



SUSTAINABILITY BRIEF

STRENGTHENING SMALLHOLDERS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Wilmar's PROSPEK Programme Builds Smallholders' Capacity for Sustainable Oil Palm Management

Over the last few decades, global demand for palm oil has grown, largely driven by its exceptional yield efficiency compared to other vegetable oils and its versatility across numerous industries. This has translated into the expansion of oil palm plantations, playing a pivotal role in rural development,¹ particularly in Indonesia.²

Within this landscape, smallholder-managed oil palm plantations have also contributed to economic growth by providing income opportunities for rural households. However, the same smallholders face the risk of being left out of global supply chains due to their inability to keep up with international regulations and evolving consumer preferences. Hence it is imperative that smallholders are continuously upskilled and trained on the best sustainable farming practices to stay ahead of industry developments.

Wilmar recognises that independent smallholders operate autonomously—managing their own finances, operations and equipment—without being tied to any specific mill. As such, mandating certification requirements without support would compromise their independence.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge their significant contribution to palm oil production in Indonesia, and are directly collaborating with them to support their attainment of certifications and helping them establish more stable, long-term relationships with our mills.

An initiative we recently launched to support the upskilling and training of smallholders is the Wilmar Indonesia Farmers Synergy and Empowerment Programme (PROSPEK). PROSPEK builds upon a range of farmer mentoring initiatives implemented previously by Wilmar.

¹ TABE-OJONG, M. P., & MOLUA, E. L. (2023). OIL PALM PRODUCTION AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED EVIDENCE FROM CAMEROON. THE JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, 60(4), 596–614. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1080/00220388.2023.2273801](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2023.2273801)

² MATIN QAIM ET AL. (2020). ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE OIL PALM BOOM. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RESOURCE ECONOMICS, VOL. 12:321-344. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1146/ANNUREV-RESOURCE-110119-024922](https://doi.org/10.1146/ANNUREV-RESOURCE-110119-024922)

Officially launched on 18 October 2024, the programme aims to enhance farmers' capacity to manage oil palm plantations sustainably, strengthen their partnerships with companies and ultimately improve livelihoods and their quality of life through targeted training and coaching sessions.

The PROSPEK pre-launch event, held in Palembang on 24 September 2024, was attended by over 130 farmers representing Wilmar's plasma farmer partners in South Sumatra. We work with more than 6,400 plasma farmers in this province alone.

Wilmar's Sustainability Smallholder Programme Manager, Yudi Triadi, explained that PROSPEK is being rolled out gradually and inclusively. The programme's current focus is on mentoring farmers to strengthen sustainable practices while maintaining the productivity and quality of their fresh fruit bunches (FFB).

"Currently, the average FFB productivity of plasma farmers exceeds 20 tonnes per hectare annually. Through PROSPEK, we aim to help farmers become even more productive while adopting sustainable practices," he said.



Wilmar's South Sumatra management team together with one of the many groups of smallholders that attended the pre-launch of the PROSPEK programme in Palembang in September 2024.

AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

PROSPEK aligns with our longstanding commitment to our No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation (NDPE) Policy, which has been in place since 2013.

Wilmar's Global Upstream Sustainability Lead, Edrin Moss, emphasised that the programme will help enhance smallholders' understanding of sustainable agricultural practices and prepare them for Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) certification, which is a government-led mandate.

"Many independent farmers still lack a holistic understanding of sustainability. We want to bridge that gap and support their journey towards sustainable practices," Edrin noted.

A key strategy of PROSPEK is partnering with local cooperatives which serve as effective platforms for organising meetings with farmers, facilitating knowledge transfer and streamlining access to resources and training. By working through and with cooperatives, we can better support farmers in improving plantation management, achieving certification and gaining access to broader markets.

I Wayan Gede Surya, Chairman of the Lembut Indah Sejahtera Cooperative, welcomed the initiative. Gede expressed hope that it would expand farmers' access to knowledge on environmental stewardship, occupational safety and overall production quality.

"Until now, we have been largely unfamiliar with sustainable palm oil practices. PROSPEK will give us the opportunity to learn and grow. We hope this programme is implemented effectively and delivers tangible benefits," said Gede.

PROSPEK is managed by a dedicated cross-divisional team from various business units to ensure the effectiveness of training and mentoring programmes.

The first phase of training was held on 26 and 27 February 2025 at PT Buluh Cawang Plantation (BCP) in South Sumatra. Over the course of two days, a total of 26 farmers representing five partner cooperatives of PT BCP were trained using the Training of Trainers method so that they could become facilitators for over 1,500 other farmers in the future.



Smallholders in our South Sumatra operations also participated in training workshops in February 2025 which was a part of Wilmar's PROSPEK programme.

The training covered key areas including facilitation techniques, NDPE policies, ISPO certification standards and sustainable oil palm cultivation practices pertaining to harvesting, fertilising and chemical spraying methods.

The training was carried out both in a classroom and in the field so that the farmers could have hands-on practice and experience being a facilitator.



Smallholders in an outdoor classroom environment to learn, observe and put to practice what they learnt.

ACCESSING LEARNING MATERIALS

To enhance the learning experience, Wilmar developed customised training modules, guidebooks and an administration system—all of which are designed to equip smallholders with the latest knowledge on independent plantation management and productivity improvement, while addressing environmental, social and economic concerns. Ultimately, these resources will aid them in fulfilling the criteria of sustainability certification, either with ISPO or RSPO.

The range of tailored training modules includes the following:

1. NDPE Guide
2. Sustainability Standard Guide
3. ISPO Certification Guide
4. Agribusiness Management Guide
5. Entrepreneurship Guide
6. Social Responsibility Guide
7. Child Protection Guide
8. Important Information Guide
9. Best Oil Palm Cultivation Techniques Guide, from Nursery to Post-harvest
10. Occupational Safety Guide
11. Best Facilitator Guide
12. Effective Facilitator Guide
13. Strengthening Farmer Institutions Guide

The guidebook, on the other hand, serves as a practical resource on sustainable oil palm management in line with NDPE principles, best technical management of oil palm cultivation and practice guidelines for fulfilling the principles and criteria of ISPO certification.

In addition, the newly introduced administration system will support cooperatives and smallholders in streamlining the reporting process for traceability, financial management and operational activities.

With more PROSPEK sessions planned, Wilmar remains committed to advancing our vision of an inclusive, responsible palm oil industry that benefits both people and the planet.



The PROSPEK trainers from Wilmar.