



First Concrete Sustainability Council (CSC) Certificates awarded...

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The 11 April 2017, marked a significant landmark for the concrete industry with the first Certificates for the international Concrete Sustainability Council (CSC) responsible sourcing system being awarded during 'Building Holland,' one of the major trade fairs for building, renovation and redevelopment in the Netherlands. The Certificates have been issued following an in-depth independent audit process by Kiwa, SGS and SKG-IKOB. The first companies that successfully finished the process were: ready mixed concrete companies Mebin and Cementbouw (a CRH company), which both achieved the silver standard; precast concrete companies VBI and BoschBeton, which both achieved bronze; and ORCEM, a producer of cementitious materials that was the first company in the supply chain to successfully undergo the evaluation process and achieve a score.

These are the first visible achievements of a process that started several years ago, initiated by the Cement Sustainability Initiative (CSI). Although the first CSI Agenda for Action was only focused on the impact of the cement plant and its manufacturing process, the CSI has been addressing the issue for several years. In 2009, CSI published an assessment of best practices to recycle concrete around the world.

In 2012 the CSI and Arup conducted a survey to explore material choices in sustainable construction and the decision-making processes associated with this. The aim was to understand the factors that influence senior construction professionals when considering material options in sustainable buildings. Over 200 individuals from Brazil, China, Germany, the UK and the US participated in this survey. The study showed that decision making with respect to material choice is complex. However, feedback indicated that the existence of responsible sourcing systems would be welcomed to ensure the sustainability of purchased materials. They were also deemed to offer benefit to respond to future trends, specifically the desire for greater access to information, demonstration of corporate responsibilities and to ensure future alignment with green building rating system objectives.


A responsible sourcing system provides information that identifies and promotes responsible practices throughout the whole supply chain. Such a system covers environmental, social and economic aspects of concrete production and it places the commitments of an organisation and the governance to support those commitments at the core of the assessment, with the information provided to construction professionals also being independently verified.

It is based on a set of agreed principles of sustainability, the precise scope of which is determined

by stakeholder engagement. The motivation of CSI members and its experience in bringing together stakeholders (including competitors from the same sector) made the CSI the natural leading force to initiate the process. Cement, aggregate and concrete industry partners from Europe, the US, Latin America and Asia initiated the development of the responsible sourcing certification systems through a new independent organisation established in November 2016, the Concrete Sustainability Council (CSC), based in Geneva, Switzerland. The CSI is one of the current 18 members.

The CSC certification system has been developed together with a large group of industry stakeholders as well as certification institutes. It covers the raw materials, its source or provenance, its manufacture and a range of economic, social and environmental impacts. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) led a consultation process with environmental experts and representatives from civil society focused on providing feedback on the system's environmental and social criteria. Feedback has been incorporated into the CSC technical manual and the CSC intends to continue the dialogue with civil society organisations and other stakeholders. As demand for systems certifying materials that are responsibly sourced such as LEED, BREEAM and DGNB grows, the CSC has maintained a constant dialogue with these organisations so that the CSC certification system is compatible and will be recognised by them.

A typical certification process includes a number of steps, is applicable to all sizes of concrete companies, and comprises three levels, bronze, silver and gold, which can be achieved depending on the performance and the maturity of the sustainable sourcing approach. To assess the sustainability in the value chain, verifications of cement and aggregate operations result in a score that feeds into the evaluation of the concrete plant.

The CSC certification system is available online and delivered its first certification in April 2017, paving the way for many more. The system is designed to encourage producers to continuously build on their efforts in improving sustainability performance of concrete along the whole supply chain. Importantly, CSC certification will provide independent evidence to help customers and clients demonstrate that the concrete products they purchase have been manufactured in a responsible manner and will contribute towards higher performance in green building rating systems. 

For more information see:

www.concretesustainabilitycouncil.org/