

A SUMMARY OF RT6

Vengeta Rao

Secretary General

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RSPO

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

SESSION 1 – RSPO PRODUCER CERTIFICATION

The plenary session started with an opening paper by Darrel Weber of WWF International explaining the **details of RSPO producer certification**.

Syed Mahadar spoke of Sime Darby's road to certification, long before RSPO, for **common sense** suggested protecting the environment and addressing social issues while seeking profit from risk and enterprise.

Musim Mas are the **first Indonesian company to seek RSPO** certification. Dr. Gan Liang Tong spoke of the many measures that were built on past initiatives along the way.

The session was closed with SGS speaking of their experience with RSPO auditing, drawing parallels with forestry certification and the need for **all parties to work closely together**

SESSION 2 – CHALLENGES IN THE NEAR DISTANCE

Much of the increasing volume of palm oil the world needs will **come from Indonesia**. Blessed with an environment that makes that nation the most efficient supplier to the world Pak Mukti Sardjono, on behalf of the Director General of Estate Crops, talked of the **many challenges** this would pose enroute to a better living for the people. The challenges included pressures on forests and biodiversity and the need for just distribution of the benefits to all its peoples. The raft of **pre-requisites and guidelines, for expansion, many consonant with RSPO P&C** are being continually improved to meet this challenges.

Dato Mamat Salleh, CEO of MPOA - the largest grouping of palm oil production - spoke of the *earnest progress of sustainable palm oil in Malaysia from the very beginning with MPOA being a founder member*, and the government's increasing support for it. He also voiced concern that as big plantations seek the RSPO standard may leave **smallholders may be increasingly forsaken**. Malaysia is alarmed at shifting goal posts both within and without the RSPO. Quote “Grandchildren's right to future development vs Grandfathers rights of past development”.

SESSION 2 – CHALLENGES IN THE NEAR DISTANCE

Simon Lord noted that outside of Malaysia and Indonesia, '**rest of world**' so to speak, the **production landscape is one of smallholders** and small growers and the need to address their needs vis-a-vis RSPO.

Andres Castro talked of the growing importance of oil palm, far from the current epicentre, and where *Colombia is the leading producer*. The recent 1 Latin American RSPO meeting saw 336 participants. And the **Colombian NI was received on the eve of RT6**. The gathering momentum is occurring far and wide; with Thailand and Ghana in communication with the Secretariat on NI for their respective countries.

Thomas Fairhurst, much read in oil palm agronomy and plantations operations, sounded a timely **caveat about planting oil palms everywhere**. Some of the poorer lands perhaps should not be planted and better lands coaxed to produce more.

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SESSION 3 – CSPO & THE GLOBAL MARKET

Ian McIntosh told of the **driving demand for CSPO from Europe**, the arrival of the first oil and the challenges yet ahead.

It was heartening to hear that in tranquil Japan too, devoid of entertaining posing around sustainability issues, environmentalism is coming to the fore. To show **concern and to help in a constructive manner** was the essence of Nakanishi-san's excellent presentation.

In China too, with **poverty still rampant**, there is yet little interest in CSPO, but hearts are a-stirring, warming to the call for conservation and protection of the environment. Dr. Huo spoke of the **much work that needs to be done to spread the message of RSPO** to the many users of palm oil in China – the world's biggest market.

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**And then Mr. Godrej spake
Of India's thirst for edible oils
How its farmers have to work and rake
For pittance yields from barren soils.**

**For the land so sparse of rain
That annual crops oft struggle in vain
In short rains ere the drought again
To eke out some miserable grain.**

**But the oil palm, godsend to the world
May well be succour to India's woes
To spout its bounteous oil of gold
With just some irrigation sprinkled so!**

SESSION 4 – SMALLHOLDER PRODUCTION

Session 4 started off with Dr. Asril Darussamin, who has been involved in the RSPO P&C, particularly the smallholder work. The Indonesian smallholder working group has produced a **comprehensive NI for Indonesian smallholders** and is awaiting finalisation of the generic P&C for smallholders to commence trial auditing on the road towards smallholder certification.

The smallholder initiative, in Malaysia, is rightly led by FELDA – the world's largest grouping of smallholdings. The Malaysian working group has had a number of **'train-the-trainers' sessions** in RSPO P&C and the Malaysian NI for smallholders, which like the Indonesian NI, is awaiting finalisation of the generic before seeking RSPO approval on the way to implementation.

The logo for the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), featuring the letters 'RSPO' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

SESSION 4 – SMALLHOLDER PRODUCTION

The road to certification, if difficult for large growers, is even more **tortuous for smallholders**. Agung Prawoto from Biocert and experienced in organic and forestry certification in Indonesia, which also has the largest number of oil palm smallholders, spelt out some of the hurdles that can be anticipated along that road.

The challenge for smallholder certification, seemed less daunting, when Jan Maarten Dros spoke of **POPSI – Palm oil producer support initiative**, that would help smallholder certification with some financial support if there is co-funding from other sources. While, during Q&A some felt that it was too little, but certainly not too late, the **RSPO is encouraged** as we believe that there will be others who will come forward to help RSPO level the playing field.

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SESSION 5 – SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

In Session 5 the meeting turned to the 'business' side of things.

Don Gruba spoke on among the most difficult seas the RSPO is attempting to charter, supply chain certification for a product with a myriad of uses from negligible quantities in a final product to practically all of it. He provided a lucid explanation of the various **supply chain options and their complexities.**

Bas Geerts then told about the central registry of all CSPO and its movement, a registry whose efficient and secure use is guaranteed by Utz Certified.

Bob Norman went through the detail of how the Book & Claim mechanism for CSPO would operate, **its very simplicity allowing for a connect between a sustainable way of producing palm oil and a market that desires such** and immediate market relevance to the work of the RSPO.

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SESSION 6 & 7 – WORLD CAFES

Thomas Barano, of WWF Indonesia, who summarised the output from the Government Cafe, talked about how governments are involved in the oil palm industry and put forth some **suggestions on some of the issues governments should consider.**

The **problems of smallholders are very difficult** and the ways to help them by training to bring them into the RSPO certification system were discussed at length. Johan Verbug led this cafe.

Mariekke talked about the various supply chain mechanisms, in particular the **pros and cons of each.** Many of the issues have to be **considered in more detailed deliberations as CSPO flows.**

The Communications, led by Caroline Sikking, told us that communications means **different things to different people.** There would need to be a **survey of the needs of the different** interest groups in order for RSPO to better promote the RSPO story, RSPO certification and CSPO.

SESSION 8 – SUSTAINABILITY A GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

Session 8 addressed Sustainability as a global initiative. John MCarthy found the success of smallholder planting oil palm to be very much **predicated on implementation of government policies.**

Rachel Kyte, Vice-President from the IFC, drew our attention to the fact that **financial institutions**, and especially those of a global reach, are supporting sustainability. She elaborated on **IFC policies in support of sustainability initiatives.**

Catherine Cassagne, spoke about the BACP programme and its **early with start with oil palm and soya bean**, with other major tropical crops, like sugar cane, to follow.

The plenary sessions closed a paper from the Roundtable on Responsible Soy. It was gratifying to note that the **RTRS is taking on the learnings from the RSPO.**

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