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WWF Statement on GAR's Forest Conservation Policy

On February 9, the Indonesian palm oil producer Golden Agri-Resources Limited (GAR) and its subsidiaries including PT SMART Tbk (SMART) announced that they will work with others to find solutions to forest conservation and stop deforestation associated with the expansion of their palm oil businesses.

GAR also announced a new Forest Conservation Policy that will govern its palm oil operations moving forward. The policy stipulates that the company will not develop on High Carbon Stock forests, High Conservation Value forest areas and peat lands. It requires that it comply with all relevant laws as well as the National Interpretation of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). WWF challenges the rest of the industry to make similar key commitments to no new planting on peat and ensure a no deforestation footprint.

See the press release issued by GAR:

<http://www.goldenagri.com.sg/110209%20Golden%20Agri-Resources%20Initiates%20Industry%20Engagement%20for%20Forest%20Conservation.pdf>

“WWF welcomes this move,” stated Nazir Foead, WWF Indonesia’s Director of Corporate Engagement, “which goes even beyond compliance with RSPO standards on greenhouse gas reduction. GAR’s commitment not to convert high carbon stock areas, including peat lands, alongside its commitment not to convert high conservation value areas, sets a powerful precedent for the oil palm industry. We challenge other oil palm growers to follow suit in order to break the Indonesian palm oil sector’s association with deforestation and climate change.”

Last year GAR and SMART were the subject of a campaign by Greenpeace, which led several major palm oil buyers to cancel contracts with SMART.

“As with any commitment, the true test will be in its implementation,” stated Cherie Tan, WWF International’s Lead on Palm Oil. “While this move is encouraging, we look forward to seeing credible third party evidence that GAR is complying with these commitments and demonstrating a time bound plan towards RSPO certification. The only way to be sure that a company is acting responsibly is for them to produce or trade only certified sustainable palm oil.”