



STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN

ISO/TC 331, Biodiversity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ISO/ TC 331 Technical Committee (“TC”) on Biodiversity was established in June 2020. This new TC comprises experts from 59 countries, with 37 participating- and 23 observing-members (June 2023). It met for the first time in June-July 2020, remotely (due to Covid-related constraints on travel), with more than 110 experts from 7 continents¹.

The objective of ISO/TC 331 is to develop frameworks, requirements, guidelines, and supporting tools to improve the consideration of biodiversity in activities conducted by any type of organization, with the goal of avoiding and minimizing their potentially negative impacts on biodiversity and contributing to its conservation and sustainable use (e.g. by acknowledging the general aims of the EU Taxonomy Regulation, especially like they are stated in its Articles 3, 4 and 9 to 17). Also, to ensure that businesses and financial institutions recognize and manage biodiversity-related risks to their sustainable operation

ISO/TC 331 is intended to promote:

- Shared understanding of biodiversity through standardized language and approaches (e.g., by establishing an umbrella standard for “Vocabulary “).
- Development of tools to enable businesses and organizations to fully integrate biodiversity principles and strategies into their corporate policies, procedures and practices in order to strengthen protection of biodiversity and minimize biodiversity-related risks to their sustainable operation. This may include tools to:
 - Support dialogue, communication, and collaboration between stakeholders at international, national and regional levels, or
 - Assess biodiversity performance.
 - Assess biodiversity-related impacts and dependencies.
- Full application of the mitigation hierarchy to avoid and minimize impacts on biodiversity as well as restore damaged ecosystems and offset residual impacts.
- Guidelines to support creation of an enabling environment for collaboration within and between sectors and value chains.
- Alignment across standards produced by other TCs (e.g., ISO/TC 207) and identification of cases when biodiversity aspects should be considered.
- a community of practice with a feedback process for the evolution of the standards over time.

The standardization deliverables target all types of organization, in the private and public sectors, as well as research institutes and civil society organizations wishing to incorporate biodiversity principles and strategies in their policies, management, operations or business models.

ISO/TC 331 was structured initially around four ad hoc groups: AHG 1 terminology; AHG 2 measurement, data, monitoring and assessment; AHG 3 protection, conservation and restoration and AHG 4 organizations, strategies and sustainable use. AHGs 1, 2 and 4 have now been converted into formal working groups following approval by TC members.

ISO/TC 331 created a Chair’s Advisory Group (CAG) to ensure consistency, support the TC governance and avoid duplication between working groups, or between ISO/TC 331 and other Technical Committees/organizations.

¹ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/Continent/>



1. ISO ENVIRONMENT

1.1 ISO technical committees and business planning

The extension of formal business planning to ISO Technical Committees (ISO/TCs) is an important measure which forms part of a major review of business. The aim is to align the ISO work programme with expressed business environment needs and trends and to allow ISO/TCs to prioritize among different projects, to identify the benefits expected from the availability of International Standards, and to ensure adequate resources for projects throughout their development.

1.2 International standardization and the role of ISO

The foremost aim of international standardization is to facilitate the exchange of goods and services through the elimination of technical barriers to trade.

Three bodies are responsible for the planning, development and adoption of International Standards: [ISO](#) (International Organization for Standardization) is responsible for all sectors excluding Electrotechnical, which is the responsibility of [IEC](#) (International Electrotechnical Committee), and most of the Telecommunications Technologies, which are largely the responsibility of [ITU](#) (International Telecommunication Union).

ISO is a legal association, the members of which are the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) of some 140 countries (organizations representing social and economic interests at the international level), supported by a Central Secretariat based in Geneva, Switzerland.

The principal deliverable of ISO is the [International Standard](#).

An International Standard embodies the essential principles of global openness and transparency, consensus and technical coherence. These are safeguarded through its development in an ISO Technical Committee (ISO/TC), representative of all interested parties, supported by a public comment phase (the ISO Technical Enquiry). ISO and its [Technical Committees](#) are also able to offer the ISO Technical Specification (ISO/TS), the ISO Public Available Specification (ISO/PAS) and the ISO Technical Report (ISO/TR) as solutions to market needs. These ISO products represent lower levels of consensus and have therefore not the same status as an International Standard.

ISO offers also the International Workshop Agreement (IWA) as a deliverable which aims to bridge the gap between the activities of consortia and the formal process of standardization represented by ISO and its national members. An important distinction is that the IWA is developed by ISO workshops and fora, comprising only participants with direct interest, and so it is not accorded the status of an International Standard.

2. INTRODUCTION OF ISO/TC 331

2.1 Purpose of this document

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) has produced this business plan for ISO Technical Committee 331 on Biodiversity (ISO/TC 331) to ensure that the work of the committee aligns with expressed business environment needs and trends. Extending formal business planning to the work of Technical Committees helps them to prioritize among different projects, clarify the anticipated benefits from the relevant International Standard, and ensure adequate resources are available to support the work of the committees as they progress towards development of international standards in accordance with their scope.

The scope of ISO/TC 331 is:

“Standardization in the field of biodiversity to develop principles, framework, requirements, guidance and supporting tools in a holistic and global approach for relevant organizations, to enhance their contribution to



Sustainable Development.”

ISO/TC 331 aims to support a consistent, effective and holistic approach to integration of biodiversity into the planning and execution of economic activity, across countries, sectors and stakeholders and to support organisations in their efforts to contribute to sustainable development.

This plan provides a rationale for development of an International Standard and sets out the process that will be followed by the Committee to identify suitable projects and activities to take forward.

2.2 Integration with other standards and committees

To achieve its scope, ISO/TC 331 works closely with other ISO technical committees, to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure alignment across standards relevant to biodiversity, such as those on climate change. For example, ISO/TC 331 is intended to establish a framework that any organization can use to help them integrate biodiversity into their activities in an effective and systematic manner. One very important task in this context is to establish a “common language” to support effective alignment across countries and sectors and to ensure that stakeholders are able to understand each other. The work of WG1 is of great importance in this regard.

To ensure that ISO-TC 331 will support standardization for biodiversity across countries and sectors, ISO/TC 331 has representatives from 7 continents², and varied sectors and organizations (public authorities, private sector, research, NGOs). The inter-disciplinary nature of ISO/TC 331 ensures that the full range of interests can be covered in an integrated manner, connecting different kinds of knowledge and experience.

Given the rapid changes in the state of biodiversity that may occur, ISO/ TC 331 aims to respond promptly and consistently to changing circumstances to ensure that it will continue to underpin good practice and improve outcomes. It will therefore track scientific and societal developments to avoid duplicating any work, that is already outdated or being tackled in other ISO TCs or outside standardization.

ISO/TC 331 governance works closely with developing countries through ISO’s Capacity Building Unit, to reinforce their capacity to participate actively in the TC. For example, a pre-TC training session is organized with the TC Committee Manager before the holding of the first ISO/TC 331 plenary meetings, to prepare the participants and introduce them to the main expectations of the meetings.

3. BUSINESS CONTEXT FOR ISO/TC 331

Biodiversity is a complex topic. The development of standards on biodiversity is therefore an important challenge that needs careful and sensitive development and the consideration of multiple dimensions, including the environment, economy, health, and ethics. ISO/TC331 seeks to promote good practice by developing standardized and co-constructed definitions, tools and methodologies that are widely readable, understandable and implemented. The goal is to find methodological solutions that organizations can use to enhance their own sustainability and that of biodiversity.

The political, economic, technical, regulatory, legal and social considerations outlined here are considered relevant to the scope of this ISO/TC, and may significantly influence the content of any resulting Standard and how it is developed.

At its 7th plenary session in Paris in 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) approved its methodological assessment report on scenarios and models of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The global biodiversity assessment released by IPBES (2019) presents an assessment of the current state of biodiversity and ecosystem services globally. It presents an overview

² <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/Continent/>



of current progress in meeting international conservation objectives (the Aichi targets³, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ and the objectives of certain international conventions⁵). Given alternative possible scenarios for the evolution of threats to biodiversity, a series of potential options for decision-makers are suggested. The IPBES Taskforce on Scenarios and Models (2019 - present) has continued to work on this assessment as part of the IPBES rolling work program up to 2030.

The IPBES (2019) report is the main intergovernmental study presenting a global review of the state of biodiversity and options to stop its erosion. It is articulated within the Global Biodiversity Outlook, on which it is based, and contributed to its 5th edition (GBO-5). The fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook-(GBO-5) provides a global summary of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and is based on a range of indicators, research studies and assessments (notably the IPBES Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), as well as the national reports provided by countries on their implementation of the CBD.

The United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Canada, concluded on 19 December 2022 with a landmark agreement to guide global action on nature through to 2030, through the 23 global targets (link, <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/vision/>).

Standardization can and should play a major role in this context. The work of ISO/TC 331 reflects the existing, well-recognized international biodiversity-related targets and scientific reviews. It will be developed to align with other relevant strategies such as the London Declaration⁶ to combat climate change through standards approved in September 2021, which defines ISO's commitment to achieve the climate agenda by 2050. ISO/TC 331 acknowledges this important development and will act in a way that considers the international climate goals in the best way possible. ISO/TC331 is intended to perform a similar role for biodiversity, helping to convert the global targets outlined above into operational goals for organizations and make their implementation more effective.

4. BENEFITS EXPECTED FROM THE WORK OF ISO/TC 331

The added value of the ISO/TC 331 program comes from working collectively with representatives of the public and private sector, including research institutes and civil society to provide other organizations and decision-makers with a range of tools to help them make the best strategic choices regarding biodiversity risks and impacts when planning or conducting their activities.

5. REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN ISO/TC 331

5.1 Membership

Current membership list: <https://www.iso.org/committee/8030847.html?view=participation>

5.2 Analysis of the participation

ISO/TC 331 promotes a broad participation of ISO and liaison members. It is currently composed of experts

³ <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals#goals>

⁵ The following Conventions are studied in particular: the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, CITES, the Ramsar Convention, the Convention to Combat Desertification, The World Heritage Convention, and the International Plant Protection Convention IPPC



from 60 countries (39 participating members and 21 observing members, up to date in November, 2023). This participation should increase because biodiversity is a global subject, which concerns all sectors of activity. ISO/TC 331 wishes to promote the participation of the developing countries and is encouraging those countries to contribute and take responsibilities in the TC. See ISO's Capacity Building Unit.

TC 331 opens the Chair's Advisory Group (CAG) to rotating representatives (titular and substitute) per United Nations Regional Group⁷:

- African Group
- Asia and the Pacific Group: Indonesia (until February 2025)
- Eastern European Group
- Latin American and Caribbean Group: Brazil and Mexico (until February 2025)
- Western European and Others Group: UK and Sweden (until February 2025)

Note: CAG attributes, composition and roles are presented in the terms of reference of the CAG approved by TC members (doc N109).

Liaison organizations include:

- IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature
- PEFC - the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
- ECOS (Environment) - Environmental Coalition on Standards
- GRI - Global Reporting Initiative
- FSC - Forest Stewardship Council
- UNCTAD Biotrade Initiative - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (BioTrade Initiative)

ISO/TC 331 met for the first time in June-July 2021, remotely. 110 experts from 7 continents were present, a high level of participation for a first meeting. There is meaningful representation from all major geographical regions, including developed, developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The second plenary meeting took place in April 2022, remotely (more than 110 experts) focusing on the scopes of the four working groups and initiating work on projects. The 3rd plenary meeting was conducted as a hybrid meeting from April 17 to 21, 2023, with more than 140 delegates. .

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE ISO/TC AND STRATEGIES FOR THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

6.1 *Defined objectives of the ISO/TC*

Objective 1: To develop impactful standards and other instruments that support and encourage organizations to **integrate biodiversity in their strategies**, assessing their impacts as well as their dependencies on the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity.

Strategies to achieve this:

- Be close to international news on biodiversity (Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, Conventions, IPBES reports, etc.);
- Refer to the recognized international frameworks as well as to the existing guidelines and standards, avoiding duplication and overlapping;
- Encourage the involvement of research institutes in order to produce tools and solutions that have been validated and tested;

⁷ For the purposes of the Terms of Reference, geographical areas are the United Nations Regional Groups without special case: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, Western Europe and Others. For countries list, refer to <https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/regional-groups>



- Describe the characteristics of biodiversity responsible business models by linking research, innovation and decision makers.

Objective 2: To minimize their potentially negative impacts on biodiversity and to maximize the **contribution to Biodiversity and Sustainable Development**

Strategies to achieve this:

- Set ambitious principles for contributing to biodiversity and sustainable development;
- Link ISO/TC 331 standards with SDGs (especially SDGs 2, 6, 12 - 15).

Objective 3: To develop **high quality standards and other deliverables for all types of stakeholders:**

Strategies to achieve this:

- Developing ISO deliverables (such as International Standards, Technical Specifications, Publicly Available Specifications, Technical Reports, International Workshop Agreements) corresponding to the various needs.
- To ensure the practical applicability and added value of the deliverables, making sure they address real-life challenges.
- To prevent green-washing and misuse of the TC by checking thoroughly that the topic(s) in question are really suitable for standardization and not be better tackled by other means (e.g. legislative measures).
- To adopt pragmatically and operational project management and efficient decision-making to be able to deliver a consensual and widely first text within 3 years.
- To have a clear communication between all future WGs, CAG and TC governance to ensure robust work.

Objective 4: To promote a large and effective **participation from countries all around the world**

Strategies to achieve this:

- Consider the interest of all regions of the world.
- Include representatives from all continents in the CAG.
- Organize plenary meetings on all continents with participating countries.
- Promote virtual meetings (or at least hybrid meetings) to allow a wider participation.
- Promote synergies between organizations.
- Work with ISO ISO's Capacity Building Unit to support developing countries wishing to engage more actively in TC 331.

6.2 Organization of ISO/TC 331

TC 331 has held 3 plenary meetings since its creation in June 2020. The TC has agreed to organize its work around 4 working groups, ad hoc groups to begin with, which become formal working groups with the positive reception of members to new projects.

The 4 major themes selected are as follows:

- Terminology (WG 1)
- Measurement, data, monitoring and assessment (WG 2)
- Protection, conservation and restoration (AHG 3)
- Organizations, strategies and sustainable use (WG 4)

The Committee will also refer to the Chair's Advisory Group (CAG) which aims to assist the governance of the TC in the coordination, planning and steering of the committee's work and other specific tasks of an advisory nature. The CAG could support TC decision e.g. on preventing overlapping content of standards and



cross-cutting issues such as terminology, access and benefit sharing (ABS, Nagoya Protocol), data (access and reliability).

CAG attributes, composition and roles are presented in the terms of reference of the CAG approved by TC members.

Each working group works on a proposed scope, which has been validated, in order to delimit its field of investigation.

As part of the terminology work, TC 331 validated the need for a working group on terminology (WG 1), which will be able to irrigate the work of the other working groups as well as all the working groups will be able to address terms and definitions which will be discussed within the terminology group.

Moreover, TC 331 members decide that existing internationally recognized terminology and standards will be respected, as well as the Global Biodiversity Framework and its associated Glossary will be integrated into the terminology work.

The first project of WG2 on measurement, data, monitoring and assessment deals with the process of designing and implementing biodiversity net gain based on a British standard. Several other project proposals have been brought to the attention of the WG2. These proposals included different methods of biodiversity measurement and assessment in different ecosystems and environments. Due the number of proposals and the wide range of topics the Committee decided on the 3rd plenary to create an umbrella task force. This task force is tasked with creating an outline for future projects based on the proposals.

For AHG 3 a possible project on Ecological Networks has been suggested during the 3rd plenary in April 2023. It has been decided that as a first step a Technical report should be written to show the standardization needs in this field. After that one or more standards on this topic could follow. Soon AHG 3 will become WG 3.

As part of the work on organizations, strategies and sustainable use, the working group (WG 4) recognized the value of producing a draft standard that could constitute an umbrella standard: strategic and operational approach for organizations (guidelines and requirements).

Given the fact that this working group (WG 4) already had numerous proposals, ISO/TC 331 recommended that the working group should be flexible in its approach and consider starting with the umbrella document to provide a framework for its initiatives.

The governance of the TC, as well as the members, recognize the need to work in close collaboration with other TCs and other organisations.

ISO/TC 331 has already established liaisons with the following TCs and organizations,

Organizations	Title	Establishment
ISO	ISO/TC 190 Soil quality	October 2020
	ISO/TC 322 Sustainable finance	December 2020
	ISO/TC 146 Air quality	February 2022
	ISO/TC 147 Water quality	April 2022
	ISO/TC 34 Food products	September 2022
	ISO/TC 217 Cosmetics	April 2023
	ISO/TC 207/SC 1 Environmental Management System	April 2023



IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	January 2021
PEFC	the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	June 2021
ECOS Environment	Environmental Coalition on Standards	November 2021
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative	April 2022
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council	May 2022
UNCTAD BioTrade Initiative	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (BioTrade Initiative)	May 2022

The TC 331 intention is to pursue the openness and mobilization of other international organizations, given the vast scope embraced by the TC.



7. FACTORS AFFECTING COMPLETION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ISO/TC WORK PROGRAMME

A first factor is the recent creation of ISO/TC 331. National standardization bodies need time to create networks, find experts and explain the new ISO/TC 331 purpose and work program.

Solutions to this:

- A pedagogical approach during and between meetings;
- The availability of support from ISO/ TC 331 governance;
- Promoting reconciliation between countries with the same issues or sharing the same language;
- Reinforcing the capacities of developing countries in coordination with ISO programs.

A second factor is the lack of resources, both expertise and financial. This is a recurring theme among the member bodies in standardization.

Solutions to this:

- Promote the use of virtual meetings (or at least hybrid meetings);
- Organize plenary meetings in different locations all around the world;
- Engage stakeholders;
- Use external communication strategies.
- Actively establish and use liaisons with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.
- Concentrate on those projects that are best tackled in standardization and that are not falling into the scope of other TCs
- Concentrate on those projects that can be standardized globally and are not hindered by too big regional differences in the ecosystems, climate conditions, etc.

8. STRUCTURE, CURRENT PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS OF THE ISO/TC

This section gives an overview of the ISO/TC's structure, scope, projects and publications. All of this information is updated regularly and is available on ISO's website, ISO Online.

The link below is to ISO/TC 331's page on ISO's website:

<https://www.iso.org/committee/8030847.html>

Click on the tabs and links on this page to find the following information:

- About (Secretariat, Secretary, Chair, Date of creation, Scope, etc.)
- Contact details
- Structure (Subcommittees and working groups)
- Liaisons
- Meetings
- Tools
- Work programme (published standards and standards under development)

Initially, ISO/TC 331 was structured in four ad hoc groups to discuss and evaluate the first work item proposals. These groups became formal working groups with the approval of work items.

The working groups were created in 2022 on the basis of the projects presented here and approved.

3 formal working groups with their associated projects:

- **WG 1 on terminology**

ISO TS 13208 Biodiversity – Vocabulary



- **WG 2 on measurement, data, monitoring and assessment**

ISO 17620 Biodiversity - Process for designing and Implementation Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Proposals have been presented and discussed within WG 2 in November 2022. They are taken into account and discussed within umbrella task force:

- Guidelines for genetic diversity assessment of higher animals and plants based on whole-genome data
- Guideline for biodiversity monitoring Part I: forest ecosystem
- Guideline for biodiversity monitoring Part II: wetland ecosystem
- Measurement of the level of biodiversity in a natural environment by capturing environmental sound
- Measurement of soil biodiversity

ISO/TC 331 took resolutions in plenary 2023 (April 2023) to establish Task Forces in order to create agility within the working group. The Technical Committee confirms the interest in an “Umbrella” Task Force aimed at identifying the structure of the ISO/TC 331 standards in measurement, data, monitoring and assessment approaches based on recognized global ecosystem typologies and general methodologies. ISO/TC 331 requests that the Task Force subsequently propose a blueprint of the projects to be completed within WG 2.

- **WG 4 on organizations, strategies and sustainable use**

ISO 17298 Biodiversity – Strategic and operational approach for organizations - Guidelines and requirements

ISO 17317 Biodiversity – Guide for the characterization of products derived from nativespecies

Preliminary project ISO/PWI 18244 Biodiversity and the Food Sector: Guidelines on how to improve biodiversity performance of food companies and food retailers

Preliminary project ISO/PWI 18260 Biodiversity and Raw Material: Considering biodiversity protection in the first stepof the supply chain. Guidelines on the extraction of abiotic raw material and their impacts on biodiversity

One Ad Hoc Group:

- **AHG 3 on protection, conservation and restoration**

A project proposal prepared by IUCN is under discussion on “Ecological networks – mapping for standardization” during the 2nd semester of 2023.

Reference information

[*Glossary of terms and abbreviations used in ISO/TC Business Plans*](#)

[*General information on the principles of ISO's technical work*](#)