3rd IUCN Oil Palm Task Force meeting, London, UK

# Summary

On 20 and 21 June 2018, the IUCN Oil Palm Task Force met in London to review past activities and discuss future strategies. Day 1 consisted a number of presentations about: the publication process of the Oil Palm and Biodiversity situation analysis by the task force, including its launch at RSPO EURT in Paris the following week and the required media messaging; GEF’s work on global commodities; the role of people and indigenous communities in oil palm; and new approaches to understanding the impact of oil palm and socio-economic conditions across large landscapes. Discussion on these topics led to the identification of 10 topics of potential interest to the Task Force. These were further condensed and analysed on the day 2, and at the end of the day there was consensus on focusing task force activities on two key topics: 1. Providing input into new RSPO indicators (short term request); 2. Focusing on oil palm development in forest frontiers. The main reason for focusing on forest frontiers are that few organizations want to work there as they adhere to No Deforestation principles. This means that there is little guidance as to how environmental impacts in these forest frontiers can best be minimized and socio-economic benefits maximized. Without guidance and study, business-as-usual practices will likely prevail, and it is clear from current analyses that this will result in major environmental and social impacts. The choice of this strategy will be further discussed internally in IUCN in a meeting in Gland, Switzerland in August 2018.

# Participants

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| **Name** | **Affiliation** |
| Erik Meijaard | Task Force Chair |
| Rachel Hoffmann | IUCN SSC |
| Darrel Webber | RSPO |
| Marcus Colchester | IUCN CEESP |
| Giulia Carbone | IUCN Business and Biodiversity |
| Douglas Sheil | Norwegian Univ. Life Science |
| Ginny Ng | Wilmar |
| Christopher Stewart | OLAM |
| Marc Ancrenaz | HUTAN and PONGO Alliance |
| Paul Hartman | GEF (Global Environmental Facility) |
| María Amparo Albán | World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) |
| Serge Wich | John Moores University Liverpool |
| Izabela Delabre | Zoological Society of London |
| Charlotte Opal | TFT |
| John Garcia-Ulloa | ETH Zurich |
| Tim Rayden | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| Heleen van den Hombergh | IUCN Netherlands |
| Cat Barton | Chester Zoo |
| Stefano Savi | RSPO and IUCN CEC |
| Samir Whitaker | Zoological Society of London |

Additionally, PC Abhilash from the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) could not make it to the meeting but submitted a presentation which was shared with the other participants.

# Meeting notes

## Wednesday 20th June

The following points arose from a general discussion on how the Situation Analysis on Oil Palm and Biodiversity should be used to prioritize the objectives of the Task Force until the end of the current IUCN quadrennium (2020), taking into account the relevant calls within Resolution 061 as well as considering how best to place the Task Force to ensure added value:

* Limited voluntary initiative effectiveness. Corporate commitments are important but there is a need for stronger government action
* Why does palm oil seem to receive more negative attention than other commodity sectors and oil crops:
  + Potentially more pressure points for palm oil (companies) than other commodities (e.g., beef)
  + Quick expansion, charismatic species, personal responsibility. Does this reflect on civil society power?
  + Columbia – physically striking in landscapes
  + Attention has been given to palm oil and health
  + Sensitivity related to lack of transparency on labels, and considered potentially easy to replace with other oil crops
  + Emotive images of fires, haze, burnt orangutans
  + Maybe other sectors do receive attention, we do not need to ‘defend’ palm oil, but think objectively?
* Question of what actually makes an impact on the ground: what is the ‘gold standard’ (RSPO already sets ‘norms’), need for practical guidelines, clear principles around land-use planning. People working in palm oil want and need concrete steps. There is currently a lack of integration between different tools at different levels, so there is a need to bring them together.
* Political cross-cutting process, opportunity to build better governance. Take into account different sectors within a territory, implications on biodiversity within a landscape approach.
* A landscape may include diverse activities: mining, restoration, infrastructure development. Need to consider these land uses in the palm oil context.
* Socio-political context of the palm oil industry: land tenure issues need to be properly understood as well as their implications on biodiversity. For example, there is not enough land set aside for people – should be involved in set-aside management. Look at what other sectors are doing (e.g., pulpwood sector has made improvements).
* Tenure: people with secure tenure may sell it and go into forests (e.g., in Sabah and Ecuador). This is an issue in the context of individual land holdings (e.g., urban dwellers land grabbing in South Africa). Therefore, a greater understanding is needed of land markets, and what happens in the context of customary vs. alienable land.
* People need to be involved in land use planning /who is already using the land?
* What has worked better in the past? Companies doing forest-based tenure?
* Is it in this group’s remit to start looking into the social dimensions and systematic assessments of social impacts and links with biodiversity. Lots of “anecdotal” rather than “systematic” examples.
* Should there be more focus on the enabling conditions that can result in both better biodiversity and social impacts?
* Comparing different crops for their environmental impacts (p.71 of Situation Analysis): Palm Oil (PO) scores best e.g., canola, soy (Brazil), per litre of fuel, if you do want to say that you replace PO with a litre of canola oil, then you would get a worse environmental impact. For the environmental implications, these are lower with PO e.g, pesticides, water resource use, amount of biodiversity found. So, this has already been looked at and may be could be used further.
* Think about the next steps of the Task Force, whose mandate runs to the next World Conservation Congress, June 2020, and how should it prepare for this, e.g., policy through a recommendation. What should the plans be for the next 2 years? What are our strengths, what do we want to achieve? Where do we have added value when we consult the Resolution?
* Marcus Colchester suggested the following areas to consider:
* Participatory land-use planning
* Insuring small holders benefit – what works and what doesn’t?
* Incentivizing community conservation (perhaps outside the scope of the motion?)
* What are conditions under which there are social benefits of PO
* Trends and lessons learns from land markets
* More biodiversity friendly production methods (different ways of producing PO – alternative productions models for PO)
* Paul Hartman: GEF’s approach is within the theme of the “Global Commons”: funding would potentially come from biodiversity. Interested in private sector engagement. 4-year funding cycle, discretionary funding. IUCN was a partner.
* Jurisdictional approaches in particular landscapes may not be transferrable for different reasons. Erik Meijaard and Marcus Colchester working on proposal to look at most successful interventions.
* Links to sensible land use and the need to work with the governments – possibly using a simple traffic light system for development.
* Smallholders are important in the supply chain – a large percentage from smallholders has a big impact on biodiversity.
* Thinking about interplay between smallholder and biodiversity and the role they play.
* This IUCN Task Force is well-placed to engage with governments and therefore have an impact. Therefore, make the document government and company-facing (and translated) to be practical.
* RSPO is conducting a public consultation on the RSPO Principles and Criteria but currently lack really good indicators, but help is required to know what’s missing – preferably biodiversity-related indicators.
* Erik Meijaard’s paper on different sustainability criteria and impacts on communities based on government data – different impacts on market vs. non-market communities:
  + How have economies changed overall – how to attribute to palm oil?
  + This data is from social elites within communities. ANU studies look at the differentiated impacts within communities.
  + Perceptions may change over time.
* Cheryl Ong at RSPO Secretariat: can potentially link research with some of the impact studies being undertaken by RSPO. Developing indicators/metrics to manage set-aside areas would be really helpful – P&C e.g., species, who will protect the area etc.?
* Identify conditions for sustainable and responsible palm oil, then recommend the tools to achieve it.
* Potentially focus on land use planning in frontier areas? Where can create biggest socio-economic losses/gains – west and central Africa
* Something that could be presented at WCC – good place to get everyone together.
* Use report – get it to readers, to policy makers. Create feedback mechanism on the report. Convene members including governments. Could be easier to convene something in parallel with IUCN events, and government members. What do policymakers focus on?
* Influence where plantations will go? What will policymakers prioritise? Research on biodiversity.
* Refineries in Indonesia: 70% covered by NDPE (no-deforestation, no peat, no exploitation) policies. Need to focus on refineries?
* NDPE for fragmented forest areas. Can develop when communities give consent/are involved?
* Companies facilitated by banks. There is a need to engage with them as they fund projects where there is no existing infrastructure. Who owns and who is financing the dark side players?
* Key expansion areas over next 10 years: strategically place ourselves where deforestation will happen?

## Thursday 21st June

**General discussion**

* Establishing ourselves as a credible voice in the oil palm arena with the report.
* How do we disseminate the report and seek feedback?
* Summarise the key messages and reach out to Council. Next Council meeting in October: Get it on the agenda for discussion to create higher level visibility.
* How to offset biodiversity losses?
* Need to develop something that translates back to policy
* Coming up for solutions for intact forest landscapes e.g., Papua and come up with solutions re the way forward, which are agreeable (compromise between govts and communities). Big pressure on these kinds of landscapes. High quality management of working with best companies. Working with finance sector, banks, the companies, setting a new model for development of OP in intact landscapes (but controversial).
* IUCN well placed as linked to Govts, could the task force propose to Govt members, can we develop a toolkit to start talking about these kinds of developments in their country e.g, Central Africa (West to East Africa – new frontiers for PO and where we can intervene). A good niche for IUCN.
* Once you reach the level of companies the decision has already been made at Govt level. First level of intervention should be with the govt.
* Need to have some agreed thinking to share. How do you get socio economic benefits while minimizing biodiversity loss?

**List of potential activities that could be carried out by the task force in the future, and their suitability criteria for the task force.**

When considering the feasibility of these activities, we should think about the key factors:

- Added value: useful within the current research and policy landscape

- Falls into calls of Resolution

- Doable within the next two years (current mandate of the task force, and before the end of the quadrennium).

- Link to current activities by members of the task force (to join efforts and tap on ongoing process)

- Fundable

- Robust

1. **Comparison of certification schemes**
   * Proposed by reviewers during Situation Analysis consultation
   * Already done to some extent (e.g. FPP). A significant amount of work has been done on this topic, although rigorousness and robustness of this analysis is controversial.
   * Could work on this question be a synthesis of previous works? Could case studies be used?
   * A possible approach: Comparison of certified and non-certified with regards to biodiversity metrics related to species or populations – are certified operations doing a good job in forests? However, this requires of metrics and indicators (see next point).
   * IUCN NL and ETH Zurich have conducted some work on this aspect.
2. **Development of biodiversity monitoring indicators**
   * Brought forward by reviewers during Situation Analysis consultation and also by Durrel.
   * Is there a global benchmark re what should be measured? e.g., develop the metrics and the approach (e.g. ZSL’s SMART HCV monitoring protocol), use of diversity index (crude measurement, easy to process data (standard code).
   * What is the role of new technologies on the development of indicators?: e.g. acoustic monitoring, AI –works well (camera trap data), a lot of interest in using AI systems for this and get funding, application to conservation questions.
   * A potential idea is to do a desktop lit review/synthesis: what levels? what scale? what capacity?. All studies out there are difficult to understand. Synthesize studies, e.g, this tool could be used at “x” level/scale. Bring together all research done on biodiversity indicators, identify gaps, are companies implementing any?. What’s going to work here (some companies are able to go all way with monitoring but majority aren’t likely to be at that stage)? But, suggestions e.g. on a step-wise process based on level, scale, capacity.
   * IUCN SSC Species Monitoring Specialist Group. Example outside PO, joint monitoring (e.g engagement of communities). HCV Working Group
   * What is implication of monitoring? – has to be some benefit not just data collection.
   * Sub-group to provide input into biodiversity indicators relating to RSPO review (deadline 2nd August): Samir (ZSL), Tim (WCS), PJ (IUCN SSC), Marc (UTN), Serge(LMU), Douglas (CIFOR), Paul F (PRU), Rachel (IUCN SSC), Guilia (IUCN) will coordinate.
3. **Forest frontiers**

**Context:**

* Pathways for a sustainable development in forest frontiers are not clear. Current initiatives in the oil palm sector may not be effective to address deforestation in these areas: complying companies may avoid entering these regions leaving opportunities for non-complying companies to expand uncontrolled.
* In this context, a possible guiding question that could be addressed is: “what are the conditions for OP expansion that maximizes social-economic gains and minimize biodiversity impact?”
* However, not everyone may be happy to discuss development in these areas in particular because the current strong focus of identifying “no-go areas”. How do we bring this discussion to IUCN members and the public? Need to open up the question. This requires as much work outside as inside the IUCN. Such discussion should include ideas on new business models (e.g. smaller scales). How do we prepare the terrain for the discussion? How do we disseminate the report and bring the right people to the table.
* We need to position ourselves properly with this issue. We are not saying we advocate deforestation. Right to say no and not approach the question as though it is ‘inevitable’ - but under what conditions can it be favourable? Framing of the question is critical.
* Work in forest frontiers needs to contribute to and feed from national development plans, and should provide guidance to national governments and companies. Identify governance requirements for a well-planned process. Useful to look at what the different scenarios what might be vs other potential scenarios. How likely is that this type of scenario and what are the enabling conditions to enable it to take place?
* General lessons learnt, like a hypothesis we’re testing. This is the positon which IUCN has, what could be the alternative. Need to be very careful how we communicate this. IUCN well placed to deal with controversial subject. Make sure people are involved early on from IUCN to avoid backlash (work with multiple stakeholders including communities, companies, investors). We’re (OPTF) committing ourselves by engaging with countries. Eventually this could feed into a toolkit on doing jurisdictional approaches, how to operationalise. What are the governance requirements?

**Aspects to consider:**

* Look across continents – South America, Africa, Asia. Possible case studies:
  + Papua – govts are looking for ideas, looking for guidance, if you come and give them tools for best outcome for people, be receptive to that.
  + Congo (would have to be super large companies),
  + Pacific, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Liberia.
* Research – social research, IFC screening tool, World Bank - make use of thinking that’s been done. Pull all the work together, socio-economic gains while minimizing biodiversity impact. Guide the govts and companies (with the social development / conservation NGOs, IUCN members, beneficiaries, investors), rethink how they’re going to do things.
* Consider risks of leakage (e.g. charcoal in Brazil): when governance framework is not in place other industries/activities can come in.
* Local government is our main target with Frontiers, informed decisions, the right to say “no”, define clearly who you need to speak to /communicate with, understand the key actors.
* Needs to touch upon:
  + Participatory land-use planning (could be part of a toolkit for govts. How it works will be locally determined. Generate some criteria. What would a toolkit look like?)
  + Incentives for community-based conservation. Set asides management, sharing benefits, performance, financing mechanism
  + New business models in forest frontiers – tenure options (leasing), size of operations

**Potential outputs:**

* Develop a simple toolkit that govts can use?
* List of 10 things a govt should look at in investors: Governments working with new investors and wanting agricultural expansion. Examples of how voluntary commitments have been embedded into regulation (RSPO and FPIC); consider tonnes rather than hectares; fairer benefit distributions?
* A synthesis study that summarizes the challenges, enabling conditions and lessons learned. This work could be based on case studies as well as metaanalysis (of social aspects for instance).

**Practical steps:**

* First step to identify local development plans, look at financers and budget allocations.
* What are the processes happening? who are in there now?
* Concept note for meeting within IUCN – July, Aug
* Propose another TF meeting by the end of the year (individuals have homework before then)

1. **Jurisdictional approaches**

* This is a topic broader than forest frontiers, which include land-use planning outside of the PO context. It has to look at all the current engines of change in a landscape and therefore possibly too ambitious. However, aspects of this issue should be address through the forest frontier work.

1. **Socio-political context of OP**

* A potential activity is producing a situation analysis on social issues (similar to the report on biodiversity).
* Marcus Colchester keen to on this work, but given time horizons and the lack on expertise in the task force on these issues, we may not be the best placed to do this. Perhaps there are opportunities to integrate socio-economic analysis/narrative into frontier analysis/discussion.

1. **Need to synthesise good co-management with communities** **(involved in monitoring and management)**

* In palm oil context. CIFOR experience on this. concession-scale or wider? How to link district/wider levels? How to incentivise conservation of set asides? Carbon finance not viable at present. What can we learn from social forestry schemes in Indonesia?
* Sime Darby trying to explore different business models in Liberia

1. **Biofuels across all crops**

* Find out what the knowledge gaps are, committing to finding more about it (Heleen) to identify any possible opportunities for the TF. Local demands and mandates in producing countries. Assisted by Charlotte and Doris (IUCN)

1. **Smallholders impacts on biodiversity**
   * Issue brought up also by reviewers during situation analysis consultation.
   * Are there impacts? Quantify
   * Why are they happening? (context and conditions)
   * Serge will look into opportunities re how to detect SH
   * Typology of small scale of OP (is it different to smallholders? Many SH are large operations, inventory of small scale OP)
   * How to engage SH in conservation
   * For a plantation manager – are they doing the job right? What capacity?

**Funding**

* Who are the potential donors, what do we need to do to reach out to them? EM to develop a concept note for Paul. Private sector funding? What funding modules would be acceptable for IUCN? It will depend on the request/theme and matching the sources appropriately. The framing of the question is therefore critical.
* DFID – is in Papua. Zoo associations are working with DFID, Cat can follow up with them.

**Communication**

* Communication with the membership needs to be considered. Zoo associations are looking for clear guidance on what they say to the public and govts.
* Messaging to the audience, creating relevance. Segmenting audience of key groups. Members will filter it down to their audience.
* Letter to governments. Council.
* Businesses – end users. Stakeholder list -
* What do you want to get out of the report e.g., is it behavior change?
* Report not clear what main message of the report. What is the message we’re trying to distil? There is a clear message: it’s a highly complex issue. Too often we try to simplify everything, but the report enforces its complexity.

**Future group membership**

* Bring in experts to fill knowledge gaps as they arise. African Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank
* Should we think about adding advocacy organizations? Proactive groups. Question is do you want engagement or do you want them as part of the TF?
* The current members have their own contacts which means you don’t necessarily need to extend the membership, you can reach out and use these networks.