

Particulars

About Your Organisation

1.1 Member Name

The Proforest Initiative

1.2 Membership Number

8-0061-07-000-00

1.3 Membership Sector

Organisations

1.4 Membership Category

Affiliate

1.5 Country

United Kingdom

2.0 Does your company or organisation produce, process, consume or sell any palm oil or any products containing derivatives of palm oil?

No

2.2 Please select all the sectors that best describe the business activities of your company or organisation, including your primary RSPO membership sector. You may select multiple sectors and will be required to complete the ACOP form for the relevant sectors

- ☐ I am a bank or financial institution that finances or supports companies or organisations that produce or manufacture palm oil, palm kernel oil or related products
- ☐ I am a conservation and environmental NGO supporting the sustainable development of the palm oil industry
- ☐ I am a social and human development NGO supporting the sustainable development of the palm oil industry
- ☒ I am an Affiliate member of the RSPO, indirectly involved in the palm oil industry

Affiliates

1. Operational Profile

1.1 What are the main activities of your organisation?

Proforest helps people manage the world's natural resources sustainably. We are an independent, international organisation that works alongside producers, industry, governments, NGOs and communities to help them understand and address their sustainability challenges, bridge their differences and arrive at effective, integrated solutions. We deliver our work by supporting companies, collaboration and providing knowledge and capacity. Our work builds on a few steps to achieve positive social and environmental outcomes through awareness, commitment, implementation, integration and scale to deliver goals. Our expertise delivers sustainable natural resource management – from policy, investment and procurement to production on the ground. Our vision is to achieve Sustainable Livelihoods in Sustainable Landscapes, and our approach to responsible sourcing aims to contribute to this transformation.

1.2 What activities has your organisation undertaken to promote sustainable palm oil, the RSPO and/or RSPO members in the reporting period?

2025 Palm Strategy

In line with our 2025 Palm Strategy and priorities to support Sustainable Palm Oil uptake, from 2020 to 2022, Proforest developed the Palm Oil Toolkit (POTK) to support companies in implementing commitments on responsible sourcing and production of palm oil, by-products and derivatives. This was delivered as part of the Good Growth Partnership's Responsible Demand Project with financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and UK Aid from the UK government via its Forest Governance, Markets and Climate programme. The POTK is an accessible guide to the many initiatives that aim to address key environmental and social issues in the palm oil supply chain, such as deforestation, development on peat, and human rights violations. The toolkit remains available online for the benefit of interested parties and includes 6 Briefing Notes and Executive Summaries as well as two Discussion Papers in English and Chinese as follows:

- BN01 - Assess and plan implementation
- BN2A – Understand the supply chain: main environmental and social risks
- BN2B – Understand the supply chain: traceability and risk analysis
- BN03 - Engage within and beyond supply chains
- BN04 – Monitor, verify and report
- BN05 – Monitor emerging issues and responses
- DP01 – Gender equality in palm oil production and sourcing
- DP02 - The case for responsible sourcing of palm oil in China

POCG

Specifically with regards to increasing RSPO certification, we carry on our engagement work with low performing actors across the supply chain as part of our role in the Palm Oil Collaboration Group (POCG), an initiative led by several prominent RSPO members, and specifically on the Implementation Reporting Framework (IRF) which features RSPO certification as highest achievable outcome. RSPO certification is one of the main elements which contributes to the composition of the IRF categories, therefore, we have created a direct link to the certification. In 2023, Proforest continued to facilitate the POCG LATAM Chapter. Its 2023 objectives prioritized issues such as the Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) process, traceability data collection and analysis, sustainability management best practices, and grievance management procedures. The LATAM Chapter of the POCG also continue engagement with RSPO LatAm, especially on topics linked to smallholders. Apart from that, in other working groups under the POCG, like the Independent Verification Working Group, RSPO is included in all discussions around measuring performance across the supply base. RSPO team members are also invited to the POCG workshops which take place twice every year. In 2024 we will continue building on the relationship with RSPO through renewed dialogue and aim to have closer collaboration between the POCG and RSPO moving forward, including looking into workstreams which are of common interest to both spaces.

Responsible Sourcing and Production

As part of our Responsible Sourcing and Production works, we have a sizeable Palm Oil portfolio, working with companies across the entire supply chain to support the sustainable production and responsible sourcing of palm oil, with RSPO certification advocated as key tool to achieving sustainability goals.

- In Africa, we directly support producer companies in their efforts to achieve, maintain or expand RSPO certification. In 2023, Proforest:
 - o Continued with HCV-HCSA assessment for Benso Oil Palm Plantation's (BOPP) proposed smallholder oil palm plantation project (748.44 ha) at Adum Bansa. BOPP is already RSPO certified. HCV-HCSA assessment report was approved by HCV Network in January 2024.
 - o Continued with HCV-HCSA assessment for Biase Plantation Ltd (BPL) in Nigeria for its proposed smallholder oil palm plantation project covering an area of 3,023.45 ha. BPL is RSPO certified.
 - o Continued with HCV-HCSA assessment for Saro Oil Palm Limited in Edo State of Nigeria for its proposed 10,188.45 ha oil palm plantation project. This is in compliance with Edo State requirements that all new oil palm plantation developments must comply with RSPO requirements.

- o Conducted HCV-HCSA assessment scoping study for a new 170 ha oil palm plantation for Twifo Oil Palm Plantation (TOPP). TOPP is an RSPO certified company.
- o Supported the development of HCV management and monitoring plan, training and support on development of remediation and compensation procedure (RaCP) for Plantations Socfinaf Ghana's (PSG) Subri Concession. RaCP was approved by RSPO in January 2024 and PSG has attained RSPO certification for the Subri concession.
- In Latin America, five New Planting Procedure (NPP) studies were carried out by Proforest for RSPO member companies covering over 33 thousand hectares assessed across three countries. Proforest further delivered a range of smallholder-focused work funded by Cargill as described in the 'Smallholders' section of this submission (below).

RSPO and HCV-HCSA Training

As an RSPO-endorsed training provider for the RSPO Lead Auditor P&C, we delivered in 2023 two RSPO lead auditor Principles & Criteria (P&C) courses in Spanish and English languages with a total of 57 participants as follows:

- RSPO lead auditor P&C in Ghana, from 14-18 August 2023 (in English, 25 participants)
- RSPO lead auditor P&C in Guatemala, from 21 – 25 August 2023 (in Spanish, 32 participants).

We also provided an online training on HCV-HCSA for producers in Southeast Asia (07-10 August 2023).

Smallholders

In the context of smallholders and their move towards RSPO certification:

- In the LATAM region, Proforest conducted a smallholder assessment and action plan towards RSPO certification with 27 smallholder beneficiaries in Palmas del Ixcán, Guatemala, funded by Cargill. We further supported 27 Guatemalan smallholders by conducting LUCA analyses in their plantations; this was also funded by Cargill. With regards to capacity building, Proforest delivered a course for Independent Smallholders on sustainable production practices based on RSPO recommendations – funded by Cargill and supported by RSPO. The course attracted 60 delegates, representing 36 companies from 6 countries in the LATAM region.
- In Africa, Proforest's smallholder-related work was delivered as part of projects supporting RSPO member producer companies in Ghana and Nigeria, as described in the 'Responsible Sourcing and Production' section above.

ASCI

In 2023, the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) coordinated by Proforest was expanded to the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative (ASCI). APOI, launched by the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA) in 2014, focused on the development of principles for responsible palm oil production in West and Central Africa. As part of this, the RSPO P&C 2018 became a strong reference point, with countries including the P&C into their country principles. At CoP26 in Glasgow in 2021, African Government Ministers gave APOI the mandate to engage with other commodities to ensure that all parties were working towards common goals as working on palm oil in isolation was having less impact on deforestation and social and human rights issues than if they engaged with other commodities in the same production landscape. The Declaration for the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative was signed by the 10 APOI countries at CoP27 in Egypt in November 2022, committing them to the same principles of sustainability in other commodities beyond oil palm. These countries - Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone - account for 25% of the world's tropical forest and 75% of Africa's forests. The evolution of APOI into ASCI means that the experience gained through engagement on responsible palm oil production has been used to support a much wider, multi-commodity initiative in the region. This expansion was the major focus of activities in 2023. Lessons from the APOI process and its transition to ASCI are available here. In 2023, the ASCI platform supported the Tree Crops Development Authority to become operational in Ghana. With further funding from the Swiss Government (SECO), the platform supported the TCDA to bring together stakeholders and put the enabling regulation before parliament. The TCDA will focus on oil palm and cashew regulation and competitiveness. Oil palm case studies were also prepared for Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana. These studies will be published in 2024.

IKI Programme

In 2023, Proforest kept working through IKI funding (the International Climate Initiative of the German Environment Ministry) on aligning no deforestation commitments from the private sector with local and national climate mitigation initiatives in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Peru. This was done by supporting national processes and developing guidance, as well as implementing landscape and jurisdictional initiatives and building capacity of local and national stakeholders. Under this programme in Peru, Proforest supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Development to develop the National Oil Palm Strategy in collaboration with local cooperation entities, producers and industrial actors. The draft was submitted to the national working group and is currently under revision by the national government. As part of these activities, 4 RSPO-related trainings were delivered in Peru in 2023 (as listed below). The IKI-funded programme also covers Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, with jurisdictional approaches in San Pedro and Asunafo-Asutifi.

- March 2023 - Pucallpa, Perú

With delivery partners: Solidaridad, Earth Worm Foundation, Proforest and RSPO

Item: Small producer certification process under RSPO scheme.

Number: 35 producers and field technical.

- May 2023 - Pucallpa, Peru

With delivery partners: Solidaridad, Earth Worm Foundation, Proforest and RSPO

Item: HCV and HCS studies applied to small producers

Number: 40 attendances between technical and producers.

- July 2023 - Lima, Peru

Meeting with small producers to promote the certification process.

Number: National directors of small producers (Junpalma)

- August 2023 - Pucallpa, Peru

With delivery partners: Solidaridad, Earth Worm Foundation, Proforest and RSPO

Item: Small producer certification process under the RSPO scheme.

Number: 40 attendances between technical and producers.

Benchmarking

We are also frequently asked by various clients to provide benchmarks of sustainability standards including RSPO, analysing how well these standards can support environmental and socio-economic best practice in the production and sourcing of various commodities including palm oil. In 2023 and 2024, a key area of focus in our benchmarking work was the role of Voluntary Sustainability Standards in the implementation of deforestation and human rights due diligence regulations, for example analysing in how far certification schemes such as RSPO can support companies in complying with the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR).

Further support for RSPO

In 2023, Proforest further contributed by providing feedback and comments on the RSPO second public consultation of the draft of the (i) RSPO Principles & Criteria 2023 and the (ii) RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard. We were also involved in the moderation of the conference session at the Interamerican conference in Miami (Bilge Daldeniz) and were speakers at SPOD (Claire Reboah) and RSPO RT (Bilge Daldeniz). Proforest further delivered the EUDR/RISS project which led to recommendations presented at RSPO RT and in a final report.

Palm Introductory Learning Journey (25-27 July 2023, Malaysia)

Proforest, in collaboration with Proforest Southeast Asia Regional Office (PFSEA) organized a Palm Introductory Learning Journey (PILJ) in 2023. The PILJ provides an opportunity for Proforest staff to have an immersive, informative and fun learning experience about how oil palm is grown, milled and refined in Malaysia and in the region, and the issues, challenges and potential solutions related to their sustainable production and sourcing. About 20 Proforest staff participated in PILJ in 2023, and about the same number will participate in 2024.

Palm oil publications

In 2023, Proforest contributed to a number of publications relating to palm oil; these include:

- Creating Harmonious Industrial Relations Through Bipartite Cooperation Institutions (in Bahasa Indonesia) - <https://www.proforest.net/resources/publications/creating-harmonious-industrial-relations-through-bipartite-cooperation-institutions-bahasa-indonesia-14258/>
- Engaging with Landscape Initiatives: A practical guide for supply chain companies in Indonesia - <https://www.proforest.net/resources/publications/engaging-with-landscape-initiatives-a-practical-guide-for-supply-chain-companies-in-indonesia-14260/>
- Guidance on Engagement Principles for the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan of Liberia - <https://www.proforest.net/resources/publications/guidance-on-engagement-principles-for-the-national-oil-palm-strategy-and-action-plan-of-liberia-14261/>
- The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative - <https://www.proforest.net/resources/publications/the-africa-sustainable-commodities-initiative-14280/>
- Sharing Responsibility and Success - Companies Collaborate to Support Palm Oil Initiatives (with TFA and CDP) - https://www.proforest.net/fileadmin/uploads/proforest/Documents/Publications/Palmoil_GlobalStudy_Final.pdf
- The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative: lessons on the transition from the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (produced by Partnerships for Forests) - <https://www.proforest.net/resources/publications/the-africa-sustainable-commodities-initiative-lessons-on-the-transition-from-the-africa-palm-oil-initiative/>

1.3 What percentage of your organisation's overall activities focus on palm oil?

50.0%

1.4 Did members of your organisation participate in RSPO working groups and/or taskforces in the reporting period?

No

1.5 Does your organisation have any past or on-going collaborations with public or private sector palm oil industry players to support them in their efforts to increase the production or consumption of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO)?

Yes

1.6 How is your organisation's work on palm oil funded?

Through private sector companies and grant funding, depending on the nature of the project or programme work concerned. Also, we cover our costs for training provision via course participant fees and service provisioning for RSPO directly is done via the Proforest Initiative and charged at our lower non-profit rates.

2. Actions for Next Reporting Period

2.1 Please outline activities that your organisation will take in the coming year to promote the production or consumption of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO)

We have a large portfolio of palm oil clients and aim to continue the portfolio of work described in section 1 (which includes a number of statements re continued and planned work in 2024).

Additionally, we are continuing to work with and for RSPO. For example, in early 2024, Proforest and RSPO submitted a joint successful application to ISEAL Innovation Fund to work on EUDR & RISS to be implemented 2024/2025. Our 2024 work also includes Revision of RSPO Labour Auditing Guidance and development of new curriculum and materials for the RSPO P&C Lead Auditor Course.

Challenges and Support

1.1 What significant obstacles or challenges has your company encountered in the promotion of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO)? What efforts has your company taken to address these obstacles or challenges?

- ☐ Awareness of RSPO in the market
- ☒ Difficulties in the certification process
- ☒ Certification of smallholders
- ☐ Competition with non-RSPO members
- ☐ High costs in achieving or adhering to certification
- ☒ Human rights issues
- ☒ Insufficient demand for RSPO-certified palm oil
- ☐ Low usage of palm oil
- ☒ Reputation of palm oil in the market
- ☐ Reputation of RSPO in the market
- ☐ Supply issues
- ☐ Traceability issues
- ☐ No challenges faced
- ☐ Others

Others

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1.2 In addition to the actions already reported in this ACOP report, what other ways has your company supported the vision of the RSPO to transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm?

- ☐ Communication and/or engagement to transform the negative perception of palm oil
- ☒ Engagement with business partners or consumers on the use of CSPO
- ☒ Engagement with government agencies
- ☐ Engagement with peers and clients
- ☐ Promotion of CSPO through off product claims
- ☐ Promotion of CSPO outside of RSPO venues such as trade workshops or industry associations
- ☐ Promotion of physical CSPO
- ☒ Providing funding or support for CSPO development efforts
- ☐ Research & Development support
- ☒ Stakeholder engagement
- ☐ No actions taken
- ☐ Others

Others

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1.3 If your company has any other publicly-available reports or information regarding its palm oil-related policies and activities, please provide the links here

No