



Factsheet

The Palm Oil & NGO (PONGO) Alliance: Fighting for orangutan conservation in Borneo

The Palm Oil & NGO (PONGO) Alliance was founded in 2015.

Mission: to support the management of orangutans and other wildlife within oil palm landscapes. To do so, the Alliance engages local governments and palm oil companies with the two objectives:

1. To guide land use planning and management to secure viable populations of orangutans and other wildlife;
2. To create a sustainable landscape for orangutans and wildlife through the implementation of best management practices and biological corridors.

Members

The PONGO Alliance gathers industry and NGO members, mostly from palm oil producing and trading countries – Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore – who believe that the best way to achieve tangible results in wildlife conservation is to work with local partners and with local communities on the ground. The members include:

- Musim Mas (grower)
- Wilmar (trader)
- Sime Darby (grower)
- Borneo Futures
- Orangutan Information Centre (NGO)
- Orangutan Land Trust (NGO)
- Fauna & Flora International (NGO)
- Zoo Copenhagen (zoo)
- PT ANJ Agri (grower)
- HUTAN (Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme) (NGO)
- SOS (Sumatran Orangutan Society) (NGO)
- International Animal Rescue (NGO)
- United Plantation Bhd (grower)
- Borneo Rhino Alliance (NGO)

Current priorities

- Promote the use of the “landscape approach” to identify and manage the areas that need to be set aside for conservation and connect them according to a coherent land planning approach;
- Develop capacity building trainings for companies having orangutans and other wildlife on their land to inform them about the best practices in forest conservation management;
- Engage with local governments to discuss ways of improving land planning and allocation of development permits to ensure that all high conservation value areas are set aside for conservation.

The landscape approach to wildlife conservation:

- A landscape approach means that all local stakeholders – palm oil companies, indigenous peoples, governments and civil society organisations – discuss and agree on which land to develop and which to set aside for conservation because of its ecological, cultural or historical value.
- The landscape approach does not look at one particular palm oil or other concession but at the ecoregion as a whole.
- Wildlife do not stay within the boundaries of particular concessions, they move across the landscape which they consider as their natural habitat. While it is important to set aside patches of forest within palm oil concessions for the survival of wildlife, it is even more important to set up safe corridors between those areas and between different concessions so that they could move from one protected area to another safely without the risk of being killed or stranded. This is why the landscape approach is currently the best practice method of managing wildlife.

About orangutans

- Orangutans are a critically endangered species, and fully protected in both Indonesia and Malaysia. Their populations have more than halved over the past 50 years due to illegal killing and agriculture, including oil palm cultivation, which encroaches on their natural habitats.
- There are two distinct species of orangutan, Bornean and Sumatran. There are an estimated 70,000 orangutans living in Borneo and 14,600 in Sumatra at the moment (source: Borneo Futures).
- Approximately 2,000-3,000 Bornean orangutans have been killed every year in the past four decades, both in agricultural conflict situations and for bushmeat (source: Borneo Futures)
- At this rate of killing, most orangutan populations will go extinct within the next 50 years.
- According to the research done by Borneo Futures (*“An impact analysis of RSPO certification on Borneo forest cover and orangutan populations”*¹), plantations managed according to the RSPO’s Principles & Criteria manage to slow down deforestation rates; currently there are an estimated 275 orangutans in RSPO-certified concessions on Borneo.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313927667_An_impact_analysis_of_RSPO_certification_on_Borneo_forest_cover_and_orangutan_populations

- However, there are at least 9,300 Orangutans living in non-RSPO-certified concessions in Borneo, whose survival is under threat. Rescuing or relocating these animals is financially and logistically impossible.
- Orangutans can survive and live in the areas allocated for oil palm development provided that a number of conditions are met:
 - Palm oil estates owners and managers must set aside intact forest areas with orangutan habitats and maintain corridors between them for orangutans to pass.
 - The forest cover in each plantation should be at least 10% of the plantation, and should be connected to neighbouring forest areas, which are properly managed (no encroaching, no kill zone).
 - There should be zero orangutan killing in these landscapes, because orangutans are a very slow-breeding species and cannot recover from any killing pressure.
 - The plantation staff should also be properly trained to manage conservation areas and corridors between them.