RSPO Annual Communication of Progress

RSPO Members are expected to communicate on an annual basis, their progress in contributing directly to the production and use of sustainable palm oil. By cooperating, networking and working together within the multi-stakeholder platform provided by RSPO, members can ensure that all players along the palm oil supply chain operate transparently and constructively as well as participate in projects and activities to promote sustainable palm oil production, procurement and consumption. To safeguard the integrity of the initiative as a whole, it is envisaged that only those members who openly communicate progress will be allowed to continue their participation in the RSPO.

Note: The RSPO Annual Communication of Progress should be completed by organizational members and it can be produced as a stand-alone statement or integrated in members’ existing communications with their own stakeholders, such as annual reports or sustainability reports. Members should state their reporting year in the inaugural report and subsequent reports would have to be submitted by the anniversary date of the first report.

Submissions of the RSPO Annual Communication of Progress are an important demonstration of members’ commitment to the RSPO and its objectives. Besides communication with stakeholders, these progress reports should serve as a useful tool for self-assessment and continuous improvement in the overall performance of the member’s organization.

1. Profile

Name of organization : FEDEPALMA
Membership type (Ordinary/Affiliate): Ordinary
Report prepared by : Jens Mesa – Dishington
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Reporting Period : October 2008 to September 2009 (12-month period)
Date of Report : October 15th, 2009
2. Details of Progress

Please provide a brief summary of progress achieved during this reporting period. The following items may be useful to include in your progress report. Please submit your report based on the following headings; you may leave blank, sections that are irrelevant to your organization:

A. Current efforts and progress in producing, procuring and/or utilizing sustainable palm oil

- The National Federation of Oil Palm Growers in Colombia—Fedepalma, with the participation of the Oil Palm Research Center Corporation—Cenipalma, and the support of the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Hydrology, Meteorology and Environment Studies Institute (IDEAM), the Geographical Institute “Agustin Codazzi” (IGAC), the Biology Research Institute “Alexander von Humboldt” (IAvH) and the WWF-Colombia have a very advanced work on the map of suitable zones for the palm oil cultivation according to the environmental, social and economical sustainability criteria, within the framework of the government policy for the development of the oil palm agro-industry in Colombia, entered in the document Conpes 3477 of 2007.

- With respect to the Principles and Criteria of the RSPO, Fedepalma keeps leading the National Interpretation Program, NI, with the support of MAVDT, IAvH, WWF and Cenipalma, principally. Among our main activities are: Development of Workshops with environmental and social NGOs, Workshops with Experts and another Special workshop with public and private entities in Bogotá, to analyze the final version of the NI document; in regards to the last, the group scored the degree of compliance, applicability, and participation in the exercise made in the previous workshops and in the public consultation conducted throughout the process.

As the outcome was very favorable, we expected to close the process at this stage, however, there were new comments made by Oxfam on some issues in regards to the social component, which became critical according to the particularities of the country, as well as on the participation of certain stakeholders in the workshops. In this regards, Fedepalma doesn’t share Oxfam’s comments because they go beyond the field of sustainable oil palm agro-industry in our country, so their solution is beyond the scope of the process.

- Development of the First Latin American Meeting of the RSPO in Cartagena, Colombia in October 2008, with the participation of 336 people: members of: the Executive Board of the RSPO, representatives of international entities, Latin-American oil palm growers, and members of public and private entities, universities and environmental and social NGOs from Colombia. In this meeting it was shown the commitment of the oil palm sector to fulfill with all the environmental, social and economic sustainability RSPO criteria.

- Ongoing participation with relevant entities of the National Government and other economic sectors for structuring the document: Guidelines for promoting sustainable biofuel production in Colombia.

- The XVI International Oil Palm Conference, around the theme: The Challenges of Sustainable Development of Oil Palm, in September 2009, which consolidates it as the major specialized academic event in oil palm in America. It was attended by 1,600 people from 32 countries, representing guilds of oil palm growers, companies related to oil palm activity, public and private entities, universities, research institutions and NGOs, among the principals.
B. Implementation and/or sponsorship of projects/initiatives that promote sustainable palm oil

Fedepalma has continued with the socialization of the Environmental Guide for the Oil Palm Agro-industry to new growers, in order to prevent impacts and negative effects on the renewable natural resources and on the environment in general, taking into account new rules on the subject and particularly the new law on environmental crimes, recently issued, and its sanctioning process. This work is carried out jointly with relevant environmental authorities, the MAVDT and Environmental Autonomous Regional Corporations (CARs).

At the end of may, United Nations approved and registered the Sectoral CDM Umbrella Project for the capture of methane, displacement of fossil fuels and the cogeneration of renewable energy in the oil palm sector of Colombia, with the participation of 32 mills. This project aims to reduce greenhouse gases with a potential of generation of 750,067 CER / year; and for its size, becomes the world's largest wastewater treatment project and the first one at the sectoral level led by a producer's guild.

Within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement signed with Ecopetrol (Colombian Petroleum State Owned Company), the ICP (Colombian Petroleum Institute), SI99 - one of the operators of Bogotá Mass transport System- and Cenipalma, tests were conducted on Transmillenium buses running on 5%, 10%, 20%, 30% and 50% palm biodiesel blending, with a duration of 18 months for a busses distance of 100,000 km. The results were very positive in the performance of the motors, and in the significant reduction of carbon dioxide, and emissions of nitrogen oxides and particles.

The Cooperation Agreement with IAvH, WWF Colombia and Cenipalma, the Interagency Committee chaired by the MAVDT, approved the GEF Project on environmental sustainability with emphasis on biodiversity, protected areas and environmental services in the oil palm agro-ecosystems. The implementing agency will be the Inter-American Development Bank-IDB, rather than the World Bank.

Concerning Corporate Social Responsibility Policy, Fedepalma continues to encourage and leading its affiliates in the purpose of strengthening the ongoing activities that companies have in the fields of health, housing, education, women, cultural development, recreation, social security, among others, to improve the workplace and the general well-being of the communities.

Fedepalma and Cenipalma have participated in different national and international conferences, dialogues, stands, and special events to publicize their programs and actions regarding the sustainability of oil palm agro-industry, biofuels, residual biomasses and renewable energy to public and private entities, educational institutions and social and environmental NGOs.

Support for Master and Doctoral thesis by students from overseas universities on environmental and social issues involving the oil palm agro-industry in Colombia has been provided.
C. Significant economic, social or environmental problems encountered in production, procurement and/or use of sustainable palm oil and efforts made to mitigate or resolve them

- Domestic land prices as compared to international standards continue to negatively impact the competitiveness of the oil palm agroindustry in Colombia.

- It is expected that the map of suitable zones for the palm oil cultivation according to the environmental, social and economical sustainability criteria, will become in a tool to support planning and land use management, and thereby to avoid mainly potential environmental and social impacts.

- The oil palm projects in the Uraba Chocoano region, northwest of the country, still concern Fedepalma and the oil palm sector due to damages suffered by the local community from illegal expropriation of its collective lands, by forced displacement and the effect on rainforest land devastation. In this regards, Fedepalma’s emphatic position is to support actions to definitively clarify the facts and to punish those responsible for the committed crimes. This issue is faced up in the judicial processes involved.

- As a result of the aforementioned, unwarranted criticism of the Colombian oil palm sector continues. Fedepalma, in order to counteract the negative effects, continues to work out intensively to demonstrate positive actions carried out and the results achieved in throughout its history. In this regards special studies undertaken by independent entities endorsed and recognized by its management and objectivity can support a respond to these criticisms.

- Faced with growing demand for raw materials for the production of food and biofuels, concerns have arisen, wrongly, in regards to the oil palm agro-industry as to the risks associated with food security. In this sense, Fedepalma continues more vigorously in the campaign to discredit these criticisms and, conversely, show all the benefits of palm oil versus other goods.

- Diseases such as bud rot (br) and the lack of resistant materials, as well as the significant increase of fertilizers price impact Good Agriculture Practices and can affect the implementation of the P&C.

- The High cost of Certification Process is a major concern to the companies and discourages its implementation.
D. Outlook of planned activities to promote sustainable palm oil production, promotion and/or use in the next reporting period

- Strengthening the environmental and social work in its various components, throughout cooperation and consultation process to ensure its sustainability and competitiveness.

- To finish the process of National Interpretation of the P&C for the RSPO approval and to give companies the necessary support, to the extent of our capabilities, in order to achieve its application and certification process.

- Support the preparation and publication of guides and manuals on the P&C to facilitate and guide the work of implementation and certification.

- Keep supporting to the work on the suitable zones map and the detailed soil surveys for new establishments of oil palm plantations, in accordance to the guidelines of the document Conpes 3477 Conpes document on “Policy for the Competitive Development of the Colombian oil palm sector”.

- With the approval and registration of the CDM Sectoral Umbrella Project by United Nations in May of 2009, Fedepalma will support the process of implementation and operation, to ensure the generation of Certified Emission Reduction (CER), to ensure proper marketing and achieve environmental benefits.

- To continue with the work of assessing the residual biomass and the renewable energy in the oil palm chain, in order to optimize their usage and to generate new business alternatives which involve with strategic partners.

- To achieve the final approval of the GEF Project for strengthening environmental sustainability through characterization studies of oil palm agro-ecosystems, assessment of their biodiversity management schemes and associated environmental services.

- To continue to strengthen the Corporate Social Responsibility Program and expand the coverage of the draft Environmental Management project at the level of all national producers, with emphasis on small ones.

E. Recent publications of environmental / social / sustainability reports or annual reports relating to the objectives and tasks of RSPO

• New articles on sustainability and competitiveness of the oil palm agribusiness in Colombia, in the magazine “Palmas” of Fedepalma.

• Several opinion sections and special notes in the Bulletin “El Palmicultor” to highlight the environmental management of oil palm sector in Colombia and its commitment to the P&C of the RSPO.
  • Book: Agronomic principles for the establishment of an oil palm plantation.
  • Book: Prospective research and technological development agenda for the production chain of oil palm in Colombia, with emphasis on Red Olein.
  • Book: Integrated Management for oil palm bud rot (br) disease.
  • Book: Oil palm in Colombia: conflicts; myths and realities.
  • Presentations made at various regional meetings, national and international, which highlight the P&C of the RSPO, are available at the Documentation and information Center of Fedepalma.

F. Recognition and awards for excellence in promoting sustainable palm oil

• Fedepalma has been postulated again to contest organized by the newspaper Portfolio: environmental protection 2009 award.
  • Cenipalma has been postulated to contest organized by the newspaper Portfolio: Innovation and technological development 2009 award.

G. Suggestions on how the RSPO can play an active role in enhancing your organization’s sustainability performance, particularly in relation to promoting sustainable palm oil

• Guaranteeing a larger RSPO presence and contacts with producers and its organizations of Latin American countries.
  • To propose in the RT7 General Assembly some changes in the Statutes in order to achieve a better regional representation in the Executive Board of the RSPO.

Your report should be concise and should not exceed 2 pages (A4) in length. Please note that your report will be posted on the RSPO website. Please feel free to include copies of any documents that would be useful to support your report. During submission, please complete Items 1 (Profile) and 2 (Details of
Progress). You can submit your Annual Communication of Progress (preferably in MS Word format) to the RSPO Secretariat via email (rspo@rspo.org).

RSPO Secretariat