Monday, 12 November 2018

CRITICAL VOTE FOR LEADING PALM OIL CERTIFICATION SCHEME TO ADOPT TRUE 'NO DEFORESTATION' STANDARD

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah – The High Carbon Stock Approach (HCSA) Executive Committee is calling for the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) members to vote in favour of the updated RSPO Principles & Criteria as it integrates the HCSA No Deforestation methodology into criterion 7.12 during the 15th General Assembly. The RSPO is the world's largest palm oil certification scheme and a positive vote will situate the RSPO as the global standard committed to certifying deforestation-free palm oil. Growing concerns over the impact of deforestation on the global climate, water scarcity, wildlife loss, and the rights of forest dependent communities is driving international demand for palm oil that is not linked to the continued loss of rainforests.

Deforestation - a critical issue on the ballot

During the RSPO's Principles & Criteria review process, deforestation has been a critical issue because the current certification standard permits the clearance of secondary forests, which are vital for wildlife, carbon storage and local livelihoods.[1] Despite increasing global awareness and efforts to protect forests, over 13 million hectares of forest are still lost every year,[2] and most tropical deforestation is driven by development for agricultural commodities, such as palm oil,[3] beef, and soy. This crisis does not only displace the people and wildlife dependent on theses rich forests, but it also makes reaching our 1.5-degree climate goal more difficult; instead of these forests acting as vast carbon sinks, deforestation and agricultural development emit more carbon than all of our cars, ships, and planes combined. This failure to harness rapid emission reductions possible through a transition to responsible, deforestation-free agriculture represents a giant opportunity cost.[4] Thus, strengthening the RSPO's Principles & Criteria to prohibit deforestation will create a win-win for

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[1] Gareth D Lennox, Toby A Gardner, James R Thomson, Joice Ferreira, Erika Berenguer, Alexander C Lees, Ralph Mac Nally, Luiz E O C Aragão, Silvio F B Ferraz, Julio Louzada, Nárgila G Moura, Victor H F Oliveira, Renata Pardini, Ricardo R C Solar, Fernando Z Vaz-de Mello, Ima C G Vieira, Jos Barlow. Second rate or a second chance? Assessing biomass and biodiversity recovery in regenerating Amazonian forests. *Global Change Biology*, 2018; DOI: 10.1111/gcb.14443; https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/10/181004085335.htm

[2] Brazil, Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Malaysia have had the highest rates of rainforest loss between 2012 and 2014. Hansen M.C., Potapov, P.V., Moore, R., Turubanova, S.A., Tyukavina, A., Thau D., Stehman, V., & Goetz, S.J. (Nov 2013) High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change. Science 15 Nov 2013: Vol:342, pp 850-853. Global Forest Change 2000–2017

[3] One of the main drivers of deforestation and forest ecosystems degradation is agricultural expansion. According to different estimates, agricultural expansion is the primary driver of 27 to 80 percent of deforestation worldwide. Kissinger, G., Herold, M. & De Sy, V. 2012. Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation: a synthesis report for REDD+ policymakers. Vancouver, Canada, Lexeme Consulting. Curtis, P.G., Slay, C.M., Harris, N.L., Tyukavina, A. & Hansen, M.C. (2018). Classifying drivers of global forest loss. Science 361, 1108–1111

[4] Missing pathways to 1.5 Celsius: The role of the land use sector in ambitious climate action. Climate ambition that safeguards land rights, biodiversity and food security. Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance (CLARA) October 2018

people, wildlife, and our climate goals, and respond to market demands for responsible agricultural production.

Voting in favour of the RSPO's new proposed requirements to halt deforestation through the use of HCSA's No Deforestation methodology will allow the RSPO certification system to contribute to the transition to a deforestation-free palm oil sector. Additionally, application of the rigorous social requirements of the HCS Approach will be integral to achieving positive impacts for communities that balance sustainable livelihood and poverty reduction with the need to conserve, protect and enhance ecosystems, and respect land users' rights.

Several RSPO members including growers have been using the HCS Approach as the methodology for implementing their No Deforestation commitments for years. The High Carbon Stock Approach Steering Group is committed to working with the RSPO to actively support the uptake of its methodology by all RSPO members, ensuring a rapid transition to a deforestation-free palm oil standard.

About the HCS Approach

The HCS Approach is the first practical, field-tested methodology for distinguishing forest areas that should be protected or restored, from degraded lands that may be developed, using an integrated land-use planning approach. The methodology was developed with the aim to ensure a practical, transparent, robust, and scientifically credible approach that is widely accepted to implement commitments to halt deforestation in the tropics, while ensuring the rights and livelihoods of local peoples are respected. The HCS Approach has allowed major plantations and supply chain actors to reduce their impact by not clearing or purchasing goods from HCS forests and High Conservation Value (HCV) areas.

About the HCSA Steering Group

The HCSA Steering Group provides overall governance of the HCS Approach and oversees further development of the methodology, including refining its definition, its objectives, and its relationship to other approaches to halting deforestation. For further information, please visit www.highcarbonstock.org.

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