

Sarawak's DOPPA Rebukes NGO Calls on EUDR Listing

The Sarawak Dayak's Oil Palm Planters Association issued a rebuke against NGOs who called on the European Union to list Sarawak as "High Risk" for deforestation

MIRI, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA, September 27, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Sarawak Dayak's Oil Palm Planters Association (DOPPA), a non-profit organization which protects the interests of indigenous palm oil smallholders, has issued a rebuke against NGOs who called on the European Union to list Sarawak as "High Risk" for deforestation.



Dayak oil palm farmers in Sarawak

The offending call to list Sarawak as "High Risk" for deforestation was made by Human Rights Watch (HRW).

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“Human Rights Watch should have consulted us before including Sarawak palm oil in their negative campaign. DOPPA represents more than forty thousand smallholders.”

Napolean Ningkos, President of DOPPA

This was seen by DOPPA as a threat to the livelihoods of indigenous palm oil farmers in Sarawak, many of whom depend on a fair market access for stable incomes.

“Human Rights Watch should have consulted us before including Sarawak palm oil in their negative campaign. DOPPA represents more than forty thousand smallholders who met our core requirement as indigenous oil palm farmers. Every member represents a family that depends on the small-scale family owned oil palm farm for their livelihoods and the future of their children. If you add in

our indigenous friends and relatives who work with us in our farms to make a living, this call by HRW will send us back to live in forests. We have fought too hard for our rights to join a developed society to stay silent while HRW misrepresents the facts in Sarawak.”

Since the EUDR was recognized as a threat to indigenous peoples livelihoods, DOPPA has been

steadfast in [voicing its opposition](#) to EUDR.

In its letter to the EU urging the listing of Sarawak as High Risk of deforestation, HRW included [naturally regenerating forests](#) as part of deforestation in Sarawak.

This is a clever exploitation of the EUDR by Human Rights Watch which DOPPA rubbished.

According to DOPPA, the definition of “forest” in the EUDR is an attack on Sarawak’s indigenous peoples rights to decide what to do with their ancestral lands. This has been made worse when HRW exploited the EU definition of “forest” to make a false claim that there are millions of hectares of ancient rainforests in Sarawak at risk of being razed for palm oil.

“Naturally regenerating forests are not ancient forests as HRW claims. If we are to believe HRW and the EU definition of forests, then the land clearing done by my cousin three years ago is now a ‘forest’ as the natural regeneration has shrubs over 5 meters tall. Would the satellite mapping of EUDR exclude Sarawak palm oil because of this?

Furthermore, the EU's definition of natural forest must not be applied to Native Customary Rights (NCR) land in Sarawak, considering that the area was developed much earlier before the introduction of the EUDR.

For Indigenous communities that cultivate NCR land for palm oil cultivation, it is important for improving the socio-economic status of rural indigenous communities. The EUDR's restrictions on opening new planting areas for palm oil for indigenous communities is seen as denying the rights of indigenous people to cultivate their land to break free from the shackles of poverty.”

DOPPA further criticized the EU as having failed to engage indigenous communities prior to the introduction of the EUDR, which is now being used by groups like HRW to push their agenda against palm oil.

DOPPA further rubbished HRW’s claim that the Sarawak state government land use policy is opaque.

“State policies are very clear and transparent that no new planting of oil palm is allowed on State Land except on NCR lands.

In addition, the state government has introduced a mechanism to verify NCR land status through 1 Stop Centers and encouraged indigenous peoples to plant oil palm on their NCR lands if it improves their socio-economic status. As of September 2024, 1.13 million hectares of an estimated 2 million hectares of native customary lands have been [mapped out](#) in Sarawak.

This completely refutes Human Rights Watch claims that indigenous land claims in Sarawak are opaque and therefore require additional scrutiny by the EU.”

In light of the harm posed by the EUDR to the livelihoods of indigenous palm oil smallholders in Sarawak, DOPPA stands with small farmers of cocoa, coffee and palm oil worldwide to repeat DOPPA's message to the EU is to exclude smallholders from the punishments of EUDR in the name of indigenous peoples rights.

Napolean Ningkos

Sarawak Dayak Oil Palm Planters Association (DOPPA)

+60 17-858 9973

napoleanrn@yahoo.com

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