

RESPONSE STATEMENT FROM RSPO

On Report by Rainforest Action Network entitled 'Conflict Palm Oil: How US Snack Food Brands are contributing to Orangutan Extinction, Climate Change and Human Rights Violations.'

September 12, 2013

The RSPO remains supportive of any initiative, whether these work in parallel or independent from its international certification scheme – so long as it advocates sustainability transformation in the palm oil sector.

Environmental destruction is caused by many influences and the report by Rainforest Action Network is a compelling showcase of the most destructive and devastating consequences of conventional or unsustainably produced palm oil. The RSPO was established as a solution to address exactly these detriments.

The report states many salient points for the sector to be more sustainable - most of which are embedded in the RSPO Principles and Criteria as well as Code of Conduct. This includes wide range of environmental and social issues, which mandate (amongst others) the use of free, prior and informed consent to develop new plantings on local peoples' land, where it can be demonstrated that there are legal, customary or user rights. Required by the RSPO also is a publicly reported commitment from its members to fully support certified sustainable palm oil through a time-bound plan.

The report identifies leading mainstream consumer companies in the US and their role in advocating sustainable palm oil. A number of these companies are RSPO members. Focusing on leading consumer goods manufacturers is an effective approach to steer market transformation as they play an exceptionally critical role in motivating the production of sustainable palm oil from 'ground to shelf'.

Internal procurement policies by companies will enable sector transformation only if it is in concomitant to an inclusive, international multi-stakeholder certification standard audited by third parties through a rigorous process. The inclusive constitution and philosophy of the RSPO in harmonizing the producers with players along the supply chain allows for revolutionary changes in the sustainability of the palm oil sector as not only a possible outcome - but an inevitable one.

The report indicates that GreenPalm is a barrier to market transformation and transparency. The RSPO acknowledges GreenPalm as a necessary transitional option in mobilizing the market to fully migrate from non-certified palm oil eventually to fully traceable certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO). However - the RSPO also firmly urges companies to accelerate the shift from certificates trading to physical/traceable certified sustainable palm oil. The Annual Communications Progress Report (ACOP) this year (2012-2013) will soon be published and it has included a guidance requesting companies to indicate their existing supply chain model and for those who haven't made the shift to physical options to state why and when they will do so.

Greater transparency and public debate around these issues are indeed critical. NGOs play a very important part in crystallizing clear routes that the sector can take through strategic feedback and recommendations. One such organization is the recently established coalition of Malaysian NGOs who understand the vulnerabilities of the RSPO as a system but also clearly see the opportunities that can be fully leveraged from such a colossal and influential worldwide structure. (<http://borneoinsider.com/2013/09/06/stop-the-wrangling-make-the-vision-work/>).

We must endeavor for the numerous initiatives in the market that advocate sustainable palm oil to come together, dialogue and collaborate. The RSPO welcomes scrutiny as an evolving worldwide multi-stakeholder standard that commits itself to continuous improvement (a criteria embedded in its Principles & Criteria.

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