

RSPOs comments on the findings in the Swedwatch report “Silent Approval”

London, March 27th, 2017

The RSPO fully acknowledges the existence of serious issues in the protection of human rights in the oil palm sector. These problems are exacerbated when linked to poverty, weak law enforcement and the presence of legislative gaps - as underlined by Swedwatch. RSPO members have a responsibility to comply with the RSPO code of conduct and to end practices that are not compliant with the RSPO requirements.

RSPO has systems in place to ensure that oil coming from RSPO Certified plantations abides to the standards set by the RSPO. These systems include third party certification, a system of accreditation for certification bodies, and an open and transparent grievance mechanism, supply chain certification to the end user and traceability provided via the PalmTrace system. This said, every system can fail and can be improved.

To further strengthen its assurance framework and deliver the credibility demanded by stakeholders, RSPO welcomes a constructive dialogue with all interested parties in the framework of the [RSPO Assurance Task Force](#).

Specifically, the RSPO is working with its members to

- i. develop clearer, mandatory guidelines on the minimum acceptable quality of High Conservation Value;
- ii. develop clearer, mandatory guidelines on assessments of FPIC (*Free Prior and Informed Consent*) in the New Planting Procedure;
- iii. develop and institute an even more transparent and robust system for monitoring the quality of assessments;
- iv. improve monitoring the quality and performance of Auditors’
- v. pursue suspensions or sanctions against underperforming or persistent offenders;
- vi. monitor RSPO members’ adherence to required procedures and report any members that fail to submit New Planting Procedure notifications before clearing land to the Complaints Panel.

The new accreditation requirements for 2017 have increased the sample size for certification, improved the competence of accredited auditors and strengthened oversight by both the Certification Bodies and [Accreditation Services International \(ASI\)](#). ASI provides independent third-party accreditation to the RSPO’s certification program and conduct regular assessments of Certification Bodies, including both office and field witness verifications.

The RSPO recognises the need to strengthen human rights and social auditing by the Certification Bodies and is working with experts and NGOs to improve the requirements and training offered. RSPO is working directly with auditors to ensure the RSPO Principles & Criteria are properly implemented and that human rights violations are properly identified, reported and addressed; ground truthing and increasing access to the RSPO complaints system.

RSPO is working to provide a stronger voice to local civil society organisations and involve intermediary organisations within the participatory processes offered by the RSPO, such as working groups, steering committees as well as consultations around New Planting Procedures and Free Prior & Informed Consent.

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RSPO welcomes dialogue with all key stakeholders including participation in the RSPO Principles & Criteria 2017/18 review, which is about to be launched, and is an opportunity to strengthen the human rights criteria of the RSPO certification. More information is available [here](#).

Best Regards,

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil