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Press Release

Open letter to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palmoil and to WWF against “greenwashing” of the Palmoil business

An Open Letter signed by more than 80 organizations from 31 countries was delivered yesterday to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and to World Wildlife Fund (WWF) co-initiator of the initiative. In the letter, they are urged to end the “greenwashing” and certification of palm oil plantations as being “sustainable”.

According to the Open Letter, palm oil companies certified by the RSPO are directly responsible for much social and environmental damage: dislocation of local populations’ livelihoods, destruction of rainforests and peat lands, pollution of soils and water, and contribution to global warming. These are the reasons why “palm oil monoculture[s] are not and can never be sustainable and ‘certification’ serves as a means of perpetuating and expanding this destructive industry”.

The letter also points out that the certification delivered by the RSPO is insufficient and highly unreliable: the standards which the RSPO refers to would not exclude social and environmental prejudices and the certification are based solely on self-assessments by the companies involved. The real goal of the RSPO certification is not to protect people or the environment, but “to legitimise an expansion in the demand for palm oil”, and to serve “to ‘greenwash’ the disastrous social and environmental impacts of the palm oil industry”. For example Unilever, the world’s first palm oil consumer company, is doing exactly this: it is using RSPO certification “as a way of portraying itself as a ‘responsible’ company, ignoring the real impacts of palm oil.”

The authors of the Open Letter are also concerned about “the role played by WWF in promoting the RSPO and using it to support endless growth in the demand for palm oil.” The fact that WWF contributed to the foundation of the RSPO and still lobbies for it worldwide is being used by the palm oil industry to legitimise its expansion and to obtain subsidies for example from the EU which decided to keep its 10% agrofuel target by 2020. The consequence of the involvement of the environmental organization WWF is the “speeding up of indiscriminate palm oil expansion in even more countries”.

Therefore, the Open Letter reiterates the call made in an “International Declaration Against the 'Greenwashing' of Palm Oil by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)” last year, and demands the end of promotion and support from the NGOs for the RSPO; a reduction in the demand for palm oil by the North; an end to the subsidies coming from northern governments; the protection of human rights and biodiversity and the reparation of damages.

Links

The open letter can be found at:

<http://www.regenwald.org/international/englisch/news.php?id=1445>

The International Declaration Against the 'Greenwashing' of Palm Oil by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) can be found at:

<http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/docs/17-11-2008-ENGLISH-RSPOInternational-Declaration.pdf>

More information about palm oil greenwashing: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/>

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