# ZSL expands environmental ranking of world's largest palm oil producers

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**London, UK – 16 November 2015 –** International conservation charity the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is today aiming to bring further clarity to the complex world of palm oil production through the launch of its expanded Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit (SPOTT), which has now grown to encompass half of all land under oil palm cultivation globally.

ZSL's established SPOTT platform is a free, interactive website designed to help investors, researchers and commodity buyers manage environmental risks in the palm oil sector. The site assesses, scores and ranks 50 of the world's largest palm oil producers using publicly available information about the sustainability of their operations, helping stakeholders make more informed decisions.

By working directly with industry to provide this level of detail, ZSL is also furthering its global conservation mission – to improve understanding of those unsustainable practices contributing to the plight of Critically Endangered species including the Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) and Sumatran orangutan (*Pongo abelii*), as well as the severe seasonal haze that has afflicted South-East Asia in recent years.

SPOTT features a regularly-updated scorecard that provides quarterly assessments of 50 oil palm growing companies – double the number in 2014 – against a framework of over 50 indicators. Framed as direct questions about best practice and its disclosure, the indicators cover areas including environmental management, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving supply chain traceability, and reporting to the industry's largest certification scheme, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). Users can compare and contrast company performance via trend-tracking graphs, as well as monitoring the media for company-specific stories on issues including fires, haze, deforestation and wildlife conflict.

Leonie Lawrence, Global Palm Oil Manager at ZSL, commented: "SPOTT supports growers to improve reporting and transparency. With double the number of companies and half of all land under oil palm development now covered by our platform, we want to engage with companies to improve their scores and urge the financial sector to use the information to better understand and address their environmental impacts."

ZSL's Transparency Toolkit also hosts a fully-searchable mapping tool displaying oil palm concession sites overlaid with near real-time satellite data on protected areas, forest loss and active fire alerts provided by the World Resources Institute's Global Forest Watch.

As financial institutions increasingly divest from fossil fuels, many investors are looking to support renewable alternatives, often in the form of sustainable biofuels, of which palm oil is a growing component. SPOTT provides guidance on the Environmental and Social Governance (ESG)processes needed to develop responsible investments, as well as helping to build trust in the supply chain by making company operations more transparent – the first step in transforming the industry towards a sustainable future.

Hilde Jervan, from the Council on Ethics for the Norwegian Government Pension Fund, explained: "The Council has recommended excluding a number of oil palm companies from the Fund over poor environmental performance. Concrete information at the company level is necessary to influence companies to spur change. SPOTT offers a much needed mechanism for the financial sector to engage with producers and to further the ESG agenda. It opens the way for financiers to communicate with companies to monitor and manage environmental risks."

Whether you are an investor, trader, producer, or buyer in the supply chain, all stakeholders have a role to play in increasing sustainability. Visitors can navigate the SPOTT website according to their stakeholder role and find tailor-made information curated to suit their needs.

RSPO's Head of Impacts, Dr Sanath Kumaran added: "The RSPO welcomes sustainability indicator frameworks such as SPOTT, which will support RSPO members in transforming the market to make sustainable palm oil the norm and translate commitments into tangible results on the ground."

-ENDS-

**Palm Oil**

One of the world's most important agricultural commodities, palm oil is present in more than half of all packaged products in supermarkets, but for decades, unsustainable palm oil has been a key driver of tropical deforestation, with vast tracts of rainforest cleared, often burned to the ground, and typically replaced with a monoculture crop, the African oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*).

**Sustainable Palm Oil Transparency Toolkit (SPOTT)**

Just as the problems facing the industry are complex, SPOTT reflects this by examining the issues in fine detail. ZSL has used highlights from its former Sustainable Palm Oil Platform, including reports, case studies and weblinks, and integrated them into the new Topics and Resources sections for best practice advice directly linked to its indicator framework. SPOTT also contains a popup glossary to help define the terms, initialisms and acronyms featuring in many company reports and websites. SPOTT is now compatible with Google Translate, and ZSL is developing bespoke content in other languages, including Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Melayu and Chinese. For more information, visitwww.sustainablepalmoil.org/spott/

**Zoological Society of London (ZSL)**

Founded in 1826, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity whose mission is to promote and achieve the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats. Our mission is realised through our ground-breaking science, our active conservation projects in more than 50 countries and our two Zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo. For more information visit www.zsl.org

**ZSL and Palm Oil**

ZSL first started working with the palm oil industry in 2001, advising companies on how to manage populations of Sumatran tigers found in their concession sites – the areas where producers are allowed to operate. More than ten years later, ZSL's Indonesia Conservation Programme has expanded to work on tiger habitat conservation, anti-poaching patrols and ecological surveys using the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), and community engagement to improve the livelihoods of local people. ZSL is also an active member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), serving on its Board of Governors, as well as submitting and supporting resolutions to enhance its Principles and Criteria, including the Annual Communications of Progress (ACOP) reporting process. ZSL-supported field research has shown that less than 16% of animal species recorded in primary forests are found in conventional oil palm plantations. Another recent ZSL study demonstrated that consumers are willing to pay a premium for sustainable palm oil, and that raising demand is vital to maintain productivity while protecting biodiversity.

For more information, visit www.zsl.org/conservation. Follow ZSL on Twitter: @officialzsl, @zslconservation, @zslscience, and @zslpalmoil.

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