

Community mapping for responsible palm oil

Recommendations for the RSPO

According to the RSPO revised principle P7.5 on the responsible development of new plantings, customary and user rights need to be demonstrated as part of the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. This can be done through community mapping.

Recommendations

- Before plantation establishment, RSPO-certified companies are advised to ensure that communities located within the concession area have been enabled to document the boundaries of their lands and landuses through community mapping. Only then, communities can negotiate on an equal footing, and give their Free, Prior and Informed Consent.
- Community maps can be used for proper site identification and internal zoning of plantations, to allow for local food crop production and biodiversity preservation.
- Companies should provide the farmers who participate in outgrower arrangements with land right certificates within one year of plantation establishment.
- In case of land-based conflicts within existing plantation areas, community mapping can be used for dispute settlement.
- The RSPO is recommended to create a dedicated fund for independent community mapping and inclusion of community maps into spatial planning.
- The RSPO is recommended to support an update of the 2008 RSPO Guide for Companies on FPIC, aligning it with the revised principles and criteria and incorporating recent experiences with PLUP and community mapping.

What is community mapping?

'Community mapping' means that community members create a cartographic map of their customary or village territory, often with the support of

an independent expert organisation.

Together they document boundaries and land uses, using simple Global Positioning System (GPS) technology and Geographical Information System (GIS) software. The boundaries between villages are established in consultation with neighbouring communities.

Community maps enable local people to communicate their perceptions of land rights and resource management systems with the government and other actors.

Conflict prevention

In many countries, customary village boundaries are rarely documented on official maps. Consequently, government authorities may lease lands that are used by local people to oil palm companies. This often results in conflicts. Community maps can be used to improve plantation planning by RSPO-certified companies, helping to prevent conflicts to the benefit of both companies and farmers.

How can community maps help meet RSPO criteria?

In recent years community mapping has developed into an efficient and cost-effective method to create detailed local maps. Companies can use these maps to make sure that they comply with several of RSPO's Principles and Criteria.

Principle 2: Compliance with applicable laws and regulations

This principle includes two criteria related to community mapping. The first (2.2) requires documents showing legal ownership or lease, history of land tenure and the actual legal use of the land. Secondly, Criterion 2.3 requires that maps of an appropriate scale showing the extent of recognised customary rights

(Criteria 2.2, 7.5 and 7.6) are developed through a broad 'participatory mapping' process that involves the parties affected, including neighbouring communities where applicable and relevant authorities.

Principle 7-5: FPIC

According to RSPO Principle 7.5 on the responsible development of new plantings, customary and user rights need to be demonstrated through 'participatory user mapping' as part of the FPIC process. This not only entails clarification of land ownership and use, but also constitutes a process to clarify local aspirations concerning new developments and the implications of the company's offer.

Principle 5, 6 and 7: Environmental and Social Impact Assessment

Prior to establishing a new plantation or mill, environmental and social impact assessments are to be conducted (Criteria 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1). Community mapping can be used as a tool for stakeholder engagement and consultation (6.2) and proper analysis of land ownership and user rights. The ensuing map can become an integral part of the assessment reports. Any loss of legal, customary or user rights (6.4) should be documented on the community maps in order to inform community members about the consequences of signing an agreement and the compensation agreed with the oil palm grower (7.4).

RSPO Dispute Settlement Facility

Criterion 2.2.5 requires that, in the case of any conflict or dispute over land, the extent of the disputed area needs to be mapped in a participatory way with involvement of all the parties affected. This can be done through community mapping. In the event disputes are not resolved, parties can submit a request to the RSPO Dispute Settlement Facility (DSF) asking for support to resolve the dispute – notably by involving an independent mediator. In such situations, community maps can assist in clarifying disputed land claims and borders.

Assistance and guidance on community mapping

Although RSPO's Revised Principles and Criteria make mention of 'participatory mapping', they do not provide further guidance. We recommend RSPO members to use participatory mapping in their operations and to work together with NGOs and other experts with community mapping experience. Eventually, new plantations should only be regarded as being in compliance with RSPO Principles and Criteria if it can be proven that each community in or adjacent to the plantation area has effectively participated in decision-making. This can be demonstrated through a community map that establishes the village borders and clearly indicates disputed lands. It is recommended that the RSPO and its members develop Best Practices in this field to offer concrete guidance.

Further reading

- In 2008 the Forest Peoples Programme developed a Guide for Companies on FPIC through a process of extensive training and dialogue with communities and companies. Chapter 5 summarises the main lessons related to participatory mapping, which are still valid today. See: <http://www.forestpeoples.org>
- Momberg, F., Atok, K. and Sirait, M. 1996. Drawing on Local Knowledge: A Community Mapping Training Manual. WWF-Indonesia Programme.
- Revised RSPO Principles and Criteria, May 2013. [Online] URL: www.rspo.org/file/revisePandC2013.pdf
- Kusters, K. et al. 2013. Formalising participatory land-use planning – Experiences from Sanggau District, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Both ENDS. www.bothends.nl/nl/Publicaties

Film: 'Mapping our future'
(<https://vimeo.com/61715444>)

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