

IUCN Oil Palm Task Force

Terms of Reference for Advisory Committee Members

Background

At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Hawai'i in September 2016, IUCN's Members passed Resolution WCC-2016-Res-061 on "Mitigating the impacts of oil palm expansion and operations on biodiversity" (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46478>), calling for the establishment of a taskforce to undertake a situation analysis on oil palm and biodiversity conservation in the context of sustainable development, and communicate the results through promotion of inclusive decision-making processes and technical inputs into appropriate land-use planning for oil palm. The IUCN Oil Palm Task Force (OPTF) was formally established through appointment of its Chair in March 2017. The OPTF is time bound, with a time frame set by the next IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2020. Within this time frame, the OPTF needs to make a useful contribution to the discussion on oil palm and biodiversity and the broader context of oil palm sustainability.

Rationale for task force

1. Many IUCN Members have different perspectives on oil palm, so it will be important to have IUCN endorsement of a centralized, neutral, science and evidence-driven viewpoint.
2. Oil palm may not be the biggest driver of deforestation, but it might be the biggest opportunity because of its place in the supply chain, and the large consumer market. It is also highly relevant to discussions about carbon-rich high-value tropical forest.
3. Oil palm is a good case study and a commodity under much public scrutiny. If sustainable production models are found for palm oil these could serve as models for other commodities driving tropical deforestation.
4. There are many overlapping and competing palm oil initiatives and a higher-level synthesis body that builds from existing initiatives, and does not compete with them, could make an important contribution to finding consensus about addressing the negative impacts of oil palm on biodiversity.

Objectives

Resolution 061 calls on the Director General of IUCN and the IUCN Commissions to establish an Oil Palm and Biodiversity Task Force, building upon existing studies focused on the impacts of palm oil expansion and operations on biodiversity, land use planning and best practices, to:

1. support governments and other actors in regions where oil palm is expanding, to identify important intact forest areas and other critical ecosystems, such as peatlands, where oil palm development should be avoided and areas where oil palm using agreed best practices could be grown;
2. promote inclusive decision-making processes, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and other stakeholders, and provide technical inputs to the development of realistic strategies within or outside current industry initiatives that stimulate appropriate land-use planning at the landscape, national and regional levels, while recognizing environmental, regulatory and local rights issues;
3. identify the conditions for sustainable and responsible palm oil production to help inform governments and others of best practices;
4. review the availability of existing oil palm concession maps and other spatial data, and provide recommendations to increase their accessibility and value for conservation purposes; and

5. assess the policies, and incentives, driving the expansion of palm oil, including for biodiesel and bioenergy, and provide recommendations on sustainable alternative sources

Role and Purpose

The organizational structure of the task force will consist of the Chair, a supporting Program Officer, an Advisory Committee, and a wider group of Members. The current Terms of Reference concerns the Advisory Committee members.

The role of the Advisory Committee is to provide advice to the Task Force Chair in support of the development of strategy and activity. This will include the identification of strategic directions of the Task Force based on interpretation of the initial Situation Analysis (to be finalized by February 2018), identification of opportunities to be pursued to achieve the objectives of Resolution 21, and the development of clear plans of action to address priorities, integrating activity across research, data, skills and partnerships.

Terms of Reference

Drawing on existing evidence as appropriate, Members of the Advisory Committee will:

- advise on where the Task Force could best position itself with regard to oil palm and biodiversity and what activities should be developed to ensure that the Task Force has meaningful influence on the perceptions about palm oil and the way oil palm is managed with regard to biodiversity and a broader sustainability context.
- Facilitate the engagement of the OPTF and its members with governments, organizations, oil palm companies and other groups or individuals that can help the OPTF to reach its objectives.
- advise on priority areas and topics – the development of new priority areas, the recommended actions or interventions to be taken to address priorities, and when to cease or reduce investment in existing areas;
- advise the Task Force on funding decisions;
- assist the Chair of the Task Force in monitoring progress towards Resolution objectives.

Advisory Committee Members' Responsibilities and Appointment Process

1. The membership policy for the OPTF is focused on having an active, widely skilled and globally representative group of members that are fully supportive of the rationale and activities of the group, based on their relevant and direct expertise on the management of oil palm, the research on and conservation of biodiversity affected by oil palm development, and the communication and policy development relevant to palm oil sustainability.
2. Individuals are nominated to the OPTF by submission to the Task Force Chair of a description of their activities with oil palm and the reasons they wish to become a member of the OPTF Advisory Committee.
3. Appointments are for the initial duration of the OPTF of 3 years (until the next IUCN Congress).
4. A representative membership with regional diversity will be sought with a balance among regions, ensuring membership of tropical regions where oil palm has been or has the potential to be developed. This will also require a diversity of languages, ensuring that in addition to English speakers there will at least be members with French or Spanish language skills.
5. Topic diversity will also be sought. Given that the issue of oil palm and biodiversity requires the convergence of multiple fields of expertise, representation of specialists from fields other than biology is very much encouraged. Particularly we are looking members with proven time dedicated to palm oil sustainability, stemming from the palm oil industry, governmental representatives from producing and consuming countries, non-governmental groups, and the funding sectors.