



OPEN LETTER TO EU COMMISSION & EU PARLIAMENT “Palm Oil Ban: Do You Stand With Us?”

From Indonesian Oil Palm Smallholders Organization (SPKS)

Indonesia, March 7th, 2018

Dear European Commission fellows,
Dear Members of the European Parliament,

We are writing to register our disappointment of your movements, policies, and campaigns against palm oil; and we request a response regarding your stance on this issue.

Your recent plans to ban palm oil were initiated with the EP resolution in April 2017 and the European Commission’s Renewable Energy Directive with a complete phase out of palm oil in transport fuels by 2021. All is claimed to protect rain forests and biodiversity, small farmers, indigenous peoples and food crops existence.

We too understand that there is always two sides of the story. Some are concerned about the devastating impact of Europe’s demand for biofuels on our forests, biodiversity, and millions of people in the palm oil producing countries, and about its significant contribution to rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Don’t you want to know the story of the palm oil smallholders?

▪ **Livelihood**

Our livelihood and the future of our children lie in the unrestricted access of the global markets including the European market. We hope you recognize that palm oil is part of global trade commodities; even volatile market prices have a great impact to us. Should the key source of our livelihood be banned, would your strategy be emphatically correct that you care for our livelihood and our children’s?

It is very important that we share our views on what do you expect from us, the smallholders, to move ahead? How do you think we will pursue our lives if your policy is adopted in the EU countries? We hope to better understand how our European counterparts are working to support sustainable palm oil at the farmers level?

▪ **Forest & Biodiversity Protection**

We appreciate EU to recognize our lands, forests and biodiversity. We hope you understand that we too are under similar pressure to look after our environment, our forests and biodiversity for the future populations in our countries.

We are convinced that sacrifices we make today will afford our children a more comfortable future. SPKS smallholders invite you all to come and see, how we jointly can conserve the environment while keeping our lives moving. Forests are important to the lives of the people, but it is the people that can positively benefit from while conserve forests and biodiversity.



▪ **Sustainability Commitment**

We were empathetic to your exertion in saving the tropical forest and its biodiversity. We too recognize our needs to save our forests, where a huge number of the smallholders are living in the verge of it. Yet we forge on, with the knowledge that what we produce can help to minimize the environmental pressure and potential loss.

SPKS members are working hard to deliver positive changes where it is needed. We are collaborating with different parties (companies, sustainability consultancies and NGOs) at domestic and international fora for traceability and sustainability operation. We are eager to play a part so that the perception of palm oil in Europe is not only negative, and to show evidence that there are organisations working to support and celebrate sustainable palm oil.

We welcome and correspond to the EP notes that *the cultivation of palm oil can deliver positive contributions to the economic development of countries and offer viable economic opportunities for farmers, provided that it is carried out responsibly and sustainably and that strict conditions for sustainable cultivation are laid down.*

SPKS mission is to build awareness and to improve the management of environmentally friendly and sustainable plantations of the smallholders; to strengthen the organization through reinforcement, sustainability training and creations of many more SPKS organizations; to improve the life quality of the smallholders through Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) and technology innovation; and to raise public awareness at the local, national and international levels to support best practices of the smallholders.

In some of palm oil producing districts where SPKS and its partners are active in, there have been initiatives and activities on the empowerment and mapping of oil palm lands and smallholders to comply with sustainability practices. We have been working with diverse partners from private sectors and local governments to support the increase quality and capacity of smallholders. We seek your support to make the process of change faster, work hand in hand with other players especially buyers and local government. If the EU does not open its market for the palm oil products of the smallholders, all these accomplishments will be in vain .. would you, EU members and EC fellows, really want to contribute to a reverting state?

We hope therefore that you will change your position and approach, and allow full access for Indonesian palm oil produces by smallholders to the 28-nation EU market. We are inviting you to lighten the livelihood of palm oil smallholders, to help us protect our forest and biodiversity, and to support the smallholders sustainability commitment by working together with us for a better condition.

We are inviting you to strengthen the cooperation with the palm oil smallholders, share your knowledge with us, increase the assistance to empower us, and expose your market more with the palm oil products from the smallholders.

We thank some of EU member countries that voiced out their views to not ban palm oil.

And we are looking for EC/EP political leadership to give us the words "Yes, We Stand With You !!"