

The RSPO Complaints System: Experiences of a New African Grower

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Discussion Points

1. Background and context
2. Complaints impact
3. RSPO complaints system – what works, what could be better
4. System revamp – observations and suggestions

Liberia: A new frontier for palm oil

- West coast of Africa
- 1980 coup, unrest, civil war 1989 - 2003
- # 175 out of 187 countries - UN Human Development Index 2013
- 4th lowest GDP per capita
- Main economic activities
 - Mining
 - Agriculture
- Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - Palm oil important



GVL: A brief introduction

- 2009: Govt, community consultations started
- 2010 - 2011: Concession agreement signed, ESIA, pre-nursery
- 2012: Started development
- Today:
 - Around 6,000 Ha planted
 - 3,500 Liberians employed
 - 4 clinics operational
 - School built
 - Scholarships



Complaints History - GVL



- 5 official complaints
- Suspension order on Feb 2013
- Quarterly progress reports
- RSPO team visit in June 2014
- Current status: Box F (Action Plan) - escalated

Complaints Impact: Company

- Critical self-assessment & improvement
 - Engaged experts
 - Improved SOPs, processes, execution
 - Awareness of “rules”
 - Strengthened organisation
- Operational disruption
 - Significant delays
 - Cost
 - Management attention
- Increased scrutiny
 - More NGOs
 - Investors

Complaints impact: Community

- Increased awareness
 - Rights
 - Grievance process
 - Growers need to abide by “rules”
- Job losses
- Development delays
- Internal conflicts

The RSPO Complaints System

- It works
 - Exists, actively used
 - Rulings followed
 - Multi-stakeholder
 - Encourages dialogue as first resort
 - Open process (mostly)
- But...
 - CP proceedings not transparent
 - Slow resolution
 - Limited resources/reach/experts
 - Database incomplete
 - Inadequate filter?

Complaints System Review: Observations

- ✓ Improved processes and systems
- ✓ More resources and expertise
- ✓ Increased independence
- ✓ Strengthen bilateral engagement as first step
- ✓ Increased reach into new territories

- *Burden of proof: caution on interpretation*
- *Safeguards against spurious complaints adequate?*

Complaints System Review: Suggestions

- *Increase transparency – CP members, proceedings?*
- *Analytics to guide decision making?*
- *Sanctions for repeated abuse of system?*

Thanks for your attention.

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