

## E-mail newsletter of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

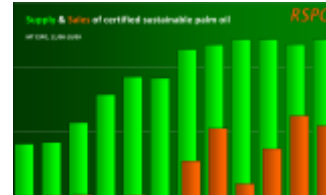
13 November, 2009

### Seventh Roundtable conference sees record turnout

Last week, participants from more than 20 countries (including China) attended an open Roundtable conference on sustainable palm oil in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The conference, organized by the RSPO, was followed by a meeting of the General Assembly of the RSPO itself.

With 811 participants, turnout at the open Roundtable conference shattered last year's record of 550, demonstrating growing interest in the growth and use of sustainable palm oil.

At the conference, RSPO President Jan Kees Vis presented the RSPO's [latest market figures](#). They show that the RSPO has created a real and viable market for sustainably produced palm oil, with more than 1.1 million tonnes of certified palm oil produced over the last 12 months and recent market uptake close to 50 percent.



The meetings brought new consensus among RSPO members and others about the need to continue the work and to build on it in the future.

### Work to continue on criteria related to carbon emissions

In the run-up to RSPO's General Assembly meeting, the RSPO's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) working group issued recommendations on ways to integrate potential effects on carbon emissions into the RSPO's current criteria for sustainable palm oil production. The working group did not yet reach consensus on all the issues.

The RSPO's executive board, in which all stakeholder categories are represented, said in a statement that "RSPO members are firmly committed to tackle their greenhouse gas emissions and to optimize their contribution to tackling climate change through flexible but time-defined voluntary actions." Such actions would follow recommendations of the GHG working group not related to land use change, such as reducing fossil fuel use, reducing methane emissions from effluent lagoons, reducing fertilizer inputs, and management of peat land ground water levels. A number of RSPO members have announced that they will begin to do so.

The RSPO's executive board asked a follow-up GHG working group to work on building consensus about the most complex issues, for example by initiating dialogue at government level about potential effects of palm oil production on greenhouse gas emissions.

### More efforts to engage owners of small plantations

At the Kuala Lumpur conference, attention also focused on the need to help owners of small plantations ('smallholders') follow criteria set by the RSPO and getting their oil certified.

The RSPO is developing criteria for associated smallholders and will begin work on those for independent smallholders. At the conference, results on the first pilot studies among smallholders in Malaysia and Indonesia were presented.

YB Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, the Malaysian Minister of Plantation Industries & Commodities, reminded the conference of the need to take smallholders on board. The Malaysian government pledged MYR 50 million (\$15 million) to help smallholders move towards sustainable practices. The RSPO itself will investigate how proceeds from trade in sustainable palm oil can be used to facilitate certification of smallholders.

### RSPO helps preserve Sumatran orangutan habitat

Following an initiative from the [Sumatran Orangutan Society](#), the RSPO's General Assembly voted to declare the broader [Bukit Tigapuluh Ecosystem](#) on the Indonesian island of Sumatra a 'high conservation value area'. Under RSPO rules, no high conservation value areas can be cleared for palm oil production.

According to the Sumatran Orangutan Society, the Bukit Tigapuluh Ecosystem, which extends beyond Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, contains hundreds of animal species (including the Sumatran elephant and the Sumatran tiger). In recent years, over a hundred Sumatran orangutans have been reintroduced into the forests; in all, the region could sustain an estimated five hundred orangutans. The Bukit Tigapuluh forests are also home to three indigenous tribes: the Talang Mamak, the Melayu Tua and the Kubu/Orang Rimba. They all rely on the forest for their livelihoods and their traditions.

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