

TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESEARCH ON IMPACTS OF RSPO CERTIFICATION ON WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS (INCLUDING LIVING WAGES) OF OIL PALM PLANTATION WORKERS IN MALAYSIA

1. Introduction

Oil palm is a valuable agricultural crop that contribute substantially to the socio-economic development not only of oil palm producers or farmers, but also to workers at the plantations. Despite the benefits, oil palm plantations around the world continue to be associated with poor working conditions. Throughout the years, there has been multiple reports on labour abuses and violations occurring on oil palm plantations. These allegations include but not limited to forced labour, including risks of trafficking, child labour, gender discrimination as well as exploitative and dangerous working practices that put the lives and health of workers at risk.

Aside from the reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other external monitoring mechanisms, there are also complaints received by RSPO via the RSPO's complaint mechanism of labour violations by RSPO members in their operations. This brings into question the impact of RSPO certification on the working and living conditions including (but not limited to) living wages of oil palm plantation workers. As such, RSPO recognises the need to conduct a study to gain further insight into these issues.

2. Objective of Research

To determine the impacts of RSPO certification on the working and living conditions (incl. living wage) of workers employed in oil palm plantations in Malaysia, the following are some of the questions that will need to be explored:

- How does RSPO intervene and what is the added value that RSPO bring to the workers in terms of their livelihood, wellbeing and protection of their rights?
- Do different categories of workers (e.g. local vs migrant, documented vs undocumented, permanent vs casual, type of work engaged in, gender etc.) experience differing changes in outcomes, as listed in previous question, over time and what is the degree of difference?
- What are the reasons that different types of workers or categories of workers experience different changes in outcomes, if any are identified?
- What are the contextual factors that significantly influence the effect of RSPO on worker (e.g. Implementation experience of company, management and structure of organisation, national requirements, other certification standards etc.)?

3. Scope of Research

The research should include an analysis of RSPO certified, non-RSPO certified (RSPO members) and non-RSPO certified (non-RSPO members) plantations in Malaysia. The determination of sample plantations for research should take into consideration procedures to match the plantation characteristics to ensure valid comparisons.

For assessment of living wages, the research should employ a methodology that is closely aligned with the methodology adopted by the Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC) for calculating a decent living wage.

4. Tender specifications and requirements

RSPO requires the services of a highly specialised, consistent and independent individual to conduct the research as per the objective above. The applicant is required to meet the following eligibility and requirements as detailed below.

Eligibility

- Applicants must hold either a Doctorate or Master's degree or equivalent in relevant academic discipline or demonstrate more than 3 years experiences in relevant fields.
- Applicants must be able to demonstrate evidence of the following technical and professional knowledge and skills:
 - Familiarity with conducting impact evaluations
 - Experience in evaluation analysis and data collection methodologies relevant to this project (knowledge and understanding of human rights and living wages, familiarity with palm oil industry, etc.)
 - Proficiency in English with good writing and oral skill, and preferably able to communicate in Bahasa Malaysia.
- Applicants must be affiliated with a college, university, non-profit research facility or consultancy services organisation.
- Applicant is preferably residing in Malaysia or Indonesia. If the applicant is not residing in either country, he or she must involve or work in collaboration with a researcher from a local university or research institute as a local counterpart.
- Applicants must not have received any other grant support during the time of application and if the applicant is successful, he or she must not hold any other research grant.
- Applicants must be willing and have the means to travel for field work.
- Applicants must avoid and disclose to RSPO of any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest that they may have with RSPO or any entities in the research project. An apparent or actual conflict of interest may exist where an individual or entity has different, and potentially conflict, duties or relationships with respect to other individuals or entities within the research project and RSPO.

Deliverables and Timeframe

- The research is expected to run for a period of 6 to 8 months
- Successful applicants are expected to deliver a progress report every 3 months and a final report at the end of the research period.
- Successful applicants must also work with RSPO on communication plans to disseminate the research findings. A clear communication plan must be developed with detailed information of the plan along with respective timelines within the research period.
- Applicants will also be required to write and publish a journal article on the research

Additional Requirement

- All research commissioned by RSPO must also involve the establishment of a Research Steering Group, which will consist of both internal RSPO and external experts in the particular topic. The participation of the Research Steering Group will be open to the institutional facilitators or supervisors of the successful applicant.
- Successful applicants will receive a copy of the RSPO Research Ethics Standards and must ensure that they abide by the standards throughout the research period.

Documents Required:

- A research proposal detailing the approach or methodology to be used for the evaluation process, scope/focus of research and budget requested.
- CV of applicant involved in the project, detailing qualifications, training and relevant experience.
- Background details of respective institutional facilitator or supervisor of researcher.

5. General terms

All documents submitted in response to this ToR must be written in English.

Any enquiries in connection with this ToR shall be submitted to Cheryl Ong, RSPO Research & Advisory Manager at the following e-mail address cheryl.ong@rspo.org.

Research proposals are to be submitted to tender@rspo.org.

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