

SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL DIALOGUE

I-SPOC MEETING

Background

The India- Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition (I-SPOC) concluded its second partners meeting on 21 November, 2019 at the Annual CRB Conference on promoting Business Sustainability. The meeting included participation from existing, new and potential members of the I-SPOC. The meeting was preceded by a high-level plenary with CXOs on “Market transformation, which provided points for deliberation and action for the I-SPOC session.

The underlying message from the high-level plenary was that India should steer the course of action on sustainable palm oil and given that it is the largest importer of palm oil in the world it is well positioned to do so. However, much ground work needs to be done by galvanizing support from stakeholders, developing a common understanding on sustainable palm oil and instilling shared role and responsibility.

Objective of the Meeting:

- To orient the new and potential representative organisations on the overarching goal of the I-SPOC, its guiding principle and priority areas of work (*namely, government policy, end users, supply chain*)
- To draw up an annual action plan comprising priority activity under the I-SPOC
- To garner support for I-SPOC through increased stakeholder engagement and participation

Highlights from the Meeting

The meeting was presided over by the Steering Committee members, including:

- AAK Kamani
- Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) (Founder)
- IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative
- Rainforest Alliance (RA) (Founder)
- Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) (Founder)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF India) (Founder)

The meeting commenced with Nandini Sharma, from CRB introducing I-SPOC and setting the context for the meeting. The session was conducted in a workshop mode to brainstorm ways and manner in which I-SPOC could address the challenges in the uptake of sustainable palm oil along three priority areas.

- Look at government policy on sustainable palm oil
- Address all the supply chain issues
- Mobilize consumers on better consumption patterns

The opening remarks were followed by statements **from the Steering Committee** on their vision for I-SPOC

• **Mr. Prakash Chawla, AAK Kamani**

Drawing from the earlier dialogue on creating a market for sustainable palm oil, Mr. Chawla emphasised on the catalytic role I-SPOC could play in bringing in greater awareness among stakeholders on Sustainable Palm Oil. Some of the key points mentioned include

- Analyse on effective ways of spreading awareness on sustainable palm oil to the **consumers**. He articulated that consumers today want sustainably produced/sourced

products, but are not sure of where to buy/procure them. I-SPOC could work towards narrowing the information and awareness gap

- Furthermore, he said that companies like AAK Kamani can serve as important agents for initiating conversations around awareness raising and help create a market for sustainable palm oil

- **Mr. Edward Millard, Rainforest Alliance**

As the founding member of I-SPOC, Edward Millard elaborated Rainforest Alliance's vision for I-SPOC which encompasses a systemic and market-oriented transformation towards the uptake of sustainable palm oil. Rainforest Alliance has been actively engaged in promoting sustainable practices in production and sustainable market uptake and sees I-SPOC as a vehicle of change. In his remarks, Mr. Millard articulated the vision to

- Include two main drivers of change in India; **Market and Enforcement of Policy** in terms of palm oil companies importing palm oil in the country
- Through I-SPOC, Rainforest Alliance hopes to develop a link between sustainable producers and Indian importers

- **Ms. Bhavna Prasad, WWF – India**

WWF India, is the founding member of I-SPOC and a leading organisation championing sustainability across different sustainable commodities and sectors including agriculture, forestry, sea food, palm oil. Bhavna Prasad from WWF, while emphasizing on the need for collective action on sustainable Palm Oil, pointed out on the important role a multi-stakeholder platform like I-SPOC should play. In her vision statement for I-SPOC, she mentioned

- There is a lack of a common shared understanding on sustainable palm oil, I-SPOC as a coalition should provide endeavour to help derive a comprehensive and shared understanding on sustainable palm oil, policies and standards. It should aim to provide potential solutions to challenges across the supply chain
- As the largest importer of palm oil and until last year one of the largest consumers of palm oil, India has a leadership and pivotal role to play, I-SPOC can be the platform that actualizes this transition towards sustainable palm oil

- **Neha Simlai, IDH**

Neha Simlai representing IDH as a steering committee member spoke of IDH's priority in the Palm Oil sector and how it sees I-SPOC as a centrepiece in furthering the agenda on sustainable palm oil. As an organization working on sustainable trade, palm is linked closely to the work they do across geographies and sectors. In her vision statement she pointed out that Presently, India taking a more steering role in changing the way that the sustainability agenda has set globally and I-SPOC as a coalition has a great potential to do spearhead discussions and action on sustainable palm oil.

- **Mr. Kamal Prakash Seth, RSPO**

As the founding member of the I-SPOC, RSPO India, Country Head, Kamal Prakash Seth spoke of the palm oil as integral commodity to sustain everyday life for seven billion people. Close to 300 million people in our country are below poverty line and to feed them there is no better oil than sustainable palm oil. In his vision statement he stated that However, owing to its versatility there also exist sustainability challenges which need to be addressed as a collective with a sense of urgency. The onus is on each one of us - business leaders, industry, consumers, government, domain experts, civil society to respond to the uptake of sustainable palm oil and here is where I-SPOC can and should play an important role

GROUP ACTIVITY

In keeping with the objective of the meeting, to deliberate on potential activities to be undertaken by I-SPOC during the year 2020, the session was conducted in a workshop mode. Accordingly, all participants were divided into the three working groups based on the I-SPOC verticals. Each group was tasked to develop a list of activities and present it to all the participants. This was followed by discussion.

WORKING ON END USERS

- **Brands**
 - **Promote on-product branding** - brand that use sustainable palm oil, should have an on-product branding/label depicting or showcasing a message on their contribution on promoting palm oil, reducing deforestation. Greater emphasis on product information disclosure particularly sustainable palm oil should be made
 - **Initiate awareness generation** - to create awareness on sustainable palm oil, brands who are already using sustainable palm oil should market their products as such to the consumers.

- **Consumers**
 - **Promote regional media engagement** including radio and newspapers to reach out to consumers and inform them about sustainable palm oil
 - Initiate **social media awareness**, encouraging consumers to question the brands on procurement, supply chain actors and value chain issues
 - Design **more campaigns** with actionable ideas for the consumers to make them shift to sustainable palm oil

WORKING GROUP ON SUPPLY CHAIN

- **Customers**
 - **Important to promote adoption of sustainability** practices amongst supply chain actors and customers
 - **I-SPOC should reach out to big brands** and their members on uptake of sustainable palm oil and encourage them to join the Coalition
 - **Train and support domestic vendors** on uptake of sustainable palm oil

- **Consumers**
 - Initiate **school programme education**
 - **Provide product certification** that enable consumers to make an informed choice while buying

- **Widen the Stakeholder Net**
 - **Through collaborations**
 - Conduct physical workshops and on-site discussions
 - Promote knowledge webinars
 - Identify industry associations to engage for wider dialogues

- **Traceability**
 - Initiate documentation of **traceability systems**
 - Encourage **suppliers screening and mapping** to understand their system of traceability of supply chain

WORKING ON GOVERNMENT POLICY

- **Follow-up on previous policy dialogues and interventions.** For example – WWF informed that on prior occasion some years ago, some of the industry associations sent a letter suggesting a preferential tariff or structure for sustainable palm oil to the government and that was through MoEFCC but no action was taken on it
- **Promote Research organizations** - partnership within organization on India specifically looking at research on international trade, imports/exports, policies and developing strategies on the various kind of incentive structures that can be implemented in terms of Indian context
- **Pursue active engagement** with relevant line ministries and departments
- **Follow a broader approach** while initiating conversation with the government, if we want to include the aspect of agriculture, deforestation, sustainability a broader approach including the issue of sustainable palm oil needs to be used