



The Concrete Sustainability Council - A new certification to recognize the sustainability efforts of the aggregate, concrete and cement sectors

On 12 April 2017, the Concrete Sustainability Council (CSC) awarded the first certificates at an event during the Building Holland trade fair. But what is the CSC, what are its targets, and how can interested companies get certified?

Trends in the construction industry

Probably the one development that has shaped our industry more than anything else over the last decade or so (and will most likely continue to do so), is that the concept of sustainability is becoming more and more mainstream. In particular, there are a number of trends that impact the relation to our stakeholders in general, most importantly to our clients:

- Wider societal expectations in regard to the ethical, environmental and social performance of the supply chain are increasing. Within the construction industry, accountability, transparency and legitimacy of its operations have become common practice.
- There is an increasing market interest in green procurement policies. Demand for systems certifying materials that are responsibly sourced such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB), High Quality Environmental (HQE) standard is growing.
- Construction industry clients, including those involved in government funded projects, increasingly seek to prove their products have been responsibly sourced.
- Contractors, architects and engineering in turn are asking their supply chains to probe questions about this crucial element of sustainability; and the onus is on manufacturers, to prove that their products have been responsibly produced and their constituent materials responsibly sourced.

This all leads to higher expectations with regards to the ethical, environmental and social performance of the supply chain of construction companies of all sizes. However, how does a company prove that it and its supply chain respect a recognized set of standards of responsible sourcing?

Committed to responsibly sourcing

In order to respond to this question and provide a credible endorsement for sustainable operations, a number of companies and associations under the leadership of the Cement Sustainability Initiative (CSI), a sector project within the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), started the development of a new certification that is targeted to our sector; this project has by now evolved into an independent entity under the CSC branding.

The CSC is committed to accelerating sustainability and responsible sourcing within the cement and concrete sector. It sets a leading example for the general public and private sector by contributing to the growing public awareness of, and commitment to, sustainable development.

The certification system was developed by industry experts; representatives from non-governmental organizations participated in a stakeholder consultation process that was led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world's largest and most diverse environmental network.



The CSC system provides insight about to which level is a company operating in an environmentally, socially and economically responsible way. The CSC certification covers raw materials, their source or provenance; the concrete manufacturing process and a range of social and environmental matters. The responsible sourcing certification system helps in providing credible and independent evidence of sustainable sourcing practices to share with customers. Whilst empowering customers and manufacturers to make environmentally supportive decisions, it allows public authorities to achieve environmental targets.

By creating a certification system for responsibly sourced concrete, the CSC aims to improve transparency of the concrete sector, highlight the essential role of concrete in creating a sustainable construction industry by getting recognition in 'green' procurement government policies and building rating systems. The CSC certification systematically integrates cement and aggregates plants, but also allows for certification of concrete plants without the supply chain participating in the validation process.

Business benefits

The CSC certification system provides credible results that are already audited and verified by external experts. Concrete producers could gain substantial benefits as it:

- strengthens brand and reputation in the market, create competitive advantages;
- allows companies to contribute to sustainable and certified construction projects;
- helps producers to improve continuously by providing insights into your whole supply chain sustainable performance and allows you to benchmark with your industry;
- contributes to the sustainability goals of your clients;
- promotes confidence amongst local communities; and
- documents and highlights the substantial efforts our sector has already spent on sustainability.

These benefits are complemented by an attractive cost structure; collaboration with trade associations as well as in-kind contributions from a number of CSC member companies allowing us to effectively minimize our overheads, while the long validity of our certificates (three years) combined with a lean but robust annual compliance check keep validation costs at very low levels.

How does the certification work?

You intend to become CSC certified? What you need to do first is to identify those plants for which your company targets certification.

Carry out a quick self-assessment: The self-assessment platform is part of the "CSC-toolbox" and freely accessible at <https://concretesustainabilitycouncil.com/>. Performing the so-called "Quick-scan" allows you to

- gain insight into your performance on responsible sourcing
- obtain information on the evidence required
- set your goals

Register for a license in the "CSC toolbox". This is done via creating an account and buying certification rights in line with your intended certification scope.

Once you are registered you may start uploading the required evidence such as company policies, certificates or pictures. You need to choose a Certification Body (CB) among the ones provided in the Tool to have your evidence verified. Verification is done by an independent Auditor nominated by the CB. The CB is also in charge of issuing your certificate once all evidence has been verified and open questions have been answered.



The CSC is supported by Regional System Operators who manage the local system and provide training and a helpdesk at national level. To date (end of April 2017) VOBN (the Dutch readymix concrete association) is the CSC's Regional System Operator (RSO) for the NL; some more are expected to follow soon. If your operations are within the geographic coverage of an RSOs, its corresponding regional framework (which is always based on the global framework) will automatically apply; if not, the global framework is the relevant one for you.

The way forward - How you can be part of this

Here are a number of ways how you can help us make CSC become a success story with multiple benefits for individual companies, our industry, and society as a whole:

- Find out more about the responsible sourcing certification at www.concretesustainabilitycouncil.org and spread that information among your stakeholders.
- Certify your concrete plants or validate your cement and aggregates plants. Try it for FREE using the QuickScan tool.
- Become a member of the CSC and enjoy benefits such as reduced fees and influence on future development.
- Reach out to your local trade association to put forward the idea of CSC membership or even becoming a Regional System Operator.
- Engage in dialogue with decision makers in green procurement frameworks and green building rating systems (such as LEED or DGNB) that the CSC certification deserves recognition.
- Share with us your thoughts on how we can improve.

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Committed to responsibly sourced concrete