

## Sustainable value chains

Civil society in Indonesia is uniting to address deforestation and growing land-use conflicts through community organisation, legislative reform and international advocacy. By securing tenure rights, communities are protecting their long-term food and income security and the future of the tropical rainforests that are lungs of our planet.



THRIVING ECONOMIES



IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS



FOOD SECURITY



WATER SECURITY



HEALTHY BIODIVERSITY



CLIMATE RESILIENCE



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

# Securing land tenure rights and sustainable land-use planning in Indonesia

I N D O N E S I A

## Context and challenge

Indonesia boasts the world's third largest area of tropical rainforest. But high deforestation rates mean that vast areas of rainforest are being lost every year. The main driver of this loss is export-led agricultural expansion, including for the production of palm oil. Approximately 90% of the world's palm oil is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia. Today palm oil is found in over 50% of the packaged products in our supermarkets. The area of Indonesia covered by oil palm plantations has more than doubled in less than 10 years to cover an estimated 7.7 million hectares<sup>1</sup> (the combined size of the Benelux countries). One 2013 study concluded that Indonesia lost a staggering 15.8 million hectares of forest between 2000 and 2012.<sup>2</sup> Plans to dedicate increasing quantities of palm oil to biofuel production are adding to this demand.

The impacts on ecosystems of Indonesia's palm oil expansion are devastating and far-reaching. One-quarter of plantations are grown on peat soils previously covered by swamp forests. Indonesia's peat swamps are sparsely populated, and thus popular for establishing large plantations – but they are not suitable. The clearance and drainage of the rich organic soils causes subsidence, which results in flooding that can turn them into wastelands. The deforestation of the peat swamps leads to rapid biodiversity loss and is robbing rare species – including orangutans and Sumatran tigers – of large areas of their natural habitat. Moreover, peat destruction, peat fires and forest clearing have helped turn Indonesia into one of the most significant greenhouse gas emitters in the world, and thus a major contributor to climate change.<sup>3</sup>

Almost 65 million people – one-quarter of the Indonesian population – depend directly on forests for their livelihoods. However, as there is often no official recognition of community rights to access or use the natural resources, the government can allocate their land for development, including for large-scale plantations. The resulting land-use

conflicts are increasing in number, frequency and intensity.<sup>4</sup> Overlapping and chaotic forest land-use classification systems work to the advantage of private sector plantation developers at the expense of the rights and livelihoods of forest-reliant people.<sup>5</sup>

## Taking an ecosystem approach

The ecosystem approach promotes the integrated management of land, water and living resources in a way that achieves mutually compatible conservation and sustainable use, and delivers equitable benefits for people and nature.<sup>6</sup> With the support of the Ecosystem Alliance, Indonesian civil society has come together in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua around a suite of related projects to stop the expansion of oil palm production on high-conservation-value lands, and to secure the rights of local communities to the natural resources which are so fundamental to their food, income security and culture.

The program is shaped around four themes:

- **Land maps and land policies:** Civil society is supporting several government initiatives – such as the proposed 'One Map approach' – toward improving the regulation of maps and accompanying land rights. These should lead to new policies that will amplify the voices of all stakeholders and provide opportunities for community organisations to participate in decision making.
- **Moratorium:** In May 2011 Indonesia signed a letter of intent with Norway to impose a two-year moratorium on new concessions, prohibiting licences to convert primary forests and peat lands. The Ministry of Forestry produced regularly revised moratorium maps, which were verified and updated by Indonesian civil society groups. The moratorium has since been extended to 2015.
- **Tenure rights:** Recent reforms have included regulation of tenure rights and the formalisation of Community-Based Forest Management. Forest areas can now be awarded the status of *Hutan Desa* (Village Forest) or *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (Community Forest), giving the community the right to manage the forest and utilise its resources for 35 years. This will protect vital ecological and economic sources of livelihood, and avert the threat of both industrial plantations and mining. Ecosystem Alliance advocacy has empowered some of the most marginalised people in society by organising management groups, providing training, facilitating access to policy makers and helping with applications for Village or Community Forest status.
- **Responsible plantations:** The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was established in 2004 to promote and mainstream the production and use of sustainable palm oil. The involvement of Ecosystem Alliance partners has included facilitating meetings between representatives of affected communities and relevant companies, coordinating civil society input into various steps in the process, and catalysing the establishment of a Dispute Settlement Facility.





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**RSPO Dispute Settlement Facility**  
In response to increasing land conflicts between local-indigenous communities and plantation companies, the Ecosystem Alliance, in partnership with Oxfam Novib, helped establish a land Dispute Settlement Facility within the RSPO. The Facility aims to assist communities and plantations to resolve conflicts through external mediation. The RSPO formally endorsed the multi-stakeholder initiative in 2013. Since then, the Alliance has supported several projects that empower local organisations and communities to negotiate with palm oil companies and defend their rights.

Parallel international action has included advocacy focused on the European Union Renewable Energy Directive and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, including in the context of REDD+ negotiations. The Alliance has helped its Indonesian partners to attend international policy meetings such as the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, and the Association for Women's Rights in Development.

### Impacts on communities, nature and policy

- A successful advocacy campaign improved the moratorium and extended it to 2015.
- Village Forest permits have been awarded to 30 villages in Sumatra, with 41,000 hectares directly attributable to Ecosystem Alliance work and far more in total.
- The West Sumatra Provincial Government has committed to establishing 500,000 hectares of Community-Based Forest Management forest between 2012 and 2017, supported by a new service center for communities and stakeholders.
- The Governor of South Solok District allocated 1.2 billion rupiah (€77,000) toward implementing a Long-Term Village Forest Management Plan.
- Indonesia's Ministry of Forestry has committed to improving the Village and Community Forest policies.
- Indonesian and Filipino partner organisations have developed an ecosystem based adaptation strategy that includes monitoring and lobby of the Indonesia Climate Change Trust Fund and the Green Climate Fund, as well as training on Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment.
- Jambi and West Sumatra Province devised Provincial Strategies and Work Plans for REDD+, highlighting the Village Forest status scheme as a key option for implementation.
- The EU has included criteria to prevent biofuel production at the expense of wetlands and peat lands in its Renewable Energy Directive.
- In April 2013, the RSPO adopted a new set of Principles and Criteria, including for the production of palm oil on peat land.
- In August 2014, the final draft of the Indonesia National Interpretation of these Principles and Criteria was completed in a joint effort by oil palm companies and civil society organisations.

### The way forward

With the moratorium extension ending in mid-2015, urgent work is needed to review and potentially renew this commitment, and to extend its coverage. For example, significant areas of high-carbon forest classified as 'secondary forests' are not yet covered and many peat lands are not yet adequately mapped. Action is also needed to review, revoke or relocate existing concessions on forests and peat lands, and to pursue ongoing work on legislative reform, verification of maps and coordination.

Under this umbrella, the vital work on tenure rights must continue. More resources are required if the project is to be effectively scaled-up to the level needed. The Village and Community Forests are a relatively new instrument for granting tenure rights that could be greatly expanded, and there are many ways in which civil society organisations can assist communities in acquiring tenure security under these and other policies.

Internationally, the project will promote the implementation and enforcement of the 2013 RSPO Principles and Criteria. The Ecosystem Alliance encourages all national governments to take action to link their own sustainability commitments to both uptake of certified sustainable palm oil in the market and their obligations under relevant international negotiations or conventions, such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and REDD+.

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### Further reading

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2. Matt Hansen *et al.* High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change, *Science* Vol. **342**, 15 November 2013.
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6. <http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/>

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