IUCN SSC Species Survival Commission

Species

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2022 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat

Stand-alone report
IUCN SSC/CEESP Oil Crops Task Force

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of "a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth."

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC's major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle's main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

ASSESS: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

PLAN: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

ACT: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.

Their implementation requires two transversal components:

NETWORK: Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

COMMUNICATE: Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the *SSC Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network each year. Each SSC Group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in stand-alone reports.

Structure of the IUCN SSC Stand-alone Report

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

Title of the SSC Group

Photograph(s) of the Chair / Co-Chairs

Group information
Includes names of Chair / Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authority Coordinators and Program Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

Logo of the SSC Group

Mission statement
Includes the mission of the group.

Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium
Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium
Includes the targets planned by the SSC Group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

Activities and results
Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results were generated during the reported year, ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

Acknowledgements
Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

Summary of achievements
Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

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2022 Report

IUCN SSC/CEESP Oil Crops Task Force

CHAIR
Erik Meijaard
Borneo Futures, Brunei Darussalam

CHAIR
Malika Virah-Sawmy
Sensemakers Collective

NUMBER OF MEMBERS
20

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
Website: https://www.iucn-optf.org

Mission statement

Our mission is to strengthen the use of different forms of knowledge on the environmental and social impacts and benefits of vegetable oils on policy decisions, whether for sustainable production, consumption, or trade. We aim to realise this through harnessing trusted messengers and accessible and evidence-based messages.

Projected impact 2021–2025

Vegetable oil crops, the main focus of the Oil Crops Task Force, cover some 425 mha of agricultural land. Crops like oil palm are considered a threat to over 300 species listed as Vulnerable, Endangered or Critically Endangered, but all oil crops threaten species where they displace natural ecosystems. At the same time, some crops, especially the perennial crops like oil palm, coconut and olive, can provide habitat to some species. Improved practices are needed for all crops, while their different yields require land that is optimally allocated to oil production to meet growing demand.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Conduct high resolution global mapping study for all major oil crops.
Status: On track

T-003 Conduct systematic review or other study on the social and environmental impacts of vegetable oil production.
Status: On track

T-007 Conduct global mapping of coconut production areas.
Status: Achieved

PLAN

T-008 Futures Methodology for the Oil Crop Task Force.
Status: On track

ACT

T-009 Facilitate management of viable orangutan populations in oil palm landscapes.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-002 Bring Co-Chair to the group and expand membership for broader expertise across all major vegetable oils.
Status: Achieved

T-004 Communicate key insights from Task Force work to global audience at IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021.
Status: On track

T-006 Organise Task Force planning meetings.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-005 Engage media attention to Task Force's key findings.
Status: On track

Activities and results 2022

ASSESS

Communication

T-001 Conduct high resolution global mapping study for all major oil crops. (KSR 5)

Number of readings/citations per scientific paper published: 116

Result description: The global mapping of oil crops is ongoing. The high-resolution global oil palm map was updated to 2021 (the previous version was 2019) and an oil palm age map from that is currently been developed, which is essential for predicting replanting needs. Additionally, the global mapping of coconut under a Microsoft-GEO grant was completed, and the soybean, rapeseed/canola, and sunflower global mapping is in process. The latter work is currently held up because the initial funding obtained for this work was lost, but there is optimism about soon restarting this work. Once global maps for these five crops are finished, we aim to determine impacts over the past 25 years on natural ecosystems including tropical and boreal forests, savannas and natural grasslands. Final outcomes from this work will be produced in 2023. Our research work is getting good attention

View across an oil palm plantation in Sabah, Malaysia
Photo: Erik Meijaard

with the two key scientific outputs: (1) IUCN Oil palm and biodiversity Situation Analysis (2018), and (2) summary paper about oil palm (2020, *Nature Plants*) so far has received 266 citations (Google Scholar metrics).

T-003 Conduct systematic review or other study on the social and environmental impacts of vegetable oil production. (KSR 5)

Number of readings/citations per scientific paper published: 166

Result description: The systematic review of the environmental impacts of vegetable oil production is delayed because our funding for global mapping of soybean, rapeseed, and sunflower was withdrawn. We are currently seeking new funding to continue this work. We are also conducting further studies on the interactions between different SDG indicators under smallholder, large holder, and unproductive oil palm in Indonesia, with a view toward expanding the new methodologies to other countries and oil crops. This preliminary work in Indonesia has been finalized and is being written up for scientific publication.

Research activities

T-007 Conduct global mapping of coconut production areas. (KSR 5)

Number of research projects completed or supported by SSC members per taxonomic group and region: 1

Result description: We obtained funding from Microsoft-GEO for a project coordinated by the University of Kent, UK, to globally map coconut plantations at high resolution. This project was implemented and the mapping was completed in 2022. We are currently writing up the results in a scientific publication.

PLAN

Planning

T-008 Futures Methodology for the Oil Crop Task Force. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/ strategies (Guidelines, preparatory docs): 0

Result description: Because of the lack of project funding this target was not achieved in 2022. However, at the end of 2022, we obtained significant funding to conduct a new study on the sustainability of vegetable oil production and consumption, which will be focused on a future-oriented approach in which we will explore how the world can meet future demand for oils and fats with the least negative impacts on the environment and people.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-009 Facilitate management of viable orangutan populations in oil palm landscapes. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 3

Result description: Based on more than 10 years of research and field experience managing orangutan populations in oil palm landscapes we published several studies that show the importance of managing human-dominated landscapes for iconic species such as orangutans. This work is changing the way we see the role of farmers in conservation management of species such as Orangutans, but also African Great Apes and a variety of other wildlife. We are continuing to study this topic while working with palm oil companies to assess the feasibility of achieving both food production and nature conservation objectives in oil palm landscapes.

NETWORK

Membership

T-002 Bring Co-Chair to the group and expand membership for broader expertise across all major vegetable oils. (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 6

Result description: Since 2021, we added another six new members to the Task Force to increase geographical and topical know-how in the group. This includes members from all three IUCN Commissions that are most directly engaged with the Task Force, SSC, CEESP, and CEM, as well as members who are knowledgeable about other crops, such as soybean.

Riparian forest reserve in
oil palm plantation in Brazil
Photo: Erik Meijaard

Task Force members Erik Meijaard, Marc Ancrenaz
and Quentin Meunier during a biodiversity monitoring
and management training in Gabon.
Photo: Erik Meijaard

Female orangutan and her baby in a forest set aside in an oil palm plantation, West Kalimantan, Indonesia
Photo: Erik Meijaard

Capacity building

T-004 Communicate key insights from Task Force work to global audience at IUCN World Conservation Congress 2021. (KSR 4)

Tangible perceptions change among IUCN members about oil crop sustainability: 10%

Result description: Several Task Force members collaborated on scientific publications that looked into the relationship between vegetable oils and global malnutrition (ref. 1) and the reduced deforestation and oil palm expansion rates in Indonesia (ref. 2). Especially the second topic is getting attention in media and policy debates, for example, featuring in language coming out of the G20 meeting in Bali in November 2022. Overall, there has been a shift in media that in the past would focus solely on the role of oil palm in deforestation and loss of wildlife habitat, where more recently such stories often feature other oil crops and the relative impacts and land needs of these crops. While we cannot prove causality, we believe that the work of the Oil Crops Task Force has contributed to this changed debate, since its inception in 2017.
References: (1) Meijaard, E., et al. (2022). Dietary Fats, Human Nutrition and the Environment: Balance and Sustainability. *Frontiers in Nutrition* 9. 10.3389/fnut.2022.878644; (2) Gaveau, D.L.A., et al. (2022). Slowing oil palm expansion and deforestation in Indonesia coincide with low oil prices. *PLOS ONE* 17, e0266178. 10.1371/journal.pone.0266178.

Synergy

T-006 Organise Task Force planning meetings. (KSR 2)

Number of internal meetings conducted: 1

Result description: We did not have any formal in-person meetings of the Task Force in 2022, partly because of COVID-19 restrictions and partly because of a lack of meeting funds. There were several informal meetings between Task Force members, e.g., during the Round Table meetings of the RSPO in Malaysia in November 2022, during which several members were able to meet and discuss future work. We also conducted regular video calls between co-chairs and specific task force members and set up a Whatsapp group for Task Force members to facilitate communication and exchange information about vegetable oil sustainability issues. Funding received at the end of 2022 should facilitate a significant increase of in-person meetings in 2023.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-005 Engage media attention to Task Force's key findings. (KSR 12)

Number of press releases: 0

Result description: We did not conduct any specific media outreach in 2022 on behalf of the Task Force. One of the Co-Chairs, however, regularly briefs journalists on matters related to vegetable oil sustainability. Examples include this article in Mongabay on the likely impacts of palm oil bans (https://news.mongabay.com/2022/03/banning-high-deforestation-palm-oil-has-limited-impact-on-saving-forests-study/).

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the financial support from Microsoft-GEO for the global mapping of coconut, the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries for mapping oil palm and other oil crops globally, and Nutella's Sustainable Nutrition Scientific Board for funding a study on the interactions between Sustainable Development Goals in Indonesian industrial-scale and smallholder oil palm.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 9

Geographic regions: 8 Global, 1 Asia

Actions during 2022:

Assess:	3 (KSR 5)
Plan:	1 (KSR 8)
Act:	1 (KSR 10)
Network:	1 (KSR 4)
Communicate:	1 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025: