PROCESS FOR THE NATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THE
PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA OF THE

ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL FOR COLOMBIA

Bogota, November 2010
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**Executive Summary**

This document presents the most relevant aspects of the process for the national interpretation (NI) of the principles and criteria (P&C) of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) for Colombia. Its aim is to submit the NI to the Executive Board of the RSPO in August 2010 for consideration and approval, in order to have a certification system specialized in palm oil.

Indeed, after approval of the NI, companies and their oil palm centers interested in having their palm oil certified as sustainable may do so by fulfilling all the requirements of the RSPO through an audit system.

Since the certification process has additional costs because of the good practices that need to be adopted, it should be given some kind of incentive in the form of better market access and a sustainable price of palm oil for it to be successful in terms of broad participation of oil palm growers. The differential will occur to the extent that buyers are willing to pay for the use of sustainable raw materials, whose traceability can be documented and demonstrated along the supply chain. Currently, the still-developing market offers a "premium" of around 3%.

The first part of this document describes the key elements of the oil palm agro-industry in Colombia: the indicators of size and weight in the international arena, the location of the four geographical areas in Colombia (North, Central, East and West), the availability of land for expansion and growth without affecting ecosystems of special interest because of the presence of natural forests and wetlands; employment generation and improvements in the surrounding communities in terms of housing, education, health and welfare.

The second part of this document describes the NI process, which includes:

- Establishment of the Coordination and Management Group composed of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Alexander von Humboldt Institute and Fedepalma
- Launch meeting held in 2008 in the Colombian Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development.
- Public consultation convened by written notice and invitations posted on the websites of Fedepalma and the RSPO.
- Nationwide dissemination through the newspaper “El Tiempo”, the largest-circulation newspaper in the country, and the monthly newsletter “El Palmicultor”
This work included expert and regional workshops. Expert workshops enabled the development of the guidance document for the construction and regional consultation process.

The regional workshops were conducted in the four oil palm growing regions of Colombia, with the participation of:

- Regional autonomous corporations, such as environmental authorities attached to the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, to ensure compliance with environmental policies.
- Territorial entities and Municipal Town Halls, through the municipal units for agricultural technical assistance (Umatas) and planning offices
- Regional Universities
- Regional, national and international NGOs
- Trade organizations such as the Oil Workers’ Union (USO) of the Colombian oil company (Ecopetrol)
- Representatives of social organizations like Worker Cooperatives (CTA) and the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) that encompasses the farming community.
- Large, medium and small oil palm producers
- Managers, employees and workers of oil palm companies

All this allowed us to receive and incorporate the views of the communities.

The NI process included special workshops with national entities related to public policies on environment, land planning, labor and social issues, human rights, education, as well as social and environmental NGOs that usually protect the interests of the communities living in oil palm growing areas of the country.

It should be noted that all documents of the NI process have been available to the public at large on Fedepalma’s website for consultation and opinion, since September 2008 to date. Also, these documents were sent to the RSPO Secretariat, where they have been available to the international public on its website at: www.rspo.org.

Regarding the objections to this process, Oxfam-Novib, a Dutch NGO Member of the Executive Board of the RSPO, and Indepaz, thought that the national interpretation of the principles and criteria (P&C) for Colombia should have open consultations to address issues relevant to the Colombian context, such as land tenure conflicts, the promotion of oil palm projects in collective territories, unemployment and poor social conditions and unplanned
expansion of oil palm plantations. Fedepalma sustained that such consultations and participation were sufficiently exhaustive as documented in Annex 1 of participants by event.

As for the suggestions relating to money laundering, private security, labor issues according to ILO parameters, and land titling, they were addressed and incorporated into the indicators and guides of the NI document for Colombia.

The revised version of the NI was endorsed by the WWF.

It should be noted the wide participation of individuals and entities in the workshops, in which environmental, social and economic issues were addressed. The social panel was characterized by extensive discussions to define indicators and guidelines.

This NI document was the basis for the development of leading sustainable processes such as the Small Oil Palm Growers Association of Campo Dos (Asogpados) in Catatumbo (border with Venezuela). The Dutch Cooperation Agency approved a "public-private partnership" project worth two million Euros for this Association, aimed at closing the gaps in technical aspects, and making the oil palm cultivation economically, environmentally and socially sustainable, so that it can be certified under RSPO standards.

Finally, the UN Global Environmental Facility (GEF) approved a project worth $18.3 million for the Colombian oil palm sector, which seeks to strengthen the biodiversity in oil palm agro-ecosystems, and one of its three strategies includes the support and socialization of the RSPO P&C in pilot areas of the country's four oil palm growing regions.
Introduction

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a global initiative that was formally established under Article 60 of the Swiss Civil Code in April 2004. It was established to untangle an unfruitful debate that arose over the growing concern of international NGOs accusing oil palm growers of incorrect use and unsustainable practices associated with the cultivation of oil palm, primarily in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Of note among such practices are the destruction of forests of high ecological value, loss of biodiversity, forest fires and air pollution, as well as social conflicts with ethnic and peasant communities. Colombia and other Latin American countries have also been subject of accusations on issues related to land titling, labor and deterioration of areas of high environmental value.

Colombian oil palm growers are concerned about the need to develop an oil palm production chain that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, through the implementation of best practices and continuous improvement, while creating permanent jobs in poor areas of Colombia and contributing to the welfare of those regions.

Colombian oil palm growers recognize that the RSPO is composed of players from across the palm oil supply chain: growers, millers, processors, marketers, consumer product manufacturers, distributors, banks, investors, and environmental and social NGOs.

In order to frame a more sustainable management system by all these players, the RSPO has developed a set of principles and criteria (P&C) on environmental, social, economic, and transparency issues, as well as continuous improvement processes.

RSPO principles are:

1. Commitment to transparency.
2. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations
3. Commitment to long-term economic and financial viability
4. Use of appropriate best practice by growers and millers
5. Environmental responsibility and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity
6. Responsible considerations of employees and of individuals and communities affected by growers and millers
7. Responsible development of new plantations
8. Commitment to continuous improvement in key areas of activities
The set of eight principles and 39 criteria was preliminarily approved by the RSPO in November 2005, at which time began a period of adjustment and field verification that would last two years. In the 2007 in the General Assembly of the RSPO, held in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), some adjustments were made and the P&C were approved, which are the generic standards used to certify companies complying with all provisions set forth therein.

The RSPO requires that palm oil producing countries carry out a national interpretation (NI) of the P&C in order to complement the indicators and general guidelines with specific aspects concerning legislation, context, best practices and the particularities of each country. This process has been carried out in Malaysia, Indonesia and New Guinea.

This document summarizes the most relevant aspects of the process for the National Interpretation of the RSPO P&C for Colombia, which was supported by the WWF, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute and Fedepalma, and with broad participation of communities and local, regional and national authorities represented by 475 people, in addition to the 336 delegates who attended the first Latin American Meeting of the RSPO.

1. Context of the Colombian oil palm sector and its environmental and social sustainability background

1.1 Country Overview

Colombia is located in the tropical zone in the northwest corner of South America. Colombia’s mainland has an area of 114 million hectares, 42 million hectares of which are in pastures, 4.5 in agriculture production, and only 0.36 million hectares are planted to oil palm.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Colombian oil palm sector has less than 1% share of the area used by the agricultural sector, and 0.3% of the total mainland area. However, its growth potential can be significant, because it can take areas that are used mainly as rangeland.

The Colombian population reached 44.6 million in 2009. With an annual growth rate of 1.2% it is now largely an urban country, and the urbanization process is ongoing.

Colombia is a developing country with a GDP per capita of $5,369. It is characterized by high levels of unemployment and poverty (45.5%). The oil palm accounts for 2.6% of agricultural GDP, which in turn accounts for 8.5% of domestic product; consequently, the oil palm sector contributes 0.22% of GDP.
Although the agricultural sector’s share in the economy is low, the country has abundant natural and human resources that, in the face of strong domestic and global demand, has high growth potential and development opportunities in terms of creation of jobs and income to alleviate poverty and promote welfare in the rural sector.

1.2 Oil palm sector overview

The oil palm agro-industry began to develop commercially in 1960. The cultivated area reached 360,537 hectares in 2009, in 103 municipalities in 16 departments. The installed capacity of oil palm mills in the country is 1,190 tons per hour, and production of crude palm oil was 802,301 tons, 68,577 tons of palm kernel oil and 97,784 tons of kernel cake. The agro-industry creates about 114,050 direct and indirect jobs, and one-third of the total area is owned by smallholders with 10 hectares in average.

Colombia is the world’s fifth largest palm oil producer and accounts for only 2% of the total production, far behind form the leaders and losing share in the last few years. In Latin America, Colombia is the largest palm oil producer. However, in the global context, the American continent is an important producer of soybean and its derivatives, particularly in Brazil and Argentina.

There are four oil palm growing areas: the East Zone (includes the Departments of Meta, Casanare, Cundinamarca and Caquetá); the North Zone (Magdalena, Northern Cesar, Northern Bolivar, Atlántico, Guajira, Córdoba and Sucre); the Central Zone (Santander, Southern Cesar, Southern Bolivar, Norte de Santander and Antioquia); the West Zone (Nariño and Cauca). Figure 1 shows the map with the geographic location of the Colombian oil palm growing areas.
The National Federation of Oil Palm Growers (Fedepalma), as a trade association since its founding in 1962, has led numerous initiatives to increase the competitiveness of the sector. To this end, Fedepalma conducts risk analysis, market analysis, foresight exercises, explores alternative uses and informs businesses about the reality of the oil palm industry so that they can make informed investment decisions based on comprehensive, accurate, timely and sufficient information. In 1990 Fedepalma created Cenipalma, a research and technology transfer center.

1.3 Progress and achievements in environmental management

Environmental management is a priority on the oil palm agro-industry agenda in Colombia. Since the nineties, Fedepalma has implemented measures aimed at promoting positive effects on the environment, strict compliance with the country's environmental policy and at
supporting the welfare of the communities involved. The following is a summary of the sector’s environmental achievements:

**a. Cleaner production agreement**

This agreement was signed in 1997 with the Ministry of Environment (now Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, MAVDT), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), Regional Autonomous Corporations (CARs), environmental authorities with jurisdiction in oil palm growing areas, oil palm companies with oil mills and Fedepalma.

Under this agreement, the Colombian oil palm sector undertakes to adopt cleaner production and operation methods that are environmentally friendly and safe, designed to decrease the level of pollution and reduce significant risks to the environment and the population, and protect and optimize the rational use of natural resources in a context of sector competitiveness.

**b. Environmental guide for the oil palm sector**

In order to meet commitments under the Cleaner Production Convention, Fedepalma worked on the formulation and implementation of an *environmental guide*, which has since 2000 served as environmental planning and management reference for technical, administrative and operational staff involved in oil palm cultivation and milling activities.


Workshops are held permanently with the participation of MAVDT and CARs for the socialization of the *Environmental Guide* to promote its implementation among large, medium and small producers.
c. Assessment of the environmental performance of the oil palm sector

In 2001, Fedepalma hired the Organization for Sustainable Business Development (ODES) to conduct a comprehensive study on environmental management and performance of the oil palm sector in Colombia.

This study includes analysis of the situation of the agro-industry, its current priorities and possible environmental management developments in relation to forests, water, soils, biodiversity and air, based on national and international trends.

The balance of the management is favorable and poses scenarios in which we must work to strengthen their performance in terms of environmental sustainability and competitiveness.

d. CDM umbrella project under the Kyoto protocol

This is an initiative of Fedepalma developed under the Kyoto Protocol (KP) and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which aims to capture and mitigate methane as a greenhouse gas produced in oil mill wastewater treatment systems, the displacement of fossil fuels, and generation of renewable energy for production processes.

The CDM umbrella project was approved by the United Nations in May 2009, with the potential to generate 757,067 CERs, in the first instance for the mitigation of methane and with a 21-year operating horizon. Because of its structuring characteristics, it became the first sector-wide PK project and the largest in the world in terms of wastewater treatment systems.
This project involves 32 companies representing 80% of the domestic palm oil production, which will be able to certify their products as "free of methane emissions," to improve the marketing of their products in export markets.

e. Cooperation agreement Fedepalma, Cenipalma, von Humboldt and WWF

This cooperation agreement was signed in December 2006 between Fedepalma, Cenipalma, Alexander von Humboldt Institute and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Colombia, in order to promote more sustainable practices and policies in the Colombian oil palm sector. Under this agreement the parties undertake to work together in strengthening environmental planning mechanisms of the oil palm sector, by reducing the negative impacts of its expansion on biodiversity, and promoting more sustainable palm oil production, following five strategic lines of work:

1. Awareness and dialogue among stakeholders to strengthen decision-making processes associated with the oil palm sector on sustainability criteria.
2. Land use planning to develop and implement environmental planning tools in oil palm growing regions.
3. Adoption of sustainable production systems in order to broaden and strengthen practices to improve sustainability in palm oil production systems.
4. Sustainable use of renewable resources in the sense of promoting research for knowledge, conservation and sustainable use of indigenous renewable resources as a development and support strategy for the oil palm industry.
5. Assessment of environmental services associated with oil palm agro-ecosystems and promotion of implementation and improvement systems.

Pursuant to that agreement, the four organizations have worked jointly on the socialization of the RSPO P&C and the NI process, as well as on the formulation of a greenhouse gas (GHG) project, for strengthening biodiversity, assessment of protected areas, biological corridors and environmental services associated with oil palm agro-ecosystems in Colombia. This project has been structured in coordination with the Ministry of Environment since 2007, and was approved by the United Nations in February 2009. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) will act as the agency that will implement the project.
f. Land characterization for oil palm cultivation

The Conpes Document 3477 of 2007 on competitive and sustainable development of oil palm in Colombia, established the need for a suitability map for the establishment of oil palm plantations in the country. This map has been in the works since mid-2008 by the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC), Alexander von Humboldt Institute, the WWF, Fedepalma and Cenipalma.

The map is expected to be completed by the second half of 2010 and will incorporate determinant factors on agroclimatic, ecological, social and economic development issues. This map will be a very important reference for the development of new oil palm projects, because protected areas of the National Natural Park System, forests, wetlands and other areas of high conservation value will be excluded from future oil palm developments in Colombia.

1.4 Progress and achievements in social management

Among the social actions undertaken by the oil palm trade organization, the following stand out: workshops and seminars conducted by Fedepalma’s Department of Training and Business Development (specialized course for oil palm companies on associative work cooperatives and a business management program for strategic alliances of the oil palm sector). It also provides the Occupational Health Manual for the oil palm agro-industry, and IICA’s study on “Characterization of strategic alliances in oil palm in Colombia.”

In addition, Fedepalma has a “2005 Sustainability Report” on social indicators of the Colombian oil palm sector. For this report, an inventory was conducted on the most relevant social development activities in the external and internal areas of the country’s 28 largest industrial oil palm companies (60% of the cultivated area of affiliated companies), trade associations and foundations. The report represents an outreach effort and an effective way to share the different approaches of each company.

This first report is a general sample of activities undertaken by oil palm companies in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The report aimed to create awareness in the industry of the importance of the work done by member companies and, more importantly, the invaluable opportunity presented to the industry in the sense of making a contribution in the social area, which represents a real competitive advantage over other sectors of the Colombian economy and particularly over international competitors.
Regarding the methodology used in the report, the sustainable approach involves the impacts of the company on the social systems in which it operates, and actions to mitigate them. To this extent, and based on the information gathered, the companies disclosed the actions taken to improve social performance, the results of such actions and future strategies to improve the existing conditions. Moreover, emphasis was placed on the importance of interacting extensively with stakeholders, an activity that was conducted through interviews.

This report helped to identify best practices in the social field and identify opportunities for social responsibility, leading to the creation of a "Best Practice Manual, which serves as a guide for the trade organization and its institutions in identifying relevant programs in social issues. It is also an information tool that furnishes current and objective data to the industry in a clear and transparent manner. It provides information, to be made known in foreign markets, on the activities and contributions made by the oil palm agro-industry in different regions. Its content allows stakeholders and the public at large to know firsthand the benefits that oil palm has brought and continues to bring to the country.

The definition of sustainability comprises three elements: People, Profit, and Planet, known as the three P’s. The report highlighted firstly that the oil palm cultivation and milling creates 35,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs, benefiting over 350,000 people in various related economic activities such as transport, sale of inputs, and provision of materials and maintenance microenterprises, among others.

These activities constitute a representative line in the Colombian agro-industry and play an important role in the development of the social fabric in each of the four existing oil palm growing areas. On the other hand, the oil palm industry represents 2.4% of the total value of agriculture and livestock production, and 4% of domestic agricultural production. Oil palm accounts for 7.5% of the value of the domestic production of permanent crops, which amounted to $317 million in 2005, that is, 0.2% of GDP.

In this regard, the report becomes a positive way of spreading information for all stakeholders across the palm oil supply chain. It is also a first step in defining the main corporate social responsibility actions the will be supported in the near future by Fedepalma and its members as part of a unified guild policy.

In terms of content, this first sustainability report showed that oil palm companies are concerned for developing social responsibility programs, although it is not possible to infer from its content a clear trend that can be a guide to enable the sector to identify areas on which to focus their CSR efforts.
Although there is no consistency between programs from different companies, most efforts and programs are focused on education, a situation that could be exploited in the near future, to define guidelines that allow the trade organization to direct their efforts towards a sector that promotes sustainable development in oil palm growing areas.

It should be noted that there are some CSR programs that, despite being fragmented and very small scale, are novel and interesting: the self-build housing project of Palmeras Yarima, the training of young leaders of Palmas del Cesar, Football for Peace of Indupalma, women participation in oil palm cultivation work and in community development processes in some plantations, as well as emerging programs involving demobilized and displaced persons.

In addition, Fedepalma published a document called *Faces of the Palm* that outlines the importance of this crop for the country and its people, showing that oil palm is not only an agro-industrial activity and source of wealth for Colombia, but also history, culture, promise, prosperity and, above all, commitment to people, to land and to development.

**a. Study on social conflict and oil palm growing areas**

Fedepalma has the study on African palm: “Myths and realities of the conflict,” a research study conducted by the Security and Democracy Foundation composed of an interdisciplinary team of university researchers. This first study on the armed conflict in Colombia intends to provide the public at large with information about the contribution of the oil palm industry to the country’s economic and social development, its relationship with the situation of regions and its potential to contribute to the pacification of the country.

In consideration of the allegations that oil palm is associated with paramilitary groups and forced displacement, the investigation established that:

The fact is that 85% of forced displacement in Colombia has occurred in rural areas where not a single oil palm tree can be found, and that only 3.3% of the displaced population belongs to the sixteen municipalities which concentrate 70% of oil palm crops. Also, among the ten municipalities with the highest rate of forced displacement, only three have oil palm crops, but at small scale. All this shows that there is no cause-effect relationship between oil palm cultivation and forced displacement of population (*African palm: myths and realities of the conflict*, Security and Democracy Foundation, 2009).
To this must be added the country's situation of violence and drug trafficking and an industry that sought to confront this reality with the improvement of the indicators during the present Administration, thanks, among other things, to the democratic security. The oil palm sector is made up of good people fighting for a better country and trying to survive in this reality. Therefore, the rise in the cultivation of oil palm is not only due to circumstantial market conditions but also to the seriousness and business-like attitude of the sector. So this is not an improvised development but an orderly and responsible growth, assuming the risks as in any productive activity.

On the other hand, the oil palm sector has been subject to serious criticism because of the worker cooperatives involved with oil palm companies. In this regard, there is no denying that the cooperative model applied to oil palm industry dignifies individuals and develop their entrepreneurial skills, transforming their work capacity into capital. In this respect, cooperative schemes have produced benefits and results for their members. The advantages of cooperatives, plus the hiring flexibility, are key elements for the rural sector development, as they take into account production cycles and rural seasonality.

Similarly, the implementation of cooperative schemes cannot undermine the regulations governing the matter, and to that extent, any misuse of the scheme by some employers cannot be hid. To control these abuses, greater intervention by the authorities is required.

With regard to remuneration levels, the oil palm sector in Colombia is one of the most formal in rural areas. Every effort is made to enforce compliance with the payment of legal benefits. Some studies have shown that compensation for workers and contractors in this agro-industry is higher than the national average. Similarly, if a comparison is made in relation to the international context, the Colombian oil palm sector pays its workers twice or three times the average wage in Malaysia and four or five times the average wage in Indonesia, which are the world's largest producers.

As a consequence of this problem, Fedepalma prepared the document “Management of Hiring” a reference guide that provides support and guidance to human resource managers in oil palm companies in the hiring process, providing elements that will strengthen existing policies and improve criteria and behaviors in terms of recruitment procedures.

As for the debate about food security, some humanitarian organizations have reported the connection between malnutrition mortality rates and the emergence of large-scale biofuel projects in the country, and that agricultural development for these projects will not provide opportunities for small producers. In response to these serious allegations, the case of oil palm in Colombia shows a different reality.
First, there is no proof of causal connection between the malnutrition situation in the country and the development of the National Biofuel Program. Additionally, it cannot be proved that biofuels play a role in worsening the malnutrition situation, since they disregard the fact that there is plenty of land suitable for oil palm cultivation without compromising food and subsistence crops, which are essential for food security. Second, the expansion of oil palm cultivation in the last decade has incorporated small producers into productive partnership schemes, accounting for about 25% of the total hectares planted to oil palm.

b. SWOT analysis of strategic partnership schemes

Considering the involvement of small and medium producers in the productive activity, Fedepalma conducted a study in 2009 on the "Assessment of productive partnership projects in oil palm cultivation in Colombia." The assessment was conducted by a team of consultants from the "Alliance for inclusive business, SNV-Cecodes," and with the support of the USAID/Midas program.

The conclusion of the assessment in relation to the 23 cases analyzed indicates that the productive partnership model achieved the goal of being a "win-win solution." This means that companies win because they make a better use of their installed capacity, have access to financial incentives granted by the State, develop new business lines and, finally, create more certainty in their regional economic and social environment.

On the other hand, producers who are involved in partnerships win because they receive higher incomes and improve their quality of life, expand employment opportunities and create a credit history in the financial system that will open the doors for any future developments, increase their self-esteem as small oil palm entrepreneurs and see their social organizations strengthened.

Finally, in the management of corporate social responsibility of the oil palm sector, we managed to involve the productive centers in the sustainability and social balance reports, which constitutes an internal working tool for companies in their commitment to neighboring communities.

Currently, besides insisting on the above issues, we intend to address them within a sector development model defined in the process for the national interpretation of the RSPO P&C, placing greater emphasis on conflicts over land tenure, which has been linked to the oil palm activity, and on the analysis of alternatives to see the possibility of
making productive projects viable in the collective territories of black communities, through appropriate prior consultation, and by assessing the precarious working and social conditions of some producers.

To handle such sensitive issues, the Federation has always been ready to provide help to guide any legitimate initiative, with a strong sense of professionalism and knowledge of the technical management of the oil palm agro-industry.

2. Participation of Fedepalma in the RSPO

Fedepalma joined the RSPO in 2004 as "ordinary member" on behalf of the Colombian oil palm sector. Since then, Fedepalma has actively participated in all activities and global meetings for the adoption of sustainable practices in the oil palm agro-industry. Fedepalma served as vice president of the Executive Board of the RSPO, representing Latin American countries and the rest of the world, in the period between 2004 and 2006.

In its capacity as member of the RSPO representing the Colombian oil palm industry, Fedepalma has as one of its objectives the adoption of the RSPO P&C by all companies across the oil palm value chain.

2.1 Activities prior to the national interpretation

Colombia has undertaken activities for discussion and socialization of the RSPO and its basic P&C, promoted by Fedepalma among stakeholders, including:

- Lectures on the RSPO and the P&C and the 15th International Conference on Oil Palm held in Cartagena in October 2006 with the participation of international experts from WWF Indonesia and the oil palm industry of that country.


- Publication of extracts about the RSPO and the P&C in the El Palmicultor bulletin.

- Workshops for the introduction and discussion of the P&C in each of the main four oil palm growing areas of the country.
These socialization workshops had two main objectives:

- Disseminate, present and discuss the P&C to stakeholders, including producers, traders, NGOs and regional environmental and territorial authorities of palm growing areas.

- Get feedback on the P&C and its possible application in Colombia. Comments, suggestions and input were compiled by Fedepalma and sent to the RSPO, before the meeting in Kuala Lumpur in November 2007.

Four workshops were held in the country's oil palm growing areas in 2007: Aracataca (August 17), Barrancabermeja (August 24), Villavicencio (August 31) and Tumaco (September 7). The workshop agenda included:

- Presentation by Fedepalma on progress and prospects of the sector in environmental management.

- Presentation by WWF on the RSPO and the P&C.

- Group work sessions to review and provide feedback on the P&C

- Plenary session to finalize and compile suggestions and recommendations.

About ninety people attended the consultation meeting on behalf of public and private organizations, academia, NGOs and the community.

2.2 Process for the national interpretation of the P&C

In order to promote this initiative for sustainability in Colombia, Fedepalma has led since early 2008 the process for the national interpretation (NI) of the P&C, with the continued support of the WWF and the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT).

In this process, interinstitutional workshops were held in Bogotá and inter-regional workshops were held in oil palm growing areas, to ensure participation of stakeholders across the oil palm value chain.

Among the participant organizations, the following stand out: Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development (MARD), Ministry of Social Protection (MPS), Ministry of the Interior and Justice, Regional Autonomous Corporations (CAR), and as environmental authorities, the Association of Regional Autonomous Corporations and Sustainable Development (ASOC), research institutes (IDEAM, IGAC, IAvH) Administrative Unit of National Natural Parks of Colombia, public and private universities; Colombian Farmers Association (SAC); and environmental and social NGOs, workers’ associations, representatives of oil palm businesses, millers and the oil palm trade organization, among others.

a. Objectives and expected deliverables

The aim of the process for the national interpretation of the principles and criteria (P&C) of the RSPO is to provide specific guidance tailored to the Colombian context for the implementation of the RSPO P&C.

Among the expected deliverables of this process, the following were proposed:

- Set of indicators to establish a methodology for measuring the performance of oil palm producers and millers in relation to the RSPO P&C.
- Definition of acceptable performance levels for each of these indicators, based on which, compliance with the P&C will be deemed complied with.
- Specific guidelines for adopting each of the P&C in the Colombian context.
- Specific legal requirements that Colombian oil palm producers and millers must meet under the P&C.

In addition, and as a result of the process, the importance of having support tools and guides to facilitate the implementation of the P&C in the oil palm growing regions was identified. So, as part of this exercise, a process for the identification of such tools was carried out, which will be further developed to facilitate the implementation of the P&C, once the process for the national interpretation is approved by the RSPO.

b. Creation of the coordination and management group

The process for the national interpretation of the RSPO P&C in Colombia began with the creation of this group in May 2008, and an expert was hired to act as facilitator, as of June 10 of that year, initially with funds from the WWF. The group was composed of:

- Fedepalma: Miguel Mazorra, Environmental Development Director; Andres Castro, Sustainable Development Director; Myriam Conto, Legal Secretary; Laura Mantilla, Environment Program Assistant.
• **WWF**: Juan Carlos Espinosa, Sector Policy Officer

• **Alexander von Humboldt Institute**: Maria Teresa Palacios, Head researcher, Inter-sector Policies Research Group; Camila Cammaert, Junior Researcher, Inter-sector Policies Research Group.

This group developed an initial conceptual and methodological proposal to implement the NI process in Colombia, based on guidelines established by the RSPO for this purpose, and reports of similar processes developed in Malaysia, Indonesia and New Guinea (Table 1).
Table 1: NI Process Schedule

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c. Launching of the NI process

The launch of the NI process was carried out in Bogota on July 7, 2008. It was called jointly by the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT) and Fedepalma, and was held in the auditorium of the Ministry.

88 participants attended the event, representing the following organizations: (see list of participants in Annex 1):

- Ministry of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development - MAVDT
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism - MCIT
- Ministry of Social Protection - MPS
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - MARD
- National Planning Department - DNP
- Special Administrative Unit of National Natural Parks System-UAESPNN
- Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute - IAvH
- Institute for Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies of Colombia - IDEAM
- Regional Autonomous Corporation of Cundinamarca - CAR
The following was the composition of the participants according to their typology: Representatives of the productive sector (38%), environmental sector (30%), social representatives (9%), research centers and universities (15%), among others. Figure 2, shows the composition of the launching event of the NI of the RSPO P&C.
Meeting Agenda

In the first part, in 2008, the following speakers took the floor: Juan Lozano Ramírez, Minister of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development; Jens Mesa-Dishington, CEO of Fedepalma; Fernando Gast, at that time director of the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, Mary Lou Higgins, WWF's representative in Colombia and David Nussbaum, director of WWF UK. They highlighted the importance of the RSPO for the oil palm sector to meet the environmental and social sustainability criteria in order to reach markets and consumers in general unrestrictedly with certified raw materials and production.

In the second part, three technical lectures were delivered respectively by the WWF, Fedepalma and the facilitator to give an overview of the RSPO, present the activities performed in the framework of the RSPO in Colombia, and describe the program and scope of the national interpretation process.

Communications

This event had the participation of print, radio and television media. Communication offices of the Ministry of Environment, WWF and Fedepalma held their respective press releases, which were posted on the internet and made available to the press for their notes on the event. Caracol and RCN television news mentioned the launch of the process. Similarly, it was specially highlighted in El Palmicultor bulletin.
d. First Expert Workshop

The first expert workshop was held on August 13, 2008 in Bogota, in the facilities of San Andrés Golf Club and attended by 55 people from social, environmental and oil palm production sectors. The composition of the expert workshop is shown in Figure 3.

![First Expert Workshop](image)

*Figure 3: First expert workshop*

The experts were divided into three working groups, according to their knowledge and ability to contribute to the interpretation process: Social Group to work on principles 1, 2 and 6, Environmental Group on principles 5 and 7, Production Group on principles 3, 4 and 8 (see list of participants in Annex 1).

Each working group was appointed a moderator and a commentator to guide the sessions and record the contributions of the participants.

The contributions were incorporated in the document "Guide for the NI of the RSPO P&C for Colombia." This document was sent to all participants and posted on the website of Fedepalma, in order to get feedback.
The regional workshops and feedback were one of the highlights of the process for the national interpretation of the RSPO P&C, as they highlighted the local reality within the general framework proposed by the RSPO P&C.

The four workshops were conducted between August and September 2008, in the following order by zone: Central, North, East and West.

- **Objectives and Expected results**

  The aim of the workshops was to ensure maximum participation of stakeholders in the process and obtain regional and local information to be incorporated in the document “Guide for NI of RSPO P&C for Colombia.”

- **Methodology of the workshops**

  The four regional workshops were developed using a methodology that included RSPO P&C presentations by Fedepalma and the WWF, creation of working groups and appointment of moderators and commentators to guide the work and record the participant contributions (see list of participants for workshops in Annex 1).

  As workshops progressed, adjustments were made to the document to be sent to the participants, and posted on the website of Fedepalma to inform and receive feedback from the stakeholders.

  Below is a brief description of the results of each workshop and some of the highlights of the event.
• Central Zone Workshop

Main components

Location of event: Palmar de la Vizcaína, Municipality of Barrancabermeja, Santander.

Date of event: August 29, 2008.

Total invited guests: 95

Total attendees: 52

Highlights: high participation of social representatives associated with small oil palm producers

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders across the oil palm value chain for the Central Zone.

Figure 4: Central Zone Workshop
- North Zone Workshop

**Main components**

- **Location of event:** Auditorium Casa Gabriel García Márquez, Aracataca, Magdalena.
- **Date of event:** September 5, 2008.
- **Total invited guests:** 122
- **Total attendees:** 57

**Highlights:** participation of small producers organized in productive partnerships and aware of the certification process

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**Figure 5** shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders across the oil palm value chain for the North Zone.

**North Zone Workshop**

- Social Representatives
- Environmental Sector Representatives
- Productive Sector Representatives
- Research and Educational Institutions
- Certification Agencies
- Media
- International institutions

**Figure 5:** North Zone Workshop
### East Zone Workshop

#### Main components

- **Location of event:** Club Villavicencio, Villavicencio, Meta.
- **Date of event:** September 12, 2008.
- **Total invited guests:** 133
- **Total attendees:** 60
- **Highlights:** participation of representatives of United Nations-related agencies, ACNUR.
Figure 6 shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders across the oil palm value chain for the East Zone.

**East Zone Workshop**

- Social Representatives
- Environmental Sector Representatives
- Productive Sector Representatives
- Research and Educational Institutions
- Certification Agencies
- Media
- International institutions

**Figure 6: East Zone Workshop**

- **West Zone Workshop**

**Main components**

- **Location of event:** La Sultana Hotel, Tumaco, Nariño.
- **Date of event:** September 19, 2008.
- **Total invited guests:** 56
- **Total attendees:** 25

**Highlights:** input from producers with high incidence of plant health problems associated with PC and the representative of Cordeagropaz, which has more than 500 small producer members.
Figure 7 shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders across the oil palm value chain for the West Zone.

![West Zone Workshop Diagram]

**Figure 7: West Zone Workshop**

**f. Institutional workshop**

Invited to the workshop were the main institutional entities responsible for defining the social, environmental and economic policies of the country, as well as for implementing and monitoring their implementation to raise awareness of the process for the national interpretation of the RSPO P&C.
Figure 8 shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders according to their role and relationship with the Colombian oil palm agro-industry (see list of participants in Annex 1).

Main components

**Location of event:** Auditorium of the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute, Bogota.

**Date of event:** September 29, 2008.

**Total invited guests:** 100

**Total attendees:** 42

**Highlights:** presentation of results of the NI of the P&C and high representation of public and private sector institutions.

Figure 8: Institutional workshop
From the methodological point of view, the WWF delivered a general presentation of the RSPO P&C and the importance of the NI; Fedepalma delivered a presentation on the management of social and environmental sustainability of the oil palm sector, and the Facilitator presented the consolidated results of the NI process. Once this part was finished, comments of participants were discussed and considered for incorporation into the document "Guide to the NI for Colombia" and were invited to make further comments on the annexed feedback form and review the process document on Fedepalma's website.
Special Annex. Feedback form for the NI of the RSPO P&C

DOCUMENT OF THE NATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THE RSPO PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA
COLOMBIA

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK SHEET

Dear stakeholder of the process for the National Interpretation of the RSPO P&C: To get your feedback to the attached document, we have designed the following form with some guiding questions to facilitate reception and data processing.

It is not necessary to fill out the form for indicators and guidelines that in your opinion are sufficiently explained in the document.

After filling out this form, please send it to: scortega@mercadosverdes.com with copy to mmazorra@fedepalma.org

Principle:

Criterion:

Do you think the proposed indicators for the criterion are appropriate and sufficient to fulfill its purpose? Please explain your answer.

Do you think the proposed guidelines for the implementation of the criterion and indicators are adequate? Please explain your answer.

Additional comments

Name of responsible person:

Entity:
Address:
Telephone:
g Public consultation and feedback

In addition to the dissemination activities described above, the presentations of these events and the document "Guide to the process for the NI of the RSPO P&C, have been published and posted on the website of Fedepalma since August 21, 2008 to receive feedback from the stakeholders.

For further dissemination of the NI process and invitation to participate, a notice in the national leading newspaper El Tiempo was published in the section "Land and Cattle," in October 25, 2008. Figure 9 shows a copy of this notice.
h. Workshop with social and environmental NGOs

In recognition of the importance of strengthening the contribution to the RSPO environmental and social principles, the Coordination Group of the NI extended a special invitation to environmental and social NGOs to attend a workshop to discuss the results of the process. At the end of the event, they were once again invited to make comments to enrich the document "Guide to the NI of the RSPO P&C for Colombia."

Main components

- **Location of event:** Auditorium of the National Federation of Oil Palm Growers, Bogota
- **Date of event:** March 30, 2009.
- **Total invited guests:** 50
- **Total attendees:** 31
- **Highlights:** Identification of environmental and social concerns against the RSPO P&C to seek improvements and solutions to these concerns

The methodology took into account the same criteria as used in the previous workshops. After the presentation of the consolidated Guide document, critical issues associated with land tenure, oil palm developments in collective territories, poor working conditions and unplanned expansion of oil palm plantations which may impact food security were discussed. Then the floor was opened for comments and feedback to contribute to improving the Guide document. Then, taking the following questions as reference, they were invited to send their written replies to Fedepalma:
Are these principles, criteria and indicators and their guidelines sufficient to contribute to the solution of social and environmental concerns?

Are there other concerns that may be resolved by the RSPO P&C in the context of NI?

**Figure 10** shows the percentage distribution by stakeholders.

**NGOs Workshop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Representatives</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Sector Representatives</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive Sector Representatives</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Educational Institutions</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Agencies</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International institutions</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 10:** NGOs Workshop

In the end, no written comments were received

**i. Second expert workshop**

The second expert workshop was held on February 12, 2009 in Bogota, in Fedepalma facilities. It was attended by 45 people associated with various sectors and organizations. Topics discussed included public policy, environmental, social and production issues. The majority of participants had attended the first workshop.

The workshop was divided into three groups: social, environmental and production which addressed the principles already defined at the beginning of the NI process. Similarly,
each group was designated a coordinator and a moderator to guide the work and record the contributions of the participants.

Each group was provided with the latest version of the document containing the indicators and guidelines for each criterion, which served as basis for the discussion and revision to produce a new version of the NI document.

Main components

Location of event: Auditorium of the National Federation of Oil Palm Growers, Bogota

Date of event: February 12, 2009.

Total invited guests: 75

Total attendees: 45

Highlights: new contributions were made to consolidate the document "Guide for the NI of the RSPO P&C for Colombia."
Figure 11, shows the percentage distribution by groups of stakeholders:

![Second Expert Workshop](image)

**Figure 11**: Second expert workshop

The revised version was immediately posted on the website of Fedepalma to continue the public consultation and feedback from stakeholders.

**j. Special workshop for the assessment of the NI process**

For this workshop, the Coordination Group deemed it appropriate to invite experts from public and private organizations who have participated in the process under different capacities and were aware of the importance of this process, for approval by the RSPO of the document "Guide to the process for the NI of the RSPO P&C for Colombia," which will allow us to make headway in the certification process for oil palm producers.
The core activity was a full analysis of the document containing the P&C with corresponding support indicators and guidelines. Each principle and criterion was commented upon and the convenience of whether or not to incorporate the changes was discussed.

At the end of the workshop, an individual analysis of the rating questionnaire was conducted. The results of this exercise are presented below (Table 2):
Table 2 – Individual assessment questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL INTERPRETATION (NI) OF RSPO PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR COLOMBIA</th>
<th>May 18, 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RATING: PROCESS AND SCOPE OF DOCUMENT</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 NOTIFICATION</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notification through events, circulars, e-mail and phone calls was:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) The participation in the launching event, Expert Workshops, Regional Workshops, Institutional Workshops, and NGO Workshops was:</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>b) The first Latin American RSPO Meeting in Cartagena, where the NI balance was presented was:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>The availability of documents throughout the process, with the progress in the construction of the NI (Fedepalma website since the end of August 2008 to date. On the website of the RSPO, since February 10, 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. SCOPE OF THE NATIONAL INTERPRETATION DOCUMENT FOR COLOMBIA</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1 CONTENT</td>
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<td>The Final NI document includes the contributions of participants in the working groups for each of the P&amp;C:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 RELEVANCE</td>
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<td>With the approval of the NI of the P&amp;C for Colombia, the Colombian oil palm industry will conduct its operations in a sustainable manner, which will be duly certified by the RSPO in terms of compliance with such P&amp;C:</td>
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<td>Total attendees: 17</td>
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ASSESSMENT RATING OF THE PROCESS FOR THE NATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF RSPO PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR COLOMBIA
Bogota, D.C. Mayo 18, 2009

1.1 Notification
1.2a Participation workshops
1.2b Latin American meeting
1.3 Public consultation
2.1 Contents NI document
2.2 NI document relevance

1 2 3 4 5

Excellent  Good  Fair
k. Consolidation of the NI process

Figure 12 shows the percentage distribution by workshop, with a total of 475 persons representing stakeholders of the Colombian oil palm industry.

The Colombian NI process will have a review period consistent with that of the global RSPO criteria in 2015. It will take place after the implementation of the 5-year GEF (Global Environment Facility) project Fedepalma will be implementing from 2011-2015 with the Colombian Ministry of the Environment, the Alexander von Humboldt National Biodiversity Research Institute, WWF, and other environmental research institutes, regional environmental authorities and oil palm growers. This project has a specific component to promote the implementation of the RSPO P&C on the ground, and will result in valuable feedback for the Colombian NI document and process.
I. Oxfam-Novib requirements

In early 2009 (February 4, 2009), Fedepalma received the visit of Sandra Seeboldt, an official of Oxfam-Novib, who had been interested in understanding the process for the national interpretation of the principles and criteria of the RSPO. With the information illustrated and documented of the process, Sandra asked for support to visit a palm growing area of the country. The visit was organized for productive projects with farmers partnering with Indupalma. As a result of this visit and other meetings held by her during her stay in Colombia, Oxfam produced the document "Palm oil: changing powers in Colombia?" an exploration of the oil palm in Colombia based on an analysis of power, with special emphasis on the RSPO process.

Additionally, and on behalf of Oxfam-Novib, the Institute for Development and Peace Studies (Indepaz) evaluated the process for the national interpretation conducted by Fedepalma. This consultancy also produced a report, of which Fedepalma became aware on August 7, 2009 by an email from Sandra Seeboldt to Andres Castro.

In this regard, Fedepalma submitted the following comments to those documents, which were sent by email dated September 27, 2009 addressed to Sandra Seeboldt and Johan Verburg of Oxfam-Novib:

We read with interest the report by Oxfam and Indepaz on the process for the national interpretation of the RSPO P&C; and of course, we do not agree with your conclusions.

The process in Colombia is not an audit itself, much less a certification of the palm oil in Colombia. I think there is a misunderstanding, because in our country the national interpretation process consisted of an academic exercise, to which Oxfam and Indepaz were invited.

In this sense, and once the process of Colombia is approved by the board of the RSPO, interested companies will be subject to audits in order to obtain the certifications. Producers who do not meet these requirements will not be certified under this standard. Fedepalma is interested in establishing a comprehensive continuous improvement plan in those areas that did not meet the sustainability requirements for the oil palm agro-industry in Colombia.

There is always room for improvement, although in this case I am not sure that by applying the RSPO P&C, the Colombian conflict will be solved. In this sense, the situation of public unrest in the country is being overcome, and oil palm has emerged in these scenarios as an opportunity to develop productive projects, instead of being a threat to the communities.

However, we are open to a dialogue to improve the scope and content of the document of the national interpretation of Colombia. In this task, we are working with WWF Colombia and will soon have a revised version of it (Communication from the Social Planning Director, Fedepalma).
Then, Fedepalma had the opportunity to have an exchange of ideas with Oxfam-Novib on October 8, 2009 in Holland and the encounter led to the following conclusions, regarding the progress of the national interpretation process in Colombia. There were discussions about the difficulties encountered regarding the low participation of stakeholders and ways of overcoming them. To make headway on sensitive issues, it was agreed to include references about money laundering, private security and labor issues in the indicators and guidelines for Colombia.

In relation to land issues, it was agreed to talk to the various authorities concerned with this problem. In this sense, contacts were made with the Ministry of the Interior (Office of Ethnic Affairs), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Department of Technological Development), Incoder (Land authority), the National Reparations Commission (Justice and Peace Law), the Presidency’s Social Action Program, the Constitutional Court, the WWF and Indepaz.

Additionally, in the academic sessions of Fedepalma’s annual guild events, held from 23 to 25 June 2010 in Villavicencio (Meta), Alejandro Reyes Posada, expert land researcher and consultant, discussed land issues in Colombia and its implications for the development of the agricultural sector. Mr. Reyes was commissioned by president-elect, Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, to prepare a bill to facilitate the restitution of the 1.7 million hectares to peasants whose land has been taken away by illegal armed groups.

In that sense, Fedepalma believes that the national interpretation process meets the requirements of the RSPO and is sufficient to carry out audits for Colombian companies seeking to certify their palm oil.

It should not be forgotten that Colombia has for years been involved in an armed conflict in which public order is disturbed and has particular regional characteristics. This social and political phenomenon has drawn the attention of many organizations that, in seeking to identify those responsible, have tried to portray the oil palm agro-industry as a player in the conflict.

Oxfam-Novib, a member of the Board of the RSPO, and Indepaz raised objections to the interpretation process in Colombia, because, in their opinion, the participation of social organizations (unions, cooperatives, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc.) was insufficient.

Among their objections, Oxfam and Indepaz said that this interpretation should reflect the problems within the Colombian context, that is, land tenure conflicts, the promotion of oil
palm projects in collective territories, unemployment and poor social conditions, and unplanned expansion of oil palm plantations. In this respect, to pretend that the palm sector solve these situations is beyond our means and cannot be a reference for the NI process in Colombia.

However, in the face of all these concerns and with the aim of contributing to a better understanding of the national realities, Fedepalma has worked on issues that go beyond the validation of that document, such as indicators and specific guidelines related to money laundering, private security, labor, and land titling and registration to help clarify the concerns and distortions by some NGOs.

3. First Latin American Meeting of the RSPO in Colombia

Based on the authorization given to Colombia at the 5th Annual Meeting of the RSPO, RT5, held in November 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, to organize a regional event to address the RSPO P&C, the certification process and markets, Fedepalma, in coordination with and support of the Ministry of Environment, organized the 1st Latin American Meeting of the RSPO, held October 16 to 17, 2008, in Cartagena (Figure 13).

The purpose of this meeting was to present the general guidelines of the RSPO to promote the involvement of countries interested in working in the context of the proposed model and to make known the work done in Colombia to meet the NI protocols.

The meeting was attended by 336 people, among whom were Jan Kees Vis, president of the RSPO; Vengeta Rao, Secretary General of the RSPO, Juan Lozano and Claudia Mora, Minister and Deputy Minister of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development; Jens Mesa Dishington, CEO of Fedepalma, and representatives from public and private entities, civil society organizations, oil palm companies from Colombia and other countries, industrialists and marketers interested in the Colombian oil palm industry (Figure 14).
Figure 13: First Latin American Meeting of the RSPO

Figure 14: Percentage distribution of participants in the process for NI of RSPO P&C for Colombia