

Malaysia's Indigenous Palm Oil Farmers Continue to Fight For Justice in European Union's Deforestation Regulations

The Sarawak Dayak Oil Palm Planters Association sees EUDR as discrimination against indigenous peoples who cultivate oil palm and may not comply with EUDR

MIRI, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA, May 9, 2024

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Dayak Oil Palm Planters Association (DOPPA) based in Sarawak, Malaysia is urging indigenous farmers to stand up for their rights to self-govern their ancestral lands and demand exception from the European Union's Deforestation Regulations (EUDR).

- Experts on the European Union's Deforestation Regulations have warned that the EUDR will have a negative impact on small farmers. Dayaks in Sarawak form the majority of small farmers in the Malaysian state whose livelihoods depend on palm oil and other crops targeted by EUDR.
- DOPPA views the EUDR as a form of discrimination against indigenous peoples whose self-governance on ancestral lands include palm oil farms.



DOPPA President Napoleon Ningkos with Malaysian Minister Johari Ghani

As Malaysia seeks to certify 100% of its palm oil production under the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification scheme to meet EUDR requirements, some DOPPA members are facing the threat of exclusion from foreign markets due to the issue of indigenous land claims. Land title is a prerequisite for the MSPO which seeks acceptance by the EU, US and UK.

In a workshop for the MSPO, Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani said that [certification would allow](#) better yields that are easily marketable. The Minister then urged DOPPA to provide clearer explanations on Native Customary Land (NCR) land claims, especially where oil palm is planted.

According to DOPPA, the indigenous community in Sarawak has been cultivating various crops on native lands for decades as a means of survival. This includes oil palm which has proven to be



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Napolean Ningkos

the best crop for incomes necessary to improve the socio-economic status of rural Dayak communities.

“DOPPA supports the MSPO and wants all our members to be certified. However, land claims are a complex matter which cannot be resolved quickly to meet the requirements the MSPO or EUDR.

To qualify for MSPO certification, we have to prove legal title but to prove legal title, we must first establish our ancestral land claims through Native Customary Rights. The Sarawak government has taken the initiative to carry

out NCR land survey work among the indigenous ethnic groups to speed up the approval of native customary land claims. This process will not happen within the time frame of the MSPO or EUDR for smallholders.

The introduction of new technology with drones may speed up the process but we still have to deal with conflicting claims on the ground between tribes and indeed between longhouses whose claims may overlap.

The worst situation for Dayak farmers is when NGOs using satellite mapping tells us that our farms sit on peatlands or overlap with national parks. We were here first, not the parks. So what if our farms are on peatlands? What suggestions do these NGOs have for our socio-economic development if not palm oil?”

According to DOPPA, the popular story as told by NGOs that Dayaks are content to live as hunter-gatherers is a false myth.

“We want our children to live as comfortably as these people who work for NGOs. We will leave no Dayak behind. This is our duty as parents for future generations of Dayaks to ensure our children do not toil on farms as we do. We have yet to see acceptable solutions from these NGOs who condemn the palm oil industry and indirectly push to eliminate Dayak farmers from the EU market with EUDR.”

DOPPA will meet with the State Minister later this month to seek support for Dayak farmers in the fight against EUDR. The obvious solution according to DOPPA, is for the EU to either exclude small farmers from the regulations or grant a realistic time frame for their inclusion under MSPO and EUDR rules.

DOPPA appreciates the acknowledgement of the EU’s External Action that indigenous peoples around the world are among the poorest.

"Oil palm farming has enabled many Dayaks in Sarawak to transform from impoverished land owners to becoming successful farmers within a generation. The toils of our forefathers has brought us to this day where we are educated enough to defend our rights as indigenous peoples."

DOPPA concluded by urging the EU to truly protect the rights of indigenous peoples, especially indigenous peoples whose livelihoods and opportunities for development are being threatened by the EU's legislations on imported goods.

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