

Minutes RSPO Sensitization Meeting for Palm Oil Producers in Ghana

In Framework of the Development of a National Interpretation in Ghana

Saturday 24th of January 2009

Date: Saturday 24th of January 2009

Venue: Ghana Oil Palm Development Company Limited (GOPDC), Kwae Estate, near Kade.

Time: 10 am – 5 pm

Attendants

- Emmanuel Ahiable	Estate manager	TOPP (Unilever Ghana Ltd.)
- Samuel Avaala	Estate manager	BOPP (Unilever Ghana Ltd.)
- Neneyo Mate-Kole	Managing Director	Unilever Ghana Ltd.
- Dan Beringer	Project Manager	Sithe Global Sustainable Oils Ghana
- Henk Zwinderman	Agricultural Consultant	Sithe Global Sustainable Oils Ghana
- Kwaku Appiah Menka	Executive Director	Appiah Menka Complex
- Lawrence Kuma-Mintah	Production Manager	Appiah Menka Complex
- Eric Anang	Managing Director	Norpalm Ghana Ltd.
- Charles Mate-Kole	Plantation Manager	Norpalm Ghana Ltd.
- Alex Owusu	Managing Director	Juaben Oil Mills Ltd.
- Colleague Juaben Oil Mills		Juaben Oil Mills Ltd.
- Pieter Van Dessel	Agronomist	Presco Plc. (SIAT, Nigeria)
- Gael Abessolo	Assistant Plantation Manager	SiatGabon (SIAT, Gabon)
- Willem Baert	Director of Operations	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Emmanuel K. Wiafe	Environmental & Safety Officer	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Emmanuel Boamah	Estate Manager Kwae	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Frempong Amponsah	Estate Manager Okumaning	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Kemeh Mensah	Outgrower Extension Manager	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Lawrence Atsrin	Technical Director	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- John Andre	Commercial Director	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Patrick Anin	Legal Officer	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Patrick Yankey	Human Resource Manager	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Laure Steer	Okumaning Outgrower Project Manager	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Anke Massart	Environmentalist	GOPDC Ltd. (SIAT, Ghana)
- Gert Vandersmissen	Deputy Managing Director-Field operations	SIAT Group of Companies

Ghana Oil Palm Development Company Limited

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Objectives of the sensitization meeting

The objectives of the sensitization meeting were threefold:

- To inform the major palm oil producers of Ghana about the aims and organization of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).
- To discuss upon the key documents created by the RSPO to guide supply chain members in achieving an RSPO certificate.
- To discuss upon the National Interpretation of the RSPO P&C and implementation of the RSPO P&C.

Programme of the sensitization meeting

07.00 - 09.30	Arrival participants from other companies.
10.00 - 10.15	Welcome address: Gert Vandersmissen.
10.15 - 12.00	General presentation on RSPO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is RSPO? - Discuss the key-steps in the certification process. - Discuss the key-documents. - Conclusion "Way Forward for Ghana"
12.00 - 13.00	Lunch
13.00 - 14.45	- RSPO National Interpretation: Procedure for endorsement + discussion. - Implementation of RSPO Principles & Criteria.
14.45 - 15.00	Coffee break
15.00 - 17.00	Visit Okumaning Estate to illustrate implementation of some RSPO Principles & Criteria.
19.00 - 22.00	Close of program.

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Subjects of the sensitization meeting

Welcome address (by Gert Vandersmissen)

Gert Vandersmissen, Deputy Managing Director of the Siat Group - Field Operations, welcomed the participants to the Kwae Estate. In his address, he informed the participants about some bad practices in the palm oil production industry and consequently the establishment of the RSPO to regulate the practices in the industry. Further, he unveiled the main reasons for the sensitization meeting concerning RSPO. Firstly, the meeting was organised to measure the current RSPO knowledge and interest of the major Ghanaian palm oil producers. Secondly, the meeting had to focus on the way forward in developing a National Interpretation of the RSPO P&C in Ghana. It was said that RSPO certification is not an obligation, but it will become of high importance in the near future.

General Presentation on RSPO (by Anke Massart)

The participants were informed about the:

- Bad practices that led to the establishment of the RSPO in 2003;
- Global, transparent and multi-stakeholder RSPO organization with its vision, mission and membership;
- Progress made since the start by looking at the outcome of the 6 Roundtable Meetings;
- Key documents created by the RSPO:
 - o RSPO Principles & Criteria
 - ✓ Hard copies of the P&C were distributed.
 - ✓ It was explained that the document is the guide for growers and millers to achieve RSPO certification.
 - ✓ The structure of the document (Principle, Criteria, Indicators and Guidance) was discussed in detail and some examples were given.
 - ✓ A remark was made that though the document is very voluminous, the practices mentioned are Good Agricultural Practices and Good Management Practices which can help companies to improve the sustainability and efficiency of their operations.
 - ✓ It was clear that the majority of the participants had seen the document, though they were not familiar with it. Only a few of the attendants had never seen the P&C before.

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- ✓ There were no questions on the structure and the purpose of the document itself, though some participants stated that more questions would arise after having studied the document.
- RSPO Guidance for National Interpretation of P&C
 - ✓ A soft copy was distributed and reference was made to the “Download Centre” of the RSPO website.
 - ✓ It was explained that a National Interpretation is necessary to avoid potential conflicts between the international standard and national/local laws and regulations.
 - ✓ Focus was made on the multi-stakeholder approach of the development of a National Interpretation.
 - ✓ Examples of the National Interpretation document from Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were shown during the presentation to illustrate the outcome of the National Interpretation process.
 - ✓ The questions on the procedure of developing a National Interpretation (e.g. funding, inviting other stakeholders) were dealt with later on as the presentation of the endorsement procedure was scheduled in the afternoon.
- RSPO Certification Systems
 - ✓ A soft copy was distributed and reference was made to the “Download Centre” of the RSPO website.
 - ✓ It was explained how a production unit can obtain an RSPO certificate once the National Interpretation is developed and compliance to the P&C is met.
 - ✓ There was a special focus on the various annexes that make up the certification triangle (certification standard, accreditation requirements and certification process requirements).
 - ✓ Examples of Certification Bodies were given and an example of a Public Summary Report (BSI report for Sime Darby) was shown.
 - ✓ There was a question on the availability of certification bodies, especially when it appeared that there were no certification bodies in Ghana (even Africa) yet. Therefore, it was proposed to seek for a common certification body for companies that are ready for certification within a similar time frame. This will also help in cutting the costs.

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- ✓ A second question was about the frequency of audits and renewal of the certification as it will also determine the cost.
- ✓ A final question was about the benefit of having an RSPO certificate. What is for Ghanaian palm oil producers the benefit of having an RSPO Certificate? It was explained that there are 4 supply chain options and that one of them (i.e. Book & Claim) is similar to the carbon credit system. You can get a credit per ton of RSPO oil produced without having to export it physically.
- RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems
 - ✓ A soft copy was distributed and reference was made to the “Download Centre” of the RSPO website.
 - ✓ The participants were informed about how to make the trade of RSPO CSPO credible and practical. Traceability needs to be proven throughout the supply chain.
 - ✓ The 4 supply chain options (identity preserved, segregation, mass balance and book & claim) were discussed in detail, including their advantages and disadvantages.
 - ✓ The participants became familiar with the fact that other members of their supply chain (e.g. refiners, consumer goods manufacturers, tank farms) also need to be involved to ensure a traceable trade of RSPO CSPO.
 - ✓ Annex 6 of the document “Supply Chain certification Requirements for different supply chain models” was presented as an extra “to do” list upon trading RSPO CSPO.
 - ✓ More questions would certainly arise during the following meetings after going through the document and the supply chain options in detail.
- RSPO Guidelines on Communication & Claims
 - ✓ A soft copy was distributed and reference was made to the “Download Centre” of the RSPO website.
 - ✓ The guidelines for communication and claims were discussed and examples of claims were given.
 - ✓ Some participants doubted that the consumer would be able to distinguish between the various RSPO claims proposed.

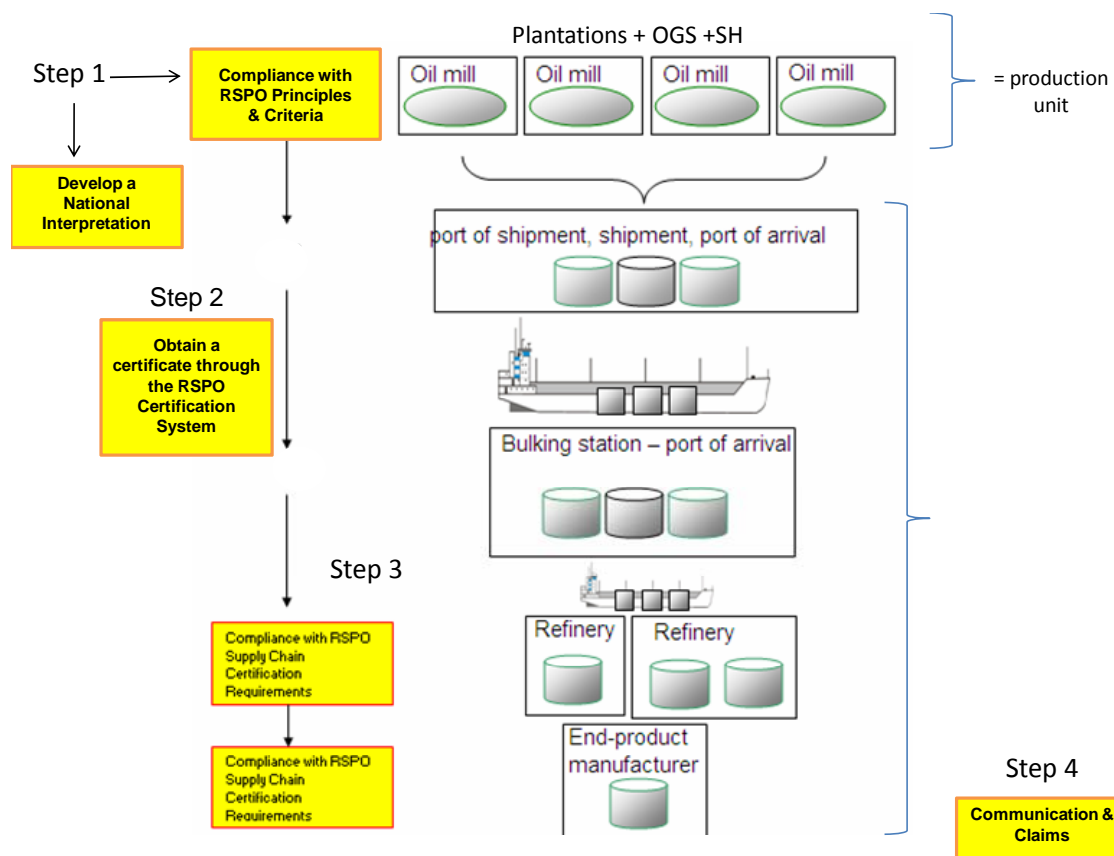
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The presentation was concluded with the following summary of the work to be done:



It was concluded that the immediate “way forward” consisted of two main levels:

- 1) Start the development of a National Interpretation of the RSPO P&C in Ghana.
- 2) Continue individually the implementation of the P&C in the various companies.



Endorsement procedure for National Interpretation (by Anke Massart)

A hard copy of the endorsement procedure for National Interpretations (i.e. RSPO Certification Systems, Annex 1) was distributed.

The following strategy was proposed during the presentation, but will be adjusted along the process:

Step 0: Discuss with other palm oil industries before starting the process.

Step 1: Sensitization of all stakeholders (government, research institutions, banks, ngo's,)

Step 2: Contact and appoint a Certification Body to assist.

Step 3: Establish a Steering Committee: Its role:

- Who should be in the Working group? – to create the NI Working Group
- How should the process be undertaken? = to create TOR, Code of Conduct, consensus model
- When will the guidance be delivered? – to develop a timeline with mile stones and outcome

Step 4: Appoint a national facilitator (or co-ordinator) and seek Executive Board approval.

Step 5: Organize minimum 2 (but better 4) physical meetings. (Minutes on RSPO website).

Step 6: Organize two separate public consultations periods of 30 days each.

Step 7: Make during the process several drafts of the NI P&C.

Step 8: Submit final draft to the Executive Board for endorsement.

Some questions were posed:

- ✓ When do we expect to have the final draft of the National Interpretation?
It cannot be predicted due to the fact that the process involves various stakeholders, physical meetings, consultation periods, etc. It might take up to 6 – 12 months.
- ✓ Can the search for funding delay the National Interpretation process?
It is clear that funding needs to be found as soon as possible to facilitate the organization. Though, we can bear the costs temporary ourselves. The ease of finding funding should become clear after a first sensitization meeting with all stakeholders.

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✓ What will be the next step?

The majority of the participants were of the view that sensitization of all stakeholders is needed. Therefore, it was agreed that we would work on a list of stakeholders to be invited for a sensitization meeting in Accra at the end of February.

Visit of Okumaning Estate (by Gert Vandersmissen, Emmanuel K. Wiafe and Anke Massart)

The Okumaning Estate is one of the plantations that tested the P&C (i.e. 2 year P&C trial). The results so far (successes and challenges) were presented by Gert Vandersmissen during Roundtable Meeting 5 (RT5) in Kuala Lumpur. During the visit, examples were shown of biodiversity plots, organic farming, buffer zones along rivers, establishment of cover crops, fertilizer experiments, ecological monitoring results (Ghana Wildlife Society), etc.

Conclusion

Several companies stated that the RSPO sensitization meeting was highly necessary, while others that were not familiar with RSPO showed a great interest in the RSPO certification and participation in the development of a National Interpretation.

It was agreed that the next meeting should be organised on a bigger scale by inviting government, processors and traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, environmental and social consultants, banks and investors, ngo's, etc. A same kind of sensitization will have to take place before a National Interpretation Working Group (NIWG) can be established.

Prepared by Anke Massart

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