

# IUCN Oil Palm Task Force

2018 Report



Erik Meijaard

## Chair

Erik Meijaard

## Location/Affiliation

Brunei Darussalam

## Number of members

20

## Social networks

Website:

<https://www.iucn-optf.org/>

## Mission statement

The Oil Palm Task Force (OPTF) aims to inform the debate on the sustainability of palm oil, using the latest research and scientific information, and give guidance to, for example, IUCN about its policies and strategies that affect or are affected by palm oil. We aim to make use of IUCN's extensive knowledge networks on biodiversity and environmental issues, social, economic and cultural issues, and policy to comprehensively guide thinking on the complex issues of agro-industrial and small-holder oil palm in the world's tropical regions. The OPTF will act as an authoritative advisory body on oil palm and how this relates to global sustainability objectives, and an intermediary between the oil palm industry, the IUCN network, and the other stakeholders in the oil palm discussions.

## Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Oil palm threatens tropical wildlife when plantations are developed in forested areas. We seek to minimise impacts on tropical wildlife by helping promote palm oil production practices that avoid negative impacts on threatened wildlife species, such as orangutans, while maximising socio-economic benefits from palm oil production. The broader sustainability context of vegetable oil production requires that the task force also looks at other oil producing crops to ensure that reductions in palm oil production and concomitant reductions in

conservation threats do not lead to disproportionate increases of production of other vegetable oil crops and even larger negative conservation impacts elsewhere.

## Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

### Assess

Research activities: coordinate the IUCN review process of the draft Situation Analysis (with support from the SSC Chair's Office), incorporate the comments and suggested edits into the final Situation Analysis, and publish Situation Analysis.

### Plan

Planning: develop study on the socio-economic impacts of oil palm and how these affects biodiversity and environmental outcomes.

Policy: global mapping of oil palm and other vegetable oil crops.

### Network

Membership: expand Task Force membership and coordinate membership registration with IUCN.

Synergy: (1) conduct third workshop for discussing situation analysis and developing OPTF strategies 2018-2020; (2) internal IUCN meetings to discuss strategic objective of IUCN Oil Palm Task Force to focus on palm oil production in forest frontiers; (3) conflict of interest statements from all Task Force members.

### Communicate

Communication: (1) develop Task Force website; (2) translation of *Oil palm and biodiversity. A situation analysis by the IUCN Oil Palm Task Force* into Indonesian.

Sustainable oil palm increasing requires that high conservation values and high carbon stocks are protected when areas are opened up for development, while riparian forests provide further protection for forest and freshwater flora and fauna. While development in forest areas reduces forest cover, there are potential socio-economic benefits if companies work well with local communities, an important consideration for the Sustainable Development Goals, which the Oil Palm Task Force is looking into  
 Photo: Erik Meijaard



Oil palm is highly controversial, hated by many environmentalists for its impact on tropical forests and species, and loved by many others for its socio-economic benefits in tropical producer countries. Truck and oil palm fruit loading facilities in West Kalimantan  
 Photo: Douglas Sheil



Oil Palm Task Force meeting in London Zoo in June 2019, in which next steps were discussed, including the launch of the Oil Palm and Biodiversity Situation Analysis at the RSPO-EU Round Table meeting in Paris. Meeting facilities were kindly provided by the Zoological Society of London  
 Photo: Oil Palm TF Archives

**Activities and results 2018**

**Assess**

Research activities

i. We received nearly 600 comments from 40 external reviewers indicating major interest in the draft Situation Analysis. Comments were incorporated into the final version, which was published in June 2018. The English version of the study had been downloaded 6,637 times in the 6 months of 2018 following its publication, making it the 8th most downloaded IUCN report ever. The French version had been downloaded 2,536 times in 2018, showing major interest in the topics from Francophone countries. There was major media attention to the publication of the report and its findings appear to have changed to global debate on palm oil, and especially the consequences of a palm oil ban on the production of other vegetable oil crops. (KSR #32)

**Network**

Membership

i. Membership increased by five.

Synergy

i. Third workshop for discussing situation analysis and developing OPTF strategies 2018-2020 accomplished in London in June 2018. The workshop discussed the process of the Situation Analysis development and formulated strategies for going forward. A decision was made to focus the work of the Task Force on oil palm in high forest cover regions and to look into the socio-economic impacts of palm oil.

ii. Following the London meeting, we conducted a number of conference calls and a meeting organised by IUCN-NL in Amsterdam to fine-tune Task Force strategies and determine how follow up work could be funded. No follow-up funding was identified, however, slowing down the implementation of further activities.

iii. All Task Force members submitted conflict of interest statements and endorsed their online publication in compliance with IUCN policies. The process started in 2018, when the first members submitted their statements and endorsements.

**Communicate**

Communication

i. Website developed: <https://www.iucn-optf.org/> (KSR #28)

ii. Indonesia is the largest palm oil producer in the world and we considered it important to translate the Situation Analysis into Indonesian. Funding was obtained to finance the translation and layout of the Indonesian report, to be published in 2019.

**Acknowledgements**

We thank Austindo Nusantara Jaya for funding the Indonesian translation of the Situation Analysis on Oil Palm and Biodiversity.

**Summary of activities 2018**

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 3/5

Assess	1	
Network	4	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 28, 32

Resolutions addressed: WCC-2016-Res-061

KSR: Key Species Result