



The Industry Voice for Workplace Solutions

minutes

**BIFMA Sustainability Assessment Standard Stakeholder Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 22, 2006**  
**9:00 am - 4:00 pm Eastern Time**  
**Holiday Inn Select**  
**3063 Lake Eastbrook Blvd. SE**  
**Grand Rapids, MI**  
**(616) 285-7600**

**Participants**

**INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS**

Brad Miller	BIFMA International
Tom Reardon	BIFMA International
Mary T. Fraser	BASF
Pat Meyer	BASF
Jim Kozminski	Haworth Inc.
Larry Dykhuis	Herman Miller Inc.
Scott Lesnet	HNI Corp.
Mark LaCroix	Interface Fabrics
Anne Saliers	izzydesign
John Shank	Kimball International
Kathy Jo DeVault	Knoll Inc.
Lou Newett	Knoll Inc.
Karen Smant	Milliken Fabric
Randy Carter	Steelcase Inc.
Mary Ellen Mika	Steelcase Inc.
Denise Van Valkenburg,	Steelcase Inc.

**OTHER**

Paul Chalmer	NCMS
Ron Lang	NCMS
Jaclyn Bowen	NSF International
Kirsten Ritchie	SCS
Clinton Boyd	SRG
Bill Stough	SR

**INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS**

Janan Rabiah      ACT

**GOVERNMENT**

Sharmin Syed	EPA DfE
Alison Kinn Bennett	EPA EPP
Verena Radulovic	EPA Solid Waste
Shayla Workman	EPA Solid Waste
Toni Stein	State of CA DHS
JoAnn Jaschke	State of CA IWMB
Laura Rauwerda	State of MI DEQ

## **Welcome**

Bill Stough, from Sustainable Research Group and project manager for the BIFMA Sustainable Assessment Standard (BIFMA SAS) welcomed stakeholders to the June meeting.

Brad Miller of BIFMA conducted a role call of those present in person and those by telephone. The project manager gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and described the proposed schedule for the next two days.

## **National Center for Manufacturing Sciences (NCMS) Update**

Bill Stough introduced Dr. Paul Chalmers of the NCMS and asked him to provide a background on his work. He provided a slide show and several spreadsheets for the stakeholders to view over WebEx and explained how the assessment tool would work.

- Boundaries are from loading dock to shipping dock.
- Each material arrives carrying all of the associated impacts that went into producing it.
- Each process adds to the impact.
- The impact of the final product equals the impact of constituent materials plus the impact of each manufacturing process.

Dr. Chalmers provided a sample spreadsheet of a fictitious product and led stakeholders through the process he was thinking about using. The spreadsheet added up the impact of energy content, emissions to air, solid waste, and land use for each of the materials or subassemblies and manufacturing processes used in the product.

He asked Stakeholders to provide feedback at the end of the presentation to make sure NCMS is on the right tract in developing the tool.

## **Stakeholder Questions**

- How would you distinguish volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from those that have human health impacts? Response: Any impact categories wanted can be added as needed; as long as the data is available the instrument is a very flexible tool.
- As NCMS goes forward will it use actual or average material data to correct for variations? Response: NCMS will start out with a default database such as the National
- Renewable Energy Laboratory LCI database, however if more specific data is available from users it can be added.
- How hard will it be to get companies to volunteer product information to populate the database? Responses: Some OEMs may provide data if it can be sanitized. Could the stakeholders build a theoretical product that would be very accurate? Could stakeholders form a group to create a theoretical product that is plausible? NCMS can develop the tool using any of the suggestion provided above.

## **Next Steps**

Dr. Chalmers suggested the following actions to continue progress on the development of an assessment tool for the BIFMA SAS:

1. Select a few representative products to populate the database;
2. Select a starter set of impact categories;
3. Create a detailed parts list and process flow chart for the product or products used;
4. Compile important values for raw materials from publicly available sources, and contributed data from members;
5. Use data from members to assign impact values for the processes identified; and
6. Evaluate the final product ratings for each impact category.

## **Stakeholder Discussion**

Several stakeholders indicated that the tool envisioned by the NCMS is more comprehensive than the original tool anticipated and that it was more of a life cycle assessment tool now. Dr. Chalmers agreed, and stated that even though the tool is more complex than originally envisioned it is still very flexible. A concern was expressed about the tool's ability to protect proprietary or confidential information and prevent competitors from reverse engineering another company's products. Dr. Chalmers assured stakeholders that preventive controls can be placed in the tool to address these types of issues.

A member suggested that BIFMA should set up a conference call with Dr. Chalmers to help identify products and processes that would be broadly representative of the business and institutional furniture industry. If two or three products could be agreed on it would help move the assessment tool forward. The following stakeholders agreed to participate on a conference call: Scott Lesnet, HNI; Mark LaCroix, Interface Fabrics; Denise VanValkenburg, Steelcase; and Anne Saliers, izzydesign. The project manager agreed to organize the meeting.

As a final comment, Dr. Chalmers asked the entire group to review and decide on which impact categories to use in the assessment tool and provide feedback to him or BIFMA.

## **Summary of the May Meeting**

Bill Stough provided a summary of the May meeting. He noted that most of the entire time at the last meeting was devoted to full group review of progress made by the work groups. It proved to be a beneficial exercise and many suggestions for improvements and clarifications resulted. One of the major conclusions from the full group review was the need to devote some time to obtaining guidance on open questions identified by the work groups which is slowing down their progress. Since the last meeting, the project manager has collected a list of open questions from each of the work groups and as a result, June's meeting will focus on obtaining feedback from the full stakeholder group.

## **Review of May Meeting Minutes**

The project manager presented minutes from the May meeting and asked if there were any corrections or questions. There was an omission and a typographical error identified; on page eight it was noted that in the discussion of the point weightings that Social Responsibility had the 15 percent number left out. On page nine, last paragraph, manager was misspelled.

## **Motion Offered**

John Shank moved and Mary Ellen Mika seconded approval of the minutes. All yes, none opposed.

## **Goals of the June Meeting**

The project manager described the goals of the June meetings as:

- Address the open issue of should 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifications be required in the BIFMA SAS; and
- Address the open issue of should biomaterials be evaluated based on current life cycle impacts and not held to a different standard, or should the use of biomaterials be promoted because they are a renewable material substitute for a non-renewable resource.

## **Open Question Session**

### **Issue 1. Should 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Certifications be Required in the BIFMA SAS?**

Bill Stough described the first issue to be addressed and provided a brief discussion on the issue. He provided legal definitions of the terms “third-party” and “certification” and a combined definition of “third-party certification” from the *Whole Building Design Guide*.

There was a discussion of the major benefits and drawbacks perceived in the marketplace to third-party certifications (see Third Party Certifications Document attached and on the BIFMA website [“3P\_Certs.doc”] at <http://bifma.org/public/SusFurnStd.html>).

Following the introduction of the issue, Randy Carter presented a draft motion and rationale for the BIFMA SAS seeking to neither encourage nor discourage the use of third party certifications as a requirement for credits.

An extensive discussion period followed, which raised several significant questions:

- The BIFMA SAS needs to deliver a standard that the market wants, it must be credible in the marketplace;
- How can reference to certifications help or hinder someone auditing a company’s conformance?
- Can we offer higher levels of performance by not listing specific 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifications, only the performance levels desired?
- One of the reasons to cite 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifications is that they have already done much of the homework in addressing the issues of concern.
- What if the 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification is proprietary and the performance indicators are not publicly available?
- Could a 3<sup>rd</sup> party certification be cited as a minimum criterion if it were followed by “or equivalent” to allow other options that met the minimum?
- Will ANSI’s procedures allow the use of the term “or equivalent?”

## **Motion Offered**

Stakeholders agreed that 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifications can not be used exclusively to obtain credits in the standard. With this consensus reached, the following motion was offered by Randy Carter and seconded by Larry Dykhuis:

*The BIFMA SAS, as with all ANSI/BIFMA standards, shall neither encourage nor discourage the use of third-party certification for conformity assessment. The BIFMA SAS shall be written to accommodate first party (manufacturer or supplier), second party (purchaser), and third party (independent of first and second party) claims of conformance. Third party certification shall not be required as the sole means for determining conformance for any prerequisite or credit within the BIFMA SAS.*

The motion was approved by show of hands and by voice vote over the phone. There were three abstentions (Clinton Boyd, JoAnn Jaschke, and Pat Meyer) and no votes against the motion.

### **Motion Offered**

An additional discussion evolved on defining what an open or public source certification is and their availability for BIFMA SAS use. The question was asked if we could specify a certification that has not gone through the ANSI standard process. It was noted that ANSI does not allow specific endorsements of products or services (see discussion under Rationale in the Third Party Certification Motion document attached and on the BIFMA website [“3PC\_motn.doc”] at <http://bifma.org/public/SusFurnStd.html>).

A consensus was reached on preferring to use open source or public certifications over proprietary ones, however when certification is cited, to be consistent with the previous motion on 3<sup>rd</sup> party certifications, a citation must be followed by the words “or equivalent.”

Larry Dykhuis made the following motion:

*“The BIFMA SAS prefers to use open or public source standards. It does not want to preclude proprietary standards but additional clarification is needed from ANSI on the issue.”*

The motion was seconded by Lou Newett. The motion was approved by show of hands and by voice vote over the phone. There was one abstention (Laura Rauwerda) and no votes against the motion.

### **Issue 2. Should biomaterials be evaluated based on current life cycle impacts and not be held to a different standard, or should the use of biomaterials be promoted because they are a renewable material substitute for non-renewable resources (e.g. such as petroleum)?**

The project manager described the issue and provided a brief overview of the emerging landscape of this new area of technology. He presented a definition of non-renewable resources, renewable resources and a definition for renewable materials. The introduction concluded with a discussion on the connection between renewable materials and sustainability (see Renewable vs. Non-renewable Materials document attached and on the BIFMA website [“Renewable.doc”] at <http://bifma.org/public/SusFurnStd.html>).

Bill Stough reminded members of the decision at the last meeting that the Water and Natural Resources Work Group would focus on material inputs or natural resource depletion issues. In this sense, the work group brought this issue to the full group for feedback on how to approach bio-based or renewable materials as a raw material input.

A comment was made that bio-based materials should not be given automatic advantage just because they are renewable; as many LCA and DfE assessments can show that they may be worse for the environment. Other comments suggested that bio-based/renewable materials were an evolving technology and the infrastructure was not there yet to give an economy of scale and therefore LCAs and DfE assessments using conventional infrastructure inputs may be misleading. It was suggested that instead of trying to solve the issues around the benefits and drawbacks of renewable vs. nonrenewable materials, the full group focus on giving the Water and Natural Resources Work Group some direction on how to handle bio-based materials.

*Can the work group consider bio-based materials with equal value to recycled content materials as it evaluates raw material inputs and allocates credits and points in the standard?*

A straw vote was called on the question which resulted in a vote by show of hands of all present and a voice vote by those on the phone. The results of the vote were all in favor with one abstention (Mary Fraser).

### **Announcements**

Tom Reardon discussed the agreement BIFMA had worked out with NSF to co-sponsor development of the BIFMA SAS. He noted the next meeting would be at NSF International. A meeting notice will be going out next week for a July 26 meeting in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Brad Miller noted that the updated schedule was included on the last page of the May minutes. He pointed out the changes made to the schedule for June, July, August and September.

Larry Dykhuis gave an overview of the Product Stewardship conference he attended in Chicago in June representing the BIFMA SAS on a panel with other organizations.

The project manager thanked everyone for participating in the June Stakeholder meeting. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm. Minutes submitted by Bill Stough, Sustainable Research Group.

## Should Third-Party Certifications be Referenced in the BIFMA SAS?

Does certification by a third-party add value to an organization? What about just saying you are compliant? Does that add the same value, or any value?

### Law Encyclopedia Definitions

**Third Party** - n. a person who is not a party to a contract or a transaction, but has an involvement (such as one who is a buyer from one of the parties, was present when the agreement was signed or made an offer that was rejected). The third party normally has no legal rights in the matter, unless the contract was made for the third party's benefit.

**Certification** - 1. Written attestation. 2. Authorized declaration verifying that an instrument is a true and correct copy of the original.

**Third-Party Certification** —The certification of a specific product or process that is performed by an organization independent from those who produce the product or process. Certification is often used to substantiate the environmental attributes of specific products (such as the percentage of recycled content) or processes (such as a sustainable harvesting operation for forests). Reference: *Whole Building Design Guide* ([www.wbdg.org/design/greenproducts.php](http://www.wbdg.org/design/greenproducts.php))

### Potential Pros:

1. Provides and Independent and objective validation of claims
2. Helps harmonize multi-sector approach (e.g. level playing field)
3. Helps meet customer demand for environmentally preferable purchasing
4. Promotes customer confidence
5. Helps standardize competence of certification auditors

### Potential Cons:

1. Third Party certifications are unnecessary
2. They increase the cost of doing business
3. Promotes non-value added competition among OEMs
4. Standards should not dictate market demand
5. Certifications may involve too much subjectivity or value judgments
6. Could be considered a form of privatized regulation

**ISSUE:**

Should third-party certification be required in the BIFMA Sustainability Assessment Standard?

**MOTION:**

The BIFMA SAS, as with all ANSI/BIFMA standards, shall neither encourage nor discourage the use of third-party certification for conformity assessment. The BIFMA SAS shall be written to accommodate first party (manufacturer or supplier), second party (purchaser), and third party (independent of first and second party) claims of compliance. Third-party certification shall be accommodated but not required for any credit within the BIFMA SAS.

**RATIONALE:**

The BIFMA SAS is ultimately intended to be an American National Standard and is being developed in accordance with the principles of ANSI. ANSI is a founding member of the International Organization for Standardization<sup>1</sup> (ISO) and supports the development of standards in accordance with ISO principles.

The National Conformity Assessment Principles of the United States<sup>2</sup> (NCAP) references ISO Guide 2: 1996<sup>3</sup> to define conformity assessment as “any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are fulfilled.” The NCAP notes that conformity assessment includes sampling and testing, inspection, supplier’s declaration of conformity, certification and management system assessment and registration, and accreditation of the competence of those activities by a third party. The NCAP includes products, services, processes, systems, personnel qualifications and organizations within the framework of this discussion.

Section 4.2 of ISO/IEC Guide 7: 1994<sup>4</sup> states: “Standards suitable for use for conformity assessment should be so written that they can be applied by any of the following: a manufacturer or supplier (first party); a user or purchaser (second party); an independent body (third party).”

By providing assessment criteria independent of third-party certification for each credit, the BIFMA SAS can accommodate first party determinations of conformance, while enabling third-party certification of manufacturer’s claims of conformance to either individual or multiple credits within the BIFMA SAS.

Third-party certification of conformance is a vital market tool and users of the BIFMA SAS should have the option of third-party certification, while encouraging harmonization of standard requirements without encouraging a proliferation of conflicting certification programs.

---

<sup>1</sup> ANSI, [Standards Activities Overview](#)

<sup>2</sup> ANSI 2002, [The U.S. National Conformity Assessment Principles](#)

<sup>3</sup> ISO/IEC Guide 2: 1996, Standardization and Related Activities, General Vocabulary

<sup>4</sup> ISO/IEC Guide 7: 1994, Guidelines for Drafting of Standards Suitable for Use for Conformity Assessment

## **Renewable vs. Non-renewable Materials**

**Non-renewable resources**, like fossil fuels and metals, exist in finite amounts and thus cannot be replenished.

**Renewable resources**, like solar energy and trees, are materials that can be replaced through natural processes.

Source: Redefining Progress

**Renewable materials**, such as vegetable fibers and bio-plastics, are derived from sources replenished by ecosystems in a relatively short time - usually within a generation.

### **Renewable Materials and Sustainability**

Since non-renewable resources are limited, we must turn to alternative sources rather than deplete the entire supply for future generations. However, renewable resources can be depleted if drawn down more rapidly than nature can build them back up. If we harvest more timber than can re-grow, the forest dies. If we catch more fish than are spawned, the stocks die out. If we dump more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than nature can reabsorb, the atmosphere is no longer hospitable to life. In order to lessen our global ecological footprint, we must take steps to ensure that we are using our renewable resources in a sustainable fashion, or within their regenerative capacity (bio-capacity).