

# OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

## PALM OIL AND BIOFUELS POLICY REFORM

February 2015

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

We, the undersigned organisations, as representatives of civil society from across Asia, Africa and Latin America, are seriously concerned about the devastating impact that Europe's demand for biofuels is having on our forests and millions of our people, and about its significant contribution to rising greenhouse gas emissions.

**Soon, you will vote on vital reforms to EU biofuels policy. Unless you take action to restrict demand for biofuels, Europe will continue to force the transformation of our countries' vital forests, community lands and biodiversity hot-spots into industrial-scale, monoculture oil palm plantations.**

The EU's use of palm oil for biofuels has been rising rapidly<sup>i</sup>, and increasing EU biofuels consumption is also indirectly driving palm oil expansion globally.<sup>ii</sup>

Escalating demand for palm oil means an unsustainable global land footprint. Around 90% of the world's palm oil is grown in **Indonesia and Malaysia**.<sup>iii</sup> The Indonesian government plans to double palm oil plantations to around 28 million hectares by 2020<sup>iv</sup> – an area larger than the entire United Kingdom. Malaysia's existing plantations cover over 5 million hectares,<sup>v</sup> with planned expansion of 60,000-100,000 hectares a year on customary lands.<sup>vi</sup> In Latin America, **Colombia** recorded over 476,000 hectares of land allocated for palm oil in 2013<sup>vii</sup> and **Peru** experienced a five-fold increase in oil palm plantations over the past 15 years<sup>viii</sup>: 72% of new plantations expanded into forested areas<sup>ix</sup>. **The Philippines and West and Central Africa** have been earmarked as the new frontiers for oil palm development: since 2001, foreign companies have signed deals allocating nearly 4 million hectares to palm oil in West and Central Africa<sup>x</sup> and the Philippine government plans to expand to up to 8 million hectares<sup>xi</sup> - 20, 000 hectares of which are within the Palawan UNESCO Man & Biosphere Reserve.<sup>xii</sup>

This relentless drive for palm oil has devastating and often irreversible consequences for people and the environment in our countries, including:

- **Land grabbing and conflict:** Oil palm companies often occupy customary land without obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of local and indigenous communities, forcing the displacement of people from their ancestral homes. The encroachment of oil palm plantations into indigenous peoples' ancestral lands violates international law.<sup>xiii</sup> Non-recognition of land rights causes conflicts between communities and companies, often resulting in violence perpetrated by state security forces in support of oil palm companies, as well as extra-judicial killings.<sup>xiv</sup> 731 conflicts over land tenure between communities and oil palm plantation companies have been recorded in Indonesia alone.<sup>xv</sup>

- **Labour and gender injustice:** The industrial oil palm plantation system frequently fails to respect the rights of workers, causes gender injustices and often involves child labour, denying children their right to education. In Caraga, Philippines, 24% of workers in the palm oil industry are reported to be children between 5-17 years old.<sup>xvi</sup> A high percentage of plantation workers are casual labourers who have no guarantee of safety at work or job security, and are paid wages too low to meet their daily needs.
- **Loss of clean water supplies, food sovereignty and cultural integrity:** Palm oil plantations require huge amounts of water and contaminate vital water sources with effluents,<sup>xvii</sup> including rivers and lakes used for fishing, washing and drinking. The destruction of forests and fertile agricultural land to make way for oil palm plantations is jeopardising the food sovereignty and cultural integrity of entire communities who depend on the land as their source of food and livelihoods.
- **Increased carbon emissions:** Industrial oil palm plantations are one of the world's largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions due to Direct and Indirect Land Use Change causing deforestation, draining of carbon-rich peatlands, forest fires and the burning of land. Biofuels which drive the expansion of palm oil will not only fail to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; they could make climate change worse.

The EU Biofuels policies' sustainability criteria are ineffective in stopping these impacts.

We urge all Members of the European Parliament to vote for biofuels policy reforms which ensure the protection of our people and environment from the impacts of palm oil expansion. **We therefore call on the EU to halt the demand for biofuels in Europe and refrain from using biofuels derived from palm-oil plantations which:**

1. Drive direct and indirect land use change (ILUC), resulting in the clearing of natural forests and peatlands and globally significant carbon emissions.
2. Have taken over community lands important for food, clean water supplies, cultural integrity and protecting the environment;
3. Are developed on lands where companies are in conflict with indigenous peoples and local communities;
4. Are controlled by companies that are involved in human rights violations, including workers' and women's rights and the use of child labour, and that do not respect good governance principles and the rule of law in producer countries.

Yours faithfully,

(197 worldwide civil society organisations)

## **AFRICA**

### *BURUNDI*

Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC)

Unissons nous pour la Promotion des Batwa (UNIPROBA)

### *CAMEROON*

NGO Cameroon Ecology (CAMECO)

### *DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO*

Bonobo Alive

### *LIBERIA*

Sustainable Development Institute (FOE Liberia)

### *UGANDA*

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)

## **ASIA**

### *IRAN*

Abolhassani Indigenous Tribal Confederacy

CENESTA (Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment)

UNINOMAD (Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes of Iran)

UNICAMEL (Union of Indigenous Camel Herders of Iran)

### *INDIA*

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in South Asia [AFSSA]

Beyond Copenhagen collective India

Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha - BJVJ

Community Media Trust

Deccan Development Society

India Climate Justice (ICJ)

Indigenous Perspectives India

Millet Network of India (MINI)

Southern Action on Genetic Engineering [SAGE]

### *INDONESIA*

AGRA PUSAT

Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN)

Aliansi Perempuan South East Sulawesi

Aliansi SERBUNDO

AlPekaje

Ayo Indonesia Foundation

CAPPA-Ecological Justice Jambi

Elpagar, West Kalimantan

Forum Pengawasan Masyarakat Kayong Utara

FORUM WILAYAH, West Kalimantan

FORUM WILAYAH ASPPUK

GEMAPALA (Papua Barat)

Gemawan

HAK organization

IDRAP

Indonesia for Global Justice

Institut Dayakologi

Jaringat Rakyat Kakap

Jasoil Tanah Papua (West Papua)

JKPP (Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif)

Jurnalis Perempuan Khatulistiwa

KOMNASDESA South East Sulawesi

KpSHK

Lanting Borneo

Lembaga Dayak Panarung

LP2M West Sumatera

Merauke (SKP KAME)/Office for Justice and Peace of Archdiocese of Merauke (Papua)

OPPUK (Organisasi Pengatan dan Pengembangan Usaha-usaha Kerakyatan)

## PEREMPUAN AMAN

Perkumpulan Huma Indonesia

## PERKUMPULAN WALLACEA

## POKKER SHK

PPSW- Borneo

Save Our Borneo

Sawit Watch

Seknas ASPPUK

Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian  
Keuskupan Agung

Sekretariat Konsil LSM, Jakarta

Serikat Perempuan Basis Khatulistiwa (SPBK)

Serikat Perempuan Pantai Utara

Serikat Petani Serumpun Damai

SETARA Jambi

SKP Keuskupan Agung, Merauke (Papua)

SPKS (Serikat Petani Kelapa Sawit/National Oil  
Palm Farmers Union, Indonesia)

Swandiri Institute

Transformasi untuk Keadilan Indonesia (TUK  
Indonesia)

WALHI Central Kalimantan

WALHI East Kalimantan

WALHI Jambi

WALHI Lampung

WALHI Nasional

WALHI Riau

WALHI South Kalimantan

WALHI South Sulawesi

WALHI South Sumatera

WALHI West Kalimantan

WALHI West Sulawesi

Yayasan Betang Borneo (YBB)

Yayasan Dian Tama

Yayasan Merangat, West Kalimantan

Yayasan Nurani Perempuan, Kaltim.

Yayasan Setara Jambi

## MALAYSIA

Borneo Resources Institute, Malaysia (BRIMAS)

Center for Orang Asli Concerns

Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP)

Friends of the Orangutans (FOTO)

HUTAN-Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation  
Programme

IDEAL Sarawak

Institute for Development of Alternative Living  
(IDEAL)

Jaringan Orang Asal Se Malaysia/Indigenous  
Peoples Network of Malaysia (JOAS)

Malaysians Against the Expansion of Palm Oil  
Plantations

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) - FOE Malaysia

Sarawak Indigenous Lawyers Alliance (SILA)

Sarawak Indigenous Lawyers' Association (SILA)

Save Sarawak's Rivers Network (SAVE Rivers)

Third World Network, Penang (TWN)

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Deribat Community Development Foundation  
Inc.

Fagagara Land Group Incorporated

Irena Ecotourism & Conservation Inc.

Jacquinet Bay Ecotourism & Conservation  
Association

Katopuna Landcare Group

Managalas Development Foundation Inc.

Ona Keto Peoples Foundation Inc.

Pari Womens Development Association Inc.

Partners With Melanesians Inc.

Pomio Potong Paga Association Inc.

## PHILIPPINES

ALDAW (Ancestral Land/Domain Watch)

Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao (AFRIM), Inc.

Alyansa Tigil Mina (Atm)

Aniban ng Manggagawa sa Agrikultura

Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)

CALG (Coalition against Land Grabbing)

Ecological Society of the Philippines

ELAC (Environmental Legal Assistance Center)

EU-ASEAN FTA Campaign

Focus on the Global South

NATRIPAL (United Tribes of Palawan)/Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan

Non-Timber Forest Products-Exchange Programme Philippines (NTEP-EP Philippines)

Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates

Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PHILRIGHTS)

Philippine Movement for Climate Justice

Socskargend Care

The Batak Federation

Urban Agriculture Advocates & Practitioners Network, Inc.

#### *THAILAND*

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Assembly of the Poor

Thai Poor Act

#### **LATIN AMERICA**

##### *ARGENTINA*

Asociación contra la Contaminación Ambiental de Esteban Echeverría.

BIOS Argentina

Eco Sitio

##### *BRAZIL*

Brazilian Confederation of Private Nature Reserves/CNRPPN (representing 16 associations in Brazil)

##### *COLOMBIA*

CENSAT - Friends of the Earth Colombia

Comisión de Justicia y Paz Colombia

Corpoguali

Corporacion Sembradoras de Identidad

Educar Consumidores Colombia

La Campaña Semillas de Identidad

##### *COSTA RICA*

COECO Ceiba - Amigos de la Tierra Costa Rica

##### *EL SALVADOR*

CESTA, Amigos de la Tierra El Salvador

##### *GUATAMALA*

Asociación CEIBA

Plataforma de Solidaridad con Chiapas y Guatemala de Madrid

Red por la Defensa del Territorio y Soberanía Alimentaria de la Costa Sur (REDSUR)

##### *HAÏTI*

Plateforme haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA)

##### *HONDURAS*

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH)

World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

##### *MEXICO*

Maderas del Pueblo del Sureste AC, Oaxaca-Chiapas

Otros Mundos, A.C./Amigos de la Tierra Mexico

Plataforma de Solidaridad con Chiapas Y  
Guatemala de Madrid

#### *URUGUAY*

Regional Latinoamericana de la UITA (Rel-UITA)

#### **OTHER / INTERNATIONAL**

Amigos de la Tierra Espagne

Biofuelwatch

Bonhoeffergruppe der Evangelischen  
Auferstehungsgemeinde

Carbon Trade Watch

Comite Obispo O. Romero

Comité Óscar Romero De Vigo (COR)

Coordinadora Ecoloxista d'Asturies

Corporate Europe Observatory

Cultural Survival

Denkhausbremen

Ecologistas en Acción (Spain)

EcoNexus

Energiehunger - Nein Danke Network

ENFID (European Network of Filipino Diaspora)

Forest People's Programme

Friends of the Earth Europe

Friends of the Siberian Forest

Global Forest Coalition

ICCA Consortium

Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika-IGLA  
(Information Group on Latin America)

International Coalition for Papua

International Primate Protection League (IPPL)

Justiclima.org

La Organizacion Traperos de Emaus

Misereor e.V, (German Catholic Bishops'  
Organisation for Development Cooperation)

Oil Palm Action Group, Australia

ONG Africando

Orang-Utans in Not e.V. (Orangutans in peril)

Paul K. Feyerabend Foundation

Pro Wildlife e.V.

Protect the Forest

Proyecto Gran Simio (gap/pgs-españa)

Redmanglar Internacional

Regenwald-Institut e.V.

Rettet den Regenwald (Rainforest Rescue  
Germany)

Salva la Selva

Sierra Club

Soldepaz Pachakuti

Solidarity Sweden - Latin America

Survival International

TAPOL

The Bioscience Resource Project

The Gaia Foundation (UK)

The Woodland League

Watch Indonesia! e.V.

World Rainforest Movement

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- <sup>i</sup> Palm oil for biofuels has increased by 365 per cent between 2006 and 2012. Source: IISD. 'The EU Biofuel Policy and Palm Oil: Cutting subsidies or cutting rainforest?'. September 2013. Available from: [http://www.iisd.org/gsi/sites/default/files/bf\\_eupalmoil.pdf](http://www.iisd.org/gsi/sites/default/files/bf_eupalmoil.pdf)
- <sup>ii</sup> Vegetable oil markets and the EU biofuel mandate. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT). February 2013. Source: [http://www.theicct.org/sites/default/files/publications/ICCT\\_vegoil\\_and\\_EU\\_biofuel\\_mandate\\_20130211.pdf](http://www.theicct.org/sites/default/files/publications/ICCT_vegoil_and_EU_biofuel_mandate_20130211.pdf)
- <sup>iii</sup> Palm oil overview. WWF. Available from: <http://www.worldwildlife.org/industries/palm-oil>
- <sup>iv</sup> Kedaulatan pangan, hanyalah mimpi, bila kontroversi lahan pangan tidak dihentikan. Sawit Watch. 9 December 2014. Available from: <http://sawitwatch.or.id/2014/12/kedaulatan-pangan-hanyalah-mimpi-bila-konversi-lahan-pangan-tidak-dihentikan/>
- <sup>v</sup> Palm oil facts and figures. Sime Darby Plantation. April 2014. Available from: [http://www.simedarby.com/upload/Palm\\_Oil\\_Facts\\_and\\_Figures.pdf](http://www.simedarby.com/upload/Palm_Oil_Facts_and_Figures.pdf)
- <sup>vi</sup> Palm oil and indigenous peoples in South East Asia. Landcoalition.org. January 2011. Available from: [http://www.landcoalition.org/sites/default/files/publication/912/FPP\\_Malaysia\\_Indonesia\\_web\\_11.03.11.pdf](http://www.landcoalition.org/sites/default/files/publication/912/FPP_Malaysia_Indonesia_web_11.03.11.pdf)
- <sup>vii</sup> Boletín de Prensa: Sector palmero le apuesta a la conservación de la biodiversidad, de la mano con el Instituto Alexander von Humboldt y WWF. 18 February 2014. Available from: [http://web.fedepalma.org/sites/default/files/Fedepalma/BOLETIN\\_FEDEPALMAYLABIODIVERSIDAD.pdf](http://web.fedepalma.org/sites/default/files/Fedepalma/BOLETIN_FEDEPALMAYLABIODIVERSIDAD.pdf)
- <sup>viii</sup> Agraria.pe. Area de palma aceitera se quintuplicó en Perú en los últimos 15 años. June 2014. Available from: <http://agraria.pe/noticias/area-de-palma-aceitera-se-quintuplico-en-peru-en-los-ultimos-15-anos>
- <sup>ix</sup> Gutierrez-Velez, V.H. et al. High-yield oil palm expansion spares land at the expense of forests in the Peruvian Amazon. Environmental Research Letters 6. 2011. Available from: [http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/6/4/044029/pdf/1748-9326\\_6\\_4\\_044029.pdf](http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/6/4/044029/pdf/1748-9326_6_4_044029.pdf)
- <sup>x</sup> Land grabs for oil palm plantations in Africa and Papua. GRAIN. 22 September 2014. Available from: <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/5042-land-grabs-for-oil-palm-plantations-in-africa-and-papua>
- <sup>xi</sup> 8 Mil Hectares eyes for oil palm plantations. Philippine Daily Inquirer. 26 May 2014. Available from: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/605424/8m-ha-eyed-for-oil-palm-plantations>
- <sup>xii</sup> ICCA Consortium. ICCA alert: last chance to halt oil palm rush in palawan 'man & biosphere reserve' (the philippines). 2013. Available from: [http://www.iccaconsortium.org/?page\\_id=2248](http://www.iccaconsortium.org/?page_id=2248). Other countries with oil palm projects include PNG, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, India, Solomon Islands, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Guyana, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Mexico.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Such as such as the Convention on Biological Diversity; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.
- <sup>xiv</sup> ICCA Alert: Stop indiscriminate oil palm expansion on indigenous peoples' land. 2013. Available from: [http://www.iccaconsortium.org/?page\\_id=76](http://www.iccaconsortium.org/?page_id=76)
- <sup>xv</sup> Oil palm and Indonesia, Sawit Watch (Indonesia)/Geodata.cso.org. Available from: <http://geodata-cso.org/embed/19/Oil%20Palm%20and%20Indonesia>
- <sup>xvi</sup> [http://www.laborrights.org/sites/default/files/publications-and-resources/Children\\_of\\_the\\_Sunshine\\_Industry.pdf](http://www.laborrights.org/sites/default/files/publications-and-resources/Children_of_the_Sunshine_Industry.pdf)
- <sup>xvii</sup> Oil processing industries can release 2.5 tonnes of effluent for each tonne of oil processed. Pollution control laws are seldom complied with. For more information see pg. 11, *The Bitter Fruit of Oil Palm: Dispossession and Deforestation*. World Rainforest Movement. August 2001. Available from: <http://wrm.org.uy/oldsite/plantations/material/OilPalm.pdf>