

Lessons learnt on biodiversity & HCV issues from the growers perspective

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Oil palm growers face many challenges in the management and monitoring of biodiversity and HCV areas especially in Indonesia. These challenges include the lack of legal recognition of HCV areas on land alienated for agriculture and provisions in the law to take away land considered as idle land. In Indonesia the problems of land pressure has resulted in the communities moving into HCV areas. There is no guidance on how companies can co-manage HCV5 and overlapping HCV values and what to do when resource use affects other HCV values and is no longer sustainable.

Few people are trained in conservation issues in oil palm and there is limited practical guidance available to both the RSPO auditors and the plantation managers. Communities do not wish to receive lower compensation for areas identified as conservation and they do expect companies to provide Plasma for every hectare of HCV released. Some communities completely reject conservation. Identification of HCV is costly and time consuming and intensive management of conservation such as habitat restoration and enhancement is a deviation from oil palm business and may conflict with financial viability. HCV misidentification, different mapping standards and map artefacts by HCV consultants results in plantations left to manage values that may not actually exist on ground or tight deadlines during assessments can result in ERT species not being recognised. The HCV toolkit was not designed for conversion landscapes and as a result there are many issues with its application. Lessons learnt in HCV management include the employment of HCV specific staff, the need for training and projects on best practises for species and ecosystem monitoring, staff training has to be done continually and the management and monitoring systems have to be dynamic and continually improved. In order to retain good staff sustainability structures must ensure sufficient career opportunities. Assessing the effectiveness of the HCV monitoring is important but seldom done. Partnerships and collaborations with government and NGOS are essential to achieve conservation objectives. Continual engagement with government for the recognition of HCV areas and community awareness and education programmes are vital. Without higher management support for conservation and social initiatives success is unlikely.