

## **HCS Convergence Meeting Statement Release**

On October 6, 2015, the leaders of the HCS Approach and the HCS Science Study, and representatives of Unilever, Wilmar, Musim Mas, GAR, Sime Darby, Cargill, Greenpeace, The Forest Trust, Union of Concerned Scientists, Forest Peoples Programme, and WWF met in Singapore. The goal was to work together toward agreement on a single clear set of rules for implementation of companies' commitments to 'No Deforestation'.

The HCS Approach and the emerging conclusions of the HCS Science Study are convergent in many respects, although the Approach is cross-sectoral and the Study is only for oil palm. There is clear common ground in application of the patch analysis developed by the HCS Approach, and in the use of LIDAR as an approach for deriving biomass maps and the methods for protecting organic soils proposed by the HCS Study. Further, there is agreement on the need for rigorous implementation of HCV and FPIC and robust support for the rights and interests of local communities. Both the HCS Approach and the HCS Study support the protection of primary forests, forests subjected to moderate levels of logging disturbance and older secondary forests, and agree that low-carbon scrub landscapes and open land should be priorities for any proposed development.

The HCS Approach and the HCS Study have different approaches to the first class of vegetation that can be considered forest – young regenerating forest. Both apply FPIC, community land use mapping and HCV to those forests, but then the HCS Approach specifies a decision tree to assess and conserve forest values; the HCS Study proposes that land use decisions be governed by a requirement for carbon neutrality. The group agreed to run parallel and joint implementation trials of different components of the HCS Approach and the HCS Study proposals in diverse landscapes to see how they compare in conservation and development outcomes and in practicalities of implementation, and to explore the challenges, risks and benefits of applying the carbon neutral approach. These trials are intended to inform further discussions about the possibilities for further convergence or complementarity.

The group also recognized that there are important issues that they need to address together, including how to ensure that HCS forest is not only identified but effectively protected in cooperation with any affected communities, future integration of HCS with existing systems such as HCV, RSPO and FSC, and how to apply no deforestation commitments in high forest cover regions. Members of the Sustainable Palm Oil Manifesto, which sponsored the HCS Study, will be invited to join in HCS Approach working groups that are addressing those questions.

There is much work to do over the coming months, but this conversation was an important beginning. The organizations around the table share a commitment to finding a path to a single set of rules for companies that have committed to no deforestation. The group will meet again before the RSPO Roundtable meeting in November to continue these discussions.