

The RSPO Africa Roadshow: Building Capacity and Raising Awareness

Presenting: Author(s): Neil Judd and Pavithra Ramani, Proforest
Oxford, United Kingdom

The Proforest Initiative, working together with an alliance of partners, has received funding to carry out a capacity building programme in Africa to raise awareness about the RSPO guidelines and the HCV concept among key stakeholders in West and Central Africa.

The RSPO roadshow is being coordinated by The Proforest Initiative, working together with an alliance of partners including the RSPO, Conservation International, Solidaridad, WWF, the HCV Resource Network, ZSL and GIZ. Funding has been provided by the Biodiversity and Agricultural commodities Programme, with additional support from Sime Darby, Olam International and Unilever.

Large scale oil palm expansion in Africa is at an early stage. While oil palm development has the potential to deliver many socio-economic benefits, there are also significant environmental and social risks. Negative impacts are often the consequence of poor planning during the establishment phase, which results in long term liabilities such as biodiversity loss and deforestation or creates conditions for social conflict. The Africa Roadshow aims to contribute to an environment for increased adoption of the RSPO Principles and Criteria as well as the effective use of the HCV framework in the countries where most palm oil expansion is planned.

The programme aims to significantly increase the level of understanding of the RSPO requirements in general, and for expansion in particular, among key stakeholders, including government institutions, civil society and the local private sector. The capacity building and awareness raising events are designed to facilitate the uptake and integration of RSPO best practices in both large-scale and smallholder plantations. The programme has kicked off with a series of workshops in Ghana, Gabon, Cameroon and Liberia in May, June and July 2012. Events in several other countries, including Nigeria, Congo DR, Ivory Coast and Congo, are planned for a second phase of the programme.