



MVO response on ActionAid’s Report “Women’s rights violations in Dutch palm oil supply chains: The case of Guatemala” (October 2020)

Introduction

6 November 2020, MVO - the Netherlands Oils and Fats Industry and its members give high priority to the sustainable production of all our raw materials including palm oil. We have taken notice of the above mentioned report and would like to respond. First and foremost, we would like to stress that the oils and fats industry in the Netherlands we are representing, is against any form of human rights violations.

General

The ActionAid report states that “the palm oil industry is guilty of violating a wide range of human rights, especially those of women”. We take this statement very serious although we are of the opinion that it is disproportionate. Our members have been taking significant steps towards a sustainable and traceable palm oil supply chain and continue to lead the sustainable palm oil supply chains. This, for example, translates into the NDPE (No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation)-policies our members have in place. In addition, our members have been leading the way in the implementation of RSPO principles and criteria, which provide rules and mechanisms like free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to promote the protection of human rights defenders and community leaders. Lastly, our members have significantly increased the percentage palm oil that is traceable to mills and plantations. To make these and sustainable practices the norm in the industry, MVO and its members support a mandatory due diligence system at EU level.

Palm oil and Guatemala

The ActionAid report indicates that indigenous women in Quiché, Guatemala are exposed to high levels of institutional and sexual violence. The intersection of gender and indigenous identity makes this a vulnerable group in this country. The issues highlighted are structural and require a coherent approach and collaboration between public and private sector.

MVO and its members strongly believe, together with ActionAid, that these practices should be abandoned as part of an integrated human rights approach. To that end MVO members are working on the execution of their respective policies worldwide.



- MVO supports sustainable (and deforestation-free) commodity markets (consumption and trade) in the European Union and worldwide. Sustainability initiatives cover all environmental, social and economic aspects.
- MVO supports ideas to assess regulatory and non-regulatory measures. A mandatory due diligence system at EU level should be based on current voluntary systems implemented, which provide guidelines to protect the rights of indigenous communities.
- The OECD guidelines should be incorporated in such a due diligence system.
- MVO members are monitoring whether the commitments and policies (of their suppliers) are actually implemented.
- MVO members are in constant dialogue with its suppliers about the implementation of the policies and local suppliers are addressing these challenges and implementing requirements.
- MVO members take action in accordance with the grievance processes and demonstrate progress at their public grievance trackers.
- MVO members transparently report on progress made through (annual) palm sustainability reports.
- MVO supports the partnership approach of the communication and the need to intensify cooperation with the industry and producing countries.
- MVO stresses the importance of communication about the need for sustainable and deforestation-free commodities also to the EU consumers.
- MVO is open for discussion around abolishing human right and women right issues with ActionAid.