

# Position statement

30/06/2022

On 24 May 2022, a group of NGOs published a [press release](#) questioning the legitimacy of the RSPO certifications obtained by the Socfin Group for its oil palm plantations in Africa.

The responsible management adopted by the group subsidiaries and monitored through strong and specific systems clearly demonstrates the strict implementation of the commitments taken. Our field operations are always conducted in transparency and with the objective of supporting long-term development of the area while protecting communities' rights, quality of life and the environment in and around the plantations.

We would therefore like to respond below to the claims made in this publication.

The Group set up a sustainability program which focuses on 3 impact areas: **rural development, its employees and the communities and the environment, implementing key initiatives bringing long-term economic performance, respect of human rights, social welfare and ensuring an easier access to health and protecting the environment.**

RSPO<sup>1</sup> is an international initiative aimed at developing and implementing a set of global standards for sustainable palm oil through a thorough and detailed certification process. It is a multi-stakeholder platform that includes: social and environmental NGO's, producers, manufactures, retailers etc.

**The Socfin Group is fully committed to the RSPO certification. All its Indonesian plantations were RSPO certified by 2015. Then, Socfin set up an objective to have all its African oil palm plantations RSPO certified by 2022. On the ground, our subsidiaries have been audited by certification bodies accredited by Assurance Services International (ASI) and recognized by RSPO. The Socfin Group is one of the most representative RSPO member of West African countries.**

**Its Responsible Management Policy highlights clearly that maintaining good neighbourly relationships with the communities living in and around its plantations, and engaging with them, is of utmost importance to the Socfin Group and its subsidiaries.** In our countries of operation, we hold regular meetings with the communities in order to have an open dialogue and listen to their needs. These meetings result in livelihood improvement projects carried out in collaboration with the communities.

In Cameroun, Safacam was one of the first Socfin site RSPO certified in 2020. The company is operating strictly in line with Socfin's commitments in order to develop a responsible tropical agriculture and to respect the high standards of the RSPO certification.

In addition Safacam has released a [position statement on 13/07/2021](#) available on Socfin transparency dashboard reminding the neighbouring communities' support to the continuous dialogue and engagement of the company in the region.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the SoGB maintains good neighborly relations with the surrounding villages. Since 2009, the surrounding communities gathered in the [AVD association](#) and the SOGB have established a memorandum of understanding (renewed every 5 years) that provides a framework for joint initiatives for the benefit of the communities.

In the minutes of the October 2021 meeting concerning the renegotiation of the MOU and the August 2021 statement of the AVD executive board and community leaders, it was stated that *"The village leaders, through the voice of the AVD General Secretary [...] reassure them of their availability for sincere collaboration. They know the importance of the SOGB in the region and for the local*

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<sup>1</sup> (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm oil)

*populations, and they have no intention of harming the interests of the SOGB [...]. Rather, the purpose of their statement was to draw the attention of their partner SOGB to a number of points that were resolved during this meeting. The village chiefs and the AVD Board express their complete satisfaction with the commitments made by SOGB."*

In Sierra Leone, SAC is committed to engaging with all its stakeholders, as confirmed by its *Stakeholder Engagement Plan*. Its Community Liaison team meets regularly with relevant stakeholders and all the concerns raised in the MALOA organization petition have been clarified [in a position statement](#) released on the 28th of June 2022. Moreover, the methodology used by the organization to set up this petition has been widely questioned by the local authorities and the multistakeholder platform. Following the petition, the Malen Chiefdom authorities and the District Multi Stakeholders Platform (DMSP) decided to make an investigation of the petition's legitimacy. As a result of the investigation, the Chiefdom authorities and DMSP found that communities were apparently given wrong and misleading information in order to get people to sign the petition.

**As all Socfin's subsidiaries, in Nigeria, Okomu is as well committed to having good relations with its neighbouring communities, respecting their rights, and always engages dialogue with them.** Actually, Okomu discussed the digging of the trenches during the communities' committees when they began to set them up in 2017 in order to prevent the massive and persistent stealing of their products.

For the case of Marioba it is important to remind that the trench was dug on the plantation property and that the community can easily enter into the plantation for their legitimate businesses at the official entrances. The leadership of the mentioned communities has publicly said Mr. Ajele is not their spokesman; Okomu Security personnel are not licensed to carry firearm and Okomu is not aware of any shooting of a woman. (This accusation has never been lodged with the Nigerian Police). Okomu has a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for all security apparatus within its plantation which specifies that all security personnel must adhere to the human rights policy which recognises the fundamental rights of all Individuals.

*Contrary to the image portrayed by some NGOs in this press release, the Socfin Group is committed to producing palm oil in a way that allows for long-term socio-economic development. This approach is based on a code of conduct and good management practices covered in the Socfin Group's Responsible Management Policy, which includes protecting communities' rights, improving their quality of life and protecting the environment in and around its plantation.*

To know more about our sustainability approach: [Socfin Sustainability Report 2021](#)