



The Copper Mark Recognition Process

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1. Introduction

The Copper Mark Assurance Process “recognizes existing standards systems, reporting frameworks, certifications or externally assured management in order to avoid redundancy and to promote the use of these initiatives.” Section 3.9 of the Assurance Process explicitly allows for equivalency and add-on assessments where possible.

The Copper Mark commits to recognize equivalent Systems to achieve the following core objectives:

- Avoid redundancy of assurance and reporting initiatives for Copper Producers.
- Encourage the use of existing Systems currently implemented by Copper Producers.
- Ensure acceptance of the Copper Mark by metal exchanges, customers and investors.
- Position the Copper Mark as a leader in the sustainability standard space.

The Copper Mark Recognition Process is designed to:

- Ensure the integrity and credibility of the Copper Mark Assurance Process.
- Define the criteria, process and timelines for the Copper Mark to recognize Systems.
- Prioritize efforts by the Copper Mark to obtain recognition in order to efficiently allocate time and resources.
- Define the criteria, process and timelines for the Copper Mark to work towards obtaining recognition by initiatives identified as priorities.
- Define the decision-making process and ability for initiatives and Copper Producers to appeal recognition decisions taken by the Copper Mark.
- Detail the practical steps taken to apply recognition in the Copper Mark Assurance Process.

2. Copper Mark Recognition of Other Systems

In order to ensure efficiency and reduce the need for additional Independent Site Assessments, Copper Producers may wish to claim that one or more of the Copper Mark Criteria has already been assessed by a third-party through an equivalent system.

The Copper Mark reviews equivalency at two levels:

- 1. Recognition of a System:** The Copper Mark reviews and recognizes a System as being equivalent. Systems are defined as having standards and assurance requirements. These may include sustainability systems, good practice frameworks, certifications, or externally assured management systems. A subset of the broadly used term “system” includes Voluntary Sustainability Standard (VSS) Systems, which are standards developed at local, national or international level by organizations from the public and private sectors on environmental and social improvements. Reviewed and recognized VSS Systems are added to the Equivalency Matrix. In contrast, an externally assured management system would not be listed on the Equivalency Matrix.
- 2. Recognition of a Participant’s Claim of Equivalency:** During the Independent Assessment (Step 3) of the Copper Mark Assurance Process, the Copper Mark reviews each participating Copper Producer’s claim of equivalence for each of the Copper Mark Criteria.

Participating or interested Copper Producers who wish to submit evidence of an independent assessment conducted for a System should reach out to the Copper Mark. In order to have the System considered, the Copper Producer should request a review of the System according to the process described in section 2.1.

Pro tips: To reduce the need for the second part of Step 3 of the Copper Mark Assurance Process: the independent third-party site assessment, Copper Producers should follow these steps before completing the Copper Mark Self-Assessment:

1. Identify whether you have independent third-party assessments conducted at your site(s) and whether those assessments cover any of the Copper Mark Criteria.
2. Consult the Equivalency Matrix or the Copper Mark to check if the System(s) for which your site has been independently assessed have already been reviewed for equivalency.
3. Where a System is not included, submit a request for review to the Copper Mark by March 31 or September 30 respectively, understanding that the review will take up to 3 months.
4. Where a System is not included or is included by not all criteria are fully equivalent to the Copper Mark Criteria, consider including an “add-on” to already-scheduled assessment. The Copper Mark will provide guidance to understand what elements must be reviewed in the “add-on” assessment. The Copper Producer must ensure the assessor is approved or can be approved by the Copper Mark before the assessment is conducted.

2.1. Recognition of a System

2.1.1. Application and timeline

Copper Producers may request the Copper Mark to conduct a review for recognition of equivalency of a System by submitting a request to info@coppermark.org. Any stakeholder of the Copper Mark may also identify and propose Systems for review.

Supporting information should include:

- A copy of / link to the Standard to be reviewed.
- A copy of / link to supporting documentation such as process documents, guidance materials, implementation procedures, etc.
- The name and information of the main point of contact at the Copper Producer and system owner.

The Copper Mark will review the proposed Systems to determine if they are relevant and material to the Copper Mark. To be included in the review, the System must:

- Cover at least one of the Copper Mark Criteria;
- Apply to Copper Producers;

- Formally launched for implementation (note: Where a standard is undergoing revisions, the current version of the standard is applied until a revised version has been formally launched for implementation); and
- Implementation be verified by an on-site, independent third-party assessment.

Priority will be assigned to Systems submitted by Copper Producers participating or preparing to participate in the Copper Mark as well as to Systems that are widely used by Copper Producers at large.

Where significant resources are required to complete a review, the Copper Mark will present the request to the Advisory Council and the Board of Directors for approval.

The Copper Mark accepts requests to conduct a review for recognition of equivalency at any time. Reviews are conducted twice per year, generally in Q2 and Q4. The Copper Mark may review a system off-cycle at its discretion.

The deadline to submit a request for review in Q2 is 31 March of each year. The deadline to submit a request for review in Q4 is 30 September of each year. The equivalency may be applied once it has been reviewed and accepted by the Copper Mark, even if the updated matrix has not yet been published. Copper Producers should work directly with the Copper Mark to understand all potentially applicable systems before completing the Self-Assessment.

The Copper Mark will review the Equivalency Matrix for relevant changes to already reviewed Systems in the first quarter of every year.

2.1.2. Review process

The Copper Mark recognizes a System as equivalent for one or more Copper Mark Criteria if **all** of the elements defined in this section are in place. The equivalency of the elements is assessed using a third party and applying a consistent methodology.

1. Benchmarking of standard requirements

The Copper Mark will assess if the requirements in the System's standard is found to be materially comparable in scope and intent to the Copper Mark Criteria. This determination is made for each individual criterion separately. Recognition of one or some criteria does not imply recognition for all Copper Mark Criteria.

For each criterion, the Copper Mark will review the standard and related documentation such as guidance documents, report templates, and other supporting evidence to benchmark the requirement with the industry norm. The System's requirements will be rated for each criterion based on the terms used in the Equivalency Matrix as:

Equivalent: where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirements are the same, even if there are minor differences in the details of the requirements and/or the language used.

Not fully equivalent: where the scope and intent (and therefore the likely outcomes) of the requirement are not the same. Similarly, issues that could be considered within the scope of the VSS but which are not addressed in the VSS are not considered as equivalent to the industry norm.

Not applicable: requirements that are beyond the scope of the VSS because the VSS was not designed with those issues in mind, or those issues that are specific to a type of metal or type of production process not included in the scope of the VSS are considered not applicable.

2. Credible independent assessment or third-party certification

The Copper Mark will confirm that the System's assurance requirements are materially comparable in scope and intent to the Copper Mark Assurance Process. The review of the System is guided by the ISEAL Sustainability Benchmarking Good Practice Guide, Annex 3, Benchmark Criteria for Evaluating Sustainability Standards which includes:

- Scheme management;
- Standard setting;
- Assurance;
- Personnel competence;
- Oversight;
- Claims and labels.

In particular, the review compares the following key elements from the Copper Mark Assurance Process:

- Assessment process, section 3.5.4 of the Assurance Process;
- Improvement plan requirements with the same or stricter timelines as defined in section 3.6 of the Assurance Process
- Re-assessment requirements with the same or stricter timelines as defined in section 3.7 of the Assurance Process
- Assessor selection, training and evaluation, section 4 of the Assurance Process
- Reporting requirements, section 5 of the Assurance Process
- Grievance mechanism, section 7 of the Assurance Process
- Program evaluation and continual improvement, section 8.2 of the Assurance Process

The Copper Mark will take reasonable efforts to seek feedback and clarification from the system owner as appropriate.

2.2. Recognition of Participant's Claim of Equivalency

This section details how recognition of Systems is implemented in the Copper Mark Assurance Process. **Copper Producers are expected to seek equivalency for Systems prior to their Independent Assessment (Step 3 of the Copper Mark Assurance Process) and in accordance with the timelines defined below.**

The Copper Mark will not extend deadlines for failure to submit a request for equivalency before the Independent Assessment.

What is the Equivalency Matrix?

- The Equivalency Matrix is jointly created by the Copper Mark and the [Responsible Minerals Initiative](#) (RMI).
- The objective is to provide succinct information on the extent to which a Voluntary Standards Systems (VSS) meets some or all of the RRA industry norms based on a clear benchmarking methodology.
- The methodology used to conduct the benchmarking follows the [RMI's Recognition Process](#) for VSS.
- The Copper Mark recognizes a VSS as equivalent for the areas indicated, as long as appropriate evidence is provided (as outlined in this Recognition Process).
- For the RMI, the Equivalency Matrix indicates the results of the equivalency function within the RRA Online Platform.
- The Copper Mark may review additional systems that are not included in the Equivalency Matrix. Please contact the Copper Mark (info@coppermark.org) for a full list of reviewed systems or with questions.

2.2.1. Step 1: Letter of Commitment

It is recommended for Copper Producers to check whether independent assessments have been conducted at the site and whether those assessments cover any of the Copper Mark Criteria. For any independent assessments conducted, Copper Producers may check whether the System is included in the Equivalency Matrix.

- For Systems that are not included in the Equivalency Matrix: Submit a request to the Copper Mark for an equivalency review in accordance with Section 2.1.1. above.
- For Systems included in the Equivalency Matrix: Please refer to Step 2: Self-Assessment.

2.2.2. Step 2: Self-Assessment

In accordance with section 3.4.2 of the Copper Mark Assurance Process: For criteria where the Copper Producer intends to claim an equivalent certification or independently verified system, the Copper Producer will indicate the name of the certification or system and provide evidence of verification (e.g. the certificate; the verification report; the continuous improvement plan). The evidence must include the following:

- a. Name of the independent verifier/certification body;
- b. Dates of the verification;
- c. Scope of the verification (operations; issue areas; criteria; etc.);
- d. Expiration of the certification; and,
- e. The results of the verification.

2.2.3. Step 3: Independent Assessment

All Copper Mark Criteria have to be verified through a site assessment.

In accordance with Section 3.5.1. of the Copper Mark Assurance Process, the independent reviewer evaluates the eligibility for equivalence of the verified standards or certifications, or externally assured management systems held by the Copper Producer based on the Equivalency Matrix and the Copper Mark Recognition Process.

In accordance with Section 3.9.1. of the Copper Mark Assurance Process: Where there is evidence that a credible independent assessment or third-party certification has identified and documented a level of conformance by the Copper Producer that is equivalent to the expectations of a Copper Mark criterion, that criterion will be considered assured by The Copper Mark and will not require further assurance within the Copper Mark Assurance Process.

The independent reviewer will assess the evidence submitted by the Copper Producer in Step 2 to confirm that:

- The assurance or certificate is in effect or valid at the time of the Independent Review.
- The assurance or certificate is no more than 24 months old or plans for reassessment or recertification are underway and communicated to the Copper Mark.
- The assurance or certificate is valid for at least 12 additional months following the Independent Review or plans for reassessment or recertification are underway and communicated to the Copper Mark.¹

¹ This is to ensure that the certificate will continue to be valid at the time of the Site Assessment

- The assurance or certificate covers the same scope as the Copper Mark Assurance Process criterion for which the Copper Producer is requesting equivalency. Scope refers to materials, issue area, and sub-requirements of the criterion.
- Corrective action plans are in place to close any non-conformities within the next 12 months.

The Copper Producer will have the opportunity to comment on the Independent Review report and can comment on the equivalency determination. In the event of a disagreement, the Copper Mark will review the information with the Independent Reviewer and the Copper Producer in order to come to resolution. The final decision on equivalency rests with the Copper Mark.

2.2.4. “Top-up” Assessments

In accordance with Section 3.9.2. of the Copper Mark Assurance Process: Where the Copper Producer has an upcoming independent assessment for a recognized System, it is possible that a Copper Mark “add-on” can be incorporated to “top-up” the scope of the external assessment to include Copper Mark Criteria that have not yet been verified in a site assessment and / or are not « fully equivalent » for the System. This may be determined by the Copper Producer in consultation with The Copper Mark and the assigned Assessor(s). The Assessor(s) has to be approved by The Copper Mark.

3. Recognition of the Copper Mark by VSS Systems

3.1. Prioritization

The Copper Mark will use the following criteria to prioritize the VSS systems from which to seek recognition:

- Recognition is required to ensure market access for Copper Producers.
- The extent to which the VSS system is already used by Copper Mark current and / or potential Copper Producers.
- The impact of the initiative on the Copper Mark's ability to achieve its vision and mission.

The Copper Mark will provide regular reports on potential initiatives to the Advisory Council. In order to determine which initiatives from which to seek recognition, the Advisory Council will review:

- The **name** of the VSS system
- The **objective** of the recognition
- The **priority level** based on the prioritization criteria
- The **scope** of the recognition (i.e. which of the Copper Mark Assurance Process criteria are in scope)
- The **requirements** set forth by the VSS system in order to seek recognition

If the Advisory Council recommends that the Copper Mark pursue recognition, staff will present the recommendation as well as proposed timelines and resources required for final approval by the Board of Directors.

3.2. Review Process

The Copper Mark may conduct an internal review or, as required by the VSS system, commission a third party to conduct a review of the Copper Mark Criteria and Assurance Process in comparison to the VSS system's requirements.

Where the review identifies gaps, the Copper Mark will engage the Advisory Council to determine whether to close the gaps, continue to seek recognition with the gaps acknowledged, or cease to seek recognition.

In the case where significant resources would be required to close the gap, the recommendation from the Advisory Council as well as proposed timelines and resources required will be presented for approval by the Board of Directors.

3.3. Ongoing Monitoring

Using the same process as described above, the Copper Mark will regularly and at least annually re-assess the value of recognition in current VSS systems and identify any additional VSS systems as appropriate. This process will include at a minimum:

- Assess the VSS against any Copper Mark Criteria revisions
- Assess the VSS based on any VSS revisions
- Take reasonable efforts to liaise with the system owner on outcome changes
- Communicate to stakeholders on any outcome changes and the justification for those changes

During the benchmarking of other initiatives, where the criterion exceeds the Copper Mark expectations, the Copper Mark will log opportunities for improvement for consideration in the next revision of the Copper Mark Assurance Process.

4. Key Terms

Copper Producer: a company involved in the production of copper, including but not limited to companies involved in mining, solvent extraction and electrowinning (SX/EW), smelting, or refining of copper.

Copper Mark Criteria for Responsible Production (Copper Mark Criteria): The Copper Mark uses the Risk Read Assessment (RRA) as the basis for evaluating Copper Producers' performance against the Copper Mark Criteria. The RRA condenses over 50 international standards and guidelines into 32 issue areas covering environmental, social and governance aspects of mining, smelting and refining operations. For the full list of criteria, see the Criteria Guide.

Equivalent: where the scope and intent (and therefore likely outcomes) of the requirements are the same, even if there are minor differences in the details of the requirements and/or the language used.

Equivalent systems: are defined as having standards and assurance requirements that are materially comparable in scope and intent as the Copper Mark Criteria and Assurance Process.

Recognition: the acceptance of an external set of requirements, their implementation and their verification in lieu of the Copper Mark's own requirements.

Systems: are defined as having standards and assurance requirements. These may include sustainability systems, good practice frameworks, certifications, or externally assured management systems.

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS): standards developed at local, national or international level by organizations from the public and private sectors on environmental and social improvements.