

The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative

Ten West and Central African countries commit to sustainable commodity production, with new Declaration signed at CoP27, November 9, 2022



“

We need the guardians of the forests – national governments and local communities – to own and lead solutions on the ground that integrate agricultural commodity production and local livelihoods with forest protection.

Embedding those rights and protection in laws and regulation will provide an enabling environment where we can continue to build capacity, readying the way for further investment and scale.

”

Abraham Baffoe

Group Director & Director Africa, Proforest
APOI National Platform, CoP26

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Introduction

The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative



The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative is a single set of principles for the responsible production of agricultural commodities in Africa. It puts producer countries in Africa at the forefront of defining the principles for the sustainable development of cocoa, rubber, palm oil, coffee and other commodities, in a way that improves livelihoods and protects natural resources, including forests.

The following principles provide the foundation for the declaration and the pledge that each country will sign up to:

- Sustainability (economically viable, socially beneficial and environmentally responsible)
- Good governance and prudent stewardship of natural resources
- Transparency and accountability
- Recognition and respect for human rights of communities and Indigenous Peoples
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Equitable benefit sharing.

The Declaration for the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative was signed by ten countries in West and Central Africa at CoP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on November 9, 2022.

Strong Foundations

An Established Model

The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative builds and expands upon the 'Marrakesh Declaration for Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Sector' signed by seven African governments at CoP22 in 2016, which acknowledged the role of agricultural commodity development as a driver of deforestation, while emphasising the critical role of forests and forest conservation in addressing climate change.

The Marrakesh Declaration has been implemented through the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI), comprised of ten countries in West and Central Africa: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Edo State (Nigeria), Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. These countries account for 25% of the world's tropical forest and 75% of Africa's forests.



Africa Palm Oil Initiative

Established in 2015, the Africa Palm Oil Initiative brought together governments from ten countries in West and Central Africa with the private sector, traditional leaders, local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

THE VISION: 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.

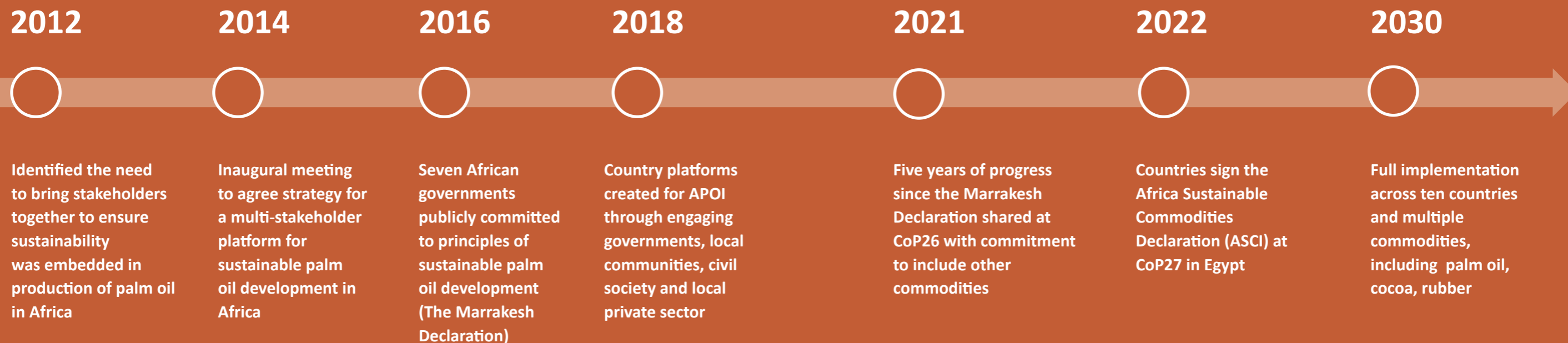
APOI has been a truly multi-stakeholder platform from inception, a critical element of its success. Every national platform has formed its own membership inclusive of national governments, traditional leaders, local communities and Indigenous Peoples, donors, technical partners, investors, producers, manufacturers, traders, and many other stakeholders.

Implementation is guided by the national platform in each country, which works with any relevant existing groups or forums, to build on existing processes and give it legitimacy. The focal point role of each national platform is held by a government representative from the focal ministry. This is to ensure that process is guided by national processes and policies, while facilitating government buy-in. However, the platforms remain independent and self-governing.

The 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.



Timeline and Progress

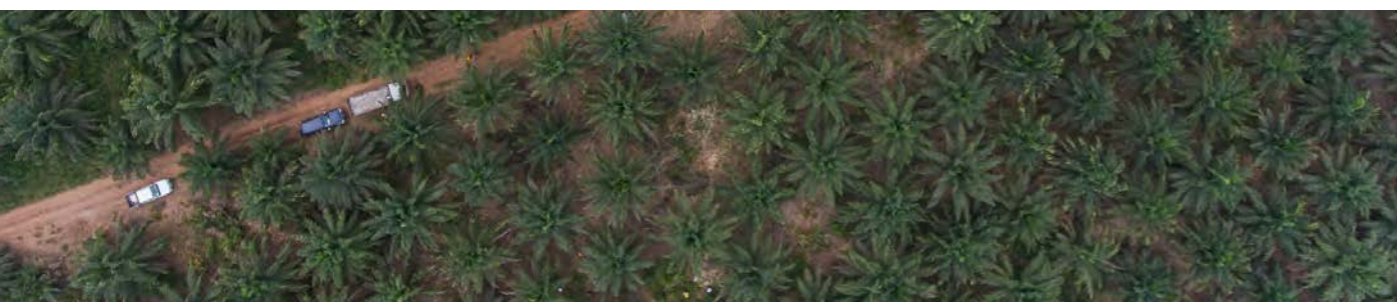


At CoP26 in Glasgow in 2021, signatories of the Marrakesh Declaration met to recognise and share five years of progress, with significant milestones from legal frameworks for land rights to private sector commitments on restoration and investment in smallholders to boost productivity while protecting forests.

Ministers agreed that the issues being addressed in palm oil were the same in other commodities, catalysing the transition to the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative to ensure all sectors are aligned to drive positive outcomes for people, nature and climate.

Governments have recognised the potential for growth in production of palm oil, cocoa and other agricultural commodities to meet increasing global demand, and to contribute to food security and better livelihoods for millions of Africans, while protecting the region's remaining rainforests.

Diversification of food production also provides resilience and improves each country's food security as well as helping to offset the impact of climate change. The Congo Basin alone can hold 30 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to three years of global fuel emissions; and its forests are essential for regional climate stability.



Why This Matters

PEOPLE



Globally, forests provide jobs and livelihoods for 1.6 billion people, including Indigenous Peoples.

The Congo Basin, inhabited for more than 50,000 years, provides food, fresh water and shelter to more than 75 million people, including nearly 150 distinct ethnic groups. Destruction of the forest will push the most vulnerable communities into poverty and food insecurity.

NATURE



Forests provide three-quarters of the Earth's fresh water and are home to 80% of Earth's terrestrial species, including trees and animals. Endangered species such as the bonobos ape, mountain gorilla and forest elephant are now only found in the Congo rainforest.

However, growing agricultural commodities, including palm oil, rubber and cocoa, is a leading driver of deforestation; estimated at 10mn hectares per year from 2010 – 2015 (FAO).

CLIMATE



Forests must be at the heart of our response to the climate change emergency; they are a natural carbon-capture technology.

Accounting for 30% of the earth's land surface, forests absorb a third of greenhouse gases emitted every year. The Congo Basin alone can hold 30 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to three years of global fuel emissions. And its forests are essential for regional climate stability.



The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative is a framework for governments committed to balance the need for agricultural production with forest protection and conservation.

These ten countries in Central and West Africa account for

25%

of global tropical forests, and more than

75%

of Africa's forests:

- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Gabon
- Ghana
- Liberia
- Nigeria*
- Republic of Congo
- Sierra Leone

* Edo State was a signatory to the Africa Palm Oil Initiative. This new declaration has been signed by the government of Nigeria for the first time, building on the success of the work done in Edo State, enabling expansion to other states under a single federal mandate.

To Commemorate the Signing

The new declaration was signed at CoP27 in Sharm El Sheikh on Wednesday, November 9th at the Ghana Pavilion, co-hosted with Côte d'Ivoire.

Ministers from ten countries each provided a statement of commitment, marking progress made and looking ahead to the future opportunity.



“ From CoP22 in 2016, when the Marrakesh Declaration was signed, we saw huge progress at CoP26 in 2021 where every country demonstrated crucial milestones to achieve the sustainable development of palm oil. Many countries have recognised the need to work across multiple commodities so the launch of ASCI is an important progression, as a truly multi-stakeholder initiative, with every country engaging at the regional, national and local level throughout the process. ”

Abraham Baffoe

Global and Africa Director of Proforest

The Formal Welcome by: **Hon. Jean-Luc Assi**, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Côte d'Ivoire



“ I would like to recognise the hard work that the ten signatory countries have put in over the last year to get to today and all the many stakeholders that have been part of this initiative.

This includes local communities who will always be an essential part of our work; civil society, who have been a stakeholder from the start; also NGOs who bring technical expertise and a focus on key issues; and the private sector, a critical partner for the long-term sustainability of the industry.

However, today is not about looking back but about looking forward to a future for agricultural production in Africa that is people, nature and forest-positive.

”

To Commemorate the Signing

Opening statements were provided by:

Jack Hurd
Executive Director,
Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA)



Lord Zac Goldsmith
UK Government Minister
for the International Environment
and Climate



Signatories

Hon. Pierre Hélé
Minister of Environment
Cameroon

Hon. Thierry Kamach
Minister of Environment and
Sustainable Development
Central African Republic

Hon. Jean-Luc Assi
Minister of Environment and
Sustainable Development
Côte d'Ivoire

Hon. Desire M'Zinga Birihanze
Minister of Agriculture
Democratic Republic of Congo

Hon. Charles Mve Ellah
Minister of Food and Agriculture
Gabon

Hon. Yaw Frimpong Addo
Deputy Minister of Food and
Agriculture
Ghana

Hon. Jeanine M. Cooper
Minister of Agriculture
Liberia

Hon. Mohammed Abdullahi
Minister of Environment
Nigeria

Hon. Rosalie Matondo
Minister of the Forest Economy
Republic of Congo

Hon. Foday M. Jaward
Minister of Environment
Sierra Leone

Statements of
support from
each country



Country Profiles - Progress and Commitments

“

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative has been a truly successful programme for Partnerships for Forests, reflecting the scale of success we can reach through multi-stakeholder partnerships from local to national and regional levels. We wish it every success as it develops into the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative.

”

Victoria Wiafe
Regional Manager,
West and Central Africa
Partnerships for Forests



Cameroon

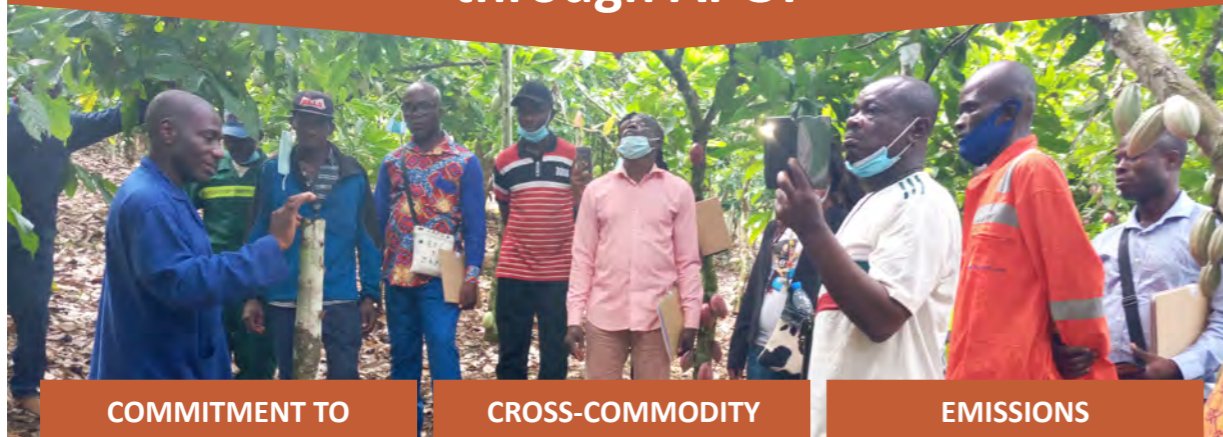


A REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Cameroon has embedded the APOI principles into its National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of the Palm Oil Value Chain (2021 – 2030) elaborated by government, private sector companies, producer associations / cooperatives, and civil society.

Hon. Pierre Hélé
Minister of Environment

Key milestones and progress through APOI



COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS:

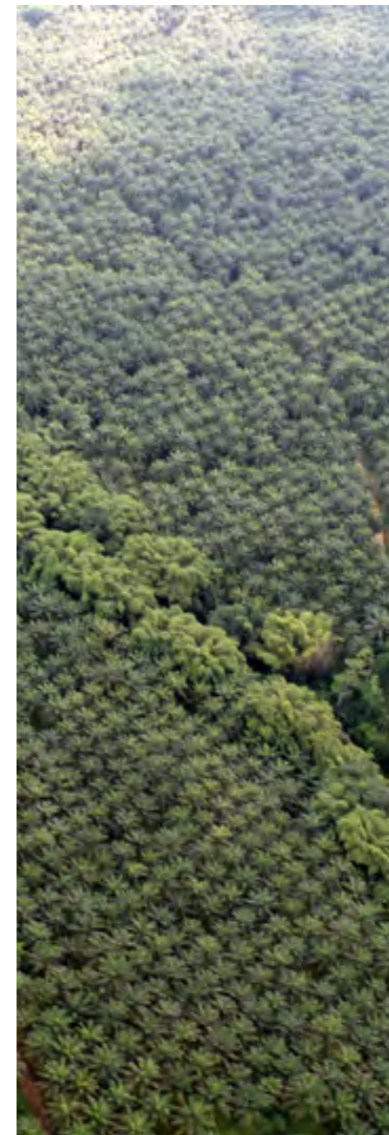
The National Plan embodies commitment to principles of gender equality, the rights of smallholders, workers' rights and the rights of local and indigenous communities as well as their livelihoods.

CROSS-COMMODITY DIALOGUE:

Cameroon is actively seeking investment to finance the sustainable development of palm oil alongside cocoa and rubber sectors, as a single pathway.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION:

Key activities include promoting the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), and commitment to the national interpretation of RSPO standard.



“ I am delighted to be at Cop27 to sign the Africa Sustainable Commodities Declaration, a truly collaborative effort, something we value strongly in Cameroon. All stakeholders involved in agricultural production in Cameroon made the collective decision to ensure that everything we do is applicable across multiple commodities. Within the oil palm sector, Cameroon has validated the national interpretation of the RSPO standard to make sustainable palm oil development the norm – a significant milestone thanks to the work of many colleagues, alongside civil society organisations and the private sector.

From our early adoption of the Marrakesh Declaration, we have taken the principles for sustainable oil palm development and we have worked with the rubber, cocoa and other sectors. And it is from this foundation that we will now continue to move forward, step by step – together.

”

Central African Republic

SUSTAINABILITY

Working to ensure the sustainability of the national platform, through technical support and funding from the Belgium Agency for Development to establishment the Inter-Professional Association of the Oil Palm Industry.

Key milestones and progress through APOI



<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">SMALLHOLDERS ARE KEY:</p> <p>The Inter-professional Association will bring together all associations, cooperatives and the private sector to work with smallholders, backed by government commitment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TECHNICAL INPUT FROM INDUSTRY:</p> <p>A collaboration between the national platform and Palme d'Or Agribusiness, will build capacity on best management practices in oil palm planting, HCV-HCS training.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY:</p> <p>Set up by the Minister of Agriculture, CAR is focused on forging strategic alliances to ensure it can move beyond the creation of principles and plans to long-term implementation and protection of resources.</p>
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Hon. Thierry Kamach
Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development



“ There is huge agro-economical potential in my country, which is needed to boost livelihoods and living conditions for millions of Central Africans, but we are determined that new production does not lead to deforestation. We have committed to ensuring that we take the principles of sustainable production and focus on implementation and action. And we have committed to building our process with the Inter-Professional Association of Palm Oil as secretariat for APOI, with government taking a strategic lead.

We now commit to build on that with professional support and capacity for the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative, so we can continue to bring associations, cooperatives and the private sector together in productive discussions and, most importantly, actions and implementation in a secure and sustainable way.



Côte d'Ivoire



LANDSCAPE APPROACH

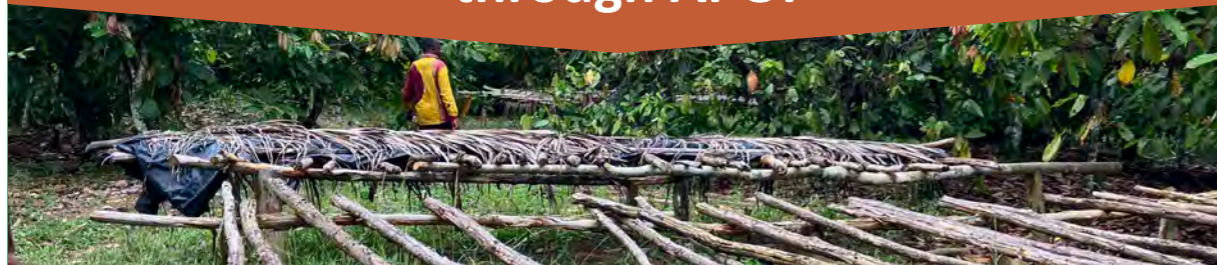
Côte d'Ivoire is balancing sustainable development of palm oil with cocoa, (world's largest producer with 40% of national export income).

▶ **2nd**
Largest producer of palm oil in Africa

▶ **2m**
Ivoriens supported (pop.10m)

Hon. Jean-Luc Assi
Minister of Environment

Key milestones and progress through APOI



LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As part of APOI, the Village Savings and Credit Association was established to ensure representation and engagement at local community level.

TACKLING ISSUES IN THE LANDSCAPE WITH HCV, HCS, FPIC

Key issues, such as forest and wildlife conservation, gender equality, smallholder training and certification, are tackled through partners at the landscape level. Partners were able to understand the importance of the identification of HCV and HCS and FPIC after the training organised by Proforest funded by IKI in San Pedro.

ZERO DEFORESTATION:

In 2016 Côte d'Ivoire signed a Zero Deforestation Agriculture Agreement with REDD+, endorsed by the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.



“ Côte d'Ivoire is the second largest producer of palm oil in Africa. But it is also the world's largest producer of cocoa. For too long, the different industries have worked in silos. But we have recognised the importance of bringing the different sectors of agricultural production together to create lasting change. And critically – we have accomplished it.

Moving forward, we are working with the Inter-Professional Association to move from foundational policy and process, to focus on implementation on the ground. We now have the capacity, the commitment and the collaboration across commodities to drive sustainable production, with real impact, at scale, for the people who live and work in Côte d'Ivoire.



Democratic Republic of Congo



THE HEART OF THE CONGO BASIN

Most of the land suitable for growing oil palm in the Congo basin is found in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

▶ **155.5m** Hectares of forest

▶ **3.83%** of the earth's forested land

Key milestones and progress through APOI

SUPPORTING SMALLHOLDERS:

Commitment to ensure support for smallholder production without the clearing of forests to enable that expansion.

FPIC, HCV AND HCS AT NATIONAL LEVEL:

Greater understanding of importance of FPIC, HCV/HCS in government, and adoption by IPLCs in field activities. Women, marginalised groups and IPLCs actively involved in the national platform and land-use management decisions.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION:

The APOI platform in turn has aligned its work with DRC's national 2016-2021 REDD+ readiness planning.



Hon. Desire M'Zinga Birihanze,
Minister of Agriculture

"The Congo Basin is one of the world's most biodiverse ecosystems, which presents huge opportunities and huge challenges. We also have to manage a complex ecosystem of stakeholders, including smallholder farmers, the engine of the region's agricultural sector, local communities and Indigenous Peoples.

We are therefore immensely proud that we have aligned the work of APOI with our national REDD+ readiness planning and can start to implement on the ground across commodities through the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative. This will enable us to protect the world's richest and most diverse forest system, while supporting our economy and our people.

Gabon



HIGH FOREST COVER LEADER

Demonstrating how to achieve sustainable development for High Forest Cover countries, while improving people's livelihoods and preserving the rich tropical forests still standing. Gabon leads in showing the world how to protect forests in tandem with ensuring economic growth and food security for communities.

Hon. Charle Mve Ellah
Minister of Food and Agriculture

Key milestones and progress through APOI



INCREASING DEFORESTATION FREE PRODUCTION:

Training national stakeholders on HCV, HCS and FPIC; and how to implement requirements, so they can benefit from the expansion of oil palm and participate in the market.

MEETING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS:

Complying with international standards such as RSPO, HCV and HCS, Gabon has also made them relevant with the RSPO National Interpretation.

PROTECTING FOREST HERITAGE:

Gabon's model includes allocating land to integrate HCV and HCS area preservation. Gabon endorsed RSPO as a national norm and adopted a national guideline for oil palm development applicable to other agricultural commodities.



“ Gabon has made it clear that all palm oil development must be RSPO certified, encompassing FPIC and other processes to ensure sustainable production that protects nature and our people. Determined to protect our wealth of standing forest, we have also moved oil palm production to savannah regions.

However, we also recognise that we need to protect our smallholder farmers, who are at the heart of production of other commodities. The Africa Sustainable Commodity Initiative provides the basis to work at a landscape level, working with communities and companies.

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Ghana



CROSS-COMMODITY COLLABORATION

Ghana has developed a national cross-commodity platform through a multi-stakeholder process, which has led to the establishment by law of the Tree Crops Development Authority endorsed by the Government under the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

Hon. Yaw Frimpong Addo
Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture

Key milestones and progress through APOI



GENDER MAINSTREAMING:

Gender equality and social inclusion have been a real focus to ensure that marginalised groups including women, migrant workers and young people are duly considered.

TREE CROP DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

A new legal entity established to regulate six commodity supply chains – oil palm, coconut, mango, shea, rubber and cashew. TCDA assumes responsibility for APOI.

FARMERS AT FOREFRONT:

Increased investment in schemes by private sector companies to create job opportunities and wealth for smallholder farmers, including training to improve productivity of their farms.



“ The journey from the Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) to the Africa Sustainable Commodity Initiative (ASCI) has been made possible through the hard work of the countries represented here today.

The Government of Ghana is in the process of considering the regulations to the Tree Crops Development Authority (TCDA) Act. We believe that practicing best management principles, protecting the livelihoods of smallholders as well as managing our forest landscapes to reduce deforestation in all our agriculture production will help us achieve the results that the ASCI seeks to achieve.

As a regulatory body, the TCDA is looking to increase funding to continue its work. As a regional body we look forward to working with strategic partners to drive the agenda of the responsible production across multiple commodities under the ASCI.



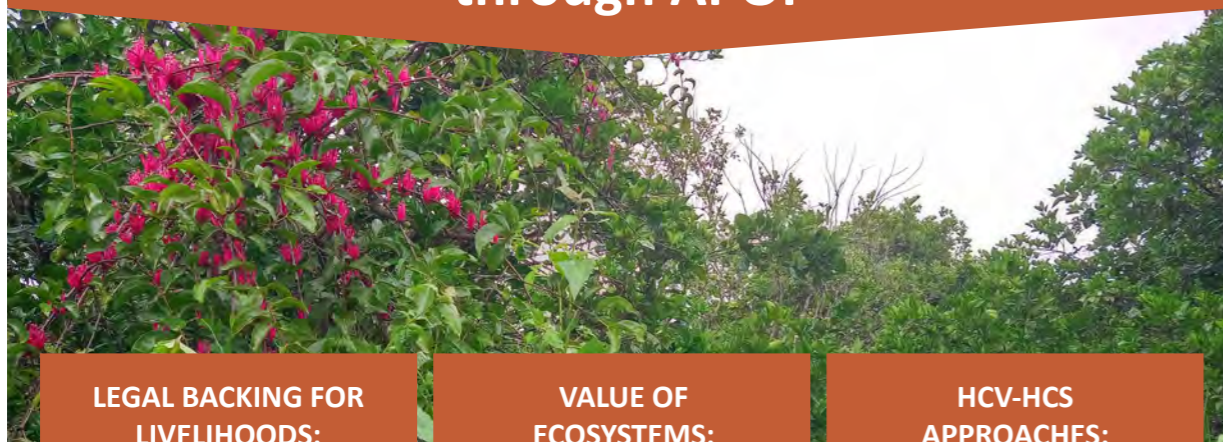
Liberia



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Working through a multi-stakeholder process, with APOI and the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), the government has launched a National Oil Palm Strategy, with land rights and local communities at the heart of production, development and forest protection. Through NOPPOL companies, FDA and civil society organisations are aligning in discussing how Liberia could implement the National FPIC Framework

Key milestones and progress through APOI



LEGAL BACKING FOR LIVELIHOODS:

The Land Rights Act (2018) gives legal and regulatory backing – ensuring Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is required for all developers and investors on customary land.

VALUE OF ECOSYSTEMS:

Communities must be consulted about any use of customary land and should be justly compensated for their ongoing stewardship of valuable ecosystems.

HCV-HCS APPROACHES:

Required for impact assessments 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 M. Cooper
Minister of Agriculture, Liberia

“ *Communities want ownership of their land. Investors want security and stability. Companies want to comply with the law. Liberia has established a regulatory framework that provides for all, starting with the Land Rights Act of 2018, a remarkable milestone. Additionally, FPIC is now legally required for any and all land allocations.*

This framework already applies across all commodities, all production, in all areas, big or small. And being aligned to principles of sustainability, which we sign up to again today, makes it easier for all actors to work together, to ensure compliance and to build trust.

”

Nigeria



ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

In 2018, Edo State, Nigeria became a partner with TFA, making it the only sub-national partner.

► **5 yrs**
in partnership
with TFA

► Committed
to producing
oil palm
sustainably

Hon. Mohammed Abdullahi
Minister of Environment

Key milestones and progress through APOI



INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY REFORMS:

Establishment of EdoGIS, ESOPP a new Forestry Commission and a Forestry Bill to replace the 1968 Forestry law.
Commitment to RSPO certification.

PROTECTION OF RIGHTS:

Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) must be given by Indigenous Peoples and local communities before agricultural development.

PRODUCE, PROTECT, REHABILITATE (PPR): INTEGRATION OF FOREST MANAGEMENT AND OIL PALM DEVELOPMENT:

Companies must integrate smallholder development into operations, protect forest areas within concessions and provide resources to restore degraded forest equivalent to 10 -25% of land holding.



“ At the start of our journey in Edo State it was agreed that any principles for sustainable oil palm development must include both oil palm and forestry companies, emphasising the interconnected nature of the two sectors. We want oil palm development to be a route to reforest Nigeria, not a cause of deforestation. The new Edo State Forestry Commission demonstrates our commitment to this, and our mechanism to deliver private sector investment through our Produce, Protect and Rehabilitate policy.

We will continue to invest in technical capabilities, such as GIS, and to build the regulatory framework, such as for FPIC. Everything we do is done hand in hand with the private sector, a critical partner in Edo State, as well as our ambition to extend adoption of the principles of the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative to other states in Nigeria.



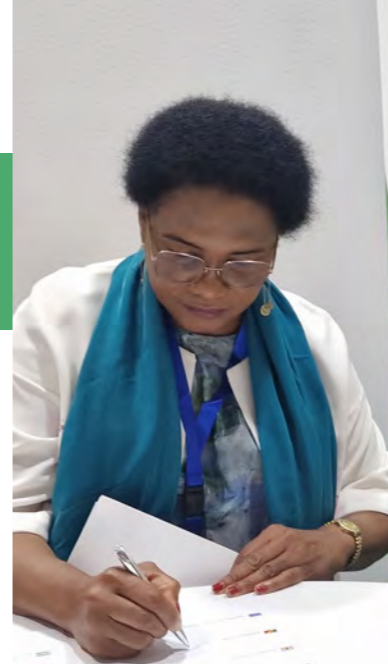
Republic of Congo

FOUNDATIONS

A national platform, national principles and an action plan for implementation.

▶ **10%**
of land suitable for development in Congo Basin

▶ **223,340**
square metres of forests



Hon. Rosalie Matondo
Minister of the Forest Economy



Key milestones and progress through APOI



FPIC NATIONAL GUIDANCE:

Alongside training government and partners in Free, Prior and Informed Consent, RoC has developed and validated FPIC national guidance, a major achievement and tool for industry.

SAVANNAH, NOT FORESTS:

Ministerial Order signed to orient palm oil plantations towards savannah regions, thus reducing pressure on forests in the Congo Basin.

GETTING SMARTER ON CLIMATE:

Increased investment in schemes by private sector companies to create job opportunities and wealth for smallholder farmers, including training to improve productivity of their farms.



“ We have made huge progress in developing the oil palm sector, which may be small, but has huge potential in my country, while supporting smallholders and protecting the forests in the Congo Basin. And one of the ways we are doing that is moving all future development to the savannah regions of the country – by governmental decree - to reduce pressure on the forests and the forest region of our country.

We have also produced plans for smallholder development and guidance for Free, Prior and Informed Consent, which apply beyond the palm oil sector, paving the way for the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative.

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Sierra Leone

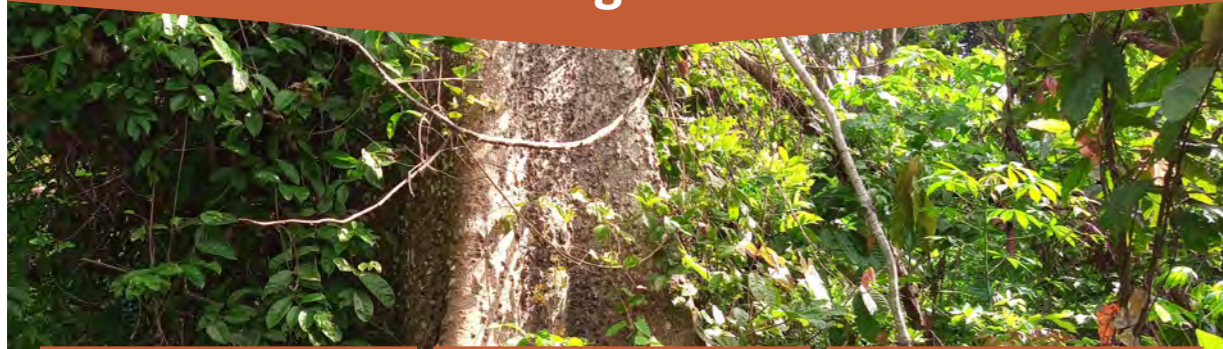


DUAL FOCUS & SUCCESS

The platform is co-chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, reflecting the dual focus of both the forest communities and farmers with the private sector.

Hon. Foday Jaward
Minister of Environment

Key milestones and progress through APOI



LAND ACQUISITION PROCESS:

The APOI platform has been involved in the setup of five alternative livelihoods programmes to reduce dependence on the forest for survival, including beekeeping and aquaculture.

RSPO ENDORSEMENT:

The country's RSPO National Interpretation was endorsed in November 2021 following public consultation. All oil producing companies, including smallholders will be guided by this.

MANAGING CARBON SINK:

A large company has integrated FPIC, HCV and HCS into their operational management plans as a result of training delivered. This will help to manage ecosystems, increase forest cover and carbon sink, and increase biodiversity within plantations.



“ We have been on a journey, encompassing many of my esteemed colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which demonstrates our commitment to sustainable agriculture and private sector development. As Minister of Environment of Sierra Leone I am proud to take this next step to sign the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative, providing a single platform for all future development.

The groundwork has been laid with the approval of the national interpretation of RSPO, with strong engagement and commitment to the process from the private sector. Beyond palm we have also ensured any development uses a full FPIC process to ensure communities retain control over their land and the future of the landscape.



Signing: Closing Remarks

Dr. Honoré Tabuna

Commissioner for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)



“ *The Economic Community of Central African States strives to ensure we have the economic and political stability to ensure sustainable and balanced development. The Congo basin is at the heart of the world’s forest regions and we have a responsibility to both conserve our forests and develop a sustainable forest economy for our people.*

The Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative builds on the same foundations that we have laid to build that sustainable forest economy – protection of nature, livelihoods and climate, while including smallholders and communities in the process. In fact, three of the five key pillars that guide our work at ECCAS come into play strongly with this new initiative: environment and natural resources; land use planning and infrastructure; gender and human development.

These are critical to the future of the Central Africa region and I am encouraged to see colleagues in Central and West Africa working together across our forest region, across multiple commodities, and across key issues, with support and commitment from the international community and private sector, so that together we might build a sustainable future in Africa.

”





AFRICA | **INITIATIVE**
SUSTAINABLE | **DES PRODUITS**
COMMODITIES | **AGRICILES DE**
INITIATIVE | **BASE DURABLES**
| **EN AFRIQUE**

**AFRICA SUSTAINABLE
COMMODITIES DECLARATION**

**DÉCLARATION RÉGIONALE
POUR L'INITIATIVE
DES PRODUITS AGRICOLES
DE BASE DURABLES EN AFRIQUE**

**COP 27 EGYPT
NOVEMBER 9TH 2022
SHARM EL SHEIKH**

THE AFRICA SUSTAINABLE COMMODITY INITIATIVE (ASCI) REGIONAL DECLARATION FOR THE AFRICA SUSTAINABLE COMMODITY INITIATIVE (ASCI)

- Recognising the shared vision for a prosperous agro-commodity sector¹ in the region that brings jobs and wealth to local communities and indigenous people and which is environmentally and socially sustainable and protects Africa’s rich tropical forests
- Noting the importance of the agro-commodity sector in economic development and in contributing to addressing rural poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the countries involved
- Emphasizing the critical role of forests and forest conservation in addressing climate change
- Acknowledging the role of agricultural commodity development as a driver of deforestation
- Understanding the importance of public-private partnerships in sustainable economic development Conscious of the need to promote smallholders in the development of sustainable agriculture
- Conscious of the need to promote, foster and accelerate the economic and social development of African countries in order to improve the living standards of our peoples, and ensure their food security and nutrition
- Conscious of the need to promote efficient, inclusive, resilient agricultural and forestry systems
- Considering the relevant international and regional treaties and conventions that the signatories have ratified and reaffirming the need to deliver on the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We, the undersigned governments [countries to be named as they sign] solemnly pledge that we will:

- Strengthen collaboration with technical and financial partners to implement the action plans resulting from this initiative, taking into account national development and land use plans, while addressing environmental targets for reduced deforestation and social issues related to land tenure and respect for the collective rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples
- Take measures to encourage the adoption of good production practices by both agro-industries and small-scale producers and promote the effectiveness of payment for ecosystem services
- Promote the respect for the rights of small producers, local communities and Indigenous Peoples while facilitating their access to production and markets
- Place the following underlying principles as the foundation of this Declaration:
 - i. Sustainability (economically viable, socially beneficial and environmentally responsible)
 - ii. Good governance and prudent stewardship of our natural resources
 - iii. Transparency and accountability
 - iv. Recognition and respect for human rights of communities and Indigenous Peoples
 - v. Collaboration and partnerships; and
 - vi. Equitable benefit sharing
- Facilitate the participation and inclusion of stakeholders in investment processes for sustainable production landscapes
- Promote socio-economic growth that is in balance with environmental protection and supports sustainable local livelihoods, including honouring our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and other international and regional environmental and social commitments

¹ Definition of commodities: palm oil, cocoa, rubber, coffee, cashew etc.

- Adopt and implement multi-sector territorial planning in order to rationalise land use and avoid conflicts of use and related deforestation
- Recognise the environmental benefits and market implications of commitments to net zero deforestation from the development of agricultural commodity sectors made by private sector companies, governments and international organizations. Therefore, committed to working and supporting with determination the various stakeholders operating in the agricultural sector to achieve our respective national commitments to net zero deforestation
- Promote agricultural commodity sectors that ensure the long-term survival of Africa’s unique biodiversity and ecosystems and globally important ecosystems, including our tropical forests. Commit to identifying and protecting the vital parts of our natural heritage by adopting locally- adapted tools and customizing tools as the High Conservation Values (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) concepts and also ensuring that agro-commodity development and management strives to secure and protect these zones of important biodiversity within agricultural landscapes
- Develop and promote agricultural commodities sectors that improve productivity while providing jobs for our people, ensuring fair and equitable working conditions, working to improve community livelihoods, and contributing to food and nutrition security as well as poverty reduction through equitable sharing of benefits and benefits
- Encourage appropriate, accountable and transparent investments in agricultural commodities development in line with this Declaration by adopting appropriate tools such as certification;
- Develop transparent, inclusive, resilient and equitable agricultural sectors that promote gender equality and the production of small-scale producers and respect land rights and private property
- Ensure the protection of categories of land rights of all our peoples, notably Indigenous Peoples, customary land rights holders, marginalised groups, forest-dependent communities, and other vulnerable groups in society
- Ensure that all developers and investors seek the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of land rights holders, land users, local communities and Indigenous Peoples, through the use of appropriate social best practices, before development
- Work in a participatory way with national, bilateral, multilateral, and regional institutions, the private sector, smallholders, local communities and civil society organizations, especially those that represent Indigenous Peoples in ensuring the design and effective implementation of national action plans
- Communicate collectively as the “Voice of Africa” on global issues affecting the sustainable development of our agricultural commodities sectors
- We emphasize our determination to take action consistent with this Declaration, in collaboration with all our partners; while this Declaration does not give rise to binding rights or obligations, we will regularly evaluate our efforts


This Declaration is open to the endorsement of other countries, and the signatories invite other potential partners to join us in making this important public commitment.

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**“
*I dream of our vast deserts,
of our forests, of all our great
wildernesses. We must never
forget that it is our duty
to protect this environment.*
”**

Nelson Mandela

For more information:

About the Africa Sustainable Commodities Initiative on Proforest's website
bit.ly/3HniV49

TFA Perceptions Magazine profile on ASCI
bit.ly/3Y8QoW1

Business Insider magazine Q&A with Abraham Baffoe on ASCI
bit.ly/3gFbWsc

Africa.com article on ASCI
bit.ly/3FEjDc8

Five years of progress towards sustainable palm oil development in Africa – progress made and lessons learned from the Marrakesh Declaration at CoP22 to CoP26
bit.ly/3Hnjzvj

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