The Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (TFA 2020) Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) aims to ensure that Africa’s palm oil sector develops in a way that is environmentally and socially sustainable, protecting Africa’s rich tropical forests, whilst bringing economic benefits to the region.

The Initiative brings together partners from ten palm-oil-producing countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone. All countries are now TFA2020 partners and have developed principles for sustainable oil palm development.

Stakeholders from governments, companies, civil society and indigenous and community groups work at both national and regional levels.

On a regional level, APOI stakeholders have collectively agreed upon regional principles for responsible palm oil development which place sustainability, transparency, good governance and human rights at the heart of Africa’s growing oil palm industry.

Seven African governments publicly committed to these principles in 2016 when they signed the TFA 2020 Marrakesh Declaration at the UN Climate Change Conference in Morocco.

Since then, the focus of the APOI has been to strengthen the collaborative implementation of the Marrakesh Declaration, driven forward at the national level by the APOI country teams.
From commitment to implementation: the role of the APOI country teams

Each of the ten APOI country teams consists of a facilitator (usually from civil society), a government focal point and a private sector representative. In a process convened by the facilitator, core stakeholders collectively agree upon a set of national principles to guide sustainable palm oil development in their country and then develop a national action plan to deliver this vision. The action plan is implemented under the supervision of the APOI national platform, which consists of a wider group of nominated stakeholders representing civil society and the private and public sector.

Country team updates

Cameroon

In Cameroon, under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), WWF and Proforest facilitated the elaboration by stakeholders (government ministries, private sector and civil society) of national principles for sustainable palm oil development. Now, the country team is engaging with the government to align and ensure these principles are embedded in the draft national palm oil strategy, currently under finalisation. This consolidation process is still ongoing and will lead to a national validation workshop of the strategy. Cameroon signed on as a TFA2020 partner in 2018.

Central African Republic

Principles and an action plan guiding sustainable palm oil in the Central African Republic were agreed at a national workshop convened by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) in January 2018. The implementation of the action plan is underway, led by the national platform endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR).

Côte d’Ivoire

Led by Solidaridad, AIPH (the national oil palm association) and the REDD+ Secretariat, the country team is planning how to implement the national principles agreed in 2016 as well as how to follow up on opportunities presented at the Implementation Dialogue held in May 2018. The country’s national platform was established in December 2017. The country team continues with the implementation of the action plan.

Republic of Congo

National principles were developed at the first national workshop held in August 2017, and the action plan was later validated at the second national workshop in December 2017. The national platform convenes regularly to discuss the implementation of this action plan, and the country team is now in progress with implementing the national action plan in collaboration with key international partners.
Democratic Republic of Congo
The second national workshop to develop the action plan for the implementation of the national principles took place in October 2017. The national platform was later established in April 2018, and the country team is now making progress towards the implementations of the national action plan, including planning a national campaign to socialize the TFA 2020 APOI.

Gabon
The first national workshop took place in September 2017, ahead of which a working group was established to discuss potential engagements on initiatives to address deforestation. Gabon hosted the APOI’s third regional meeting in October 2017. Gabon is now implementing one of the key recommendations resulting from the national workshops.

Ghana
The Ghana APOI national platform is focusing on implementing their action plan with particular attention on increasing productivity and sustainability in the sub-sector by disseminating best management practices (BMP) to increase yields without increasing the size of farms or deforested areas. Partnering with Solidaridad and the Ministry of Agriculture, BMP training has been delivered to Agricultural Extension Officers. Ghana also hosted the TFA 2020 General Assembly and the Fourth APOI Regional Meeting in May 2018.

Liberia
In Liberia, the Oil Palm Sector Technical Working Group, based in the Ministry of Agriculture, will house the APOI national platform. A manager hired by the UNDP Good Growth Partnership will coordinate the affairs of the platform for the next three years in close consultation with the Secretariat to ensure that the platform harnesses all synergies in the oil palm sector in Liberia - across the private sector, civil society and government.

Nigeria
With firm commitments from Governor Obaseki, Edo State became a partner of TFA2020 in May 2018. Since then, Edo State has developed the national principles and action plan in a workshop including members of the State government, private sector and civil society organisations. Other significant palm oil producing regions that have shown commitment so far include the Cross-River, Akwa Ibom and Delta States.

Sierra Leone
In 2016 national principles were developed covering a range of issues from deforestation to support for smallholder outgrowers. These principles were reviewed at the second national workshop, held in 2017, and an action plan for their implementation was agreed. In 2018, the Sierra Leone team is focusing on convening the national platform meetings to discuss and move forward implementation of the action plan.
Taking a jurisdictional approach to combatting deforestation

Jurisdictional initiatives aim to bring together stakeholders in a particular region, at the scale of a jurisdiction or landscape, to agree goals, align their activities and share monitoring and verification. They are emerging as ways of achieving sustainability objectives at a larger scale.

What are the key elements of jurisdictional initiatives?

- Development and implementation at the scale of a jurisdiction (i.e. local or national government) with a focus on the performance of the whole landscape.
- Participation of government together with other stakeholders such as civil society groups, communities, private sector companies and farmers.
- One or more shared goals that support sustainable development (e.g. reducing deforestation, eliminating child labour or supporting smallholders).
- Alignment of the activities and inputs of different stakeholders (e.g. incentives, enforcement and planning) to increase effectiveness.
- Accountability to provide credibility and assurance including long-term governance, monitoring, transparency, communication and verification.

How do jurisdictional approaches contribute to more responsible commodity production?

- They provide a potential solution to the challenge of implementing commitments that are outside the control of individual producers (e.g. protecting conservation areas or recognizing community rights).
- They can also make certification cheaper, more efficient and - importantly - more inclusive of small producers.
- They also offer a platform for public-private partnerships, which can provide support and incentives for change, achieve transformation at scale and improve long-term governance.

What next for the Africa Palm Oil Initiative?

With all APOI country teams having now developed their national plans, the emphasis will now be on moving forward onto the final implementation phase. The APOI is focused on developing high-impact partnerships to support the delivery of national action plans, as well as developing joint actions with other commodity supply chains - especially cocoa and rubber - in order to push forward the agenda to halt deforestation in West and Central Africa.

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