much about getting clarity on the structure for now and reiterated some envisioned impacts of the CREST initiative.

- To complement the themes that will be identified for quarterly meetings, it has been proposed to identify knowledge partners/ technical partners to be on-boarded as and when to work in relation to a specific issue; further, it has been mutually agreed to evolve and engage with partners but for now in contrast to the I-SPOC approach, CREST initiative will not be following a membership model and instead, the core group (referring to those present) will for now be relied upon

- The Co-ordinating unit reiterated the overarching objective of the CREST initiative as being a positive change on commodities via a landscape footprint and other sustainability dimensions and work towards the objective of sustainable value chains
- Envisioned impacts of work/activities of CREST initiative as put forward by FOLU India include the following:
 - Over time, partners develop specializations and collaborate to develop a policy
 - Addressing the issue of departmental siloes at the government level as well as that of the government industry interface
 - Importance of seeing through the lens of the particular commodity

Discussion on outputs

There was a brief discussion on outputs that included highlighting the need to develop a briefing paper/s on selected commodities. FOLU India advised that a policy brief may not be well advised as it requires in-depth knowledge when commodities face a complex interplay of factors including policy, trade, regulation, practice. He went on to advise to look at a few commodities and a few briefing papers as a starting point. CRB suggested some current topics around which briefing papers can be developed and used another terminology to refer to such written outputs, which is thought pieces.

- Think about producing one policy paper once a quarter or even a briefing paper
- Highlight implications on sustainable sourcing as well as on trade of commodities and use that to build some level of knowledge base
- Topics were suggested to develop thought pieces:
 - EU directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence
 - FTA between Australia and India, more specifically, the All India-Australia Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement
- IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative advised that it is happy to take on the work on import of palm oil via best practices, including landscape approaches all the while keeping in mind Forest 500 and the Glasgow commitment; it was accordingly advised by FOLU India Country Platform to look at palm oil within the overall context of consumption of edible oils so as to avoid working in siloes
- CRB advised a process of socializing outputs
 - Partner to share outline of proposed output with other members
 - Upon completion and finalization of output, a webinar can be held in tandem to the thought piece/ briefing paper
 - Co-ordinating unit to populate the Activity schedule with the outputs

- CRB highlighted the role of net positive impacts such as “net zero” in the private sector and how such a transition can be captured as FOLU CREST impact points and was supported further in this regard by the suggestion to look at the Theory of Change and make refinements
- Proposed outputs by members are as follows:
 - IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative to share an outline of this Policy Brief and will revert by the first few weeks of May
 - CRB advised that it will take the lead on the EU directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence

Discussion on funding

FOLU India shared an update on the funding options being explored for the FOLU India CREST initiative. WRI India advised that while certain outputs are not contingent on funding, they may benefit such as in the case of briefing papers to which CRB responded by advising that funding and development of outputs must not be seen in isolation and suggested that while fundraising occurs, the briefing paper can be developed as a thought piece and then ensure webinars.

- Some ideas were mentioned with regards to socializing the outputs, which are as follows:
 - Traction to be built using webinars
 - Interest of funders may be generated by creation of short briefing paper
- Updates on funding as shared by FOLU India
 - UK government is supporting the initiative and has put FOLU India in touch with philanthropic based organizations
 - FOLU India to connect in mid-May with a key stakeholder (Morgan) to discuss funding

Way Forward

- IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative to bring in her colleague next quarterly meeting that has expertise on India’s agri-commodities both on a national basis and from an exports perspective
- WRI India mentioned a contact who is an expert in production of edible oil who advised that production is very resource intensive and can connect IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative with him in case of any additional information needed/technical expertise requirement

- It has been suggested to use a mixed approach with regards to choosing commodities, which refers to a combination of a matrix/ criteria based approach of choosing commodities as well as choosing commodities based on organizational preferences/ strengths
- Partner-specific outputs to be worked on are as follows:
 - IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative to share an outline of Policy Brief in relation to palm oil within the overall context of consumption of edible oils and will revert by the first few weeks of May
- The tasks for the Co-ordinating Unit are as follows and given that CRB has a dual role in this initiative, the tasks allocated to CRB are listed below as well:
 - To populate the activity schedule of CREST
 - To list out all activities as discussed today and at another internal meeting to see how prospective themes for an ISS session can be developed as a way to get a head start on ISS preparation
 - To start brainstorming specific themes that the CREST initiative will work on over the year
 - To work towards making quarterly meetings thematic
 - To take the lead on development of briefing paper in relation to EU directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence
 - Co-ordinating unit to look at Theory of Change and make refinements

Annexure 1

Agenda of the Quarterly Partners Meeting held on 26 April 2022

- Round of Introduction by members
- Presentation of Draft Action Plan
 - Discussion on Operationalization
 - Synergy between FOLU India Country platform and FOLU India CREST initiative
 - Allocation of responsibilities amongst partners
- Update from Secretariat
 - Role of Secretariat
 - Propose structure for quarterly meetings
 - Webpage on FOLU India CREST initiative
 - Refinements will be carried out (plan for Web page to be shared internally)

AOB

- Socializing FOLU India CREST with key stakeholders via workshops

Annexure 2

Participation List

Name	Designation	Organization
Dr. KM Jayahari	India Country Coordinator	Food and Land Use Coalition
Ms. Devisha Poddar	Senior Project Associate	Food and Land Use Coalition
Dr. Ruchika Singh	Director - Sustainable Landscapes and Restoration	WRI India
Mr. S. Vijay Kumar	Leader	Food and Land Use (FOLU) Coalition India
Mr. Narendra Mohan	Senior Expert - Commodities and Sustainable Supply Chain	WWF India
Ms. Neha Simlai	Senior Manager - Markets and Policy Engagement, SourceUp Champion	IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative
Ms. Sneha Maheshwari	Program Officer - Markets	IDH - The Sustainable Trade Initiative
Mr. Rijit Sengupta	CEO	Centre for Responsible Business
Mr. Aditya	Assistant Director	Centre for Responsible Business
Ms. Nitya Chhiber	Programme Officer	Centre for Responsible Business