

TROPICAL FOREST ALLIANCE
AFRICA PALM
OIL INITIATIVE

INITIATIVE POUR
L'HUILE DE PALME
EN AFRIQUE DE LA

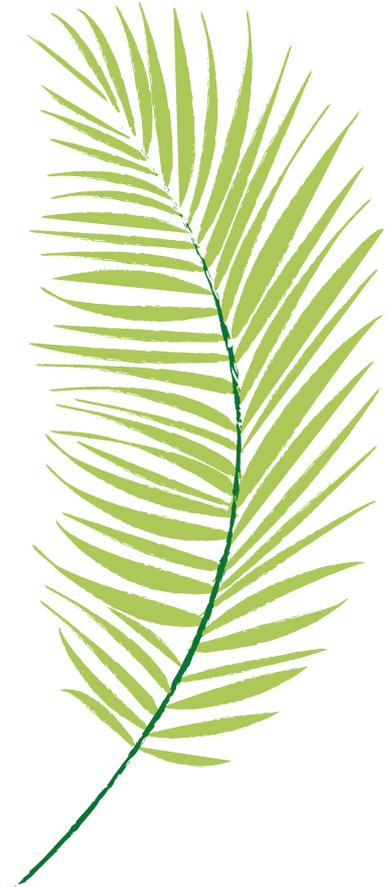
TROPICAL FOREST
ALLIANCE

MARRAKESH
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6 NOVEMBER 2021
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GLASGOW



Five Years of Progress towards Sustainable Palm Oil Development in Africa

From the Marrakesh Declaration at CoP22 to new endorsement and impetus at
CoP26: Progress, lessons learned and next steps for the Africa Palm Oil Initiative

Five Years of Progress towards Sustainable Palm Oil Development in Africa

Forests are going to be critical to keep the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

At CoP26 world leaders renewed their commitment to end deforestation as part of the action needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and slow the pace of climate change.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that the rate of deforestation between 2015 and 2020 was 10 million hectares per year;¹ with agricultural commodity production one of the leading drivers. Globally, 1.6 billion people depend on forests for their jobs and livelihoods,² while in many African countries 50–60% of the population work in agriculture.³ Forests and ecosystem services are the lifeblood of local communities and indigenous peoples, whose culture, subsistence and way of life depend on forests. These communities are also the most affected by climate change, food insecurity, unemployment and poverty.

International trade in commodities like palm oil, soy and beef is worth over \$80 billion per year,⁴ and global demand continues to grow. Global Industry Analysts, Inc. estimates that the global palm oil market will reach \$57.2 billion by 2026, a compound annual growth rate of 5% from 2020.

The FAO estimates that 10% of global cropland in the world is allocated for permanent crops, such as fruit trees, oil palm oil plantations and cocoa plantations.⁵ 85% of global palm oil supplies come from Malaysia and Indonesia.⁶

Africa currently produces a small proportion of the world's palm oil but consumes approximately 15% of global production.⁷ A number of governments have committed to expanding their oil palm sector to satisfy local demand. For example, in 2019 the Nigerian Federal Government created a new policy on palm oil, aiming to produce 100% of local demand by 2027, which will mean a significant increase in domestic production.

Oil palm trees are native to Africa, and the continent has the potential to be the frontier of responsible palm oil production, to meet this increasing demand and contribute to improved food security and better livelihoods for millions of Africans, while protecting West and Central Africa's remaining rainforests.

Ten countries that account for 75% of Africa's forests form the Tropical Forest Alliance's Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI): Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Edo State (Nigeria), Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

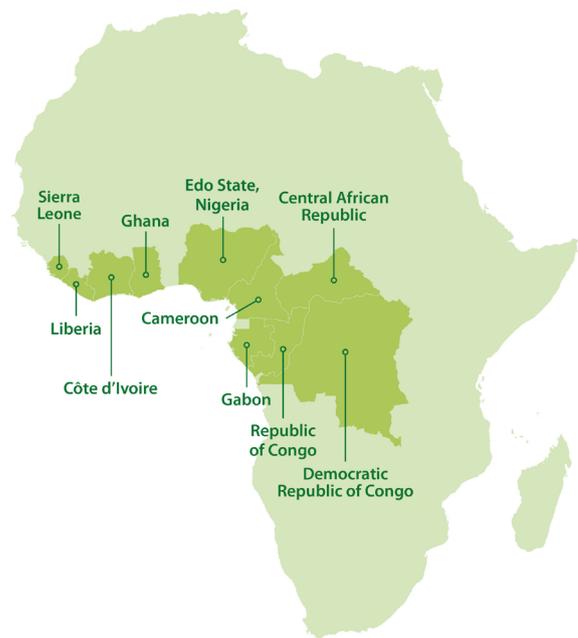


Figure 1: A map showing the countries that are members of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative.

1 FAO and UNEP. 2020. *The State of the World's Forests 2020. Forests, biodiversity and people*. Rome. [Accessed 30 Nov 2021]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8642en>

2 FAO. 2015. *Forests and poverty reduction*. [Accessed 30 Nov 2021]. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/forestry/livelihoods/en/>

3 For example, according to ILO figures, agriculture represents approximately 50% of total employment in Sub-Saharan Africa: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database. 2021. *Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modelled ILO estimate) – Sub-Saharan Africa*. [Accessed: 30 Nov 2021] Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=ZG>

4 UK Government Cabinet Office. 2021. *More than 20 countries come together to pledge support for the world's forests*. [Accessed 30 Nov 2021]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-20-countries-come-together-to-pledge-support-for-the-worlds-forests>

5 FAO. 2020. *Land use in agriculture by the numbers*. [Accessed 30 Nov 2021]. Available from: <https://www.fao.org/sustainability/news/detail/en/c/1274219/>

6 IUCN. 2018. *Issues Brief: Palm Oil and Biodiversity*. [Accessed 30 Nov 2021]. Available from: https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/iucn_issues_brief_palm_oil_and_biodiversity.pdf

7 Elsa Ordway, Denis J. Sonwa, Patrice Levang, Fideline Mboringong, Ludovic Miaro III, Rosamond L. Naylor, Raymond N. Nkongho. 2019. *Sustainable development of the palm oil sector in the Congo Basin*. [Online]. Center for International Forestry Research. [Accessed 30 November 2021]. Available from: <https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7279>

An overview of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) and the Marrakesh Declaration

APOI is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together national governments, traditional leaders, local communities and indigenous peoples, donors, technical partners, investors, producers, retailers, traders, and many other stakeholders. The joint vision is a prosperous palm oil industry that 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.

Each country in the APOI worked through a national platform to develop national principles for responsible palm oil development in West and Central Africa, which place sustainability, transparency, good governance and human rights at the heart of Africa's growing oil palm industry. The APOI country teams then contributed and agreed key themes that should be covered by a set of regional guiding principles, addressing deforestation, community rights, labour conditions, smallholder development and biodiversity protection.

The resulting 'Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Sector in Africa' was signed by ministerial representatives of governments of palm oil-producing countries in West and Central Africa during the annual UN Climate Change Conference (CoP22) in Marrakesh, Morocco on 16th November 2016.

The message was clear: Africa is open for investment in the oil palm sector but will only welcome investments that comply with the principles of sustainability, transparency and the protection of forests and human rights as contained in the Declaration.

Since 2016, the APOI has focused on strengthening the collaborative implementation of the Marrakesh Declaration, driven forward by the country teams.

Marrakesh + 5 years of progress at CoP26

As we celebrate five years since the signing of the guiding principles at the heart of the Marrakesh Declaration, we look back at progress that has been made in key areas, such as working with partners; protecting natural heritage using locally adapted tools including High Conservation Value (HCV), High Carbon Stock (HCS) and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); protecting the rights of forest-dependent communities; promoting gender equality; and supporting smallholder livelihoods.

At an event to mark five years since the signing of the Marrakesh Declaration at CoP26 in Glasgow on 6th November 2021, we heard from several ministries and national platforms about the progress made in the past five years and the potential for further change. (Full statements follow as an appendix.)



Figure 2: The closing of the Marrakesh +5 event, which took place during CoP26 at the Ghana Pavilion, 2021

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They emphasised some important messages:

APOI has demonstrated the power of a multi-stakeholder approach, and this is reflected in the structure and policy framework established. In Sierra Leone, for example:

“The platform is chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and co-chaired by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This reflects the dual focus for our multi-stakeholder engagement, encompassing both the forest communities and farmers and also the private sector.”
– Hon. Mr. Abu Bakarr Karim, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Sierra Leone.



Figure 3: Training in HCV, HCS and FPIC under the Africa Palm Oil Initiative, Gabon

The inclusion of smallholders in palm oil production is going to be critical for international companies to address in their supply chains. According to the Minister

of Agriculture of Gabon’s statement, *“if we just allocate land to companies we will inevitably push communities into the forest areas as there will be nowhere else for them to farm.”* The statement continues:

“But if the model includes smallholder development and land is allocated to them then they can get regular income from the plantation and enough land to live on and raise their families. When they are empowered economically then they also want to protect the forests, they are committed to protecting them if they are supported to have decent livelihoods.” – Hon. Biendi Maganga-Moussavou, Minister of Agriculture, Gabon.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for all indigenous peoples and communities as a prerequisite for land use and commodity production are key principles written into the Marrakesh Declaration, which must be addressed by all developers and investors. In Liberia:

“FPIC is now legally required for any and all land allocations. In addition to FPIC, we have ensured that HCV-HCS approaches have been mainstreamed into the requirements for any impact assessment for land use. This ensures potential investors are aware of all social and environmental risk to the land, the nature and the people who rely on it.” – Hon. Jeanine Milly Cooper, Minister of Agriculture, Liberia.

Public-private-community partnership is essential and potential investors need to be aligned with this. In Edo State, Nigeria, *“one of a number of measures we are taking is the Produce-Protect-Rehabilitate concept, under which private companies operating in the state will need to provide the resources to restore a degraded forest area equivalent to 25% of their land holding.”* – His Excellency Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki, the Governor of Edo State.

The private sector is needed for technical as well as financial support. In the Central African Republic, *“a collaborative protocol between the national platform and the company, Palm d’Or agribusiness, was signed to help build capacity on best management practices in oil palm planting.”* – APOI National Platform, CAR.

The work done in Africa is critical as the continent becomes the new frontier of the ever-increasing demand for palm oil. The Congo Basin is one of the world’s most biodiverse ecosystems and stores an estimated 25%–30% of the world’s tropical forest carbon stocks.⁸ About 60% of the roughly 280 million hectares of land suitable for growing oil palm in the Congo Basin is found in the DRC:⁹

“Therefore it is a major milestone to institutionalise the APOI platform at a national level, signalling we have regained government commitment to including palm oil production in the national strategy for the overall agricultural recovery.” – APOI National Platform, Democratic Republic of Congo.

8 Elsa Ordway, Denis J. Sonwa, Patrice Levang, Fidelity Mboringong, Ludovic Miaro III, Rosamond L. Naylor, Raymond N. Nkongho. 2019. *Sustainable development of the palm oil sector in the Congo Basin*. [Online]. Center for International Forestry Research. [Accessed 30 November 2021]. Available from: <https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7279>

9 Ibid

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In Republic of Congo, APOI has worked with the government to establish a framework to ensure the country's forests are protected while investment in responsible palm oil development is welcomed:

“A major achievement in 2018 was the national discussion that culminated in the Minister of State in-charge of Agriculture, and the Minister in-charge of Land Affairs, signing a Ministerial Order to orient palm oil plantations towards savannah regions, thus reducing pressure on forests in the Congo Basin.” – Hon. Prof. Paul Valentin Ngobo, Minister of Agriculture, Republic of Congo.

However, deforestation is not driven by palm oil production alone. While Côte d'Ivoire is the second largest producer of palm oil in Africa, it is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa, accounting for 40% of national export income:¹⁰

“We see the importance of tackling the biggest social and environmental issues within the entire landscape, rather than one supply chain. We also see the benefit of working with other countries to share what we have learnt, the importance of governance and policy support, alongside action plans and implementation.” – Hon. Jean-Luc Assi, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Côte d'Ivoire.

As well as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana has also recognised that these same issues occur in the production of other commodities and have legislated for this:

“The original Oil Palm Development Bill that was drafted in 2017 was expanded to cover other tree crops, and upon being passed by law, we established the Tree Crops Development Authority to regulate six commodity supply chains – oil palm, coconut, mango, shea, rubber and cashew.” – Hon. Samuel Abu Jinapor, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Ghana.

Finally, APOI is not a stand-alone platform, but seeks to align with other frameworks to strengthen and scale up. For example, in Cameroon, *“APOI stakeholders have worked to better align existing initiatives and programmes with the national action plan, such as the REDD+ programme and the stakeholders participating in the development of the Accountability Framework Initiative, who were invited to be members of APOI.” – APOI National Platform, Cameroon.*

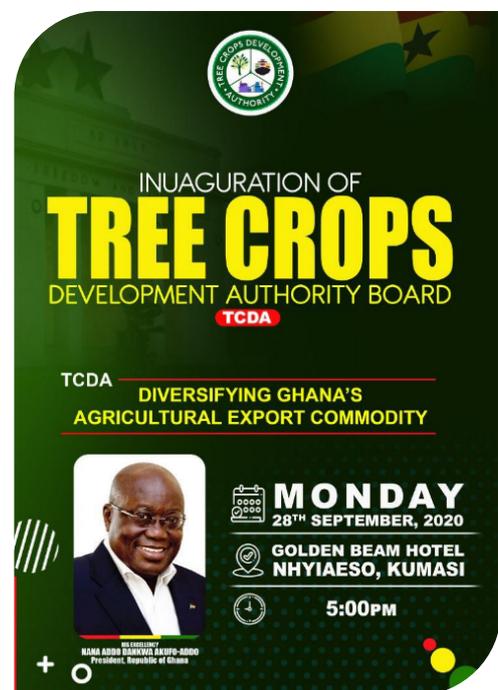


Figure 4: A poster for the inauguration of the Ghanaian Tree Crops Development Authority, 2020

¹⁰ The World Bank. 2019. *Côte d'Ivoire Economic Outlook: Why the Time Has Come to Produce Cocoa in a Fully Inclusive and Responsible Manner*. [Accessed 30 November 2021]. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire/publication/cote-divoire-economic-outlook-why-the-time-has-come-to-produce-cocoa-in-a-responsible-manner>

Maintaining momentum after CoP26

Recognising important milestones achieved by 2021, while re-affirming commitment to the Marrakesh Declaration five years on, also provides an opportunity for African governments to highlight the technical and financial support required for future development.

Support from the international community will be essential, through technical expertise, capacity building and financial support to help implement land use planning and sustainable production. With these conditions in place, investment opportunities in Africa offer companies a way to deliver on their own global sustainability commitments.

Commitments made at CoP26 in Glasgow need to be translated into tangible action and investment that can be implemented on the ground in Africa. One avenue for this will be the ongoing FACT (Forest, Agriculture and Commodity Trade) Dialogue, launched by the UK as part of its CoP presidency, which recognises that sustainable food supply chains and international trade are crucial to accelerate the transition towards more sustainable land use practices.

With demand for palm oil increasing, the sustainable production of palm oil is a sector that FACT will need to address. The APOI process brings five years of progress to the table, to engage on what works and where efforts need to be focused.

The Marrakesh Declaration set the direction for a shared vision for the responsible production of palm oil in Africa. Statements made in Glasgow re-affirmed that commitment, providing real momentum to take us forward, aligned with the FACT Dialogue coming out of CoP26. The members of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative are aligned with a shared message about the road ahead and the partnership and support needed for the journey.

This milestone of five years also provides an opportunity for Proforest to look at the framework and process of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative and what lessons we can draw from the multi-stakeholder initiative for future platforms in Africa and beyond.

History of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) was the first signature initiative of the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA), a public-private partnership whose principal goal is to reduce tropical deforestation across the globe, with a focus on agricultural commodity production. Members of the TFA include the 400 companies of the Consumer Goods Forum, governments and environmental and social NGOs.

In 2014, members of TFA identified forested countries in Africa, where historical deforestation rates were low, but where major palm oil companies had established plantations on a large scale, or started to secure land to do so, as key landscapes to protect and develop in a sustainable manner. Stakeholders in the palm oil industry, both producers and purchasers, wanted to ensure that lessons from working in Indonesia and Malaysia were incorporated into the African oil palm development process: building on the successes whilst avoiding the mistakes.

The APOI began with an invitation from the head of Unilever to the governments of six West and Central African countries – Liberia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, and Nigeria – to join the TFA. The first Africa Palm Oil Initiative meeting was held in the UK in September 2014. In the same year the UK Government's Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, FCDO) and Proforest formulated a plan to support the development of an Africa Oil Palm Action Plan for TFA, which would support delivery of its goal and objectives in Africa. Meridian Institute has been an integral part of the process, working with all partners and providing implementation support.

The objectives of the TFA Action Plan on Oil Palm Development in Africa are:

1. To build a partnership between governments and the private sector, supported by civil society, to agree and implement a set of principles for responsible practice across the whole palm oil sector in the region, particularly for expansion. This will build on existing national and international initiatives and legal frameworks, and include a locally-adapted approach to reduced deforestation.
2. To support governments and civil society in developing the enabling conditions required for sustainable development practices, in particular, with reference to land use planning, clarification of tenure rights and capacity building.
3. To support leading companies in implementing sustainable practices to provide a benchmark for further improvement of the sector.
4. To support improved smallholder production and livelihoods through both direct support from companies and existing multi-stakeholder initiatives.

These objectives are realised through the APOI, a collaboration between African governments, the private sector and African and international non-governmental organisations in which stakeholders from governments, companies, civil society and indigenous and community groups work at both national and regional levels.

The APOI seeks to achieve these objectives through national and regional principles that take into account the development plans of countries in Africa, which are adopted by governments and the private sector and provide a basis for civil society engagement. At the same time, national-level platforms and action plans have been developed to support the implementation of the national principles in practice, addressing environmental targets for reduced deforestation, land use change and greenhouse gas emissions, and social issues such as land tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The national process was a key aspect of APOI when countries identified national limitations to attaining the goal of a sustainable oil palm sector, and developed principles, actions and an implementation plan to address those challenges.



Figure 5: An APOI meeting in the Republic of Congo, 2018.

The APOI multi-stakeholder process

The APOI brings together partners from ten palm oil-producing countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Edo State in Nigeria, Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone.

The APOI process uses a participatory approach that balances bottom-up and top-down approaches to decision making and consensus building, involving representatives from African and donor countries, producing and consuming companies, and civil society at both local and international levels.

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TFA established an overarching governance structure to manage the process:

- a multi-layered working group to coordinate the initiative's leadership, planning and delivery
- a series of core teams in the focal countries to lead the development of country-level plans; these teams would aim to articulate a vision for a sustainable palm oil sector for each country in a participatory and customised manner. The country core teams included TFA partners along with African local civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.

The APOI process is categorised into three main phases of multi-stakeholder engagement:

- 1. The engagement phase:** This was the crucial government engagement phase in each participating country prior to initiating further activities. This engagement process differed in each country as it was tailored to meet the local context. It was coordinated by Proforest in collaboration with ad hoc 'engagement teams' made up of various TFA partners including private sector (such as Unilever), civil society (such as WWF) and government development agencies (such as DFID, now FCDO) in a manner which ensured that there was consistency in communicating goals and objectives so the vision was attained. Support was provided by Meridian Institute, and the World Economic Forum hosted the APOI secretariat.
- 2. The development phase:** Once there was sufficient engagement from governments and interest from civil society and the private sector the development phase began. The approach to this was:
 - Form a country team/taskforce of interested actors, including government, private sector and civil society (both local and international), coordinated by an in-country focal point. In each country the informal engagement team looked at existing groups and platforms to see if these structures could be used to avoid replacing or undermining functioning approaches. This required looking at existing processes for FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade), REDD+ or similar to ensure that, where possible, the APOI built on and supported these approaches/initiatives.
 - The focal point, supported by the country team, convened a workshop bringing together relevant stakeholders to discuss and analyse the current national situation with respect to oil palm development and identify gaps and barriers to implementing good practice. This was followed by an assessment of the activities and initiatives needed to create the enabling conditions for progress, including existing projects and approaches which could be supported or scaled up.
 - Once the national assessment was complete, national platform meetings were held to begin the drafting of a national work plan for implementation.
 - Country teams then convened at regional meetings to discuss the proposed content of the regional principles and its roadmap. This was done to ensure that the regional principles were not based on general assumptions, but firmly rooted in and based on local realities which, when addressed with local solutions, would lead to a continent-wide impact.
 - The focal point (who is always a government-appointed representative from the responsible APOI ministry) led the development consultation process with support from the country facilitator with a wider range of stakeholders on the draft outputs from the first workshop. A second workshop was held to discuss progress with the regional principles and validate the national principles and action plan, including institutional arrangements to achieve the shared vision of reducing deforestation in the oil palm supply chain.
- 3. The implementation phase** is owned and managed within each country by the government, the country team, TFA partners implementing activities, and other interested parties with a degree of ongoing support at the regional level. At the national level, country teams have formed national platforms to manage the implementation of activities.

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For the APOI to deliver real impact on the ground, it is important that continued support is provided for this process. The focus of the APOI during this phase has been on:

- Institutionalising and strengthening the national platforms
- Supporting the implementation of the national principles and action plans
- Training and capacity building on tools and approaches such as High Conservation Value (HCV), High Carbon Stock (HCS) and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and supporting national governments to integrate these into laws and/or regulations
- Development and implementation of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plans with the national platforms
- Supporting the national platforms in developing and implementing communication and outreach programmes at the national level.

The process also continues to share experience and lessons learned through the regional platform and through engagement with other global processes. This knowledge sharing is central to the APOI.



Figure 6: HCV-HCS training in Edo State, Nigeria, 2020

Five lessons for five years of the APOI process

LESSON 1

One size does not fit all

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative was started with a broad picture in mind – a sustainable oil palm sector in the oil palm production regions in Africa. Therefore, the approach was to develop a regional ‘accord’ or ‘compact’ setting out basic principles to address common issues, which could be adopted by governments and private sector and provide a basis for civil society engagement.

The APOI process has provided an opportunity to learn the elements required to harness the positives from multi-stakeholder initiatives. Each country is different, so national platforms were institutionalised depending on the country context.

Recognising the autonomy and peculiarity of situations in each country and factoring that into the design of the APOI has resulted in the successes the programme has achieved in many countries.

In each country, the APOI facilitation team strived to ensure that all stakeholders including marginalised group representatives were engaged and were given an opportunity to shape the process. It required that in each country the facilitator needed to be viewed as a person with objectivity who could play the role of a both convener and moderator, with an understanding of the general as well as the local context.

The APOI approach was to support the countries according to their individual contexts and demands. This approach resulted in the structure of the platform in each country and its institutionalisation status being different, as each depends on the country context. A consistent feature of each platform is that the focal point role is held by a government representative from the focal ministry. This is to ensure that the APOI process is guided by national processes and policies, while facilitating government buy-in. However, the platforms remain independent and self-governing.

LESSON 2

Building on existing platforms

Each country team engaged with a wide group of stakeholders to actively participate in the process, notably for the national workshops. Wherever possible, the country team worked with a relevant existing working group, platform or forum to make the process efficient, to build on existing processes and give it legitimacy.

In the case of Liberia, for example, the Oil Palm Sector Technical Working Group was already established in 2009, about six years before the first APOI National Workshop was held. The APOI revived the Oil Palm Sector Technical Working Group, which had been defunct for a number of years, instead of creating a new platform to serve as the national platform.

In other countries the APOI teamed up with existing structures or platforms such as the National REDD+ Technical Committee, the RSPO Working Group, a palm oil development association, a national climate change taskforce/group or a similar organisation which was working towards the same goal but from different perspectives to harness existing efforts towards achieving a common goal. In each instance, it was important that both the public and private sectors, as well as civil society, were represented in this group.

LESSON 3

Change is constant – adaptation is key

Another factor that has contributed to the success of the APOI process is how, through a participatory approach, adaptive management has been employed by national teams to achieve the desired outcomes. Each platform is assisted by the facilitation team to regularly review its processes and evaluate its progress based on the ultimate goal of reducing deforestation, the steps outlined to achieve this goal, and the changes that may have occurred to either positively or negatively influence the implementation of the identified actions. They then adapt the process to mitigate against possible negative outcomes.

This process has ensured that divergent views on the purpose of the platform are identified, conflicts are resolved and opportunities to advance the shared vision are identified. The governance process of the platforms – built to foster representation, transparency and making truthful and mutually agreed attributions – has facilitated collaborations within and beyond the platform to achieve the shared vision.

In addition, high-level political leadership and technical engagement by government are essential during elections or political turnover. Where possible and appropriate, government officials are playing the lead role in the negotiation and implementation of activities in the national action plans to foster a sense of ownership.

LESSON 4

Facilitation and effective communication are key to building trust and consensus

Skilled facilitation plays a crucial role in the success and longevity of multi-stakeholder platforms. As a multi-tiered, multi-stakeholder initiative, the APOI implementors recognised the need to have facilitators at the international, regional and national levels who create space for dialogue, develop collaboration, run effective meetings and mobilise agreed actions.

To effectively do this, facilitation was considered on two levels:

- 1. Global level:** Meridian Institute supports and collaborates with Proforest as the implementing partner for APOI, convening and moderating meetings at an international and regional level while supporting in-country facilitators to play this role at a national level.
- 2. Country level:** Proforest, working in conjunction with government, private sector companies and civil society groups, identified competent country facilitator institutions.

LESSON 5

Creating an enabling environment

In the design of the APOI, platforms were constituted at the national and regional levels to facilitate growth, provide learning and sharing opportunities, and allow the possibility of creating an effective model to be replicated and scaled up.

Every year, the APOI convenes regional meetings to connect its implementing partners in all ten countries with stakeholders from around the world. These meetings provide a space to forge connections between the TFA community in West and Central Africa, build and strengthen public-private partnerships for sustainable palm oil production in the region, and share experiences and lessons learned from the APOI process for multi-stakeholder commodity platforms around the world.

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These meetings have attracted representatives from international organisations and initiatives such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Forest Institute (EFI), Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) and the Accountability Framework Initiative (AFi), as well as regional bodies such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). These organisations are now engaging with the APOI at the national levels to align their environmental and forestry programmes with the APOI Principles and Actions.

Five years of progress and the roadmap ahead

At CoP26 African governments re-affirmed their commitment to the principles of the Marrakesh Declaration on Responsible Palm Oil Development in Africa, marking progress made at a local, national and regional level of implementation.

Many governments have already recognised and taken action in that the principles of the Marrakesh Declaration apply across many other commodities.

The statements of progress made at the Marrakesh+5 event at CoP26, which are included in the appendix, show there is political will and momentum in implementing principles of sustainable production.

What is needed now is collaboration and partnership from the international community and private sector, for support in land use planning and sustainable production, through technical expertise, capacity building and financial support.

The multi-stakeholder process continues from Marrakesh to Glasgow and onwards, to make our shared vision of a prosperous oil palm sector a reality, one that brings jobs and wealth to local communities, is environmentally and socially sustainable, and protects Africa's rich tropical forests.



Figure 7: HCV-HCS training, Ghana, 2018

Appendix: Statements by ministers who attended CoP26, high-level representatives and APOI National Platforms

Cameroon



National Platform of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative

The Republic of Cameroon has committed to the long-term governance of the sustainable development of palm oil with a national platform to ensure the continuing viability of commitments made as part of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative.

H. E. Hele Pierre, the Minister of the Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, signed the decision to create the platform on July 21, 2021. It is a framework for collaboration and consultation and to align all stakeholders in the palm oil sector.

The national platform's General Assembly is made up of representatives from government, private sector, smallholder associations, NGOs, civil society organisations, as well as technical and finance partners, who will support the government in its aim to meet national demands, and stop importing palm oil as a means to ensure its future food security through sustainable development.

The platform has been involved in the participatory development of a National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Value Chain (2021 – 2030). This strategy incorporates national principles for the promotion of sustainability in palm oil production in Cameroon.

Key activities and commitments include promoting the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), commitment to the national interpretation of RSPO standard, and commitment to principles of gender equality, the rights of smallholders, workers' rights and the rights of local and indigenous communities as well as their livelihoods.

In order to achieve this, the national platform will concentrate on capacity building and institutional development, mobilising climate finance and other financial support and ensuring that palm oil development takes place in the context of Cameroon's land use planning reform processes. Capacity building includes both technical aspects such as HCV-HCS, and critical social aspects such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

This builds on many years of work in Cameroon, where APOI stakeholders have worked to better align existing initiatives and programmes with the national action plan, such as the REDD+ programme and the stakeholders participating in the development of the Accountability Framework Initiative, who were invited to be members of APOI. This allows for the pooling of objectives of the various initiatives and saves time in the implementation of the APOI action plan.

Cameroon is also instituting a cross-commodity dialogue to involve the cocoa and rubber sectors, and is actively seeking investment to finance this sustainable development pathway.

Central African Republic National Platform of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative



The APOI national platform for the oil palm sector was established by the Minister of Agriculture's Decree. This brings together all stakeholders and meets regularly to promote the sector's development in a way that respects the environment and is socially equitable.

The APOI process in each country has always been set up to move beyond the creation of principles and plans, to the implementation of these sustainability practices in the sector.

In the Central African Republic this has been done by forging strong strategic alliances with key partners, which improved the alignment of partnership efforts, shared goals and shared proposal development.

A collaborative protocol between the national platform and the company, Palm d'Or agribusiness, was signed to help build capacity on best management practices in oil palm planting. We will also be rolling out HCV-HCS training.

The Central African Republic is focused on ensuring new production does not lead to deforestation. There is huge agro-economical potential in the country, which is badly needed to boost livelihoods and living conditions for millions of Central Africans.

Smallholders will be key to everything we do in our country. The government is very engaged and committed to working with smallholders, and we plan to work through the Inter-professional Association of Oil-Palm Industry, to bring all associations, cooperatives and the private sector together. The Belgium Agency for Development will support the establishment of the Inter-professional Association.

The global COVID pandemic has further exacerbated food insecurity in the country, sharpening the focus on the agricultural sector. Sustainable agricultural development is an important aspect of the national government's plans for economic development.

Côte d'Ivoire

Hon. Jean-Luc Assi

Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development



Côte d'Ivoire is the second largest producer of palm oil in Africa. The industry provides a livelihood to almost 10% of our population, supporting two million Ivorians directly or indirectly. We export nearly half of our production to other African countries.

It is critical that we develop the palm oil industry in a sustainable way – environmentally, socially and economically. That is, to meet the growing demand without deforestation, to increase productivity while improving livelihoods, and to meet international markets.

However, it is not the largest agricultural commodity in our economy. Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer and exporter of cocoa, accounting for 40% of national export income.

As a signatory to the Marrakesh Declaration, we have been a member of APOI since the beginning. But we have looked at the implementation of the principles at a national level, in a way that can apply to cocoa as well as oil palm.

As we reflect on five years of progress of the sustainable development of palm oil in Africa, I want to share how Côte d'Ivoire has approached this from a landscape level, across commodities, to ensure the sustainable development of agro-commodity production for the country and our people.

We have partnered with government agencies, technical partners and NGOs to ensure we take action within the landscape on key issues, such as forest and wildlife conservation, gender equality, smallholder training and certification.

In 2016 we signed a Zero Deforestation Agriculture Agreement with REDD+. Endorsed by the Paris Agreement, adopted at CoP in 2015, REDD+ is one of the only international initiatives that aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation with financial incentives and viable alternatives.

Côte d'Ivoire has invested enormously in our cocoa sector. We are honoured to be here today to recognise the five years of further work and investment in our oil palm sector. We see the importance of tackling the biggest social and environmental issues within the entire landscape, rather than one supply chain.

We also see the benefit of working with other countries, many represented here today, in West and Central Africa, at a regional level, to share what we have learnt, the importance of governance and policy support, alongside action plans and implementation.

We have partnered with international industry bodies, such as RSPO and the Interprofessional Association of the Oil Palm Industry, NGOs such as Solidaridad, technical experts like Proforest, and local organisations, such as the Village Savings and Credit Association, which was established as part of our programme.

We look forward to the partnership that APOI enables across Africa.

Democratic Republic of Congo National Platform of the Africa Palm Oil Initiative



As demand for oil palm soars across the world, the Democratic Republic of Congo is at a critical juncture. Most of the land suitable for growing oil palm in the Congo basin is found in the DRC, which amounts to about 60% of the roughly 280 million hectares.

That presents an enormous opportunity as well as many challenges. The Congo basin is one of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems and stores an estimated 25%–30% of the world's tropical forest carbon stocks. This is a huge responsibility, and we have a duty to protect our forests for people today, and tomorrow.

Therefore it is a major milestone to institutionalise the APOI platform at a national level, signalling we have regained government commitment to including palm oil production in the national strategy for the overall agricultural recovery.

The national platform has aligned its vision for collective action with the government's 2020-2030 strategic national development plan, which has been validated by the government and is currently being implemented.

The APOI platform in turn has aligned its work with DRC's national 2016-2021 REDD+ readiness planning, also with funding from CAFI, as well as the government's national plan for agricultural investment, which is currently undergoing development.

The platform's unique position and versatility has allowed it to play a pivotal role in being able to align its objectives with all of these different initiatives allowing each to complement the work of the others.

Smallholders will remain a focus area, as the engine of growth in the region's palm oil sector. We want to ensure we can support smallholder production without the clearing of forests to enable that expansion.

As one of the world's richest and most diverse forest systems, we must protect our nature, while supporting our economy. APOI is one of the vehicles that will enable the DRC to do this.

Edo State, Nigeria

His Excellency Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki the Governor of Edo State



It is my pleasure to share with you some of the experiences from Edo State, Nigeria, in our pursuit of sustainable and equitable land use practices in the State. Edo State is a relative newcomer to the TFA Africa Palm Oil Initiative, becoming a partner in 2018. Nonetheless, the State's commitment and progress on sustainable oil palm development builds on strong foundations and years of action.

We have focused our efforts on the importance of integrating palm oil production with forest management, using integrated land use planning to systematically support better production and conservation. Indeed, Edo State's very first stakeholder workshop under the APOI to agree on Principles and Actions for sustainable oil palm development included both oil palm and forestry companies, emphasizing the interconnected nature of the two sectors.

With the support of Proforest, we carried out a forest cover analysis of the state and the verification of this analysis is underway. This is part of my government's efforts to ensure that our remaining forests are protected from agricultural expansion and that only degraded land is earmarked for agriculture development.

One of a number of measures we are taking is the Produce-Protect-Rehabilitate concept that aims to ensure that agricultural development – and particularly oil palm – contributes to restoring the forest cover of the state. Under this concept, private companies operating in the state will need to provide the resources to restore a degraded forest area equivalent to 25% of their land holding.

This is where we see the strength of public-private-community partnerships, supported by our development partners, to protect the remaining forest cover while restoring the degraded areas and supporting smallholder farmers. Like many countries in West Africa, we are deeply conscious of the need to support smallholder producers to use more sustainable practices and facilitate their market access, within the framework of planned and sustainable agricultural and forest sectors.

We have made adhering to the requirements of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil and the APOI Principles and Actions the norm for palm oil production in Edo State. All palm oil companies operating in Edo State are required to be RSPO members and to comply with the RSPO requirements.

Moreover, through a consultative process, we have developed guidelines in Edo State for ensuring there is Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from indigenous people and local communities before agricultural development takes place.

Our experience in Edo State shows that private sector action can drive sustainable land use, protecting and restoring forests and supporting smallholder producers' and local communities' livelihoods. Strong leadership from the State provides the essential policy and legislative environment that underpins this private sector sustainability.

Gabon

Hon. Biendi Maganga-Moussavou Minister of Agriculture



It is my great honour to be here today, representing Gabon but also on behalf of all High Forest Cover countries to show by our example how we can achieve sustainable development for our countries, improve the livelihoods of our peoples and preserve the rich tropical forests which we have kept safe and standing. Ours is a different story to many countries of the world, and we do not seek to overcome decades of deforestation and extraction.

But we have a unique challenge in that we need to develop our agricultural food security and diversify from fossil fuels.

How can we do this, without destroying our forests? And how can other High Forest Cover countries do the same to ensure their sustainable development?

Gabon has done this, and done this well, by complying with international standards such as RSPO for palm oil development, and with HCV and HCS, and taking these standards and making them relevant on a national level, such as we did with the RSPO National Interpretation for Gabon.

Through Gabon's APOI platform we have been able to arrange capacity building so companies operating in Gabon can understand HCV and HCS and how to implement those requirements. And we have extended training to smallholders, so they can benefit from the expansion of oil palm too, and participate in the market. We're working with big companies like Olam to make sure that smallholders are involved and have the training and inputs needed to make their livelihoods.

As you've been hearing elsewhere at CoP26 with the work the FACT Dialogue are doing, this inclusion of smallholders and investment into their livelihoods is going to be one of the critical next steps for international companies. Smallholders are critical to the oil palm industry in Africa, and if we just allocate land to companies we will inevitably push communities into the forest areas as there will be nowhere else for them to farm.

But if the model includes smallholder development and land is allocated to them then they can get regular income from the plantation and enough land to live on and raise their families. When they are empowered economically then they also want to protect the forests, they are committed to protecting them if they are supported to have decent livelihoods.

This is how the government of Gabon has been working together with the private sector, with NGOs and with communities to ensure that our forests are kept standing. Over the coming years we want to scale up this economic development onto savannah, and Gabon will be a leading exporter of palm oil by 2025.

We are looking forward to working with APOI, with the other countries in Africa who have signed up to the Marrakesh principles, and we believe we can show the world how you can invest in sustainable development which has social and environmental benefits.

Ghana



Hon. Benito Owusu Bio

Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources

CoP represents one of the largest multi-stakeholder platforms in the world – inviting the public and private sector to meet, bringing in NGOs and civil society to debate and discuss.

Ghana's development of our national platform has also been multi-stakeholder led, not something owned by the government, although endorsed and supported by the President and myself in the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

We recognised that the broad spectrum of issues facing the palm oil sector required a decentralised body, much like we have for cocoa in Ghana. We also recognised that these same issues occur in the production of other commodities. The original Oil Palm Development Bill that was drafted in 2017 was expanded to cover other tree crops, and upon being passed by law, we established the Tree Crops Development Authority to regulate six commodity supply chains – oil palm, coconut, mango, shea, rubber and cashew.

The Tree Crops Development Authority provides a legal and regulatory framework for a sustainable national platform. It also now assumes responsibility for the APOI platform. It is important that we legislate and manage production supply chains across multiple commodities to reduce the risk of deforestation and associated social issues that come along with agriculture commodities production.

The process has also led to increased adoption and uptake of sustainability requirements including tools and approaches for sustainable practices such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent, and HCV and HCS approaches to agriculture development.

As a major cocoa producer and exporter, Ghana is also supportive of expanding the Marrakesh Declaration to incorporate other commodities and I welcome thoughts from my esteemed fellow ministers here today. This means we can create strong linkages between the work already done and the progress of the FACT Dialogues, for which Ghana co-chairs the Support to Smallholders working group, led by the Forestry Commission.

This will allow us to continue to tackle the key issues and open up opportunities for growth. In Ghana we have made gender equality and social inclusion a real focus of activities and efforts to ensure that marginalised groups including women, migrant workers and young people are duly considered.

Likewise, the process has led to increased investment in smallholder schemes by private sector companies creating job opportunities, and creating wealth for smallholder farmers who in some cases as in Benso Oil Palm Plantations are supporting forest protection. And to support them to build their own future, we have provided best management practices training by public and private sector partners, ranging from use of fertiliser to boosting plant growth, to help farmers improve productivity of their farms.

We can succeed one farmer at a time. We can progress with one commodity at a time. But we can create more impact and scale by working together, across commodities and across borders.



Liberia

Hon. Jeanine Milly Cooper Minister of Agriculture

Liberia's journey began before the signing of the Marrakesh Declaration at CoP22 in 2016. More than a year before, as my country came out of the Ebola crisis, the first national workshop was held where stakeholders did not only agree on National Principles and Actions for responsible oil palm development but also agreed that Liberia needed a multi-stakeholder platform to ensure a sustainable palm oil industry.

In our efforts to rehabilitate rather than recreate, the APOI revived the Oil Palm Sector Technical Working Group and with UNDP support, restructured to become the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), whose outcomes feeds into an inter-ministerial committee that advises the president on oil palm issues.

We are proud to be a signatory of the Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa. The process of reconstituting the TFA APOI National Platform in Liberia was guided by Regional Principles within the Marrakesh Declaration. I am pleased to be able to represent the platform, alongside my colleague in the Forestry Development Authority. Together we have a shared National Oil Palm Strategy for Liberia that has been launched by the government.

We believe in the multi-stakeholder process, and it is the partnership and collaboration between government, the private sector, communities and NGOs, that has been at the heart of our success. Just last week, we launched the NC3P Cocoa Sector Roadmap; and our teams are working to finalize a National Rice Development Strategy. Communities in Liberia have a key stake in our agricultural commodity production as landowners as well as producers. This is what I would like to share with you today, how we have placed forest protection, local communities, land rights and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) into the process ensuring that companies and investors seek local communities' consent before any development is carried out on their customary land.

The President of Liberia, His Excellency George Weah, signed the Land Rights Act into law in July 2018, promising our citizens clarity on fundamental issues, including the land beneath their feet. FPIC is now legally required for any and all land allocations. Smallholder development and FPIC are key principles written into the Marrakesh Declaration for all developers and investors, for which Liberia has given legal and regulatory backing.

In addition to FPIC, we have ensured that HCV-HCS approaches have been mainstreamed into the requirements for any impact assessment for land use. This ensures potential investors are aware of all social and environmental risk to the land, the nature and the people who rely on it.

Multi-stakeholder means every stakeholder, and our communities have the most at stake. We do not believe that decisions around customary land can or should be made without communities' input or consent. It is the people who live on the land who must agree to how that land is used, farmed, developed and protected. It is also incumbent on the Government of Liberia to ensure that our communities are justly compensated for their continued and able stewardship of valuable and renewable ecosystems.

Giving our people a voice in the development of a sustainable palm oil sector is the key driving principle for Liberia and its multi-stakeholder platforms.

Republic Of Congo

Hon. Prof. Paul Valentin Ngobo

Minister of Agriculture



What I would like to present to you today is not so much lessons learned from a mature oil palm industry in the Republic of Congo, but the opportunity that my country presents.

The Marrakesh Declaration sent a message: Africa is open for investment in the oil palm sector, but will only welcome investments that comply with the principles of sustainability, transparency and the protection of forests and human rights as contained in the Declaration.

My message today is that The Republic of Congo is open for investment in the palm oil sector. While still a net importer of palm oil, we have done the hard work to set up the framework and standards required. Republic of Congo is home to 10% of total land suitable for oil palm development in the Congo basin. We now welcome the development of the sector in a sustainable way.

A major achievement in 2018 was the national discussion that culminated in the Minister of State in-charge of Agriculture, and the Minister in-charge of Land Affairs, signing a Ministerial Order to orient palm oil plantations towards savannah regions, thus reducing pressure on forests in the Congo Basin.

This has been enshrined in law, and we are now progressing towards certification of palm oil produced sustainably in our savannah. As a member of APOI since 2018, we have the institutional support and governance needed to partner with investors who want to implement best practice in development of the oil palm sector, supporting our smallholder development plan while protecting the forests of the country.

Smallholder farmers in the oil palm value chain in Central Africa play a significant role in the value chain but are less influential as actors than their counterparts in West Africa. Smallholder farmers are a core part of the opportunity for growth, contributing to the increase in artisanal mills. However, smallholders have less access to technical and financial resources, contributing further to the power imbalance, and social and environmental risks for the landscape. This is a focus for us going forward.

In September, the Presidents of Republic of Congo and France signed a Letter of Intent committing 65 million US dollars for the preservation of the rainforest in the Republic of Congo. This deal is made with the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). The Marrakesh Declaration was mentioned and APOI is referenced as a supporting platform. This is a promising sign of the potential within the Republic of Congo to work with international governments, building on the foundation that began five years ago in Morocco.

As we hear from many countries represented today, we have a national platform, national principles and an action plan for implementation. We have built capacity across our government and partners in HCV-HCS and FPIC to strengthen understanding and enhance delivery, including FPIC national guidance – a major achievement and tool for the palm oil industry. We are also working to develop climate smart agriculture regulations and evolve our platform to support this in the future.

We look forward to building on these elements, working alongside other APOI countries and investors, so we can build a sustainable palm oil industry in Africa that works for all.

Sierra Leone

Hon. Mr. Abu Bakarr Karim Minister of Agriculture and Forestry



The vision of the APOI Platform is to have a prosperous palm oil industry that is environmentally and socially sustainable, protecting the rich tropical rainforest of the region and creating job opportunities which will increase economic growth.

The National Platform comprises of eighteen member Institutions and Organisations from Government, the Private Sector and Civil Society. It is chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and co-chaired by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This reflects the dual focus for our multi-stakeholder engagement and support, encompassing both the Forest Communities, Farmers, and the Private Sector.

Our engagement with the Private Sector begins at the start of the palm oil value chain - the TFA-APOI platform has been able to introduce FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) into the land acquisition process for multinational companies, ensuring the process always respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) National Interpretation for Sierra Leone has been tabled at RSPO Secretariat for Approval. This is a major move that will guide the oil producing companies, including the small holder commercialization sector.

Goldtree Holdings Ltd has recently been granted the “RSPO Certificate”, including “Organic Certification” confirming that the company has met the standards set by the global body in the sector, and we expect the other companies to follow suit.

Another large company, SOCFIN Palm Oil group, has integrated FPIC, HCV (High Conservation Value) and HCS (High Carbon Stock) considerations into their operational management plans because of the training workshop that was held in Sierra Leone. This will help to manage ecosystems, increase forest cover, and carbon sink, as well as increase biodiversity within the plantations.

We also want a prosperous palm oil industry that provides livelihoods and opportunities for our people. We want smallholders to be included in this economy, so they can benefit from the land and provide for their children.

In Sierra Leone the TFA-APOI National Platform has been involved in the setup of five alternative livelihood programmes to reduce dependence on the forest for survival, including beekeeping and aquaculture. However, we can expand this to more communities, more smallholders, and more regions with international investment.

The support from the Private Sector is key to this development, and I welcome the opportunity to engage with international investors here at CoP26 as part of the broader Tropical Forest Alliance - Africa Palm Oil Initiative.

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative is coordinated by Proforest on behalf of the Tropical Forest Alliance, funded with UK Aid from the UK government through Partnership for Forests (P4F). The Marrakesh+5 event was also supported by the UK FCDO's Forest Governance, Markets & Climate Programme.

