



TROPICAL FOREST ALLIANCE

proforest

# Moving towards sustainable production: Tropical Forest Alliance Africa Palm Oil Initiative



## What is the Africa Palm Oil Initiative?

The Tropical Forest Alliance Africa Palm Oil Initiative's (APOI) vision is a prosperous palm oil industry which 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. The Initiative seeks to achieve this through the development and implementation of national and regional principles for responsible palm oil development that take into account 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 Initiative brings together partners from ten palm oil-producing countries: Cameroon, Central African

Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria<sup>1</sup>, Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone. The APOI is a collaboration between African governments, African and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector where stakeholders from governments, companies, civil society and indigenous and community groups work at both national and regional levels. The APOI is the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA)'s first Signature Initiative coordinated by Proforest on behalf of TFA in partnership with a range of regional and national institutions.

This document highlights some of the APOI's many achievements to date.

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<sup>1</sup> Nigeria is not an APOI member, but Edo State is.



The APOI is making sustainability and non-deforestation in the palm oil value chain a national agenda.”

*Oil Palm Development Association of Ghana*

## Insights



*Afua Prempeh, Proforest Country Facilitator, APOI Ghana National Platform*

“I met Ama, a picker of loose palm fruit, on one of my first visits to a plantation. She would not readily speak to me; we were with men and, customarily, she was not expected to be vocal. I asked the men to go on ahead without us, then spoke to her in the local dialect. After some hesitation, she began to share her hopes and aspirations.

Ama has three children and works in the plantation to supplement her income as a market trader. Like all of us, she wants her children to have a better future, and the extra income she earns picking fruit goes towards this. Palm oil is giving her an opportunity to realise her dreams, and the sustainability of this sector is essential to Ama and the many others like her.

These personal stories make the APOI's objectives - especially the aim to improve livelihoods and well-being for communities and marginalised groups - more than just words to our team. It is a vehicle for real change.

The successes outlined in this report provide compelling evidence that great things are achieved through a series of small things and, as the African proverb goes: ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.’

Let's go together!”



## What did the APOI set out to achieve?

Since the beginning, the APOI aimed to balance sustainability with economic development to ensure social and environmental concerns were addressed before the industry expanded. It puts in place a framework to ensure that future growth of the palm oil sector occurs along a sustainable path.

- The first achievement was to reach a high level **shared regional agreement** about what sustainable palm oil looks like in West and Central Africa. This was realised through a collaborative process that resulted in the Marrakesh Declaration (see page 7).
- This shared regional vision was used as the framework to develop **national principles** in the ten countries,

based on their wider development plans and context.

- National platforms were established to ensure the coordination and success of the **implementation phase**, during which the APOI focused on developing high-impact partnerships to support the delivery of national action plans, as well as developing joint actions with other commodity supply chains - especially cocoa - in order to push forward the agenda to halt deforestation in West and Central Africa.

The following pages outline the inputs and processes that enabled these three steps to be taken so successfully.



The APOI is a process that supports the sustainable development of oil palm cultivation. Gabon is a high forest cover country, with 85% of its land cover consisting of HCV forests, savannah and various ecosystems, and such rich biodiversity that we could not risk losing this. This important and timely initiative allows WWF to engage with other national stakeholders in the pursuit of a sustainable palm oil sector in Gabon, while protecting this rich biodiversity.”

*Marthe Mapangou, Country Director, WWF Gabon*



TFA is proud of the APOI’s success. We are looking forward to the next phase of work, forming stronger partnerships, making huge inroads on implementation and, with Proforest, transitioning the palm oil sector in West and Central Africa.”

*Justin Adams, Director, TFA*

## Insights



*Abraham Baffoe, Africa Regional Director, Proforest*

During the first few years of the APOI, the many stakeholders involved made significant progress in addressing commodity-driven deforestation. We negotiated and signed the Marrakesh Declaration; we agreed many sets of national principles and action plans; and we started capacity-building and training activities in each country.

No one can tackle this problem on their own: it requires agreement on what needs to be done, and who should play each role. This is what we have achieved. It was a difficult process, but a rewarding one; we are all happy with the progress made.

And we are now energised to do more on the ground. In the next phase, we must maintain our current momentum. The main focus will be to galvanise more actions that demonstrate impact. We want to see real change and a positive shift in the way that palm oil is produced in West and Central Africa.”



## Behind the APOI's success

### A shared regional agreement



#### The Marrakesh Declaration

At COP22 in Morocco, seven African governments publicly committed to sustainable palm oil by signing the Marrakesh Declaration, a joint vision to transform production in West and Central Africa.

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#### Regional platforms

To share experiences among countries, and with initiatives for other commodities (e.g. the Cocoa and Forest Initiative), the APOI held five regional meetings. These enabled country teams to meet with donors, development and advocacy organisations, and buyers and producers of palm oil and other commodities. These focused on collaboration in the implementation of national principles and actions, and bilateral discussions helped to raise issues and share lessons about effective implementation processes.



#### Building partnerships

Key stakeholders from across 10 palm oil-producing countries have engaged with the APOI; this is four more countries than originally envisaged.

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## National principles



#### National principles

National principles for sustainable palm oil production have been developed in nine countries, and for Edo State in Nigeria.

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#### National platforms

Eight countries have set up platforms for national dialogue and action; these also support regional engagement.

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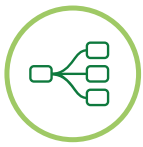


#### A jurisdictional approach

The APOI brings stakeholders together at the jurisdiction or landscape scale. This ensures that all the drivers of deforestation - including commodities other than palm oil - are considered when planning solutions.

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## Implementation phase



### Action plans for implementation

Action plans for implementing the national principles are in place, and this process is now under way in most participating countries.

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### Improved land-use planning and conservation

Actions to improve land-use planning have already taken place in several APOI countries, while most have adopted conservation measures compliant with Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and High Conservation Value (HCV) requirements in their national principles. Best management practices are now becoming the norm, not the exception - something that wouldn't have happened without the APOI.



### Gender inclusion and marginalised groups

The APOI recognises that the palm oil sector cannot develop sustainably without the inclusion of marginalised groups: women, indigenous peoples, local communities and smallholders. In the APOI process, national platforms ensure that marginalised groups are included in workshops and decision-making processes, giving members of these groups a voice.

Gender considerations are particularly important for natural resource management, including palm oil. The need to promote gender equality and inclusion of smallholder development in national palm oil development strategies is noted in the Marrakesh Declaration and features in most countries' action plans.

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### Capacity-building and training

This is central to many countries' action plans and crucial to developing sustainable palm oil.

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## Building consensus at the regional level

### The Marrakesh Declaration

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP22) in Marrakesh, Morocco, seven countries<sup>2</sup> agreed to a joint vision to transform palm oil production in West and Central Africa. This is expressed through a set of shared regional principles - the 'Tropical Forest Alliance Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa', or 'Marrakesh Declaration' - which was signed on 16 November 2016.

"These countries are at the frontier of palm oil development, accounting for 75% of Africa's forests," says **Justin Adams** of TFA. "Under the Marrakesh Declaration, governments have committed to implementing the Declaration's principles - of sustainability, good governance, partnerships, transparency, recognition of community and human rights - while promoting social benefits for farmers and protecting the region's rich tropical forests."

Negotiating this was a major step; previously, no regional standard for sustainable palm oil production was in place. Today, the Marrakesh Declaration provides a roadmap for APOI countries. "It gives a clear message to all stakeholders: this is how we will proceed," say **Mallorie Bruns** and **John Ehrmann** from the **Meridian Institute**, one of the APOI's partner organisations. "It took a lot of work, right down to agreeing the exact wording, but it

was a major step in formalising the APOI. It provides a set of principles with which all parties can hold each other to account."

"The Marrakesh Declaration will enable West and Central African countries to work with companies such as Unilever to secure sustainable jobs and livelihoods, support food security in the region, and prevent environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation," confirms **Nick Hurd**, **UK Minister of State for Climate Change and Industry**.

While countries determine their own approach to achieving sustainable palm oil production (see page 7), the Marrakesh Declaration represents a shared commitment to mitigating the main negative social and environmental impacts.

"One of the interesting things about the APOI is how it is embedding these guidelines around good land-use planning, looking at conservation priorities when we're planning for development, and that's a very healthy thing to be doing," says **Christopher Stewart**, **Head of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, Olam**.

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<sup>2</sup> The signatories are Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Liberia, the Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.



The APOI brings together voices from government, the private sector, indigenous and civil society in a unique collaborative effort to address the challenge of achieving deforestation-free commodity supply chains whilst balancing economic development across the region."

*S.E. Henri Djombo, Minister of Agriculture, Republic of the Congo*

### A set of shared regional principles

By signing the Marrakesh Declaration, governments confirm that they:

- recognise the shared vision for a prosperous palm oil sector in the region that brings jobs and wealth to local communities, but which is environmentally and socially sustainable and protects Africa's rich tropical forests
- note the importance of the palm oil sector in economic development and in contributing to addressing rural poverty
- recognise the critical role of forests and forest conservation in addressing climate change
- acknowledge the role of agricultural commodity development as a driver of deforestation
- understand the importance of public-private partnerships in sustainable economic development
- are conscious of the need to promote, foster and accelerate the economic and social development of African countries in order to improve the living standards of their peoples and ensure food security and nutrition
- consider the relevant international and regional treaties and conventions that the signatories have ratified, and reaffirm the need to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Building consensus at the country level

The first step in the APOI process was engaging with each partner country: with government, with the private sector, and with civil society (see Figure 1). This was enabled by the fact that many private sector companies and governments had already made responsible sourcing commitments that resonated with the APOI's goals, and so got their attention.

The extent of governmental cooperation with the APOI was a major early achievement. "We focused on engaging with high-level African officials right at the start," explains **Ludovic Miaro III, WWF Regional Palm Oil Program Coordinator, Central Africa**. Getting government representatives from ten major African palm oil producer countries together to talk about how

to achieve sustainable development of palm oil sector in the continent was a notable step. "Once we had government commitment, it was easier to engage with other key stakeholders through official establishment of the national palm oil platforms in each of the ten countries," confirms Ludovic.

"The APOI is very good at engaging at the highest level," agrees **Joseph Lumumba, TFA's Regional Coordinator for Africa**. "In African countries, government involvement and policy are very important; the private sector often follows the government's lead before operating. So getting governments 'centre stage' pitched the APOI at the highest level, and it spread from there."



Having governments, NGOs, civil society and the private sector in a room together raised the level of importance for all."

*Mallorie Bruns, Senior Mediator and Program Manager, Meridian Institute*

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### Phase 1: Engagement

- Form engagement team.
- Engage government, local civil society and private sector representatives.

2

### Phase 2: Development

- Form country team, comprising a facilitator, government focal point and private sector representative.
- Organise national workshops to develop national principles and a national action plan.

3

### Phase 3: Implementation

- Form national platform, comprising the country team and other stakeholders.
- Convene implementation dialogues to identify the key stakeholders; synergies between existing initiatives and national action plans; and opportunities for targeted support to the countries to implement their national action plans.
- Collectively implement national action plan.

Figure 1: The three phases of the APOI process

## Leading from the front: the role of the private sector

As a first step to begin the development of the initiative, Unilever, on behalf of the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) companies, contacted the governments of Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria to invite their participation. All other palm oil-producing countries were also welcome to join. In 2014, a high-level meeting hosted by Unilever and The Prince's Charities International Sustainability Unit (ISU) convened several African governments, business representatives from both upstream and consumer goods companies, as well as donor governments, to explore the possibility

of establishing a set of framework principles to govern how sustainable palm oil will be produced in West and Central Africa in the coming decades.

The APOI has formed links to global companies through the CGF, whose members had committed to reducing deforestation by half by 2020 but needed to act on this. The initiative then provided a channel for companies to fulfil these commitments, which brought buy-in among global players in the palm oil supply chain.

## National Principles

The Marrakesh Declaration provided the ‘building blocks’ for what sustainable palm oil development means in West and Central Africa. The next step was for each country to identify its own needs and priorities, and create a set of tailored national principles for sustainable palm oil development.

Thanks to the considerable efforts of the country teams, nine of the ten participating countries now have national principles in place.<sup>3</sup> The documents have around ten principles each, as well as milestones and a timeline.

<sup>3</sup> Edo State in Nigeria has state-level principles, not national ones; Gabon’s principles are due to be finalised in 2019.

### Principles reflect priorities in Ghana

Creating national principles, rather than using a ‘one size fits all’ approach, reflected the varying situations in the partner countries. In Ghana, for example, 80% of palm oil is delivered by small producers. In response, national principle 4.7 outlines the need to “Ensure that livelihoods of smallholders/out-growers are protected”.

A process is also under way to establish a regulatory body for the sector, under the Ghana Tree Crop Development Authority Bill. This is a direct response to its first national principle in the APOI: “Sustainable oil palm production shall be governed by clear policy and legal framework, with a well-structured value chain where all actors belong to a decentralized governance system supervised by a regulatory body”. This Bill was accepted by the Government of Ghana and the Minister of Finance in November 2018, and the Authority is set to be established in 2019.

### From national principles to ministerial order in the Republic of the Congo

In the Republic of the Congo, the government has issued a ministerial order that all new plantations above 5 hectares must be in savannah regions, not forests. This will reduce pressure on forest ecosystems, which are part of the threatened Congo Basin forest. This action builds on one of the country’s APOI national principles, and government recognition will make it more robust and sustainable.

Palm oil is harder to produce in savannah regions; there is less rainfall, so more effort and investment are needed. But actions on the ground help to demonstrate the benefits of the APOI process. “A successful plantation in the savannah will convince people that this approach works,” says Louis Defo, Proforest’s coordinator for the Congo Basin.





## Action plans for implementation

Once each country had agreed its national principles, the next stage was to host a national workshop at which an action plan was developed to implement these (see Figure 1, page 7). These national principles and action plans are now being implemented on the ground. In Central African Republic, for example, an inventory of the palm oil sector was conducted as part of the action plan development process. This will act as a reference for future interventions in the sector; before this, the country had little easily available information on the sector.

Further implementation activities, outlined in action plans, have also taken place to ensure that palm oil development meets conservation and land-use objectives.

- A land-use planning process undertaken in Edo State, Nigeria, will ensure that palm oil expansion only takes place on land designated for agriculture.
- In Gabon, the APOI assisted the government in a series of meetings held to define what ‘forest’ means. This will support effective land-use planning that allows for economic development while meeting conservation objectives.
- Application of the Republic of the Congo’s national principles means that palm oil plantations will be oriented towards savannah regions, reducing pressure on forests in the Congo Basin (see previous page).



One of the challenges across the region is that there is no real land-use planning, there is no regulation of what is a protected area and what is for housing and farming. So when the companies are looking for land, they’ve got primary forest or very dense carbon-stock forest on the right, and on the left they’ve got villages with all their farms, and the marginal land in the middle is degraded and not suitable for oil palm cultivation.”<sup>4</sup>

*David Hoyle, Director of Land Use and Conservation, Proforest*

<sup>4</sup> From the Guardian [www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jul/27/palm-oil-boom-cameroon-land-ownership-protest](http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/jul/27/palm-oil-boom-cameroon-land-ownership-protest)



## National platforms

Once the national principles and action plans were agreed, national platforms were put in place and validated by governments. These platforms are the driving force behind the APOI: they have the remit to oversee the implementation of the national action plans and principles, and bring key stakeholders together for dialogue and action.

“The national platforms play an invaluable role,” says **Abraham Baffoe**. “From the beginning, we decided to work through them and ensure they included representatives from the private sector, from the government, from civil society. This is essential for continued engagement; if the Ministry of Agriculture is in the team, other people are more likely to listen!”

Seven countries<sup>5</sup> established platforms using a multi-stakeholder approach, with members nominated by their constituents. Rather than duplicate efforts or

confuse responsibilities, the APOI sought to build on existing national processes. Therefore, in countries with platforms that play similar roles, the APOI works within these. The national platforms also perform a facilitation role, sharing information and updates on what is happening on the ground. Proforest supports them by providing facilitators, selected from its partner organisations (usually an NGO).

Collaborating with diverse groups through the national platforms ensures that all interested groups have their say, which builds consensus. Such collaboration is at the heart of the APOI approach and building on these partnerships, as well as forging new connections, will be central to future activities.

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<sup>5</sup> Cameroon, Gabon and Edo State are expected to complete this phase in 2019.



The country teams have been very effective. Without them, we couldn't have achieved all that we have.”

*Abraham Baffoe, Africa Regional Director, Proforest*



### Gender analysis in Ghana

Gender considerations are essential in natural resource management. In Ghana's palm oil-producing regions, women and men often have different rights and access to land, especially where customary laws on land tenure favour men. In line with its aim to ensure that all marginalised groups are fully represented, Ghana's national platform conducted a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis to understand how gender sensitive (or otherwise) the APOI process has been in the country.

Based on this analysis, a strategy has been developed to ensure that, going forward, the country team is gender-sensitive in all its work, and will ultimately become gender transformational. Ghana's national platform will continue to work with experts and organisations to mainstream gender into its work. Lessons will also be shared with other APOI countries, so they can learn from the Ghanaian process and take the necessary steps, based on their local context, to integrate gender sensitivity into their own processes.

The full report is available at: [www.proforest.net/APOIgenderstudy\\_ghana](http://www.proforest.net/APOIgenderstudy_ghana)

## Capacity-building and training

Proforest is a global leader in training for the sustainable production of agricultural commodities and forestry, and the APOI provides a forum to bring these to the participating countries. At the start of the engagement process, for example, Proforest noted that some stakeholders didn't know how to implement the many tools that exist for avoiding deforestation (e.g. tools for identifying HCVs), and so provided initial training in how to use these.

After this, training was based on needs and requests. A series of training workshops on becoming 'deforestation-free' were delivered in Côte D'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone, plus a joint workshop for participants from the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Brazzaville. These built the attendees' understanding of the concepts, tools and debates surrounding zero deforestation, and initiated discussions about the issues in an African context.

### Training the trainers in Ghana

Ghana has made considerable progress in capacity-building. Its national action plan notes the ambition to increase smallholder productivity through the adoption of best management practices. Three 'training the trainers' courses, attended by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's field officers, enabled them to take new knowledge and techniques out to the smallholders they work with.

In total, 96 people took part in the courses, held in 2018 for field officers from the Ashanti, Central, Western, Eastern, Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions. Through presentations, group discussions and fieldwork, participants covered a range of topics under the theme 'palm oil best management practices'.

"I had little knowledge of oil palm best management practices," says **Edith Gorman**, an agriculture extension officer in Ghana's Western Region, who works with 800 smallholders. "Now, I know fertiliser application, culling in the nursery ... [this] will help farmers to improve on their old ways of doing things, and use the best management practices instead. This will greatly increase their yield, thereby increasing their income."



Find out more in our [Training the Trainers](#) video, or watch our other APOI videos and animations on our [YouTube channel](#):

[www.youtube.com/c/ProforestGlobal](http://www.youtube.com/c/ProforestGlobal)

### Strengthening HCV, HCS and FPIC capacity in Gabon

In Gabon, 30 stakeholders from the government, civil society and the private sector undertook capacity-building on several elements of sustainable palm oil production, during an event organised by WWF and Proforest in collaboration with Olam Palm Gabon.

"The training provided national stakeholders with a greater understanding of the concepts of HCV and High Carbon Stock (HCS) forest, and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)," says Eugène Ndong Ndoutoume, the country facilitator in Gabon. "They strengthened their capacity to identify, manage and monitor HCV/HCS areas, and in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the FPIC process."

The training included a visit to a palm oil concession at Olam Awala, within an RSPO-certified HCV area. Participants simulated the steps needed to achieve FPIC with a community. These include building relationships between local communities and palm oil growers/companies by establishing initial contact with a village or community before development begins. A video was also produced, which shares the feedback on this first contact with local communities.

## A jurisdictional approach

Palm oil is the APOI's primary focus, but in many areas, other commodities, such as cocoa and rubber, also drive forest loss. Eliminating deforestation therefore requires a focus on everything that is happening. The jurisdictional approach used by the APOI looks at all commodities and sectors within an area and asks: What are the problems? What are the solutions? Who can play what role?

"This is the right scale to address deforestation," explains **Abraham Baffoe**. "For example, palm oil production in Ghana is concentrated in the southwest; this is also where most of the country's remaining forest is found, where rubber is grown, where cocoa is grown.

These are competing needs and threats; you cannot just look at palm oil."

Jurisdictional initiatives bring stakeholders in a particular region together to agree goals and align their activities (e.g. enforcement mechanisms, monitoring and verification systems). This approach, and the partnerships it brings about, ensure that efforts to develop sustainable commodity production and sourcing take a holistic approach. This in turn can lead to incentives for transformation at wider scales, and improve the long-term governance of all commodities within a landscape or region.



Bringing all stakeholders together was important. Before, each did their own thing and followed their own agendas; now, people from across the whole supply chain - smallholders, agro-industries, producer associations, government officials, civil society groups - have started to collaborate."

*Louis Defo, Proforest Coordinator for the Congo Basin*

The jurisdictional approach is already yielding results. For example, country teams have participated in two dialogues aimed at sharing results from a landscape initiative. One of these was the TFA 4th Regional Workshop, an event organised in close collaboration with the Cocoa and Forests Initiative (which brings

together 35 cocoa and chocolate companies committed to ending deforestation and forest degradation in the global cocoa supply chain). Its members were able to learn lessons from the APOI, which will now be applied to their own activities.



Countries in West and Central Africa are realising there is a need to consider landscapes holistically, to look at all agricultural development within them."

*Mallorie Bruns, Senior Mediator and Program Manager, Meridian Institute*

## How do jurisdictional approaches contribute to responsible commodity production?

- They provide a solution to the challenge of implementing commitments (e.g. protecting conservation areas, recognising community rights) that are outside the control of individual producers.
- They can make certification cheaper, more efficient and more inclusive of small producers.
- They offer a platform for public-private partnerships, which can provide support and incentives for change, achieve transformation at scale and improve long-term governance.
- They align the APOI's work with initiatives and partners already on the ground in each country.



## APOI country highlights from 2018



### Cameroon

An event to raise awareness of the APOI brought together over 20 journalists to learn about the APOI process, and the key challenges in the country's palm oil sector that it seeks to address. The event was broadcast on TV and radio, and was featured in about 20 newspapers and online articles.



### Central African Republic

The national platform carried out several activities in 2018. These included disseminating leaflets on how to adopt and implement good practices in palm oil plantations, including copies translated into the local Sango language. They also carried out a study on the state of palm oil development and smallholder development. This report was submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, along with a mapping of smallholder farms in Lobaye and Ombella M'Poko Divisions. These are expected to inform a project to drive improvements in smallholder productivity.



### Côte d'Ivoire

The national platform organised training and capacity-building events on tools and approaches to address deforestation. These included events for national stakeholders on HCV forests, HCS approaches and FPIC. In total, 34 participants from the palm oil and cocoa sectors were trained, including district and regional government administrators, NGOs and the private sector. Côte d'Ivoire also organised an annual APOI platform meeting in December, bringing together 55 participants including growers, millers, smallholder farmers, input dealers, community-based organisations, government representatives and the media. They discussed the APOI process, focusing on how to strengthen this and accelerate progress towards reducing deforestation from commodities' supply chains.



### Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The country saw a delay in establishing a formal national platform, due to the need for a Ministerial Order. But on 6 October 2018, through engagement by the national platform and the APOI facilitator, this was finally signed by the Ministry of Agriculture.



### Gabon

By engaging with senators in Gabon's Upper House of Parliament, the Social, Economic and Environmental Council and civil society organisations (CSOs), the APOI supported the release of a position paper on forest definition. This enhanced the engagement of different sectors working to align environmental, conservation and economic goals with the forest definition in Gabon. The national platform also worked with an international consultant to review the existing documents and to make technical inputs to the ongoing process to define forests in Gabon.



### Ghana

The GESI analysis completed by a consultant in 2018 will strengthen the national platform's quest to promote inclusion and ensure that all marginalised groups have representation and voice in the APOI process, and that their concerns and suggestions are incorporated into work plans and interventions.



### Liberia

The second meeting of the National Oil Palm Technical Working Group provided an update on the communications strategy, root cause analysis and farmers' training needs assessment. It also shared the latest information about CSOs' regional outreach and an update on the RSPO and APOI Regional Team's mission to Liberia. Participants also discussed activities and priorities for 2019.



### Edo State, Nigeria

The state principles and action plan for responsible palm oil development and forest management in Edo State were reviewed and validated. Participants also identified relevant stakeholders to be involved in an APOI state-level platform, including marginalised groups such as smallholders and women. In line with the state action plan, a land-use planning process has been initiated in Edo State to ensure palm oil expansion takes place only on non-forested land designated for agriculture development. Through support from the APOI process, the Edo State Government has carried out analysis of the forest cover of the state. Based on the outcomes, the state government is developing a framework that will ensure that palm oil development occurs on the basis of Produce-Protect-Rehabilitate that will require palm oil companies in the state to engage or contribute to reforestation of degraded forest reserves.



### Republic of the Congo

A major achievement in 2018 was the national discussion that culminated in the Minister of State in-charge of Agriculture, and the Minister in-charge of Land Affairs, signing a Ministerial Order to orient palm oil plantations towards savannah regions, thus reducing pressure on forests in the Congo Basin. The national platform also held two awareness-raising workshops in the Sangha and the Cuvette Divisions, attended by about 60 people.



### Sierra Leone

In 2018 national platform members focused on introducing the APOI process to the newly elected government to secure their commitment and representation on this platform. They organised meetings to raise awareness of the APOI at the national level. Encouragingly, the new government approved the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, which will promote gender mainstreaming in agriculture, forestry and food security.

## The APOI's next steps

The first years of the APOI saw significant achievements - but most activities still require further work and action. This will consolidate the progress made and ensure that the APOI's vision - a prosperous palm oil industry that truly protects the remaining tropical forests of West

and Central Africa - is delivered. With all APOI countries having developed national plans, future activities will see the national platforms, principles and action plans institutionalised and implemented with partners.



Nine countries and one subnational region have principles for sustainable palm oil, but these are 'hanging'; we now need action to put these into effect, to translate regional and national ambitions into local action."

*Joseph Lumumba, TFA Regional Coordinator for Africa.*

## Implement action plans at the national level

The APOI will continue to develop trusted relationships between governments and national platforms, and provide support to implement the action plans in each country. This could be through creating a variety of enabling conditions, depending on the needs of the specific country; for example, promoting the incorporation of key requirements from the national principles into law, or enhancing the uptake of jurisdictional approaches in implementing the action plans.

The APOI will also work with national platforms to implement strong communications strategies, capacity-building and training at national levels, and a system of monitoring, evaluation and learning to assess outcomes in each country.



One of the successes of the APOI has been the multi-stakeholder approach through which the national principles and action plans were developed. The engagement of government, private sector and civil society organisations is crucial in order to ensure the continuing harmonisation between these sectors in promoting sustainable palm oil in Africa."

*Nadia Goodman, Principal Project Manager, Proforest*



## Enable sustainable palm oil at a global and regional level

The development of the regional platform has been powerful in terms of sharing information and lessons learned, building peer-to-peer relationships and providing a robust forum from which the regional principles and declaration were developed.

The APOI will continue to provide regular regional forums for governments, donors and the private sector to meet, allowing learning and sharing between the countries as they gain more experiences with their national platforms; to share best practice and challenges from the implementation of their action plans; and to discuss innovative approaches for addressing these challenges. Through these forums, donors and the private sector

can identify entry points where they can support implementation, learn from each other, and meet potential investors.

The TFA partners in the APOI countries have committed to support real transformational change towards responsible sourcing in the palm oil sector, and there is significant potential for learning between countries as plans are implemented. These partners have a range of experiences with palm oil investment and responsible palm oil practices, which can inform peer-to-peer learning, in terms of experience with investor engagement and the technical implementation of responsible production approaches.

## Engage with global palm oil companies and financial institutions to promote the APOI

The APOI will participate in regional and international conferences to disseminate its experiences and lessons, and learn from the experiences of other initiatives within and outside of Africa. Through these, it will be able to share outcomes and experiences with global

companies and financial institutions, and encourage them to source from and invest in sustainable practices in APOI countries. The national teams can also share experiences with TFA initiatives in other regions.



The most important thing now is to show that commodity-driven deforestation has reduced. To do this, we need to deliver on the ground.”

*Abraham Baffoe, Africa Regional Director, Proforest*



## Contact details

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