

Abstract

Monitoring, reporting and verification tools - a key stepping stone for improving HCV management in palm oil landscapes and RSPO certification credibility

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To date, 28 palm oil producers have been certified as compliant with the RSPO Principles & Criteria (RSPO P&C), representing an area of 1,110,206 ha of oil palm production and an estimated annual production capacity of over 5.5 million tonnes of Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO). This indicates significant progress in terms of increased recognition by industry leaders to address the negative environmental and social impacts associated with palm oil production.

There is a need however to demonstrate that RSPO certification results in a real and significant reduction in the impacts associated with palm oil production. At present, many buyers, consumers and civil society organisations remain doubtful as to the ability of the RSPO certification scheme to achieve this goal. This doubt is exacerbated by the fact that the RSPO's current principles and criteria (P&C) relating to HCVs lack a detailed framework for monitoring, reporting and verifying the impact of improved management practices, introduced in order to comply with the RSPO standards. To overcome this, the RSPO must work with certified producers to ensure that they are capable of implementing the relevant P&Cs to an acceptable standard, and provide evidence to all stakeholders that they are having the desired impact. This is essential to strengthen the credibility of RSPO certification and generate greater market uptake for CSPO.

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is in the process of developing a user friendly, practical and informative system for monitoring the status of HCVs 1-4 within an oil palm concession, fundamental in enabling practitioners to design and implement effective measures to maintain and enhance HCVs. This paper will highlight that in addition to facilitating adaptive management, monitoring trends over time of HCV species and habitats (or suitable indicators of these values) will provide both the producer and the RSPO with quantitative evidence of the impacts of their efforts to conserve these values. Lack of standardisation and little or no guidance are key barriers faced by growers, with few having the capacity to design and implement monitoring protocols for HCVs. This is a major area for concern given that HCV monitoring forms the critical link between the identification of HCVs and the implementation of appropriate management interventions to conserve them. Therefore, developing the capability and competency of RSPO certified producers to achieve this is a priority gap in the chain which needs to be addressed.