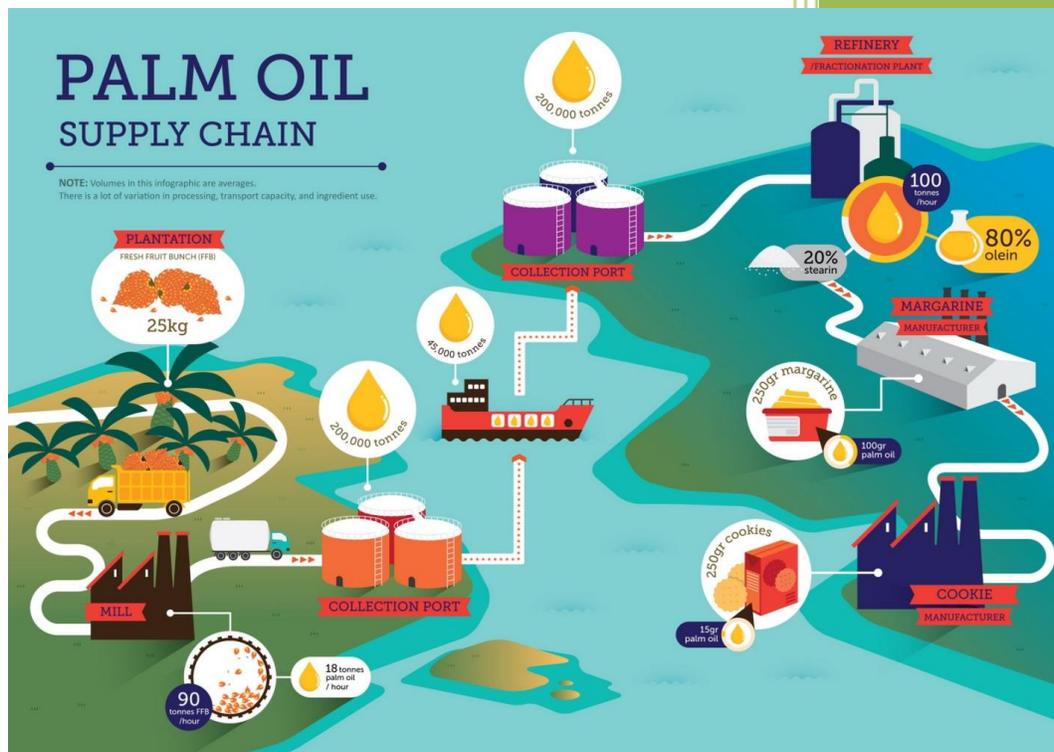


# Transformation towards Sustainable Palm Oil in India



**CRB** CENTRE for RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS  
Enabling Change for Impact

**Sustainability Ambassadors Project**

**FINAL REPORT  
June 2019**

## 1. Introduction

In spite of the high volume of trade and consumption of palm oil in India (India being the largest consumer of palm oil, globally), the uptake of certified sustainable palm oil in India is negligible (around 1%). While this offers a great opportunity to explore uptake of sustainable palm oil in India, it also presents a case for understanding challenges in market transformation towards sustainable palm.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) came together in mid-2018 through a partnership to examine these challenges/opportunities and to raise the ante on the need and benefits from a transition towards sustainable palm oil in India. It was evident from the research undertaken earlier by CRB and others on the subject, that focusing on the FMCG sector (given its influence on the supply chain) could help create the demand for sustainable palm oil.

Therefore, it was agreed that CRB would be focusing on identifying ‘sustainability ambassadors’ among FMCG companies in India – by continuously engaging with them to understand the challenges to/opportunities from better uptake of sustainable palm oil. Simultaneously, CRB and RSPO would also work on creating an ‘*India story*’ on sustainable palm oil and use social and traditional media to start enhancing the visibility and wider understanding on the subject.

This report summarises the activities and achievements of these interventions and highlights the future course of action to help maintain the momentum achieved through this partnership in raising the visibility and understanding on transformation towards sustainable palm in India.

## 2. Activities Update

This section enumerates the activities undertaken in this partnership, covering the following:

- Creating the *Indian Story* on Sustainable Palm Oil
- Enhancing awareness and visibility through Social Media
- IEC development and dissemination
- Press interaction (engaging journalists)
- Championing Sustainability (Sustainability Ambassadors)

### 2.1 Creating the ‘Indian Story’ on Sustainable Palm Oil

Based on the discussions and aligned with RSPO agenda in India, two ‘stories’ were agreed for creating content on responsible palm oil (*Indian story* on sustainable palm) for wider outreach in India. These two stories were: (i) ***Responsible shopping (awareness among consumers about products using certified sustainable palm oil)*** and (ii) ***Agro-based (Oil palm plantation based) enterprise development in Indian state(s)***.

A few articles based on this content were published in the media (print and online). This started with building understanding about the importance of palm oil in the FMCG sector, and subsequently on the first story about the need for consumer awareness to raise demand for good palm oil (Amar Ujala Hindi

Daily, 20/02/2019

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KG\\_FUcH3HhfVZY9P6mwLn3la6JIGMbFQ/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KG_FUcH3HhfVZY9P6mwLn3la6JIGMbFQ/view?usp=sharing)).

Another full article entitled ‘Climate Smart Consumption’ has been drafted and shared with media organisations. It is expected that this article would be published soon and then disseminated widely.

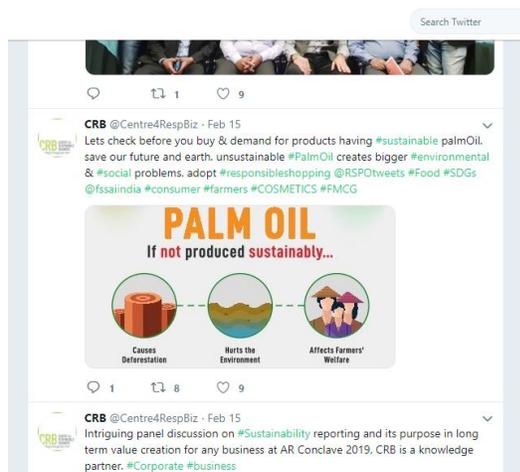
**Remark:**

It has been agreed to align the content pertaining to the second story (Agro-based enterprise development) with the process of ‘national interpretation’ (NI) of the RSPO Standard in India. However, the content of the second story could not be finalised given that the NI process was initiated a few months later than was originally anticipated in this project.

*CRB would therefore like to seek an extension of 2 months (till end-August 2019) for the finalization of the content and development of the second story.*

**2.2 Enhancing visibility through Social Media**

CRB has been using its twitter/FB/LinkedIn handles to relay messages and content related to the above story on a regular basis. Further, CRB has also used its social media handle to highlight the need/benefits from transition towards sustainable palm in India. Nearly 50 social media posts have been done through Twitter, FB and LinkedIn – and helped in getting a good number of responses.



Once the content based on the second story is generated, the same would be used to raise the visibility of the contribution of oil palm (as a cash crop) towards ago-enterprise development in Indian states. This would demonstrate the importance of the crop (oil palm) both for the local economy and in creating local employment.

**2.3 IEC Development and Dissemination**

It was discussed and agreed with RSPO that two sets of Posters would be developed aligned with the two stories. Given that content of the first story was finalised, this was used to create a set of 2 posters linked to the first story (Responsible Shopping), and they are being disseminated widely.

Poster 1 was printed and nearly 1000 copies have been circulated at the Globoil Event (Sept 2018, Mumbai, India), CRB 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Nov 2018 (Delhi, India) and RSPO global event in Nov 2018 (Malaysia). Copies were also used to engage with various stakeholders in India.

500 copies of Poster 2 were printed and have been used in reaching out to consumers through social media. CRB and RSPO would continue to use this poster in its engagement with young consumers (viz. AISEC Annual Conference in Hyderabad, July 2019)

**Responsible Shopping Poster 1**



**Responsible Shopping Poster 2**



A second set of posters would be developed once the content pertaining to the second story has been finalised by August 2019.

**Remark**

RSPO will be a Lead Partner for CRB for its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference (**India and Sustainability Standards 2019**) and Co-host a **CEO Panel** on ‘Promoting Sustainable Palm oil in India’. Over 700 delegates are expected to participate in this Conference – and would lead to considerable visibility not only for RSPO but also on the subject of sustainable palm in India. Both the sets of posters would be used at this event for raising public awareness. Further, these posters would also be used for the youth engagement intervention that CRB would be launching later in 2019.

**2.4 Press interactions and meetings with journos**

CRB engaged a senior media professional/(consultant) in identifying journalists both from English and Hindi press for engaging on this subject. Given the complexity of the subject (extra-territorial nature of environmental impacts), it has been a slow process, especially in terms of journalists picking up the issue and writing about it. However, over the last one year, CRB has had interactions with with over 20 journalists (see list of Journos in *Annex 1*).

While some of these discussions were undertaken one on one, some others were held in groups of 3-4 journalists at a time.



In a meeting with senior journalists in Delhi, Feb 2019

On a related but different note, CRB was able to facilitate the participation of 2 senior journalists in the RSPO Annual Global Event in Malaysia in Nov 2018. The journalists were able to produce articles on their return to India:

- Daily Financial Chronicle - <http://www.mydigitalfc.com/plan-and-policy/climate-change-challenge>
- Amar Ujala –[https://epaper.amarujala.com/delhi-city/20181117/11.html?format=img&ed\\_code=delhi-city](https://epaper.amarujala.com/delhi-city/20181117/11.html?format=img&ed_code=delhi-city)

## 2.5 Creating Champions: Sustainability Ambassadors

CRB was able to identify and engage two senior sustainability experts in this project (Bharat Wakhlu, Former Resident Director, Tata Group & Prof Vasanthi Srinivasan, IIM Bangalore), to advice and guide the interaction with the companies and other key actors. Both Bharat and Vasanthi also helped the team in identifying some relevant industry contacts.

CRB identified relevant officials in MNCs (Cargill, PEPSICO, Rabobank, Olam, HSBC), Indian companies (Galaxy Surfactants, Marico, Haldirams, Parle, Nutriva, Wipro Consumer Products, Godrej Agrovet, Bikaji) and other organisations (UN Environment, UNIDO, SEBI, Indian Banks' Association, Climate Disclosure Project, IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative, Federation of Biscuit Manufacturers of India) – and engaged with them on the subject periodically, to understand their interests and perspectives.

Following rounds of interaction, the following companies/organisations have agreed to work together with CRB and RSPO towards this transition: ***Rabobank, HSBC, Olam, IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative, Haldirams, Galaxy Surfactants, CDP, UN Environment***. These companies/organisations have resolved to work together with CRB and RSPO to initiate transformation towards sustainable palm in India. Discussions with some others like Wipro Consumer Products, Parle, Cargill, Reckitt-Benckiser have also progressed well – and it is expected that they would also join soon.

### Remarks

As part of a separate initiative, together with RSPO, Rainforest Alliance, WWF, CRB has developed and launched a coalition - ***Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India*** (I-SPOC, [www.indiaspoc.org](http://www.indiaspoc.org)). CRB acts as the Secretariat of I-SPOC.

The current project (*Sustainability Ambassadors*) has raised the capacity and understanding of CRB on the subject of sustainable palm oil in India, and therefore motivated CRB in taking the responsibility of managing the Secretariat of I-SPOC. This also helps CRB in engaging regularly and interacting with a number of both MNCs and India companies on sustainable palm oil



First Members' Meeting of I-SPOC in Mumbai, May 2019

Further, CRB worked closely with RSPO in India to represent the issue (socialize the idea of sustainable palm oil) in a number of meetings organized in Delhi and Mumbai.

**Photo Gallery (Interactions and Representation at Various Events)**



*CRB and RSPO participated in a number of events to raise the awareness/understanding on sustainable palm oil*

### **3. Positive Developments & Project Achievements**

- Better visibility of RSPO and the subject of sustainable palm oil in the Indian FMCG sector – especially among leading Indian FMCG companies (relevant staff handling palm oil in these companies have also been identified and engaged with)
- Development of IEC material and content to support continuous engagement with companies/organisations on the subject (to build a larger cadre of supporters of sustainable palm)
- The creation of I-SPOC has accorded considerable momentum on the issue in India – bringing together the knowledge and network of a number of Members (17 members already), which can be leveraged
- The project has helped develop understanding about the ‘business case’ of the transition towards sustainable palm oil for FMCG companies – and the support they require in the process
- Identification of a number of journalists who needs to be cultivated to raise the profile on sustainable palm oil in India

### **4. Challenges Encountered**

- While there is greater traction for MNCs (especially RSPO members and who have made global commitments towards sustainable palm oil), the interaction with India companies has been challenging (slow paced), though interesting.
- Reluctance among FMCG companies towards uptake of sustainable palm oil stemmed from the fact that certified sustainable palm oil is available for a premium (US\$35-50/MT), which would add to the cost of their end product – thereby posing market risks.
- Owing to the fact that 2018-19 was an election year (National Elections in India), the attention of the journalists was largely focused towards political issues.

### **5. Way Forward**

- Given the traction has been achieved in identifying champions on sustainable palm (Sustainability Ambassadors) across FMCG companies and organisations in India, the momentum should be maintained. CRB and RSPO to continue the identification of relevant staff in FMCG companies and engage with them in 2019.
- A number of senior journalists seem to be gradually warming up to the idea of engaging/writing on sustainable palm (aligned with the content that has been created in this project).
- CRB and RSPO have agreed to engage the youth (millennials) on Sustainable Palm (to be referred to as Y4S), using ‘sustainable lifestyles’ as a key for this engagement. Both the organisations believe, if they are well informed, youth consumers (millennials) would be able to generate the demand for responsible sourcing and transformation towards sustainable palm in the market. In India, this would be tedious process, but with consistent and targeted engagement, it can create the desired effects.

## ***Annexure 1***

Below is a list of journalists with who CRB has had interactions on sustainable palm oil over the last one year or so.

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Organisation</u></b>
1. Sanjay Jha	ITV UK
2. Shishir Sinha	The Hindu Business Line
3. Sharad Gupta	Amar Ujala
4. Abhishek Prabhat	The Economic Times
5. Harish Damodaran	Indian Express
6. Jatin Gandhi	Hindustan Times/Fellow IFWJ
7. Jayanto Roychoudhury	The Telegraph
8. Sanjiv R Singh	Times Digital
9. Shishir Chaurasia	Amar Ujala
10. Piyush pandey	Amar Ujala
11. Srivatsa	The Hindu
12. K.A. Badrinath	Deccan Chronicle
13. Gautam Dutta	Finacial Chronicle/IANS
14. Urmi Goswami	Economic Times
15. Mukesh Kaushik	Bhaskar
16. Tarun Nangia	NewsX
17. Faiz Askari	SME Street
18. Ajit Kumar	Radiance Media
19. Amit Upadhyay	The CSR Journal
20. Nitin Pradhan	Jagran Group
21. Mohammed Waqas	India Today
22. Naushad Ali	Sahara Samay
23. Sudhir Misra	Navbharat Times
24. Rajendra Kumar	National Voice
25. Alok Joshi	CNBC Awaaz
26. Aseem Manchanda	CNBC TV 18
27. Manisha Gupta	CNBC TV 18
28. Roopshree Nair	PTI
29. Prithvi Parihar	PTI
30. Renu Agal	The Print