RSPO Annual Communication of Progress

1. Profile

Name of organization: International Plant Nutrition Institute, Southeast Asia Program

Membership type : Affiliate

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2. Details of Progress

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

The Southeast Asia Program of the newly established International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI) has a long-standing record of high integrity in science-based agronomic research and training programs with a particular emphasis on oil palm nutrition since its beginning as a representative office of the International Potash Institute in Singapore in 1974. In recent years, it operated as a joint mission of the Potash & Phosphate Institute/Potash & Phosphate Institute of Canada (PPI/PPIC) and the International Potash Institute (IPI), until it became a program of the new IPNI on January 1, 2007. IPI continues to support the joint mission. IPNI and its partners develop and promote improved, benefit enhancing nutrient and crop management practices through collaborative research, publications, and training.

IPNI focuses on the development and promotion of generic, scientific principles in crop and nutrient management towards an ecological intensification of oil palm production. Principles can be easily adapted to site-specific needs for optimizing yield, ensuring efficient and effective use of inputs and resources, and achieving profitability while meeting acceptable environmental standards.

IPNI actively liaises with a group of individual oil palm agronomists and technical experts from various companies and organizations recognizing the need to integrate information, tools, and technologies into a coherent framework for knowledge-based crop and nutrient management.
RSPO criteria related to current IPNI program activities:

Criterion 3.1 There is an implemented management plan that aims to achieve long-term economic and financial viability.

Criterion 4.1 Operating procedures are appropriately documented and consistently implemented and monitored.

Criterion 4.2 Practices maintain soil fertility at, or where possible improve soil fertility to, a level that ensures optimal and sustained yield.

Criterion 4.3 Practices minimize and control erosion and degradation of soils.

Criterion 4.8 All staff, workers, smallholders and contractors are appropriately trained.

Criterion 5.1 Aspects of plantation and mill management that have environmental impacts are identified, and plans to mitigate the negative impacts and promote the positive ones are made, implemented and monitored, to demonstrate continuous improvements.

Criterion 8.1 Growers and millers regularly monitor and review their activities and develop and implement action plans that allow demonstrable continuous improvement in key operations.

B. Implementation of projects/initiatives that promote sustainable palm oil

There are substantial opportunities to increase yield and profitability on existing land through the implementation of Best Management Practice (BMP) in oil palm estates. However, plantations are challenged with the identification and implementation of suitable BMPs that would promise greatest financial return with existing human and capital resources while achieving sustainable production and environmental protection. IPNI has been instrumental in developing a BMP concept that has been successfully evaluated and introduced at larger scale in several estates in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. The evidence-based BMP approach is now ready for wider scale evaluation.

In 2006, IPNI launched a new initiative to promote ecological yield intensification based on its BMP concept through collaborative projects and regional workshops in Southeast Asia. The main purpose of the program is to promote the evaluation of BMP as a management tool in mature plantations, where a set of site-specific BMPs are implemented in a number of full-size management blocks representative for the estate to collect evidence on the agronomic, economic, and environmental performance of the chosen BMPs. Through this process, estates identify better ways to implement BMPs for yield intensification, and decisions on larger investments in BMP are based on practical, commercial-scale evidence.
IPNI promotes the BMP concept by providing assistance in training, agronomic and economic data analysis, and planning for wider scale implementation at a commercial scale. The five-year program initially focuses on key areas with opportunities for yield and efficiency increases in Indonesia. Since July 2006, IPNI has set up 30 commercial blocks with BMP in partnership with six collaborating plantations in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

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

D. Outlook/summary of planned activities to promote sustainable palm oil production, promotion and/or use in the next reporting period as well as action to address social or environmental problems encountered (under part C, if relevant).

Activities in 2007 include two regional workshops with field visits at two project sites in North Sumatra in late October. The BMP concept and project results will further be presented at a seminar for plantation executives organized by the Southeast Asia Program of IPNI and IPI on October 31 in Medan, Sumatra.

In 2008, IPNI will continue to evaluate and promote yield intensification based on BMP through collaborative projects and regional workshops. Two book publications are planned: A pocket guide on “Best Management Practice for Maximum Economic Yield in Oil Palm” and proceedings of an expert consultation “Towards a Strategic Approach for Nutrient Management in Oil Palm” held in Singapore in October 2006.

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


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

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

We encourage RSPO to establish a science council that would provide advice and guidance to the Verification Working Group in the establishment of meaningful and measurable indicators of sustainability related to oil palm agronomy and other disciplines where technical advice is needed. The science council would consist of recognized scientists and research organizations with expertise in the areas of concern. The science council is not meant to slow down the process of developing criteria and performance indicators for sustainable palm oil, it is meant to speed up the process by providing short, sound, science-based background material on controversial topics to the VWG. The science council could further periodically review criteria and performance indicators for SPO. Science council reports and reviews would be published on the RSPO website.

We further propose to establish a discussion forum on the RSPO website that would allow RSPO members or selected groups such as the science council to discuss topics of interest without having to meet. There could also be a section for the public to participate by commenting on developments.