

Pilot procedure for submission of combined HCV or HCV-HCSA assessments reports covering more than one Area of Interest (AOI)

1. Change History

Version number	Effective date	Description of changes
1	10/11/2023	Changes to section 3.3 Fees and timelines. Reference to Specification is included.

This pilot procedure went into effect on **27 December 2019**. This procedure will apply to any assessment initiated after this cut-off date. Upon publication of this document, any reports submitted to ALS which contain more than one AOI, and/or multiple development areas will be evaluated according to the longer timeframes published in this procedure. Assessors will be requested to register their on-going or recently completed assessments which started before the cut-off date for this procedure.

1. Introduction

Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) report evaluation fees are based on the time and cost needed to evaluate an assessment conducted at a single Area of Interest (AOI).

Below are the definitions of AOI from the HCV-HCSA manual (originally from the HCSA Toolkit) and then adapted in the HCV Assessment manual. These

definitions assume that the AOI is a core development area surrounded by a wider buffer.

Definition

Any HCV or HCV-HCSA assessment report that covers more than one Area of Interest (AOI) is a **combined assessment report**. This procedure defines what kind of combined reports can qualify for submission to the ALS. In other cases, separate reports must be submitted to the ALS for each AOI.

From the HCV-HCSA Assessment manual (2017): *The AOI...must include the concession¹ and the wider landscape adjacent to the concession. The boundary of the AOI must be aligned to either administrative or natural boundaries, for instance hydrological catchments or other landscape units. The wider landscape may be determined by (a) identifying the watershed or the geographical land unit containing a cluster of interacting ecosystems; (b) selecting a unit size that encompasses the plantation concession and a buffer of the surrounding area (e.g., 50,000 or 100,000 ha); or (c) using a radius of 5 km from the concession.*

From the HCV Assessment manual (2019): *The AOI is the management unit² (MU) and the wider landscape surrounding or adjacent to the MU. The wider landscape may be determined by identifying a single or combination of social or environmental features that are connected to and extend beyond the*

¹ Or "development area"

² The term management unit (MU) may be interchanged with concession, permit area, etc. It just refers to the area under some form of ownership, lease rights, exploration rights, etc. of the Organisation commissioning the assessment. This is the area where current and/or proposed commodity production activities take place or will take place.

MU boundaries such as a watershed or a geographical land unit containing a cluster of interacting ecosystems, and community lands.

2. The challenge

In recent years, the HCV Network ALS has evaluated assessment reports, where results were combined from multiple (non-contiguous) AOIs. Presenting results from more than one AOI in a single report is challenging because reports are longer and more complex than standard single AOI reports. The reports have included non-contiguous AOIs from multiple locations (and geographic scope), under variable ownership, and often with different biophysical and/or socio-cultural characteristics. Given this challenge, the HCV Network Secretariat has developed a procedure for evaluating combined (multiple AOI) reports to avoid future challenges with costs and timeframes.

The table below provides examples of scenarios that occur in practice, and this has informed the development of the pilot procedure:

Table 1 Production Scenarios

Production Scenario	How this relates to Aol definition	How must assessment results be submitted to ALS?
1. One contiguous development area (i.e., concession, management unit) surrounded by a defined wider landscape.	One Aol	One single assessment report submitted following standard ALS procedure.
2. Multiple non-contiguous development areas. (E.g., three development areas of 5,000ha), all within 10km of each other.	One Aol	One single assessment report submitted following standard ALS procedure is acceptable up to a total of 20,000 ha of development area, with all development areas within 10km of each other.
3. Multiple non-contiguous medium to large (>50 ha each) development areas within 10km of each other.	Multiple and likely overlapping AOIs	Results from multiple AOIs may be submitted to ALS in a combined report if they meet the criteria. The total development area assessed must not exceed 100,000 ha with all development areas within 10km of each other.
4. Multiple non-contiguous small development areas (\leq 50 ha each) managed/owned by associated smallholders and/or companies within 10km of each other.	Multiple and likely overlapping AOIs	Results from multiple AOIs may be submitted to ALS in a combined report if they meet the criteria. The total development area assessed must not exceed 50,000 ha with all development areas within 10km of each other.

5. Multiple small farms managed by independent smallholders within a “wider landscape”.	HCVN does not recommend the use of ALS licensed assessors and quality assurance for independent smallholders unless their operations are high risk.
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3. Procedure for combined assessment reports

This procedure has undergone several iterations, but it is still not known for certain how it will work in practice because of the variation in the scenarios where assessors and companies may like to combine assessment results from different areas. Therefore, the ALS will pilot this procedure for up to one year to take the time to evaluate the different cases/scenarios that are submitted for evaluation. The pilot period will allow the ALS to test adapted templates and to adjust timelines and fees to match the effort required to evaluate combined reports. Note that companies and assessors must check to see if relevant certification scheme requirements would also influence whether and how assessment results from multiple sites could be combined.

The procedure consists of the following:

- Criteria for ALS acceptance of combined assessment reports
- A pre-check process to determine if the assessment results qualify to be submitted as a combined report
- Fees and timelines for combined assessment reports
- Guidance to assessors (on this procedure and adjustments to report templates)
- Guidance to Quality Panel members (adjustments to report evaluation procedures)

3.1. Criteria for acceptance of combined assessment reports

There can be very good reasons to submit combined assessment reports, especially in cases where a combined report would reduce repetition and increase efficiency. Combined assessment results can be submitted to ALS for

evaluation in one assessment report if the production scenario meets at least four of the following six criteria:

At least 4 of these Criteria must be met (red means required)	
1.	All development areas are located within a coherent biogeographic area such as an ecoregion or landscape, noting that it is not appropriate to combine assessment results across major biogeographic boundaries unless they are functionally linked e.g., by hydrological function
2.	There is a single ownership (by same parent company or holding) and/or contractual agreement for all development areas
3.	There is shared management responsibility for all the development areas.
4.	The development areas are characterised by similar or related social, economic and cultural context
5.	Most of the local stakeholders in the different Aols can speak the same language.
6.	Assessment activities conducted and report submitted to ALS over a contiguous time period (within two years). This is to ensure that the results are current.

ALS will NOT accept combined results if any of the development areas:

- Are located on different islands
- Are located more than 10 km from each other
- Have a total combined area of more than 50,000 ha or 100,000 ha (see production scenario 3 and 4 in Table 1)
- If any single development area is larger than 50,000 ha

3.2. Pre-check before submission

Assessors must complete a pre-check survey to determine if the combined assessment report procedure is applicable. Note that if after report

submission, the ALS staff determine that the criteria are not met, the assessor will be notified and must prepare and submit separate reports.

3.3. Fees and timelines

Combined assessments are longer and more complex; requiring more time and resources for evaluations. Therefore, the fees for combined assessment reports are higher than for standard reports. The corresponding fees can be found in the Assessor Licensing Scheme (ALS) Specification.