

General Comments on the National Interpretation Development in Colombia



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Summary



This first part of the presentation on the process that has been undertaken in Colombia to implement the Principles and Criteria (P&C) of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) contains general comments that highlight elements deemed important in the creation of a favorable development environment, and emphasizes on some important management background issues



Ever since the creation of the RSPO, Fedepalma has participated actively in all its activities. As Ordinary Member, Fedepalma represents the Colombian oil palm industry, protecting its interests and guiding its development strategy to comply with the RSPO Principles and Criteria (P&C).

In 2004, the Federation, authorized by the Board of Directors, began to devise a philosophy that allowed for the establishment of the implementation scope of the Principles and Criteria in Colombia. This has been the focus of the work in the last four years.

Table 1 lists the RSPO Principles and Criteria, so that you can continue getting familiar with them, particularly with the words that guide each of them from the management perspective.

Table 1. RSPO Principles & Criteria

Principle 1: Commitment to Transparency	Principle 5: Environmental responsibility and conservation of natural resources and biodiversity
Principle 2: Compliance with laws and regulations	Principle 6: Responsible consideration of employees, individuals and communities
Principle 3: Long-term economic and financial viability	Principle 7: Responsible development of new plantings
Principle 4: Use of appropriate best practices by growers and mills	Principle 8: Commitment to continuous improvement in key areas of the productive activities

Socialization background

In 2006, Fedepalma began incorporating Principle and Criteria related elements into trade union events, special meetings and palm grower bulletins.

In 2007, regional socialization workshops were held in North, Central, East and West zones. At that time, 90 people participated in representation of various entities and institutions including the Ministry of the Environment, Regional Autonomous Corporations, Social and Environmental NGOs, and some territorial entities.

An important background fact, especially for those who are not very familiar with the oil palm industry, was the signing in 1997 of the Clean Production Agreement with the Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the five Regional Autonomous Corporations (Corpocesar, Corpamag, Corponariño, Corporinoquia and CAS) participated in the Agreement, which marked the strengthening of the environmental management.

As a result of the activities carried out pursuant to this agreement, a best practices guide for all producers nationwide was published in 2000. This oil palm industry's guide was used as reference for all the other environmental guides that were endorsed by the Ministry of the Environment at that time.

To mark Fedepalma's 40th anniversary, a document titled "Environmental Performance of the Oil Palm Sector in Colombia" was prepared and published in English and Spanish, in order to show the work that the sector has achieved.

On the other hand, Fedepalma signed an agreement with the Alexander von Humboldt Institute, the World Wide Foundation (WWF) and Cenipalma to work on components related to sustainable production systems, protected areas and biological corridors, biodiversity characterization and environmental services.

Currently, within the framework of the agreement, a GET Fund project has been preapproved to prioritize and develop activities in the four oil palm belts because we need to continue strengthening the process that is being undertaken to study oil palm agroecosystems.

According to the plantations' environmental performance, in terms of protected areas, it is estimated that today 15% of Colombia's land is in natural condition; therefore, it is necessary to have an effective assessment and begin quantifying everything that is there.

Since 2001, pursuant to sector and trade association policies, fundamental steps or being taken to improve competitiveness and sustainability, as follows:

- Enrichment and conservation of natural ecosystems
- Enrichment and protection of biodiversity
- Restoration and management of hydrographic basins, water balance, and efficient use of water
- Integrated soil management to enrich and improve its physical, chemical and biological properties
- Eco-efficiency of productive processes and utilization of byproducts
- Commercialization of higher-value products from the environmental perspective



- Sector's positioning as an environmentally friendly agroindustry

It is important to note that in 2007 the national government approved a Conpes document, in which one of its guidelines highlights the characterization of land suitable for oil palm cultivation in Colombia, as follows: *"increase the competitiveness and production of the oil palm agroindustry, in an economic, environmental and social sustainable manner, making full use of the country's advantages and the growing market potential, in order to provide rural zones with new development, employment and well-being opportunities"*.

On the other hand, when the government approved the biofuel Conpes document, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute began analyzing everything related to environmental sustainability in terms of biofuel policies, plans and programs in Colombia. The fundamental idea was to look at the productive aspect, the start of the chain, and determine what the implications would be in terms of the demand for raw materials for biofuel production.

RSPO P&C for Colombia

The Program for the National Interpretation of the RSPO Principles and Criteria was the result of a team-

work effort launched by the Ministry of the Environment on July 7, 2008.

A subject matter expert workshop was held on August 13, 2008 to structure the document, and a number of Regional Workshops were held in the Central, North, East and West zones. Finally, on September 29, an Institutional Workshop was held at the Agustín Codazzi Geographic Institute (IGAC).

The National Interpretation process showed some interesting data: Of the 357 participants, 72 (20%) were from the public sector; 9 participants (3%) were from the private sector; 21 participants (6%) were from international institutions; 8 people (2%) were from certification bodies; 23 (6%) were representatives from public and private universities; 43 participants (12%) were NGO representatives; 175 people (49%) from the oil palm industry and 6 participants (2%) from the media. These figures reflect the participation ratio in the direct consultation process.

During all this process we tried to comply with three aspects in particular: presenting process results, incorporating comments from the meeting, and drafting the final document, which we hope to bring to Bali (Indonesia), in order to show the Colombian oil palm sector's commitment to the world.