

Environmental groups call on World Bank to drop plans for resumed palm oil funding

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Press release by World Rainforest Movement, Latin American Network against Monoculture Tree Plantations RECOMA, Rettet den Regenwald, Salva la Selva, Ecologistas en Accion and Biofuelwatch

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From 31st August to 1st September, the World Bank is holding their final stakeholder consultation seminar about future finance for palm oil projects in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

Worldwide, the critique of the sustainability of oil palm plantations has been growing. Last September, the World Bank finally decided to suspend all palm oil finance, following testimonies and complaints by several groups, including about the serious environmental and social impacts of World Bank finance for palm oil giant Wilmar International. World Bank President Zoellick announced that the International Finance Corporation (IFC) had been instructed to carry out a full strategic review. The outcome of the IFC review was an embarrassment for the whole of the World Bank Group.

Palm oil production for food, cosmetics, chemicals and agrofuels relies on vast monocultures and has disastrous consequences for people, environment and climate. The palm industry, which has been backed by World Bank funding for 45 years, harms indigenous and other forest dependent communities as well as small farmers.

International palm oil companies such as Wilmar are responsible for serious human rights abuses, evict communities who live in rainforest regions, destroy tropical forests and their biodiversity on a large scale, pollute soils and water and speed up climate change.

Klaus Schenck, Rainforest Rescue, Germany, explains: "The framework programme which the World Bank has proposed for the palm oil sector is entirely unsatisfactory and unacceptable. It is nothing but a smokescreen. Calls from environmental and social organisations worldwide have been ignored".

Teresa Perez, World Rainforest Movement, says: "We need to emphasise that oil palm plantations are not sustainable because they rely on a model of export-oriented production which is based on plunder. We regard the palm oil framework proposed by the World Bank as nothing but a farce, with no positive aspects".

Guadalupe Rodríguez, Salva la Selva, Spain adds: "Industrial oil palm monocultures are not sustainable and never will be. Finance for oil palm plantations makes the World Bank directly responsible for increased poverty, for human rights abuses and environmental crimes".

Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch, UK says: "Hundreds of groups worldwide have condemned the greenwashing of oil palm plantations. Palm oil certification, just like the "guidelines" proposed by the World Bank, is nothing but greenwashing".

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