

**DRAFT REPORT ON ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINBLE PALM OIL (R S P O) FORUM**

**SUBMITTED BY COLANDEF**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The production of oil palm on large scale bases has helped to transform the economies of some countries from agrarian bases to manufacturing. In Malaysia and Indonesia for example, Oil palm contributes more than fifty percent (50%) of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). On the World markets, both countries contribute forty four (44%) and forty one (41%) percentages respectively to the total production of palm oil. Palm oil is directly consumed and used as a major raw material in soap, perfume, detergents, edible oil, margarine, biscuits, cosmetics, biodiesel fuel and many other industries either as a major raw material or just as an additive. In recent years, owing to the realization of the importance of palm oil, many palm oil users have gone into large scale production without any consideration of its impact to the sustainability of our ecosystems hence increasing its attendant problems of deforestation, relocation of inhabitant's, extinction of endangered wildlife species, climatic changes and instability in the ecosystem. Due to these environmental problems associated with cultivation and production palm oil, it facilitated the global formation of Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. In Ghana however, the major palm oil producers are sharing the sustainability thought and has taken keen interest to start the RSPO certification process.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was first recognized on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2004 under the Article 60 of the Swiss Code as an international multi- stakeholder not for profit entity. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil is an organization created to preserve the natural environment of palm oil plantation while enabling reasonable growth to support local population. The principal objective of the RSPO is to accelerate the growth and the use of sustainable palm oil through collaboration within supply chain and open dialogue between its stakeholders.

RSPO acknowledged that palm oil is a vital and versatile resource for both food and non food industries, which contributes to the socio-economic development of countries where palm oil is cultivated and to the diet of millions of people in the world. It is believed that production and use of palm oil must be done in a sustainable manner based on economic, social and environmental viability. With this in mind, RSPO is projecting the development of a globally acceptable credible explanation of sustainable palm oil production and the accomplishment of better management practices that follow this definition.

The definition of sustainable palm oil was developed by a criteria working (CWG) under the guidance from the RSPO executive board .The definition consist of 8 principles and 39 criteria ,and the guidelines for applying these principles were not left out.

The need for national explanation of the RSPO principles and criteria to its stake holders gave birth to the National Interpretation Working Group (NIWG).

The national interpretation working group has representatives of all the stakeholders along the supply chain and report back to the executive board of RSPO. A National Interpretation of the RSPO Principles and Criteria has been developed by the Ghanaian palm oil sector and its stakeholders.

The Ghana National Interpretation Working Group delivers guidelines to all the oil palm producers, processors and procurers on how to implement the RSPO principles and criteria. The group is made up legal, license and social sub group, agronomy, milling practices and research sub group, environmental natural resources sub group and economics and labour sub group.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm oil (RSPO) had its first meeting in 2003 and started the intent for a certification, the principles and criteria drafting commenced in 2004.The adoption of principles and criteria, certification, and the two year trial of the principles and criteria was also done in 2005.In 2006, the principles and criteria progressed, the certification and supply chain options.

A two year trial result, principles and criteria reviewed, and certification process unveiled in 2007.

Based on the progress reports from RSPO meetings, in 2008, the first certification was issued, certification of sustainable palm oil and involvement of stakeholders and governments. RSPO works with stakeholders to achieve the certification and also maximize resources

The major palm oil producers in Ghana are sharing the sustainability thoughts, attempts have been made by Benso Oil palm (BOPP), Norpalm Ghana Ltd, Twifo Praso oil palm (TOPP) and COLANDEF, a social and land governance NGO, and members of the Ghana National Interpretation Working Group (GNIWG) brought stakeholders from the western and central regions together. These stakeholders consist of oil palm growers, oil palm processors and traders, consumer goods manufacturers, environmental and nature conservative NGO's and social development NGO's all on one platform and introduce them to the concept of the Round table on sustainable palm oil (RSPO), its importance, and the certification processes.

## **THE OBJECTIVE OF THE FORUM**

The organizers of the forum had the following aims to achieve at the end of the programme:

- To sensitize and educate smallholders and other stakeholders on the principles of the RSPO certification and its benefits.
- To set up a collaborative multi-stakeholder support for RSPO certification.
- To create the space for the inclusion of stakeholder's views into the National Interpretation of the principles and criteria and the certification process.

## **ROLES PERFORMED BY PARTNERS**

Benso oil palm plantation (BOPP), Norpalm Ghana Ltd, Twifo Praso oil palm (TOPP) and CLANDEF are members of the Ghana national interpretation work group, each played an important role in the organization and facilitation of the forum. The roles played by each are as follows:

### Role of BOPP

- ❖ Co-sponsored the forum
- ❖ Distribution of invitation letters to smallholders in their catchment area
- ❖ Facilitation on the RSPO principles and criteria

### Role of TOPP

- ❖ Co-sponsored the forum
- ❖ Distribution of invitation letters to smallholders in their catchment area

### Role of NORPALM

- ❖ Co-sponsored the forum
- ❖ Distribution of invitation letters to smallholders in their catchment area
- ❖ Facilitation on the RSPO certification

### Role of COLANDEF

- ❖ Writing of invitation letters
- ❖ Distribution letters to institution in both central and western regions
- ❖ Main facilitators for the forum
- ❖ Reporting
- ❖ Arrangement for venue

## **CONTENT DISCUSSION**

### Programme Outline

1. Introduction to workshop objective
2. Presentation overview of the RSPO and update on the (GNIWG)
3. RSPO Principle and criteria
4. Deepen presentation and discussion on the following:
  - ✓ Principle and criteria no.2(land issues and the use of approved chemicals)
  - ✓ Principle and criteria no.4(types of materials and yield)
  - ✓ Principle and criteria no.6(Socio-cultural issues)
5. Plenary discussions (participant observations and concerns)
6. Summary and conclusion
7. Chair person's remark

## **OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop began around 8:00 am with the arrival of participants and registering of their names, organizations from which they are coming, their contacts and signatures.

At around 9:22 am when the participants were seated, Mr. Simeon Nketsiah began facilitation of the workshop by first welcoming the participants and given them the opportunity to introduce themselves. After the familiarization process, the workshop was ushered in by an opening prayer from Mr. Clement Gyaame, a participant.

Mr. Daniel Atuah of Colandef then came to introduce the chairperson for the workshop who was in the person of Dr. Mrs. Mary Opoku Asiama; the Western Regional Director of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA).

The chairperson then gave her introductory speech which set the ball rolling for the workshop.

## **WELCOME ADDRESS**

The welcome address was delivered by the chairperson of the programme, Dr.Mrs. Mary Opoku Asiama; she welcomed the participants for honoring the invitation and thanked the organizers for given her the opportunity to chair such an august occasion.

She said Ghana had had a lot of funding from international donors for cultivation of oil palm. This project has about 300 hectors of palm plantation and sited Buabeng farms in the Central Region as part of this project. Development of this facility will boost palm oil cultivation in the country to

catch up with the internationally recognized oil palm producing countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Colombia, Benin and Kenya in Africa.

She added, due to the global attention given to the cultivation and use of palm oil, there is the need as stakeholders to meet the international standards. To achieve this, it has become necessary that standardization and certification procedures will be followed.

Also, as a representative from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, she expressed the interest her institution has in the RSPO certification. She acknowledged that players in the RSPO supply chain are numerous and applauded them for being present at the forum.

## **OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION**

### **PRESENTATION OF OVERVIEW OF RSPO AND UPDATE ON THEGNIWG: *By Mr. Samuel Avaala***

The presentation started with an overview of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Mr. Avaala talked about the cultivation of oil palm in Ghana, the potential of oil palm if Ghana decides not to export them, we can make good use of palm in the country. He said in some countries, four (4) hectare palm farm is considered as a small holder.

He added by given the various requirement in water and electricity that is expected in producing every tone oil palm.

Although oil palm farmers want to expand their farms, it must be done in a sustainable manner; an example was dragged from Malaysia, due to palm oil they pull down trees that are good for medicinal and other purposes without considering the environmental impact on the people.

Later they released its consequent impact and decided to have the right procedure which is sustainable.

Recently, the World Bank invited the stakeholders to inform them about their suspension of funding oil palm cultivation because of its environmental impact.

The RSPO principles and criteria have now given way for international funding of oil palm .

By comparison, Mr. Avaala said rubber cultivation take more resources from the soil without replacing it but palm oil is not like that.

The role of the Ghana National Interpretation Work Group is to explain the principle and criteria (P&C) of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) while taken in to consideration the custom, laws and value of the country in to consideration.

He then backed the overview of his presentation with a power point presentation showing the processes undertaken by the various players in achieving the certification. The visuals showed the various meetings of the RSPO, farms that have the certification and the machineries used in processing their produce.

The presentation showed the various percentage contributions in the palm oil industry with Malaysia contributing 44%, Indonesia 41% and others 15% in the world market. This means that Ghana is considered as others that contribute the smallest percentage. If Malaysia that came to Ghana to learn the cultivation of oil palm is now internationally known as one of the leading producers in the palm oil industry, then we, as a country, need to do more by expanding our cultivation in accordance with RSPO principles and criteria.

If Ghana is able to follow the principles and criteria we can then be certified.

#### **THE PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL PRODUCTION-** *By Charles Mate-Kole*

- **COMMITMENT TO TRANSPARENCY**

Oil palm growers and millers provide adequate information to other stakeholders on environmental, social and legal issues relevant to RSPO criteria, in appropriate language and forms to allow for effective participation in decision making. In achieving the transparency the stakeholders need to know the available documents on concerning land acquisition, the environmental laws, and laws governing the country. Present at the meeting were some experts from Ministry of Agric, Lands Commission, Chiefs and Environmental officers who also shared their experience at the forum.

The land commission is in charge of acquisition of land and land documentations for plantation.

In Ghana the Chiefs are the custodians of land, they also contributed on how to acquire land from the traditional authorities.

The environmental protection Agency is to make sure that our surroundings are not polluted with chemicals used for oil palm cultivation.

- **COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICATION LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

There is compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations. There is the need to observe the custom and traditions of where we want to set up a plantation or where it is located. If we want to cultivate palm oil we need to take environmental and

social impact assessment to conserve endanger species and medicinal trees must also be preserved in the cause of our operations.

- COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

There is an implemented management plan that aims to achieve long term economic and financial viability. There should be a documented business or management plan which will not be less than 3 years. As stakeholders we should take into consideration economic rate of returns and added that investors are just interested in economic viability.

- USES OF APPROPRAITE BEST PRACTICE BY GROWERS AND MILLERS

The practices that maintain soil fertility or where possible improve soil fertility to a level that ensures optimal and sustainable yield must be adhered to. That is, adequate fertilizer is used, leguminous crops are used as cover crops to maintain soil fertility and reduce erosion.

- EENVIROMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND BIODIVERSITY

As part of plantation and mill management, including replanting that have environmental impacts are identified. In our operations, we need not to pour chemicals into water bodies along our plantations or farms to pollute them for people to use for domestic purpose in order to achieve environmental viability. Mr. Kole mentioned chemicals like Paraqua and thermemic as dangerous chemicals that need not to be used by farmers. And encouraged the smallholders and the out growers to use chemicals responsibly.

Burning farm lands drives away birds and other reptiles. One needs to protect these endangered species in the environment.

- RESPONSIBLE CONSIDERATION OF EMPLOYEES AND OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY GROWERS AND MILLS

Pay and conditions for employees and for employees of contractor always meet at least legal or industry minimum standards and are sufficient to provided decent living wage.

There should be a collective bargain between employers and employees and individuals affected by palm oil cultivation. An example was sited, where farmers in Ghana use their Children and relatives under age on their farms, and it is a form of childlabour. Childlabour violate the principles of the RSPO.

On this issue, a concern was raised that, in our Ghanaian culture, children help their parents on their farms, so if a child helps the parents and at the same time attends School, it can not be termed as childlabour but rather child work.

## DEEPEN PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE PRINCIPLE AND CRITERIA NO.2-

*By Nana Ama Yirrah (Mrs.)*

RSPO-PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA 2 (COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS ON LAND) This presentation sought to highlight the land issues in oil palm production and the need to pay due attention to the land sector to ensure optimum yield from palm oil production. Below are the key issues discussed in the presentation.

### SUMMARY OF RSPO AND P&C

- 8 principles
  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 practices by growers and millers
  5. Environmental responsibility and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity
  6. Responsible consideration of employees and of individuals and communities affected by growers and millers.
  7. Commitment to continuous improvement in key areas of activity
  8. Commitment to continuous improvement in key areas of activity.
- Criterion 2.1 There is compliance with all applicable local, national and ratified international laws and regulations.
- Criterion 2.2 the right to land can be demonstrated and is not legitimately contested by local communities with demonstrable rights.
- Criterion 2.3 use of the land for oil palm does not diminish the legal rights ,or customary rights ,of other users, without their free, prior ad informed consent.

### WHY GIVE ATTENTION TO LAND THE LAND ISSUE?

#### THE AIM:

- To guide all those engaged in the oil palm sector (producers and millers) towards RSPO Certificate for sustainable palm oil
- Procedures for RSPO certification will include gathering evidence about all relevant principles and criteria directly from stakeholders including statutory bodies, indigenous peoples, local communities workers and worker' organizations smallholders ,and local and national NGO'S
- Information on the evidence of ownership of land and compliance with applicable laws on land, especially registration documents ,will be assessed and used for certification under RSPO
- Where operations have been established, certification process will directly involve all parties to the land agreement to assess whether land transfers

and/or land use agreement have been developed with their free, prior and informed consent and check compliance with the specific terms of such agreement (RSPO Criteria 2.2 and 2.3).

### **THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE LAND SECTOR IN GHANA**

- Access to land and security of tenure have long been recognized as crucial to achieving sustainable development.
- In Ghana and many African countries ,land tenure security has remained problematic to the dual system of land administration (state and customary systems)
- The influence of traditional institutions in administering land has remained strong, holding about 80% of the total land in Ghana.
- Changing dynamics in socio-economic development notwithstanding, the influence of cultural practices and beliefs have remained strong in administering land in Ghana.
- Both formal and informal systems; State and local laws, regulations and guiding principles influence decision on land.
- Long and expensive registration process
- Limited documentation and registration of rights and interest in land
- Conflicts
- Multiple laws
- Ignorance
- Mistrust
- Lack of consensus
- Increased vulnerability
- State capture
- Worsening tenure insecurity
- Unsustainable natural resource management and development

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR RSPO CERTIFICATION IN GHANA**

- Policy planning
- Pro-poor programming
- Decentralized Land Governance
- Traditional Authorities
- Awareness attention and action
- Bridging the distance from the formal system to the practices in the local area

## **PLENARY DISCUSSION/CONCERNS**

- What categories of people or individuals will be certified
- Wouldn't the high level standards(certification processes)cause production units to wind up
- Whether RSPO will affect the small producer
- Did Malaysia had any support from the state before having the certification
- Is it a requirement to have sophisticated machinery before you are certified
- How do we certify smallholder
- Relationship between our systems (culture) and the standards. Eg. child labour and child work
- What arrangement exist under RSPO to support out growers and Smallholders
- Define Government support for palm oil
- What can be done to ensure that lands without documentation are documented for farm purposes
- How can palm oil producing companies collaborate(liaise) with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to educate farmers on the
- Why do land documentation processes take a longer period

## **CONTRIBUTIONS/RECOMMENDATION**

- ✓ Farmers should see palm oil cultivation as a Business not as a hobby
- ✓ Polluters should made to pay compensation on damage on the environment
- ✓ Ghana should have Palm Oil Board as we have COCOBOD
- ✓ Increase sensitization and awareness on land documentation procedures
- ✓ The certification should bind new and existing production units.

## **REACTIONS**

1. Farming close to water bodies and its implications
2. Patronize CLS to get simple documentation on farm lands to enhance RSPO certification
3. Polluters should be made to pay compensation for pollution
4. The Chiefs should make farm lands easily accessible for farm purposes(cultivation of palm oil)
5. Due to the large land acquired for plantations, it has made difficult for people around their catchment area to get farm lands

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRPERSON; DR. MRS. MARY OPOKU**

The Chair person delivered her closing remarks to bring the workshop to an end. In her speech she highlighted on the purpose of the meeting which was to explain RSPO and its objectives .She admitted that looking at the questions that were coming from the participants ,it gave a true reflection that everyone had understood the concept of RSPO which was the main purpose of the meeting .

The chairperson stated, aside the challenges the certification processes pose, RSPO forum has been beneficial to stakeholders present at the meeting, taking into consideration its vision of ensuring that all oil palm products are from a sustainable source. She also added that all comments, concerns and questions pertaining to RSPO can be sent to COLANDEF or via the internet to the RSPO website.

She thanked all the participants for their contribution and urged those present at the workshop especially the farmers to educate their fellow farmers on what they have learnt to achieve the certification as a country.

**OBSERVATIONS**

- Number of participants at the meeting was very encouraging
- The presentations were made in both Fante and English
- Smallholders and out growers questioned the social responsibilities of BOPP, Norpalm and TOPP.
- Personnel invited from Ameen Sangari did not turn up
- All presentations and activities were done within the time frame assigned
- RSPO website was given out.
- All presentations and activities were done within the time frame assigned