



Statement Friends of the Earth International

Bowing to civil society pressure, palm oil giant promises to end its forest destruction

9th of December 2013 – In response to years of pressure from civil society, Wilmar International, the world's largest palm oil trader, has just announced a “No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation Policy”.

Friends of the Earth International and many Friends of the Earth member groups have campaigned for years to end Wilmar's destructive, unsustainable, and often illegal practices. The ravages of the palm oil sector are well known and well documented, and we need urgent action to reduce the massive harm caused to forests and communities by industrial palm oil plantations.

We are strongly cognizant that Wilmar's commitment to improvement comes in the wake of many years of land-grabbing, fueling of conflicts, destruction of endangered habitat, and other abuses – all of which has rewarded Wilmar and its associates with enormous profits, and established the company as the world's largest palm oil trader.

Given this history, and the context within which transnational corporations such as Wilmar operate, Friends of the Earth recognizes that a voluntary commitment by Wilmar, no matter how broad, can only be fully effective when accompanied and overseen by strong national legislation and international norms to prevent systematic exploitation of lands, lives and livelihoods, and by the full empowerment of local communities and community-based organizations to determine the best use of their lands and resources.

Friends of the Earth has documented several ongoing cases of social and environmental abuse involving Wilmar, its subsidiaries, and its third party suppliers. These cases demonstrate that Wilmar's membership in the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil did not prevent it from violating the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities or from deforesting large areas.

In light of this, Wilmar needs to take immediate steps to demonstrate that it takes this new policy seriously. These steps include bringing an immediate end to conversion of natural forest to plantations; halting its purchasing of palm oil from Bumitama Agri Ltd.; immediate adherence to national laws in Uganda and all the countries where it operates; and the full and demonstrable application of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in all of its operations, including consideration for returning lands which were previously acquired without communities' consent and through processes which did not respect their ownership rights. Without these concrete and immediate actions, the statement of Wilmar will be merely greenwash to prevent pressure from civil society groups.

Friends of the Earth will be closely monitoring the implementation of Wilmar's stated commitments.

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