

July 24, 2024

Public Letter to RSPO re: Astra Agro Lestari's membership application

TO: Joseph D'Cruz, Chief Executive Officer, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

CC: Oi Soo Chin, Acting Head Membership, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

Dear Mr. D'Cruz and Ms. Soo Chin:

Two weeks ago it was [announced](#) that Astra Agro Lestari (AAL) submitted a formal application for membership to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). AAL's announcement included a statement of full support from the RSPO. **We, the undersigned, strongly urge the RSPO to withhold AAL's membership until protracted land conflicts between AAL and communities in Sulawesi, Indonesia are resolved; remedy and redress to communities impacted by AAL's operations is provided; a process to ensure communities are able to provide or withhold their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is conducted; and AAL's permitting irregularities, including its permits and concession maps, are investigated and addressed by the Indonesian government.**

Last month, [a new report](#) detailed ongoing environmental, human rights, and governance violations by AAL, including illegal palm oil cultivation inside Indonesia's forest estate; ongoing intimidation and criminalization of environmental human rights defenders; and several AAL subsidiaries operating without required permits. This followed a [March 2022 report](#) that documented land grabbing, criminalization of Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs), and environmental degradation tied to AAL's operations in Sulawesi, Indonesia.

AAL's ongoing violations contravene RSPO Principles and Criteria, including the right to FPIC; protection of HRDs from violence, intimidation and criminalization; respect for communities' land rights; compliance with laws and regulations; and prevention of water pollution.

In response to documented evidence of environmental and human rights violations, ten consumer brands – Colgate Palmolive, Danone, Friesland Campina, Hershey's, Kellogg, L'Oreal, Mondelez, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble – all of which are RSPO members, announced suspensions of sourcing from AAL. Multiple financiers have also sanctioned the company, including Norges Bank which excluded financing to AAL and its parent companies Astra International and Jardine Matheson, and BlackRock which voted against company directors at both AAL and Astra International citing ongoing land conflicts and violations in Sulawesi.

A growing body of evidence indicates that non-adherence to RSPO Principles and Criteria by member companies is prevalent. Controversial companies receive certification and maintain membership despite evidence of sustained violations, while the complaints system is ineffective. Granting AAL membership to the RSPO would undermine impacted communities' calls for remedy and redress and efforts to hold the company accountable for its violations, as well as further undermine the RSPO as a body.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Acción Ecológica

Amnesty International Sierra Leone

Asejis Community Network

Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)

Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)

Asociación ProPurús

Community Empowerment and Social Justice Network (CEMSOJ)

Environmental center for Development Education and Networking (EDEN)

Federación por la Autodeterminación de los Pueblos Indígenas (FAPI)

Friends of the Earth England, Wales, Northern Ireland

Friends of the Earth Europe

Friends of the Earth Malta

Friends of the Earth US

Global Canopy

GRAIN

HEKS

Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT)

Indigenous Peoples Rights International

Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples (LAHURNIP)

Milieudefensie

Mutasa Youth Forum

Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)

Protection International

Rainforest Action Network

ReAct Transnational

Satya Bumi

Star Kampuchea

Synaparcam

Turkana Extractive Consortium

WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia

Women on Mining and Extractives

Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, Indonesia