

Migros' Opinion on the Publication - IOI, RSPO and Palm Oil Incident

The environmental associations of Bruno Manser Fund and Friends of the Earth Europe are reproaching the Malaysian palm oil group IOI with illegally acquiring land and engaging in fire clearance. Bruno Manser Fund is now asking Migros to discontinue its supplier relationship with IOI. Migros takes the accusations very seriously and will not tolerate this kind of behaviour under any circumstances. Migros has been committed to supporting the sustainable cultivation of palm oil for more than ten years now and, together with the WWF, is a founder member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The RSPO is an international body, on which producers, processors, NGOs, banks and commerce are represented. Members undertake to observe strict criteria in respect of sustainable production.

The IOI company is similarly a member of the RSPO. Migros will thus submit a request for a Grievance Procedure as per the RSPO guidelines to be instigated. This matter must be investigated. If the reproaches are seen to be true then, in Migros' opinion, sanctions must be imposed on the company that is at fault. Migros will also contact IOI directly and request a full explanation. If the explanation given is not satisfactory, Migros will take the necessary action and draw the appropriate consequences.

The RSPO is repeatedly criticised for not doing enough against forest clearance. Migros does not, however, see any reason for fundamentally questioning the RSPO. The RSPO is currently the only international organisation which is actively committed to the sustainable production of palm oil and thus makes a key contribution towards combating the destruction of the rainforests. Unfortunately, it remains a fact that the problems concerning forest clearance in Indonesia and Malaysia are far from being resolved. There is still a great deal of work to be done.

Certification by the RSPO started in 2007. Today, roughly 3% of the overall surface area is certified. Alongside Migros, other companies such as Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Boots, The Bodyshop, Sainsbury's, Carrefour, Unilever, Ahold, Asda, Waitrose, Iceland and the Coop, have all undertaken to purchase sustainable palm oil. To ensure that further palm oil producers switch to sustainable production and that the RSPO specifications are observed, it is essential for even greater pressure to be exerted by the retail trade and industry. Migros is committed to ensuring that this pressure is increased.

The WWF is also counting clearly on the Roundtable in its endeavours to save the rainforest. "The Roundtable criteria ensure that sustainable palm oil is compatible with the tropical rainforest and is produced in a socially equitable and legal manner. The Guidelines additionally ensure the protection of threatened animal and plant species and prescribe the smallest possible use of chemicals and the upholding of land rights", writes WWF Switzerland on its homepage. The WWF also demands strict sanctions if RSPO members violate these criteria.

There are also increasingly frequent calls for palm oil to be boycotted. Migros does not, however, consider that a boycott would make sense, since switching to other oils (such as soya or rapeseed) would only shift the problem elsewhere. Despite this, Migros examines all the possibilities for replacing palm oil if this brings advantages in social, ecological, or health terms.

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(translation: BMF)