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## Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

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### *RSPO response to public allegations of non-sustainable practices*

KUALA LUMPUR/BRUSSELS, 24 March, 2010 –The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a multi-stakeholder organization promoting the growth and use of sustainable palm oil. The Roundtable’s 420+ members, including many mainstream palm growers, oil traders, processors, manufacturers and retailers worldwide, have pledged to work towards implementing sustainable business practices. Today, more than 1.5 million tonnes of RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil have been produced, and supply and sales are growing.

Occasionally, assertions are published about RSPO members allegedly not yet fully acting in accordance with the RSPO’s principles and criteria for sustainable palm oil production. While their numbers are few, the RSPO takes all such assertions very seriously in order to safeguard the overall integrity of the Roundtable and its certification system.

The RSPO inquires with members about public complaints insofar published evidence permits. Without access to the full evidence and the cooperation of those who collected it, however, the RSPO’s ability to investigate fully and fairly, and to take action if needed, is limited.

In case of a possible breach, the RSPO calls on parties to use the organization’s fair and balanced grievance procedure and to make all evidence available to the RSPO’s Grievance Panel.

#### **About RSPO’s Grievance Procedure**

Anyone who has evidence of an RSPO member acting not in accordance with the RSPO’s Code of Conduct can bring a complaint. The Grievance Procedure is open to members and non-members. Complaints are presented to a five-member, multi-stakeholder Grievance Panel whose main job is to help resolve the issue. In serious cases, the Grievance Panel may require an RSPO member to take specific action or face cancellation of its RSPO membership.

#### **About the difference between RSPO membership and RSPO-certification**

Some past allegations did not fully appreciate the crucial difference between RSPO membership and RSPO-certification.

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Membership of the RSPO demonstrates that a producer company has pledged to become sustainable within the next few years. It does not yet mean that (all of) its plantations have already achieved that goal. Only RSPO-certification ensures that plantations operate sustainably today. RSPO-certified plantations have been visited by independent auditors who have established that practices follow the RSPO's principles and criteria. Certification is a thorough and time-consuming process in which many local stakeholders participate.

The RSPO strongly encourages all of its members, both producers and users of palm oil, to fully switch to RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil soon.

### **About partial certification**

Some past allegations did not fully appreciate how and why the rules permit producer members to have some plantations certified but not others. This may happen, for example, when a company recently acquired plantations that are not yet sustainable.

RSPO certification rules are strict: when one plantation of a company is certified, the company must have robust plans in place to have all of its other plantations certified within a few years. Note that even in such cases, RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil can ONLY come from plantations that have indeed been certified!

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### **About the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)**

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil is a multi-stakeholder association created in 2004 by seven organizations and companies aiming to promote the growth and use of sustainable palm oil. The Roundtable includes mainstream palm growers, oil traders and processors, retailers, investors and leading NGOs such as WWF and Oxfam International. The RSPO now has more than 420 members worldwide and membership is still growing. All members have pledged to work towards sustainable business practices across the board.

The Roundtable remains a work in progress. It sets environmental and social standards for sustainable palm oil production, such as no new clearing of primary tropical forests, conservation of natural habitats, and respect for workers and the rights of indigenous people. It selects independent auditors to certify sustainable plantations and sets guidelines to ensure accurate market information on the use of sustainable palm oil.

More than 1.5 million tonnes of RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil have been produced thus far, and supply and sales are growing.

For more information, please use contact details at the top of this statement.