



PRESS RELEASE

World's largest palm oil companies team up with NGOs to save 10,000 orangutans found on non-certified palm oil concessions in Borneo

London, 13 June 2017 – A group of some world's largest palm oil companies, including Wilmar, Sime Darby and Musim Mas, together with the Orangutan Land Trust and a number of wildlife conservation experts and NGOs, today announced the launch of the PONGO Alliance, a new initiative aimed at supporting the management of orang-utans and other wildlife in palm oil landscapes.

While there is a widespread perception that palm oil cultivation is not compatible with wildlife protection, the [latest research](#), conducted by NGO Borneo Futures for the Orangutan Land Trust and Wilmar International, shows that there are ways for the palm oil industry and orangutans to coexist.

The palm oil companies, members of the PONGO Alliance, acknowledge their responsibility for ensuring that palm oil cultivation is done with minimal impact on local biodiversity and commit to promoting the use of sustainable landscape management (so-called 'landscape approach') across the entire island of Borneo. The landscape approach does not look at one particular palm oil or other concession but at the ecoregion as a whole because wild animals do not stay within the boundaries of particular concessions, but move across the whole landscape which they consider as their natural habitat.

Ginny Ng Siew Ling, Forest Sustainability Manager with Wilmar International, commented: *"The PONGO Alliance's approach is to engage with all stakeholders on the ground, including palm oil companies, local governments and local communities to implement best management practices for the protection of orang-utans and wildlife in the oil palm landscape."*

Orangutans are critically endangered species, whose population have more than halved over the past 50 years due to poaching, illegal logging and intensive agriculture. Today, the largest population of orangutans on the planet lives on the island Borneo, which is shared by three countries, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

The RSPO certification and companies' corporate policies of "no deforestation, no cultivation on peatland and no exploitation" do have a positive impact on the survival of the species, as shown in the latest [research](#) done by Borneo Futures, one of the members of the Alliance. However, there are still around 10,000 orangutans living on non-certified palm oil concessions who are at risk of extinction if their habitats are not managed properly.

Dr. Erik Meijaard, an independent researcher at the Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions (a partnership between five Australian universities) and the founder of Borneo Futures, states: *"Our research shows that the collaborative approach at the landscape level can become a game changer for wildlife conservation. The next step now is to scale this up and sit down with all palm oil companies having orangutans on their concessions in Borneo to discuss a joint action plan."*

The PONGO Alliance was launched at the annual European [conference](#) of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in London on June 13, 2017.

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About the PONGO Alliance

The Palm Oil & NGO (PONGO) Alliance was founded in 2015. The Alliance’s mission is to prevent the extinction of orangutans living on palm oil concessions on the island of Borneo. The Alliance will engage with local governments and certified and non-certified palm oil companies in Borneo to help implement sustainable landscape management (so-called ‘landscape approach’) on the entire island. A landscape approach is about having all local stakeholders discuss and agree on the ecosystems that need to be excluded from development because of their ecological or cultural value.

The PONGO Alliance gathers industry and NGO members, mostly from palm oil producing and trading countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – who believe that the best way to achieve tangible results in wildlife conservation is collaboration between all stakeholders on the ground. The current members include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Musim Mas (grower)• Wilmar (grower)• Sime Darby (grower)• PT ANJ Agri (grower)• United Plantation Bhd (grower)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Borneo Futures• Orangutan Information Centre• Orangutan Land Trust (NGO)• Fauna & Flora International (NGO)• HUTAN (Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Programme) (NGO)• SOS (Sumatran Orangutan Society) (NGO)• International Animal Rescue (NGO)• Borneo Rhino Alliance (NGO)• Zoo Copenhagen (zoo)
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Factsheet

The Palm Oil & NGO (PONGO) Alliance: Fighting for orangutan conservation in Borneo

The Palm Oil & NGO (PONGO) Alliance was founded in 2015.

Mission: to support the management of orangutans and other wildlife within oil palm landscapes. To do so, the Alliance engages local governments and palm oil companies with the two objectives:

1. To guide land use planning and management to secure viable populations of orangutans and other wildlife;
2. To create a sustainable landscape for orangutans and wildlife through the implementation of best management practices and biological corridors.

Members

The PONGO Alliance gathers industry and NGO members, mostly from palm oil producing and trading countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – who believe that the best way to achieve tangible results in wildlife conservation is to work with local partners and with local communities on the ground.

The members include:

- Musim Mas (grower)
- Wilmar (trader)
- Sime Darby (grower)
- Borneo Futures
- Orangutan Information Centre (NGO)
- Orangutan Land Trust (NGO)
- Fauna & Flora International (NGO)
- Zoo Copenhagen (zoo)
- PT ANJ Agri (grower)
- HUTAN (Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme) (NGO)
- SOS (Sumatran Orangutan Society) (NGO)
- International Animal Rescue (NGO)
- United Plantation Bhd (grower)
- Borneo Rhino Alliance (NGO)

Current priorities

- Promote the use of the “landscape approach” to identify and manage the areas that need to be set aside for conservation and connect them according to a coherent land planning approach;
- Develop capacity building trainings for companies having orangutans and other wildlife on their land to inform them about the best practices in forest conservation management;
- Engage with local governments to discuss ways of improving land planning and allocation of development permits to ensure that all high conservation value areas are set aside for conservation.

The landscape approach to wildlife conservation:

- A landscape approach means that all local stakeholders – palm oil companies, indigenous peoples, governments and civil society organisations – discuss and agree on which land to develop and which to set aside for conservation because of its ecological, cultural or historical value.
- The landscape approach does not look at one particular palm oil or other concession but at the ecoregion as a whole.
- Wildlife do not stay within the boundaries of particular concessions, they move across the landscape which they consider as their natural habitat. While it is important to set aside patches of forest within palm oil concessions for the survival of wildlife, it is even more important to set up safe corridors between those areas and between different concessions so that they could move from one protected area to another safely without the risk of being killed or stranded. This is why the landscape approach is currently the best practice method of managing wildlife.

About orangutans

- Orangutans are a critically endangered species, and fully protected in both Indonesia and Malaysia. Their populations have more than halved over the past 50 years due to illegal killing and agriculture, including oil palm cultivation, which encroaches on their natural habitats.
- There are two distinct species of orangutan, Bornean and Sumatran. There are an estimated 70,000 orangutans living in Borneo and 14,600 in Sumatra at the moment (source: Borneo Futures).
- Approximately 2,000-3,000 Bornean orangutans have been killed every year in the past four decades, both in agricultural conflict situations and for bushmeat (source: Borneo Futures)
- At this rate of killing, most orangutan populations will go extinct within the next 50 years.
- According to the research done by Borneo Futures (*“An impact analysis of RSPO certification on Borneo forest cover and orangutan populations”¹*), plantations managed according to the RSPO’s Principles & Criteria manage to slow down deforestation rates; currently there are an estimated 275 orangutans in RSPO-certified concessions on Borneo.

1

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313927667_An_impact_analysis_of_RSPO_certification_on_Borneo_forest_cover_and_orangutan_populations

- However, there are at least 9,300 Orangutans living in non-RSPO-certified concessions in Borneo, whose survival is under threat. Rescuing or relocating these animals is financially and logistically impossible.
- Orangutans can survive and live in the areas allocated for oil palm development provided that a number of conditions are met:
 - Palm oil estates owners and managers must set aside intact forest areas with orangutan habitats and maintain corridors between them for orangutans to pass.
 - The forest cover in each plantation should be at least 10% of the plantation, and should be connected to neighbouring forest areas, which are properly managed (no encroaching, no kill zone).
 - There should be zero orangutan killing in these landscapes, because orangutans are a very slow-breeding species and cannot recover from any killing pressure.
 - The plantation staff should also be properly trained to manage conservation areas and corridors between them.