Progress Report

Implementation of Credible Interoperability Mechanisms for Low-Emission Steel

16 November 2026

ResponsibleSteel has worked with partners to progress alignment and interoperability between low-emission steel standards into practical tools for trade.

From words into action

Standards and definitions for low-emission steel are fundamental to mobilising the policy support, demand and finance needed to secure investment in decarbonisation projects.

ResponsibleSteel is committed to making it easier for buyers, producers, policymakers and other market participants to recognise credible low-emission steel declarations. This means facilitating recognition across different standards and markets.

Over the past year, ResponsibleSteel has deepened its collaboration with the Chinese Iron and Steel Association (CISA), developer of the C2F standard, and the Brussels-based Low Emission Steel Standard (LESS). Building on the Memoranda of Understanding announced at COP30 in Belém in 2025, we have made significant progress towards greater alignment and interoperability between our three organisations, whose standards collectively cover over 60% of global steel production by volume[1].

Our bilateral work with CISA and LESS also complements efforts to advance alignment and interoperability through intergovernmental initiatives, including the IDDI, the Climate Club and the IFCMA[2].

In addition, we have supported industry stakeholder research and dialogue to move interoperability from shared ambition towards practical delivery.

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[1] Estimate based on 2024 World Steel Association total crude steel production against production of ResponsibleSteel member sites with certification, an estimated average capacity utilisation rate among non-certified ResponsibleSteel member sites and LESS members, and an assumption that CISA's members make up 90% of Chinese steel production.

[2] The International Deep Decarbonisation Initiative IDDI is hosted by UNIDO, and the Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches IFCMA is hosted by the OECD.

Demonstrating the Steel Standards Principles

ResponsibleSteel's cooperation with other standards systems is guided by our commitment to the Steel Standards Principles (SSP). Launched at COP28, and now endorsed by more than 65 organisations, the SSP galvanises stakeholders to progress alignment and interoperability in the measurement methodologies for steel[3]. This report outlines the significant progress made towards the SSP's goal of building transparency, alignment and interoperability between methodologies for measuring embodied greenhouse gas emissions in steel production.

The work set out below aligns with the Framework for Credible Interoperability, first developed by ResponsibleSteel, which sets out the technical and governance elements needed for stable interoperability mechanisms built on transparency, robustness and mutual agreement. The SSP Transparency Criteria complement this framework by recommending that all product carbon-intensity claims should clarify the accounting rules used against these criteria.

Summary of Progress

Significant progress has been made, under our bilateral partnerships with CISA and LESS, towards demonstrating credible interoperability between low-emission steel standards in practice:

1. An in-depth bilateral **comparative analysis of commonalities and differences** has been undertaken between ResponsibleSteel and C2F standards, and between the ResponsibleSteel and LESS standards;
2. Amendments to improve the **alignment of the ResponsibleSteel International Production Standard with the SSP Transparency Criteria**, and with C2F and LESS, have been considered under its ongoing Standard Revision process. We understand C2F and LESS are also pursuing revisions to their rulebooks.
3. A standalone **ResponsibleSteel GHG standard and certification programme** for decarbonisation progress is planned for 2027;
4. **Two bilateral co-calculation tools** are under development and testing, that will enable steel sites to use the same data set to calculate their decarbonisation progress under the thresholds of different standards;

[3] ResponsibleSteel was a co-founder of the Steel Standards Principles, with the IEA Secretariat, Steel Breakthrough Agenda, Worldsteel Association, WTO Secretariat and UNIDO. The SSPs now have over 65 endorsing organisations. The SSPs were an outcome of the Steel Breakthrough Agenda, in which ResponsibleSteel has played a continuous role.

5. The development of an **interoperable assurance approach** to guide the development of audits for interoperable certifications has been initiated;
6. Plans for the **world's first steel-standards interoperability pilots in China**, with first results expected in 2027;

In addition, ResponsibleSteel has worked with HILT CRC to initiate a collaborative research project on pathways for interoperability between standards and certification systems. HILT CRC is an international research consortium led from Australia with a focus on supporting markets and driving demand for low-carbon products to facilitate transformation.

In tandem with this progress, several demand-side initiatives, including demand-side aggregation frameworks SteelZero, the First Movers Coalition, and RMI's Sustainable Steel Buyers Platform have expressed an intention to recognise credible low-emission steel standards or interoperability mechanisms within their own work. These help to connect purchasing decisions with credible existing market claims systems, thereby scaling market demand.

From testing to widespread market adoption

Our next common task is move from technical cooperation and testing to widespread market adoption. In 2027, following the pilots, credible interoperability mechanisms will be available for market use.

Therefore, we invite market participants to seize the opportunity to use these mechanisms to accelerate trade in certified low-emission steel. In practical terms, this means procurement processes, public and private, as well as finance sector assessments, will be able to recognise certificates produced through such credible interoperability mechanisms.

Moving towards wider cooperation

Decarbonising the global steel industry will require cooperation across multiple standards, companies and countries. ResponsibleSteel is committed to widening and deepening that effort together with other like-minded standards and other interested businesses and organisations.