

## **Resolution 6g**

Proposed Resolution to be adopted at the 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

14<sup>th</sup> of November 2013

**TITLE: TRANSPARENCY IN PLANTATION CONCESSION BOUNDARIES**

**Submitted by:** Sumatran Orangutan Society

**Co-signed by:** World Resources Institute, Agropalma, New Britain Palm Oil, Zoological Society of London

### **BACKGROUND**

In June 2013 many Indonesian companies, including oil palm companies, were implicated as being responsible for fires that were causing the haze which was enveloping the region<sup>1</sup>.

The RSPO, the media and other stakeholders were unfortunately not able to verify or deny those claims in a timely manner without maps of members' concessions against which to compare fire hotspot data. Although the RSPO requested that 5 grower member companies submit detailed digital maps of their plantations, these were only available after a few weeks, during which time public speculation on the causes and perpetrators continued.

The incorrect accusations, and the delay in providing a robust response to these, have done considerable damage to the companies, to the RSPO itself, and to the oil palm sector as a whole. Such damage could have been avoided if verified concession data were publicly available, allowing for rapid assessments. In effect, as it stands, the RSPO does not know where its grower members are operating.

We therefore propose that all grower members submit to the RSPO ESRI shapefile polygon data that displays the current, verified boundaries of all of their concessions, and that the RSPO makes this information publicly available on each company's RSPO member page as well as assimilating the data to create a map displaying the location of RSPO member plantation operations. Each member is also responsible for ensuring that the data provided to the RSPO is current and reflects any changes in concession coverage.

Through the provision of accurate maps, companies will be able to protect themselves from false claims against their operations, and the reputation of the RSPO and its stakeholders can be upheld. In the interests of expediting this strengthened position, proactive members are encouraged to submit their concession boundary data as soon as possible to the RSPO.

**Resolution** In view of the RSPO's commitment to transparency;

Acknowledging that government concession maps do not always match true concession boundaries on the ground;

Noting the high level of media, public and NGO scrutiny of the RSPO and its members' operations;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://insights.wri.org/news/2013/06/wri-releases-updated-data-fires-indonesia>  
<http://news.mongabay.com/2013/0716-rspo-vs-greenpeace-haze-fires.html>

We therefore call on the 10th General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, to resolve that:

- 2a) **It is mandatory for grower members to make their existing concession boundaries publicly available in digital format (shapefile) via the RSPO website.**
- b) **Data must be provided by each grower member by the 2014 ACOP deadline, although early submission is encouraged.**

**Contact for further information:**

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**Appendix**

The RSPO has always been concerned with enhancing transparency in the industry, with the very first Principle being a 'Commitment to Transparency'. The revised P&Cs state that all growers are required to make publicly available all legal land use documentation (Criterion 1.2). The RSPO has also stated, in 'Questions on RSPO and the Haze':

*Public transparency on issues of land use and land ownership is essential to addressing the question of responsibility for fires [and] the annual haze problem. Companies and governments should work together to provide consistent concession boundaries to the public, including concessions not certified by the RSPO. This would include all relevant company holdings, joint ventures, and the concessions of exclusive suppliers.*

The issue of transparency is not restricted to the matter of haze, as it has also plagued the RSPO in other aspects such as in this 31 July 2013 'Statement From the RSPO on the Importance of Transparent and Responsible Sourcing of Fresh Fruit Bunches'<sup>2</sup>:

*The RSPO once again underlines the importance of public transparency, especially on issues of land use and land ownership, in addressing many of the question (sic) related to unsustainable practices. The RSPO appreciates the challenge of collating and verifying this information for companies and the Government of Indonesia. Nevertheless, the RSPO once more extends its hand to aid in this effort, where possible and calls on other stakeholders to do the same, and to support projects such as Indonesia's important OneMap Initiative.*

**Statement regarding any concerns of this resolution representing a potential breach of commercial confidentiality:** The proposed resolution concerns areas where activities are on-going and can be seen on the ground and from space, and thus does not refer to commercially sensitive information.

Concession location data is already required to be made available for public review, according to RSPO Criterion 1.2. *"Management documents are publicly available, except where this is prevented by commercial confidentiality or where disclosure of information would result in negative environmental or social outcomes."*

The concession boundary data that we are seeking to make publicly available would not violate the transparency terms established by the RSPO: *'Examples of commercially confidential information include financial data such as costs and income, and details relating to customers and/or suppliers. Data that affects personal privacy should also be confidential.'*