

Identification and Analysis of the Characteristics of Voluntary Sustainability Standards in the International Market of Agro-Industrial Goods

Diego Alonso García Bonilla

Department of Administration and Organizations

Faculty of Administration Sciences

Universidad del Valle

Cll. 4B 36-00, Cali, Colombia

diego.a.garcia@correounivalle.edu.co

Abstract

The paper presented below is intended to identify and analyze the main characteristics of voluntary standards of sustainability (VSS) in the international market of agro-industrial goods based on the review of scientific articles published in recent decades. To this end, a bibliometric exercise was methodologically proposed that allowed the collection and processing of a scientific corpus of 61 articles that respond to the objective of the analysis.

As a result of the processing of the information collected, the findings were classified into five analytical dimensions. The first, oriented to the theoretical foundation, describes the main theoretical perspectives that support the practical development of VSS. The literature review raises the responsibility of producers and consumers to advance in a consensus on new approaches that accelerate actions and solutions to the challenges of sustainable development, incorporating the need to establish partnerships for the implementation of sustainable development globally.

The second dimension, focused on the development of VSS in international food trade, highlights the increasing complexity and impact of global supply chains, the integration of new management and marketing methods that respond assertively to reducing these impacts. Environmental and the assurance of the global food chain as the central axes of the VSS.

The third dimension, in which VSS are associated with the production of biomass and forest products, analyzes the importance of the creation of private organizations for the establishment of norms and standards oriented to “sustainable forest management”, thereby creating incentives for compliance with regulations that contribute to ecological sustainability, social justice and the safety and efficacy of agro industrial products.

In the fourth dimension, in which the main limitations identified in the VSS are proposed, the commercial tensions generated between producers and consumers are described given the increasing number of private standards for international trade, which pursue similar objectives that generate a “market of standards” saturated. In addition, the literature highlights the restrictions of VSS given its voluntary nature, the limitations of the demand for such products and the challenge of including small farmers, where private standards can only partially compensate for structural weaknesses in governance in the field of natural resources.

Finally, in the fifth analytical dimension, the relationship between VSS and fair trade in the international market of agro-industrial goods is proposed. The literature describes the VSS as practices for the development of equitable commercial relations that guarantee the sustainability of the supply, especially of agro food products in local and international markets.

In general, the analysis allowed the identification of multiple dimensions of VSS in the international trade of agro industrial goods, highlighting this field of study as emerging in the international scientific literature. However, the VSS analysis suggests the development of multiple analytical perspectives that identify their potential in the international market.

Keywords

Sustainability, Sustainable Development, Standards, International Trade, Agriculture.

Biography

Diego Alonso García Bonilla: professor at the Department of Administration and Organizations of the Faculty of Administration Sciences of Universidad del Valle in Cali. Master in Business Administration and Specialist in Social Management from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Colombia) and Economist from the Universidad del Valle (Colombia). Researcher in the field of sustainable development, international trade and business sustainability in Colombia.