



GREENPEACE



NGOs welcome the Forest Stewardship Council decision to cut ties with companies linked to Indonesia pulp giant APRIL.

PEFC certification body must follow suit.

Jakarta 13 August 2013: A recent statement issued by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) confirms that Asia Pacific Resources International (APRIL) is officially banned from using the FSC trademark to market its pulp and paper products.(1) APRIL, part of the Royal Golden Eagle group (RGE), is owned by Mr Sukanto Tanoto, whose assets are estimated to be worth around US\$12 billion.(2)

This decision follows a formal complaint being lodged (23 May 2013) with the FSC by Greenpeace, WWF Indonesia and the Rainforest Action Network that APRIL was in violation of its Policy for Association (3) and the subsequent move by APRIL (13 June 2013) to ask its certification bodies to withdraw all of its chain-of-custody FSC certificates.(4) The joint-NGO complaint to the FSC documents continued large-scale deforestation activities, as well as social conflicts and human right violations, by APRIL and other companies within the RGE group in Indonesia.

The FSC Policy for Association is in place to ensure that the FSC only associates with companies committed to the basic fundamental principles of responsible forest management. One of the requirements of the policy requires that a company holding FSC chain-of-custody certificates is not involved in the conversion of High Conservation Value forest and must not have converted an area of natural forest covering more than 10,000 ha within the past five years.(5)

‘The FSC has acted rapidly to disassociate its brand from the activities of APRIL and its affiliated companies’, said Aditya Bayunanda from WWF Indonesia. ‘However, APRIL still holds chain-of-custody certificates granted through the industry-led PEFC forest certification scheme. If the PEFC standards are as rigorous in safeguarding natural forest, the organisation would follow the lead of the FSC and distance itself from all RGE group companies.’

The latest statement by the FSC not only means that APRIL is no longer allowed to apply for any sort of FSC certification, but that all other companies belonging to Tanoto’s pulp and paper empire are barred from obtaining FSC chain-of-custody certificates. These include three leading global specialty cellulose companies – Sateri International (China), Bahia Speciality Cellulose (Brazil) and Toba Pulp Lestari (Indonesia)– that manufacture ingredients used in everyday products ranging from textiles, cigarette filters, baby wipes and eyeglass frames to cosmetics, ice cream, pharmaceuticals and tyres.

‘Whilst more and more global companies are cutting their ties with deforestation, Sukanto Tanoto’s notorious empire continues to trash rainforests across Sumatra and Borneo,’ said Bustar Maitar from Greenpeace. ‘APRIL’s suppliers alone are estimated to clear around

60,000 hectares of rainforest, making Tanoto the largest driver of deforestation for pulp in Indonesia, if not the world.'

'This move is a clear signal to paper and textile buyers, as well as the broader corporate community, that APRIL and Sukanto Tanoto's other businesses are rogue companies,' said Christy Tennery of Rainforest Action Network. 'FSC's decision, and the shocking cases of land conflict and rainforest conversion raised in our complaint, demonstrates that doing business with any of Tanoto's companies poses significant risk to customer brands and investors.'

WWF, Greenpeace and RAN are calling on APRIL and the RGE group to immediately stop all natural forest clearance in its own and suppliers' concessions and commit to implement a zero deforestation policy, as a first step to cleaning up its practices.

Notes to editor:

1. FSC statement on APTIL: <https://ic.fsc.org/newsroom.9.454.htm>
2. www.sukantotanoto.net/rge.html
3. The full NGO complaint is available on the FSC website: ic.fsc.org/download.april-group-complaing.1163.htm
4. APRIL statement on its 'withdrawal from FSC by companies associated with APRIL': www.aprilasia.com/images/pdfs/APRIL%20comment%20on%20withdrawal%20from%20FSC%20by%20associated%20companies%20-%202024%20June%202013.pdf.
5. In FSC Policy for Association, failure of the 10,000 ha forest conversion threshold does not lead to disassociation *per se*, but leads to a case by case investigation by an independent Complaints Panel, as the one asked by the 3 NGOs, taking into account the local circumstances, the scale of the operation and plans for continued conversion

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