

The Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit

Zoological Society of London

Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit (SPOTT): a toolkit that harnesses the power of investors and other stakeholders in the palm oil supply chain to increase uptake of best practice by oil palm growers, helping to protect ape habitats.

Oil palm plantations present particular challenges to arboreal primates. As increasing demand for palm oil is linked to deforestation in gibbon and orangutan habitats in Southeast Asia, and those of chimpanzees and gorillas in West and Central Africa, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is working to engage investors, companies and their supply chains, which can help us to conserve endangered species and habitats. ZSL believes that in order to transform the palm oil industry towards a more sustainable model that safeguards natural capital and biodiversity values, its supply chains require greater transparency, supported by responsible investment to encourage best practice.

ZSL's Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit (SPOTT – sustainablepalmoil.org) is an online platform for monitoring and managing environmental risks from palm oil production. The SPOTT scorecard assesses 50 of the world's largest oil palm growers against key indicators of environmental and socio-environmental best practice. SPOTT enhances sustainability analytics and data services for finance sector and sustainable procurement professionals via a detailed indicator framework, regularly updated resources and associated guidance on environmental and social governance processes.

With over 50 indicators—framed as simple questions on expectations for best practice and its disclosure—SPOTT reveals the transparency, or public availability, of company information relating to environmental and socio-environmental performance. This includes compliance with reporting requirements set by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), as well as additional policies, plans and statements on landbank, environmental management, fragile, marginal and peat soils, zero burning, greenhouse gas emissions and traceability, which expand upon RSPO criteria to provide more robust assurance for stakeholders on the sustainability of company operations.

ZSL has widely consulted on these indicators to ensure that they enhance the ongoing work of non-governmental organizations, companies and the investor community, including Investec, Unilever and the World Wide Fund for Nature. Built in consultation with the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment's Sustainable Palm Oil Investor Working Group and various heads of responsible investment, ZSL SPOTT is intended to provide evidence of whether best practice commitments are being implemented. Supporting information includes a bespoke live newsfeed from Thomson Reuters, online data sources (such as relevant company reports and news articles) and an interactive mapping tool, developed in collaboration with Global Forest Watch from the World Resources Institute (WRI), to include growers' concession site boundaries, protected area and primary forest

proximity, and forest loss and fire alerts. The mapping component is also intended to support the resolution for ‘transparency in plantation concession boundaries’ that was adopted at the 2013 RSPO meeting, which ZSL, WRI and others called for following the high-profile transboundary haze over Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

The first version of ZSL SPOTT was launched in November 2014 to coincide with the global RSPO meeting and featured 25 of the world’s largest publicly listed companies (by market capitalization) that grow oil palm. By working with growers to explore the integration of site-level indicators—such as those generated by ZSL’s RSPO-endorsed Impact Monitoring System—ZSL intends to revolutionise data availability and reliability, to pilot a landscape-scale project to test this Monitoring, Reporting and Verification system with partners, and to assess site-level data that could be provided via the Transparency Toolkit. Future iterations will expand on the number of growers and indicators to include more detailed assessments and verification of best practice implementation.

The SPOTT project—supported by the Packard Foundation, the Generation Foundation and the RSPO—is ultimately intended to build trust in a sustainable palm oil industry and to support the palm oil industry in moving towards a sustainable model that protects the environment for all apes and the forests we depend on.

Abbreviations

RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SPOTT	Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit
WRI	World Resources Institute
ZSL	Zoological Society of London