

# The control of socio-ecological criteria through private governance mechanisms

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The continuous growing global economy bears a consistent pressure on the availability of natural resources. As an answer to sustainability requirements for biomass, various initiatives for global sustainability standards and certification schemes have emerged as new private governance mechanisms. The question is, what are the potentials and limits of those private control mechanisms for a sustainable biofuel production. The impacts of private governance for this study were assessed through case studies of biomass production sites in Brazil, already certified or in the process of certification. The main research focus was laid on the implementation of social and ecological criteria at farm level. During the field visits on the production sites, farm managers were asked about their experience with the implementation process of socio-ecological criteria, the main gains and obstacles and their motivation for certification.

Private governance in form of certification is limited to the criteria addressed in the standards. Therefore the findings from the case studies were assessed against statements of sustainability requirements for biomass production of Brazilian stakeholders such as representatives from ministries and state agencies, certification agencies, farmers, standard organizations, processing companies, farmer organizations, agricultural research organizations and representatives from civil society organizations. Positive influences of certification were found for direct impacts, such as the compliance with national laws, the use and handling of agrochemicals or labour conditions. Indirect impacts of a rising biomass production such as indirect land use change or land price hikes cannot be effectively governed by private control mechanisms which are focusing private biomass production sites and the subsequent supply chain. Additional instruments on national and international level are required to deliver sustainably produced biomass for a rising global demand. Private governance has the potential to enforce the implementation of national environmental and social policies and enhance the discourse and public debate about sustainable production and consumption, but it lacks in assuring a sound sustainability performance of biomass producers.