

Insights from the global first certified independent smallholders: The smallholders perspective

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Since August 2012 the globally first independent smallholders are RSPO certified. The four groups received continuous support throughout the last three years. Throughout those three years and all the steps taken towards certification there were challenges at every single step. The smallholders will report how they were convinced to join and cooperation with the mills started. They will present the challenges in materializing benefits before the certification and let the audience know on the topics of the endless hours of discussing and agreeing on the future steps to be taken. Under the title of *Partnership Farming* new models of cooperation were introduced to create benefits for all partners involved.

The impact study of the certification benefits on those smallholders – based on the proper baseline of the project – reveals that the major benefits for smallholders are not coming from certification but rather from yield and OER improvement, as well as others such as better relationship towards mills, higher capacity and better bargaining power. Challenges remain especially towards the long-term business model of such groups. Price premiums may not be sufficient to cover the auditing and surveillance costs, which result in the consequence that smallholders groups need to get much bigger, resulting on more challenging group management. Additionally it seems that independent smallholders will need support throughout the process and all of us have to find solutions towards doing this without international donors funds, at least in the medium to long term.