

The Marrakesh Declaration

Building a regional commitment for the sustainable development of the oil palm sector in Africa

On 16 November 2016, at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Marrakesh, a group of African palm oil producing countries will publicly sign the **Marrakesh Declaration for the Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa**. This landmark moment will place sustainability, human rights and the prudent stewardship of natural resources at the heart of the palm oil industry in Africa.

The **Marrakesh Declaration** is part of ongoing work taking place across the private sector, public sector and civil society in nine countries under the umbrella of the **Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 Africa Palm Oil Initiative**. It represents a public acknowledgement that, whilst investment in the oil palm sector in Africa has the potential to deliver economic benefits to the region, it also brings with it the potential risk of significant negative social and environmental impacts, including deforestation, land conflicts, human rights abuses and the destruction of High Conservation Values.

By signing the Marrakesh Declaration, these African governments are showing their commitment to provide the leadership needed to develop sustainable commodity supply chains that address deforestation and poverty alleviation. The Marrakesh Declaration will enable further action and most important scalability, while de-risking investments in oil palm expansion, thereby increasing national reputations as safe and responsible sources of palm oil, and promoting green growth. In this way, it balances local economic development with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Signing the **Marrakesh Declaration** and delivering on its commitments, is a clear demonstration that these African leaders are serious about honouring and implementing the national, regional and international Treaties, Conventions, and Declarations that the countries are party to, including the **Paris Agreement**, which was ratified by these countries in 2015.

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative

The vision of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) is a prosperous oil palm industry that brings jobs and wealth to local communities in a way that is environmentally and socially sustainable and protects the rich tropical forests of the region.

Its goal is to develop and support the implementation of national and regional principles for responsible oil palm development that take account of the ambitious development plans of countries in Africa, while addressing environmental targets for reduced deforestation, land use and greenhouse gases, and social indicators on issues such as land tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Tropical Forest Alliance 2020

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative is the first signature initiative of the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA 2020). is a public-private partnership that aims to reduce deforestation in supply chains linked to key global commodities (palm oil, soy, beef and pulp and paper) and protect the tropical forests that provide food and livelihoods for millions of people, through its unique cross-sector collaboration. www.tfa2020.org.

The APOI works with stakeholders at both national and regional levels. At the national level, countries are participating in a three-phase process through which governments and all stakeholders engage in supporting the development of national principles, and contribute to the implementation of national action plans for responsible oil palm development.

Progress so far

In parallel, representatives of government, the private sector and civil society organisations from the participating countries are contributing to the development of a set of high level, generic regional principles to guide oil palm development in West and Central Africa region. These principles provide the foundation of the Marrakesh Declaration.

Nine governments have engaged with the APOI: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

Of these, four have already developed principles and action plans to guide the sustainable palm oil production in their countries. And three countries - Ghana, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire - have already started to work on how to implement their action plans on-the-ground.

The road to Marrakesh

In October 2016, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 60 participants from the public and private sector and civil society agreed a final text of the Marrakesh Declaration to be signed in Marrakesh, Morocco at the UNFCCC COP22.

The Marrakesh Declaration is founded on principles of environmental and social sustainability and the recognition of community and human rights, as well as economic development, transparency and working in partnership. It will be signed by a number of African governments on 16 November.

By signing **The Marrakesh Declaration for the Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa** these countries announce that Africa is open for investment in the oil palm sector in Africa – but that such investment needs to be sustainable. It is expected that a number of other countries, donors, supply chain and oil palm production companies will endorse the Declaration.

Beyond Marrakesh

The regional principles laid out in the Marrakesh Declaration are, by necessity, high level and aspirational, so it is crucial that there is interpretation, adoption and implementation of the principles at the national level.

The long-term vision of the APOI is to support the widespread implementation of responsible oil palm principles adopted in Marrakesh by the national governments to deliver real impact on the ground. Its work is funded by the UK Government through its Department for International Development (DFID).

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