

## A Pilot Study on Sustainable Practices of Malaysian Palm Oil Mills

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### ABSTRACT

*Over the past decade, palm oil as an edible vegetable oil has been focus of discussions in the area of sustainability standard for palm oil production. There is a lack of knowledge in terms of sustainable practices in Malaysian palm oil mills particularly among the mills owned by Chinese community in Malaysia. This pilot study aims to determine the gap for Malaysian Chinese millers to attain Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) standard in terms of knowledge and documentation. The study explored the following main research question: What are the main issues and challenges faced by Malaysian Chinese palm oil millers in the context of sustainable certification processes? Employing qualitative approach, five Chinese palm oil millers locating in the state of Pahang, Malaysia were selected randomly for in-depth face-to-face interviews and non-participant observations. This field study was conducted in the year of 2017. The study results indicate that Malaysian Chinese palm oil millers place great priority on the environmental management and pollution control policies implemented by the local government through the Department of Environment (DOE). Regular inspections by the local DOE officers on milling's waste management and cleaner production technologies become the management's main point of concentration. Another area of concerns from the Malaysian Chinese millers is the well-being of their mill workers. Other components of RSPO principles and criteria receive moderate attention. In view of the results of this pilot study, it had shown that the Malaysian Chinese millers lack certain knowledge and assistance in documentation in order to qualify the RSPO standard. Thus, a bigger study on this group of Chinese millers should be carried out so that a comprehensive guidelines and documentation software can be developed to assist this group in meeting the world requirements expected of them.*

**Keywords:** Oil palm, Palm oil miller, Sustainability, Malaysia, RSPO, Environmental certification, Standardization, Governance

### INTRODUCTION

As reported in the News Straits Times (Ooi, 2017), Malaysia celebrated 100 years of oil palm planting in 2017. This was to commemorate the success of Henri Fauconnier in planting the first commercial oil palm in 1911 at Tennamaram Estate, Kuala Selangor, as a proposal to replace an unsuccessful coffee estate. This effort of Henri Fauconnier had over the years made Malaysia as the number one trader and second largest palm oil producer in the world. Fauconnier's kind act had then continued to enable palm oil to prosper as one of the healthy edible vegetable oils worldwide.