



The Africa Palm Oil Initiative Highlights from 2020-2021



APOI countries have each followed a three-phase APOI process: engagement, development and implementation. As part of the implementation phase, National Principles and Action Plans were developed to guide the implementation of sustainable palm oil production in each country.

To ensure the coordination and success of the national principles and action plans, multi-stakeholder national platforms were established during the development phase to facilitate the implementation process.

In this current implementation phase of APOI, countries have been spending the year working on their sustainability plans and getting back to fieldwork and training following the Covid-enforced hiatus.



The African Palm Oil Initiative is a truly multi-stakeholder platform, providing a framework for governments to engage with local communities and private sector, while giving companies a channel to fulfil their commitments to reduce commodity-driven deforestation,” said Justin Adams, Executive Director of the Tropical Forest Alliance. “Our shared vision is for a prosperous African palm oil industry that brings jobs and wealth to local communities in a way that is environmentally and socially sustainable and mitigates climate change by protecting nature and the rich tropical forests of the region.



FPIC consultations with communities, Edo State, Nigeria



HCV, HCS and FPIC training in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Policy successes with governments

Integrating APOI principles with national government processes has been integral to the success of the initiative

In Liberia a major success was the July validation of the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan, which will be coordinated by NOPPOL (National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia), the country facilitator for APOI, who will also move forward with the RSPO smallholders certification for the country.

In Edo State, Nigeria there were policy successes with the validation of the Guidelines for conducting Free Prior & Informed Consent in the state, which is now on the way through passage into law. This was aided by the state counsels joining as members of the platform in September- these state counsels are staff of the Ministry of Justice. Hitherto the platform did not have representatives from the legal department. This marks a greater shift in stakeholder understanding of the concept of FPIC and its importance. The State Government, through the Edo State Oil Palm Programme, has made it mandatory for oil palm investors in the state to conduct FPIC with would-be affected communities, and to comply with the RSPO P&C to ensure certification. The Edo State programme also includes a reforestation element which all investors have committed to, amounting to a percentage of each concession allocated.

Sierra Leone's APOI national platform has concluded national discussions and contributions to the country's RSPO National Interpretation, which was endorsed by RSPO's Board of Governors in November 2021 following public consultation.

Ghana's APOI national platform continues to engage with the new Tree Crop Development Authority, with platform members playing central roles in the operationalisation

of the Authority. Five members of the APOI platform form part of the oil palm sub-working group that is providing input into the development of the legislative instrument which will empower the Authority to regulate the oil palm sector sustainably, and the Chair of this sub-working group comes from a private sector member of the APOI national platform. As this is a new government authority, it provides the opportunity to mainstream the issues identified through the TFA APOI process as inhibiting its sustainable development.

Gabon too saw success following the April workshop on the validation of the sustainability framework for its national platform, which led to a meeting between the APOI platform's advocacy committee and the Minister of Agriculture in July to discuss the draft decree on the APOI platform's creation, organisation and operation. Assisted by the Secretary General of the Ministry and legal advisors, the Minister reaffirmed the Gabonese government's commitment to support the sustainability of the palm oil sector.

Cameroon saw success in the development of the National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Sector, led by MINADER (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). This was finalised at a workshop in September attended by key agro-industry companies, small producer associations and cooperatives, civil society organisations, government agencies, WWF and Proforest, and during the meeting the APOI national principles for sustainable palm oil development were embedded into the National Strategy.

Capacity building at government level, and also with local communities

Highlighting the importance of capacity building at all levels to ensure genuine and meaningful participation

Edo State, Nigeria has conducted capacity building with companies and government as part of the validation of the FPIC process.

Also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there began the first formal capacity building for 11 government ministries who form part of the APOI platform of the DRC. This capacity building took place in Kinshasa, but was also for the benefit of the decentralised services in the provinces. In DRC the training topics of HCV, HCS and FPIC are not yet integrated into the legal framework and national regulatory processes, but the APOI platform has highlighted the need for capacity building and training

to create a better understanding of the concepts before they can possibly be integrated into law. The APOI platform in DRC also noted a remarkable change in the active participation of women and indigenous peoples at the platform meetings throughout the year. This is a central tenet of APOI principles under the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration, but sometimes requires the platform to go against prevailing norms. At the local level women are generally excluded from decision making, and indigenous peoples have no right to speak, so the DRC APOI platform requiring their participation has allowed the much needed voice of local communities to be heard.

Sustainability plans for the future

Ensuring the long-term success and effectiveness of the APOI platforms has been a focus for every country this year. Alongside government endorsement, local buy-in and financial sustainability is essential to ensure the work continues

The APOI platform is now a recognised body of the palm oil sector in Côte d'Ivoire with its integration with AIPH, Association Interprofessionnelle de la filière Palmier à Huile. This institutionalised platform is made up of a diversity of actors working to implement the APOI action plan, and the integration of APOI as the technical organ of AIPH will allow the future good functioning and financial security of the platform.

The Central African Republic (CAR) has also been working on the sustainability of the national platform, and secured commitment in September from the Belgian Development Agency (Enabel) for the Interprofessional platform with financial and technical support. This will initially be provided through the Rural Development Support Programme (DEVUR2) financed by the Bêkou fund of the European Union. Enabel has also offered to support the national platform in the development

of a larger-scale project in the sector, and has sent representatives to visit some of the plantations with Proforest's assistance.

The APOI platform in the Republic of the Congo (ROC) has also been identifying potential technical and financial partners as part of their sustainability plan and has held meetings throughout 2021 to present the sustainability plan to potential partners EFI, CAFI, the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, AFD and Unicongo.

Edo State too has secured funding from its state government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, starting from 2022. This is of crucial importance for the sustenance and institutionalisation of the platform beyond its current funding period from donor Partnerships for Forests.

CoP26 in Glasgow and on into 2022

Seven countries provided ministerial and high-level statements for an event held at CoP26, providing updates on progress and major milestones in sustainable palm oil development over the last five years.

As part of this, APOI saw the overall success of ministerial support at CoP26 for a refresh to the Marrakesh Declaration, which will be developed by the countries through 2022 and would seek to expand its reach and opportunities to other commodities and regions. Work on the revised Marrakesh agreement

amongst all parties will begin in earnest in 2022, with a view to signing a new regional accord at CoP27 in Egypt in November.

For more information visit <https://bit.ly/3EYT65v>



HCV, HCS and FPIC training in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Palm nursery, the Democratic Republic of the Congo



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