



## 14 November 2008: Unilever buys first batch of certified sustainable palm oil

### **Unilever has secured palm oil from the first-ever batch to be officially certified as 'sustainable'.**

At a celebration in Rotterdam on 11 November, Unilever joined other partners of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to accept the first delivery of certified sustainable palm oil.

The day marked a milestone for Unilever, towards achieving a much more ambitious and publicly announced commitment – sourcing 100% sustainable palm oil by 2015.

Nils van Dam, SVP, Spreads and Dressings, Europe, accepted the delivery on behalf of Unilever.

He told the gathering of media, not-for-profit groups and RSPO stakeholders: "For us it is very important to buy palm oil from sustainable sources, and we also know that this is what consumers want. This is why – together with others – we helped to found RSPO."

Unilever's Director for Sustainable Agriculture, Jan Kees Vis is the president of the executive board of the RSPO. He described the arrival of the first certified sustainable palm oil in Europe as a "small but significant step" towards mainstreaming sustainability in the palm oil sector.

### **Transparency and credibility are paramount**

On the same day as the arrival of the palm oil, Greenpeace released a report claiming that the supplier of the first batch of certified oil, United Plantations, had violated RSPO sustainability standards elsewhere.

Investigators are in Indonesia to check the validity of the allegations. While United Plantations has since issued a strong statement saying it can prove all the allegations are unfounded, it also said it would co-operate fully with the RSPO.

Jan Kees says the extra scrutiny – and dealing with it properly – is important to maintain RSPO's credibility:

"It's vital that organisations like Greenpeace can challenge the process at all stages. We will do everything we can to improve things that are not up to standard yet... as with any scheme that's in its infancy, the RSPO will evolve and strengthen over time."

### **Cultivating change**

With 250 members, the RSPO now accounts for half of the palm oil market. But according to Gavin Neath, Unilever SVP, Communications & Sustainability, with the media focused on the issue of deforestation, it also highlights a need for extra vigilance on Unilever's part. "It's very important that we can track the full lifecycle of our raw materials, this is why we are working with our suppliers through discussions and audits to ensure they comply with our standards."

The next important developments on palm oil are expected later this month, at the annual Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil in Bali. Several resolutions will be voted on, supporting Unilever and its partners' overall goals towards preventing palm oil-related deforestation.

