PLANTATION LIFE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Efforts by Wilmar to Curb the Pandemic in Our Operations

The current Covid-19 virus outbreak and subsequent global pandemic has created uncertainties in the way we all live and work. The plantation sector has not been spared, and plantation companies must adapt to the current situation.

Wilmar has plantation operations in Indonesia, Ghana, Malaysia and Nigeria. The respective governments in Indonesia, Ghana, and Nigeria have announced localized restriction of movement orders in specific parts of each country, and none of these restrictions have closed palm oil refining, milling, or oil palm plantations.

Currently only Malaysia is under full nation-wide movement restrictions. Under the Malaysian restrictions, the oil palm sector has been classified as critical to the food supply chain, and therefore can remain operational but on a reduced scale. A full moratorium\(^1\) on plantation and palm oil mill activities has only been announced covering several districts in the east of the state of Sabah, including Lahad Datu, where Wilmar has our Sabahmas Mill and Estates. Apart from Sabahmas Mill and Estates, all other estate and mill operations in Malaysia are operating at a reduced level, based on the Malaysian government’s guidelines provided to the plantation sector.

Where there have been no enforced closures, our operations in the four countries are running normally, or on reduced capacity, with new SOPs and precautionary practices to ensure our employees remain safe and healthy. To date, with precautions in place, we have been fortunate to have zero cases of Covid-19 amongst employees in our mills and plantations.

\(^1\) The closure of palm oil mills and plantations, originally set for 14 April 2020, covered the districts of Kalabakan, Kunak, Semporna, Tawau, Lahad Datu, and Kinabatangan due to outbreaks of Covid-19 positive cases. As of 10th April 2020, this order has repealed for plantations and mills that have not had any confirmed cases of Covid-19 [https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/sabah-reopen-oil-palm-estates-mills-without-covid19-cases](https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/sabah-reopen-oil-palm-estates-mills-without-covid19-cases)
EFFORTS IN PLACE IN OUR OPERATIONS

Despite the continuation of operations, our employee’s health is our biggest priority. We have implemented several changes in the way we work, as well as adjustments to help us get through this pandemic while ensuring our employees are healthy and safe.

1. Establishing Covid-19 Management and Implementation Teams

Special regional management teams were set up in March to ensure that there was a strategy in place for handling operations and these teams were tasked to develop guidelines and special standard operating procedures (SOP) and to prepare key service implementation teams such as the team in charge of carrying out health monitoring.

The Covid-19 management teams are generally made up of plantation and mill operations, purchasing, sustainability, ESH, women’s committee, human resources, and estate health service personnel. Apart from the development of SOPs, it was important to outline how health screenings were to be conducted, and look into how key materials (e.g. face masks, hand sanitizers, disinfectants, thermometers, etc) would be purchased and distributed.
2. Introduction of Special S.O.P. for Work During the Pandemic

Since March, we have introduced special standard operating procedures (SOP) to guide operations during the Covid-19 pandemic. These SOPs are localized and have been implemented in Malaysia, Indonesia, Ghana and Nigeria, and cover our mill and plantation operations, as well as housing areas within our operations, and dealings with external people. The SOPs cover measures such as:

i. **Social distancing measures** such as ensuring everyone stays at home if not at work, and enforcements of safe distance measures (of at least 1.5 meters) during field operations such as during muster, in worker transport, and in facilities like clinics and creches where they remain open.
ii. **Regular screening of Covid-19 symptoms** carried out by specially trained staff that are equipped with infra-red thermometers. Checks are done prior to entrance to enclosed workplaces such as offices and mills, as well as during muster - before workers leave for their various field sites.

Regular checks are also done for all residents in estate housing. Where positive symptoms are identified, employees will be required to go for Covid-19 testing and into government quarantine if relevant where they will be on paid sick leave. Employees that are feeling unwell are required to go for check up in the estate clinic and to self-isolate at home on paid sick leave. In addition to this, there is also controlled entrance to Wilmar’s estate areas from outsiders (e.g. vendors, non-Wilmar resident visitors, etc.)
iii. **Increased focus on sanitation** in our operations. Prior to the various government imposed restricted movement orders, hand washing and hand sanitizing campaigns were already being rolled out.

This included putting up posters showing proper hand washing techniques, and information on why hand hygiene is critically important to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Hand wash and hand sanitizer stations have also been set up throughout our operations.
To accommodate the lack of availability of hand sanitizers, we have also diverted some of our R&D labs to produce alcohol-based hand sanitizers using the WHO guidelines for local production\(^2\). Meanwhile we are regularly disinfecting workplaces, and other key places in our estates using a solution of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) to ensure cross-contamination of germs is kept at bay.

\(^2\) https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Guide_to_Local_Production.pdf
Meanwhile we are striving to provide clinical face masks to employees in key roles (especially medical staff in estate clinics, employees carrying out the regular screening of symptoms), due to the global shortage of clinical face masks it is necessary to prioritize the distribution of face masks.

3. Providing Support to Alleviate the Impact of COVID-19

We recognize that these are difficult times for many people, and as a company we are doing what we can to help provide support and contribute to national or local initiatives to help those around us.

**Indonesia** – Contribution of USD 1 million to the Indonesian government for the purchasing of Covid-19 test kits, and face masks³.

**Malaysia** – Contributions comprising primarily of medical-related equipment as well as food supplies. Through the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Tawau, we donated RM 100,000 (*approximately USD 23,000*) for the purchase of 2 ventilators for the Tawau Hospital. We also contributed RM 450,000 (*approximately USD 104,000*) worth of Covid-19 test kits via the Malaysian Palm Oil Association. Additionally, in collaboration with the Kuok Group of companies in Malaysia, we have donated:

- 70,000 surgical masks and respirator face masks to 11 hospitals
- 1,000 liters of hand sanitizers to 10 hospitals
- RM 145,000 (*approximately USD 33,000*) of medical equipment to the University Malaya Medical Centre Kuala Lumpur
- RM 100,000 (*approximately USD 23,000*) worth of foodstuff provided via the government and 3 charitable organizations to be distributed to poor families and the homeless

Ghana – Contribution of items and cash worth GHC 1 million (*approximately USD 175,000*) to the Ghanaian government’s Covid-19 fund⁴. In addition, we also distributed soap, thermometers, facemasks and Veronica buckets (buckets designed to dispense water for handwashing purposes) valued at GHC 255,000 (*approximately USD 45,000*) to the communities surrounding our BOPP estate⁵. The BOPP estate’s health clinic remains open for all community members needing health services during the pandemic, while we have carried out awareness raising of the Covid-19 pandemic and measures for precaution to local community members.

Nigeria – Contribution of NGN 4 million (*approximately USD 11,000*) to the Cross River State’s Covid-19 task force to assist in efforts to manage the spread of the virus. Wilmar’s plantation and mill operations are in Cross River State.

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