The Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) is a public-private partnership that aims to reduce deforestation in supply chains linked to key global commodities (palm oil, soy, beef and pulp and paper) and protect the tropical forests that provide food and livelihoods for millions of people, through its unique cross-sector collaboration.

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative, facilitated by Proforest, is the signature TFA initiative in Africa with a goal of developing a framework that takes account of the ambitious development plans of countries in Africa, while addressing environmental targets for deforestation, land use and greenhouse gases, and also social indicators on issues such as land tenure and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The initiative brings together partners from ten palm oil-producing countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria (Edo State), Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone.

Edo State became a partner with TFA in May 2018 when the Governor of Edo State, His Excellency Godwin Obaseki, committed to making Edo State a partner of the TFA, cementing this new partnership during his speech delivered at the TFA General Assembly in Accra, Ghana. The State convened the first State level workshop of the TFA Africa Palm Oil Initiative on 20-21 August 2018 in Benin City. The State level workshop brought together about 100 participants from government, the private sector and civil society organisations who agreed on a set of 8 Principles and Actions to guide oil palm development in the State, based upon the Marrakesh Declaration on responsible oil palm development in Africa and current Government’s Economic Growth and Recovery Plan (EGRP).
Principles and Actions for responsible oil palm and forestry development in Edo State

**Principle 1 (Deforestation, low carbon development and land use planning)**

Edo State will achieve Zero Net Deforestation by 2025 through integrated land use planning and low carbon development, adopting High Conservation Value and High Carbon Stock (HCV and HCS) designation approaches to safeguard forests and biodiversity. The State will work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to protect the remaining forests and restore some degraded areas within forest reserves.

**Actions**

1. Review and strengthen existing forestry and agricultural laws and regulations and build capacity of institutions for effective law enforcement.
2. Develop and implement awareness creation/communication programmes on forest/conservation/agricultural laws and regulations, forest protection, sustainable agriculture and Zero Net Deforestation (ZND) and low-carbon development concepts.
3. Develop integrated land use planning through multi-stakeholder processes and provide legislative framework to support the implementation of the plan.
4. The land-use planning process must set aside areas for permanent forestry, reforestation, and for all other compatible land-use designations including for food crops and agricultural commodities such as palm oil, rubber etc.
5. Develop and implement a rehabilitation programme in degraded areas within set-aside permanent forest areas.
6. Provide enabling environment for big and small palm oil companies and timber producers to comply with policies, laws and regulations.
7. Develop a robust GIS system that supports Monitoring, Review and Verification (MRV) for effective assessment of progress toward 2025 Zero Net Deforestation goals.
8. Provide incentives and introduce improved agricultural practices to farmers to discourage agricultural expansion into forest frontiers (forested areas).
9. Provide incentives to individuals, communities and commercial entities including palm oil, rubber, timber and cocoa producers to embark on forest plantation establishment and link them to carbon credits/REDD+ programmes.
10. Increase coordination amongst relevant government departments for effective implementation of the sustainable palm oil and timber production goals.
11. Develop strategies and provide incentives for community involvement in collaborative forest management and forest protection.

**Principle 2 (Good governance and transparency)**

Edo State commits to develop a clear policy and a legal framework for addressing deforestation and ensuring sustainable palm oil development through transparent and multi-stakeholder processes. The State is also committed to institutional reforms to enforce regulations at all levels.

**Actions**

1. Develop through a sustainable multi-stakeholder process a regulatory framework and/policy for sustainable forestry and agriculture commodity development in the State.
2. Create a directorate under the Ministry of Agriculture, to deal specifically with palm oil development, and a separate Forestry Commission to deal with the forestry sector. These institutions must have adequate budget
Principle 3  (Responsible investment/ finance and adherence to internationally recognised sustainability certification schemes)

Edo State will create the enabling environment for responsible and transparent investment in the oil palm and forestry sectors that promotes sustainable palm oil and forestry certification.

Actions
1. Ensure that entities commercially producing palm oil and timber in Edo State have or are seeking internationally recognised palm oil or forestry certification.
2. Build capacity of state institutions involved with oil palm and timber production to understand APOI and internationally recognised sustainability schemes such as the RSPO and timber certification, as well as legal requirements to implement them to ensure that investing entities adhere to long-term sustainable production.
3. Ensure that companies operating in Edo State have a long-term plan/policy to address social and environmental issues through engagement with communities in their catchment areas.
4. Ensure that investing institutions adhere to international principles for good practice.
5. Establish a framework for smallholder farmers to sign MOUs with the big companies to help them improve operational practices and achieve group certification.

Principle 4  (Capacity-building)

Edo State commits to develop and provide institutional capacity building on appropriate tools such as HCV and systems to deliver sustainable forest management and good agricultural practice for commodity agriculture development.

Actions
1. Develop a programme to build capacity of institutions and personnel. Capacity development must be informed by research and development on the issues on the ground
2. Develop appropriate extension services for both forestry and oil palm sectors to ensure best practice requirements are practiced by all operators
3. Create the enabling environment for demand-driven research in the forestry and oil palm production sectors and facilitate uptake of research outcomes and transfer of knowledge
4. Facilitate financial capacity building for smallholder farmers.

Actions
3. Develop a monitoring framework to track and hold accountable entities that produce palm oil and/or timber through unsustainable practices.
4. Establish effective and regular monitoring and evaluation of the governance systems.
**Principle 5 (Respect for the rights of communities, including their land rights)**

Palm oil and forestry entities operating in Edo State shall seek Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of local communities, right owners, and land title owners, as well as respect the traditions and customary rights of populations of local communities within their operational landscapes. All agricultural and forestry entities shall avoid practices that promote discrimination or exclude any rights/stakeholders.

**Actions**

1. Edo State will develop FPIC compliance requirements that all entities operating in the State should be compliant with and implement.
2. Develop a monitoring system to ensure transparent FPIC compliance requirements have been met before commencement of forestry and agriculture operations.
3. Facilitate mechanism to ensure and maintain good relationship between communities and palm oil and forestry entities.
4. Create environment of collaboration and openness for transparent benefit-sharing.
5. Create awareness amongst landowners on sustainable land title agreement.
6. Facilitate human resources capacity development in communities to make them employable in agricultural and forestry companies.

**Principle 6 (Inclusivity of marginalised groups, including women)**

The oil palm and forestry sectors in Edo State shall be guided by a robust and transparent system of gender sensitive and inclusive engagement and collaboration with stakeholders at all levels. There shall be no discrimination at any phase of oil palm and forestry development based on gender, disability, age, ethnicity or size of land.

**Actions**

1. Ensure that there is a balanced representation of women and vulnerable groups in all stages of development.
2. Develop mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of benefits taking due consideration of the vulnerable and marginalised groups.
3. Consideration should be given to all classes of people based on merit for employment of livelihood development.

**Principle 7 (Productivity and Best Management Practices)**

The development of the palm oil and forestry sectors in Edo State shall be guided by best agricultural practices and targeted research, training and capacity building and extension services for all stakeholders. Development shall aim at increasing productivity and enhancing the sector’s contribution to local and national development while promoting conservation within oil palm and forestry landscapes.

**Actions**

1. Review primary, secondary and tertiary education curricula and training to include sustainable agriculture and forestry requirements considering the needs of the State.
2. Build capacity of all relevant stakeholders involved with palm oil and forestry sector on sustainable agriculture and forestry.
3. Establish efficient extension services within both the public and private sectors that ensures best management practices are accessible to all categories of operators, particularly smallholders.
4. Develop a monitoring and evaluation system to assess effectiveness of interventions.
**Principle 8 (Livelihoods and smallholders)**

Edo State oil palm and forestry sectors should have smallholder components that provide opportunities for increased income, food security, rehabilitation, and conservation through access to finance, markets and extension services.

**Actions**

1. Ensure a land tenure system that encourages security, productivity and good management of land in the State.
2. Promote smallholder schemes to ensure better access to markets/high value supply chain
3. Support smallholders to gain access to finance
4. Support public-private-people partnership for smallholder outgrower scheme development
5. Facilitate information for smallholder organisations/ groups/ schemes for better access to benefits.

---

**We anticipate that the APOI will bring sustainability to the sector according to the following theory of change:**

An important part of the in-country process is the establishment in each country of the TFA APOI National Platforms which are tasked with working collectively and independently to ensure that the plans/activities of each country are geared towards fulfilling broadly outlined principles, and ultimately that the Marrakesh Declaration is implemented.

This newsletter will highlight steps and activities undertaken by the Tropical Forests Alliance Africa Palm Oil Initiative Nigeria (Edo State) Platform towards developing a sustainable oil palm subsector in Nigeria. This document will highlight the strength in working collaboratively and how our individual efforts go a long way to implementing the sustainable oil palm agenda in Nigeria.

Through support from Proforest and the APOI process, the Edo State Government has carried out analysis of the forest cover of the state.

Based on the outcomes, the state Government has developed a framework through the Implementation Office of Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) to ensure that palm oil development occurs on the basis of Produce-Protect-Rehabilitate. This means for every land parcel allocated for agricultural commodity production (mostly oil palm) there will be ratio of such land allocated for rehabilitation in areas designated by the Government.
Expansion of the State Platform

The APOI multi-stakeholder platform in Edo State has indeed being a bridge linking all stakeholders of the sector. However, it is our belief that to make meaningful impact in Nigeria we must expand from our nucleus to other parts of the country. For this expansion we want to take it by region till we get to the apex (National).

## Phase 1

The states we are considering are in no particular order;

1. Delta State
2. Bayelsa State
3. Rivers State
4. Akwa Ibom
5. Cross Rivers
6. Ondo State

## Phase 2

The South West Region;

1. Ogun State
2. Lagos State
3. Oyo State
4. Kwara State
5. Ekiti State

UPCOMING EVENT

Development of an FPIC Framework for Edo State

### How to get involved

If you are interested in becoming part of the APOI process in Edo State, Nigeria please contact your country facilitator:

- Churchill Ebehitale Oboh
- Intercom Data Network
- e.churchill@idnng.com or churchillsimple@gmail.com

The Africa Palm Oil Initiative is coordinated by Proforest on behalf of the Tropical Forest Alliance, funded with UK aid from the UK government through the Partnership for Forests Programme (P4F).