

SUSTAINABILITY BRIEF

Beyond Firefighting

Wilmar's Approach to Fire Prevention and Partnerships



Wilmar owns over 230,000 hectares of oil palm plantations in Indonesia, Malaysia, Ghana and Nigeria. As climate change intensifies – bringing hotter temperatures, prolonged dry seasons and stronger winds – the risks associated with fires and haze continue to grow. These conditions can increase the likelihood of fire outbreaks and make suppression efforts more challenging.

Fire and haze are complex landscape-level challenges influenced by multiple factors, including weather patterns, traditional agricultural practices, peatland management, topography and human activities.

Effective fire prevention and management therefore require a comprehensive approach encompassing responsible land management, community awareness, strict enforcement, monitoring and early detection systems, rapid response capabilities and close collaboration between companies, government and local communities.

A STRICT NO BURNING POLICY

Wilmar's No Burning Policy has been in place since 2006 and applies to all its palm oil operations worldwide, including subsidiaries and third-party suppliers. Any deliberate breach of its No Burning Policy by suppliers constitutes a serious violation and may result in the termination of commercial relationships. This strict prohibition on the use of fire for land preparation and development activities became a key tenet of Wilmar's No Deforestation, No Peat, and No Exploitation ([NDPE](#)) Policy in 2013.

Land preparation is carried out using mechanical methods instead of fire, while wood biomass and vegetation residues are typically chipped, mulched or left to decompose. This helps return nutrients to the soil, improve soil health and reduce the need for inorganic fertilisers. It also contributes to lower greenhouse gas emissions.



Heavy machinery, excavators, chippers and specialised equipment enable safe and efficient land development without the use of fire. Aside from minimising fire risks, these methods also support long-term land productivity and environmental stewardship.

We closely monitor all Wilmar's concessions and surrounding areas, complemented by community outreach programmes and multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at promoting responsible land management and fire prevention.

COMPREHENSIVE FIRE MANAGEMENT APPROACH

To proactively mitigate fire risks, Wilmar implements fire prevention, preparedness and rapid response protocols across its global operations. These protocols provide guidance on planning, prevention, suppression, post-fire reporting and management, while ensuring readiness and preventive measures across all concessions and surrounding areas.



Through satellite monitoring, we monitor and identify fires within and up to five kilometres beyond our concession boundaries. Our integrated fire monitoring system automatically detects hotspots and immediately notifies field managers through the dashboard system. These alerts are then verified through on-the-ground inspections, enabling rapid intervention and helping to reduce false alerts caused by temperature fluctuations rather than actual fires.

Hotspot alerts are generated using satellite data, which detect potential anomalies in ground surface temperature. Importantly, hotspot alerts do not necessarily indicate the presence of an active fire. Instead, they serve as an early warning signal requiring verification by field personnel before further action is taken. This verification process helps ensure that resources are deployed effectively and appropriately.

Once a fire is confirmed, dedicated on-site response teams stationed at all Wilmar concessions are immediately dispatched. Each operational unit maintains dedicated firefighting personnel, equipment and emergency response procedures to contain and extinguish fires as quickly as possible. Regular training exercises and competency assessments are conducted to ensure readiness throughout the year.

We also work closely with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) through its Hotspot Monitoring Programme to share fire-related data and verify hotspot alerts.

Peatlands warrant particular attention in fire prevention. When drained, peat becomes highly combustible and can sustain slow-moving, sub-surface fires that are difficult to detect and extinguish, and that may reignite even after the surface appears controlled. Keeping peat wet is therefore one of the most effective safeguards against fire.

Consistent with our NDPE Policy, we enforce a strict no new development on peatland, regardless of depth, and actively support peatland conservation and restoration efforts through collaboration with relevant stakeholders. For peat areas planted prior to our NDPE policy, we apply best management practices across 1,481 hectares in Indonesia and Malaysia. In line with RSPO standards and expert recommendations, we maintain optimal water table levels through water management infrastructure such as canals and water gates, and monitor them closely – keeping peat moist to reduce fire risk, while also limiting subsidence and carbon emissions.



Since 2016, Wilmar has been a voluntary member of the Fire Free Alliance (FFA). This multi-stakeholder initiative aims to prevent, detect, suppress and report fires, with a particular emphasis on community engagement and awareness-raising. Through this initiative, we educate local communities on sustainable agricultural practices and responsible land management.

We have carried out fire-free outreach programmes in 147 villages since 2016, including 74 villages located around existing management concessions in 2025.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Wilmar's fire management approach today reflects nearly two decades of continuous learning, operational experience and investment in prevention systems. Lessons from past fire events across the region have reinforced the importance of moving beyond a reactive firefighting approach towards a preventive strategy focused on risk reduction, early detection and rapid response.

Over the years, several important lessons have helped strengthen our approach.

First, early detection and rapid verification are critical. Experience has shown that small fires can escalate rapidly under dry and windy conditions if not addressed immediately. This has driven investments in enhanced satellite monitoring, automated alert systems and field verification procedures.

Second, firefighting readiness must be maintained year-round. Dedicated personnel, specialised equipment and regular training ensure that operational units are prepared to respond quickly when incidents occur.



Third, community engagement is essential. Many fires originate outside concession boundaries or in community-managed areas where burning may still occur. This underscores the importance of awareness programmes, education initiatives and partnerships that promote sustainable alternatives to burning.

Fourth, effective fire management requires collaboration. Government agencies, local communities, suppliers, civil society organisations and industry partners all have important roles to play in preventing and responding to fires.

Finally, climate change continues to reshape fire risk profiles. Longer dry periods, changing rainfall patterns and higher temperatures require continuous adaptation of fire monitoring, preparedness and prevention strategies. These lessons continue to inform investments in technology, personnel, risk assessment, emergency preparedness and community partnerships, helping to strengthen our resilience against future fire risks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Despite extensive prevention efforts, fires may occasionally occur within our concessions, particularly during periods of prolonged drought. Our investigations have identified a range of potential sources, including:

- (i) enclave areas within or surrounding our concessions that are occupied or managed by small-scale farmers and local communities;
- (ii) areas outside our concession boundaries where fires spread through topography, vegetation or wind conditions; and
- (iii) activities beyond the control of plantation operations, such as encroachment, and illegal mining.

We maintain detailed records of every fire incident, including the location, size of the affected area, duration, cause, action taken and photographic evidence. Police reports are lodged for all fire incidents within our concessions, as forest and land burning are prohibited under Indonesian law.

For smallholders and surrounding communities, limited access to tools and machinery, financial constraints and established land preparation practices can make alternatives to burning more difficult to adopt. Recognising these realities, Wilmar adopts a prevention-first approach that combines education, awareness-building and practical support.

Through training programmes, community outreach activities and partnerships with local stakeholders, we promote responsible land preparation and fire prevention, while raising awareness of the environmental, health and economic impacts of fires. These programmes support local communities and smallholders within a five-kilometre radius of our concessions.



Importantly, we also seek to address some of the practical challenges that can lead to burning. Where appropriate, we support communities through technical assistance and access to machinery and equipment that can be used for land preparation without fire. By sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, we help demonstrate that productive land management can be achieved safely and sustainably without resorting to burning.

In parallel, we monitor suppliers through our Supplier Group Compliance Programme (SGCP). Fire alerts detected within their concessions trigger our grievance mechanism, which initiates investigation, verification and, where necessary, corrective action. To date, SGCP monitors approximately 24.4 million hectares across Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and other palm-producing countries.

LOOKING AHEAD

As climate change continues to increase fire risks through higher temperatures, prolonged dry seasons and changing weather patterns, we remain committed to continuously strengthening our fire prevention and management systems.

Building on nearly two decades of experience implementing a strict No Burning Policy, we continue to invest in advanced monitoring technologies, rapid response capabilities, trained firefighting teams and community-based prevention programmes.



We recognise that effective fire management extends beyond concession boundaries and requires collective action among companies, governments, communities, smallholders and civil society. Fire is not a land management tool for responsible plantation companies. Rather, it is an operational, environmental and social risk that must be prevented through sound management practices, early intervention and strong partnerships.

Through continuous improvement, collaboration and responsible land stewardship, Wilmar remains committed to minimising fire risks, protecting ecosystems and supporting the long-term resilience of the landscapes and communities where we operate.

