



Tropical Forest Alliance 2020

Africa Palm Oil Initiative Regional Meeting

12 - 13 October | Libreville, Gabon

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) is a signature initiative of the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA 2020). Its vision is a prosperous palm oil industry, which brings jobs and wealth to local communities in a way that is environmentally and socially sustainable and protects the rich tropical forests of the region.

Representatives from government, private sector, small producers and civil society from fifteen countries came together on 12 and 13 October 2017 for the Initiative's third regional workshop, which took place in Libreville, Gabon. The Prime Minister of Gabon, His Excellence Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet, and his cabinet opened the regional meeting. The ten Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) country teams were joined by international civil society organisations, as well as private sector representatives, keen to engage in the process of the development of sustainable palm oil in West and Central Africa. Eight countries - the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone - joined as TFA 2020 partners, represented by members of their country teams. Two further countries - Cameroon and Nigeria - have been closely engaging with the Initiative and were represented by key members of government and civil society.

The regional meeting was organised by the Government of Gabon through the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock responsible for the GRAINE programme, in conjunction with WWF-Gabon, Proforest, and the TFA 2020 Secretariat. The Africa Palm Oil Initiative is coordinated by Proforest on behalf of the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020, thanks to financial support from the UK's Department for International Development through the Partnership for Forests Programme and from the Global Environment Facility, via WWF-US.

Key lessons and achievements

The regional meeting was well attended, welcoming around 80 participants from over 15 different countries. A gender balance of representatives from public, private and civil society sectors supported the meeting's aim to be inclusive and collaborative.

We were delighted to see that the regional meeting:

1. Highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to effectively advance the mission for the elimination of the deforestation from commodity supply chains.
2. Emphasized the need to integrate the views of forest peoples' communities when developing national policies against deforestation.
3. Underlined the crucial role of reliable and comprehensive data to inform the creation of policies that provide the legislative groundwork for sustainable agricultural production.
4. Stressed the importance of land rights and land use planning for the implementation of commitments to eliminate deforestation.
5. Facilitated intra-country learning for all ten countries engaged with the Africa Palm Oil Initiative. These exchanges were incorporated into the national principles and action plans in accordance with the national context and the evolution of the process.

Next steps

In the coming year, the APOI will be focusing on:

- Engaging the countries in the implementation phase through the TFA 2020 Implementation Dialogue process: facilitating targeted multi-stakeholder dialogues that can help realise the national action plans.
- Supporting the country teams as they seek targeted opportunities for the resources and finance required to engage, develop and implement their national principles for sustainable palm oil.
- Building the national knowledge base, technical expertise and general capacity needed to sustain the APOI in each country.
- Communicating the APOI objectives to a wider audience, at both a regional level and within each APOI country.
- Other support needs identified by the APOI country teams.

Below is a summary of the speakers and presentations that were held over the two days of the regional meeting. At the end of this document, there is also a summary of key documents.

Day 1: Thursday, October 12

Addressing Deforestation in Central and Western Africa

The first day of the regional meeting started with opening statements from Marthe Mapangou (WWF-Gabon), Abraham Baffoe (Proforest) and Joseph Lumumba (TFA 2020). Their opening remarks highlighted the importance of collaboration between the public, private and civil society sectors to create palm oil industries in West and Central Africa which can support the development of national agricultural, while protecting forest resources and distributing wealth in rural areas.

The Minister of Agriculture, Yves Fernand Manfoumbi, and His Excellence Prime Minister Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet then addressed the meeting. Their statements reinforced the commitment of the government of Gabon to the development of a prosperous, sustainable palm oil industry in the country.

The first session of the day was a mini-panel discussion entitled **Advancing High Impact Partnerships for Deforestation-Free Economies in Central and Western Africa**. Christopher Stewart (Olam), Hilde Dahl (CAFI) and Felix Bangweni (UNEXPalm-Cameroon) presented and Marthe Mapangou (WWF-Gabon) moderated the session. The panelists discussed opportunities and challenges in leveraging public-private partnerships like the Africa Palm Oil Initiative and others, to advance deforestation-free supply chains.

The second session was entitled the **Africa Palm Oil Initiative Marketplace**, where each country team shared key challenges and opportunities for advancing the APOI agenda in their local context encountered over the last year. The objective was to provide an overview of the current opportunities in each country, in order to advance potential partnerships with wider interested participants. In terms of the broader APOI goals, the Marketplace was also a chance to facilitate intra-country learnings to continue to build a shared understanding of the aims of APOI and techniques for supporting the Initiative.

After lunch, a series of presentations brought into focus various initiatives which are advancing the agenda for deforestation free commodity chains in the region and beyond. On technology, Anna Kopacz (TFA 2020) presented technologies available and in development that can assist in decision making within actions aimed at halting deforestation. The [TFA 2020 Initiative Map](#) uses these technologies to present TFA 2020 partner initiatives and projects that are driving action towards reaching deforestation-free supply chains. On other deforestation inciting commodities, Vincent

Manu from the World Cocoa Foundation and Violaine Berger from IDH presented the **Cocoa and Forests Initiative**. This new exciting initiative brings together 35 cocoa and chocolate companies, who collectively committed to work together to end deforestation and forest degradation in the global cocoa supply chain, with an initial focus on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. On the question of unified definitions, Adrienne Stork from the Rainforest Alliance presented the [Accountability Framework](#), a collaborative effort to establish common definitions, norms, and good practices for delivering on companies' ethical supply chain commitments. Finally, Jeremiah Bentum from our principal donor programme [Partnerships for Forests](#) (funded by UK-DFID) gave some insight on current funding opportunities for forestry projects in West and Central Africa.

The final session was a series of interactive discussions on the recently released **TFA Commodities and Forests Agenda 2020**. This began with an introduction by Patricia Matzdorf (TFA 2020) on the 10 agenda items, why these were selected as high-priority impact areas, and which are most relevant to the West and Central African context. The session then turned into an interactive workshop designed to explore how to accelerate action on the agenda items most relevant to Central and West Africa. The agenda items were: Agenda 4: Sustainably increasing smallholder yields in palm oil and cocoa; Agenda 6: Accelerating the implementation of jurisdictional programmes; Agenda 7: Addressing land conflicts, tenure security and Land rights; Agenda 10: Improving the quality and availability of deforestation and supply chain data.

The first day was brought to an end by statements from the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock responsible for the GRAINE programme and His Excellence Yves Fernand Manfoumbi.

Day 2: Friday, October 13

APOI Focus Day and Training

The second day of the meeting provided an opportunity for each of the ten country teams to identify its next steps and where they will need support from TFA2020 community to implement their national principles and action plans. During this session, the country teams presented the state of oil palm production in their respective countries, highlighted priorities of their national action plan and opportunities for partnerships.

The afternoon session was the **Deforestation-Free** Training on deforestation-free concepts, global commitments and tools, conducted by Mike Senior and Louis Defo from Proforest.

Key documents

The presentations shared during the sessions are available in the links below:

- [Central African Forest Initiative \(CAFI\)](#)
- [Cocoa and Forests Initiative](#)
- [Partnerships for Forests](#)
- [Commodities and Forest Agenda 2020](#)
- [Accountability framework](#)
- [Zero Deforestation training](#)