

# Indonesian Economic Diplomacy toward Palm Oil: Indonesia's Respond to the EU Resolution on Palm Oil and Deforestation of Rainforest (2016/2222(INI))

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**Abstract.** Palm Oil becomes one of Indonesian major trade commodity, besides oil and gas. It has comparable quality with palm oil from Malaysia, Netherland, Papua New Guinea, and Guatemala. Therefore, an accessible and good prospect of the global market is essential for the sustainability of Indonesian palm oil production and marketing. European Union (EU) is a major importer of Indonesian palm oil because the consumption of palm oil among EU member countries is considered high. However, in the past few years, there were some international reports, including European media, that Indonesian palm oil is environmentally unfriendly, because the operation of palm oil plantation leads to deforestation and the greenhouse emission issue, abandoning the local people's, rights and decreasing the population of orangutan and other animals. EU then produced EU Resolution on Palm Oil and Deforestation of Rainforest (2016/2222(INI)) in 2017 to ban the import of Indonesian palm oil. Furthermore, different views among both sides and competition over similar products from Europe contribute to Indonesian efforts to conduct economic diplomacy, to protect the Indonesian economy.

## 1 Introduction

Palm oil is one of Indonesia's primary export commodities, which contributes up to 1.5%-2.5% of Indonesia's GDP. In 2017, this commodity succeeded in creating 4 (million) employment opportunities, eliminating poverty and developing village areas. Palm Oil also supports Indonesia's foreign exchange up to IDR 239.4 billion in 2017, therefore the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, publishes policies to adopt ISPO (Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil) certification, which refers to the sustainability of palm oil, formalized on December 31, 2014. This policy aims to reduce the greenhouse effect and increase palm oil market sales in the international market [1].

The demand for palm oil in the international market is also high. India consumed Indonesian palm oil with 7.63 million tons Indonesian palm oil and made it as the biggest consumer. It is followed by African countries (2.29 million tons), China (3.73 million tons), European Union (5.03 million tons) and Pakistan (2.21 million tons). This rising demand makes several countries compete for each other to export their palm oil to international markets. On the other hand, some negative problems are affecting Indonesian palm oil marketing, such as health problems in some processed products, or deforestation or disputes with local people regarding the opening of oil palm plantations can increase greenhouse emissions and reduce the population of endangered orangutans and animals' others. This condition causes environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace and local

communities to make public campaigns to minimize the use of palm oil. Finally, several countries such as the United States and European Union countries make regulations which are in the form of labelling "Without Palm Oil" into products that use palm oil as the ingredients [2]. This regulation is implemented to reduce the use of palm oil which also means reducing deforestation.

The EU is the second largest market for Indonesian palm oil, after India. The high level of palm oil consumption in the EU also led to the agency's plan to standardize palm oil. One example of this standardization effort is establishing the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in April 2004. The RSPO members are Arhus United UK Ltd. (UK), Karlshamns AB (Sweden), and Unilever NV (Netherlands) in collaboration with the Malaysian Palm Oil Association (Malaysia), Migros Genossenschafts Bund (Switzerland), and the World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF). This is a non-profit organization, which combines all stakeholders (producers, processing companies, traders, consumer product companies, retail companies, banks, investors, environmental NGOs, and social development NGOs) from the palm oil industry. It aims to maintain the role of palm oil to minimize the extinction of biodiversity and deforestation and to protect oil palm farmers. Therefore, the EU only receives RSPO certified products. However, RSPO failed to reduce deforestation and manage forest governance [3].

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The establishment of the Resolution of Palm Oil and Rainforest Deforestation by the European Parliament (EP) initiated a report by Katerina KONECNA as a reporter, entitled 'Impact of EU consumption on deforestation'. In the same year, the European Union implemented trade protection, Anti-Dumping Tariffs (Anti-Dumping Import Duty - BMAD) and import taxes from € 76 to € 178.85. Finally, the Anti-dumping tariff (BMAD) was rejected by the European Union High Court [4]. In 2014, the Rapporteur noted that palm oil consumption was 60% of the EU's energy sector, referring to the Nagoya Protocol (October 12, 2014) related to the utilization of natural resources. Forest fires on Borneo in 2015 were also used as references. This record was compiled into a report and approved on August 29, 2016, by the European Parliament. On November 3, 2016, the European Parliament suggested the report be changed to Resolution. In 2017, the voting process was conducted to respond to Katerina KONECNA's report. (9/3/2017), followed by a plenary meeting and a single reading report (03/20/2017). The resolution on Palm Oil and Rainforest Deforestation was approved after Voting conducted by EP (4/4/2017).

## 2 Literature review

To know the development of the palm oil issues related to environmental problems, there are several studies about palm oil and environmental issues. [5] said that illegal palm oil plantation destroyed and disturbed the habitat of orangutans. Deforestation because of land clearing in the year of 2015 is presented as an example. However, Becker gave a few suggestions to minimize the negative issues, such as having an annual conference held by IPOA (Indonesia Palm Oil Association) by inviting the Indonesian government to introduce product, attract new buyers and improving the marketing strategy in Europe: 1) to comply with the regulations; 2) Actively to participate in the Crude Palm Oil (CPO) Conference. 3) The premium side of palm oil feature [5].

[6] in his article, "How will palm oil expand affect biodiversity?" has a different opinion, which said Palm Oil did not strongly contribute to the deforestation due to the lack of supporting data. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) sets several criteria of deforestation, such as:

1) Opening land clearing. 2) To change degraded forests due to illegal logging or fires. 3) Have an economic role by cooperating with companies in timber or plywood commodities. 4) Open access to forests, which cut down land into oil palm plantations. Referring to FAO criteria, the available data indicate that there are no palm oil contributions in the case of deforestation [6].

Adelia Sukma Kusumaningtyas in her writing, "Non-Tariff Barriers by the European Union to the Efforts of EU Non-tariff-barriers", focused on the role of other actors, such as Greenpeace and the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) on campaigning the adverse effects of deforestation because of palm oil. Producers and consumers are vigorously pursued not using palm oil, which is an international standard for

environmentally friendly palm oil products, which are being exported to the EU market [7].

A similar view on negative campaign more detailed shared by [8], who revealed several issues that became the NGO's concern related to the palm oil logging, such as 1) Illegal logging. 2) Biodiversity loss because of the opening of palm oil plantation. According to Friend of the Earth, the decreasing population of orangutans, elephant, and Sumatran tiger was because of the opening of palm oil plantation. In fact, the biggest causes of deforestation are animal hunting and mining exploitation. 3) Land conflicts between private companies and local residents, because local communities lack information. The palm oil business also creates employment opportunities for them. 4) Climate Change. He quoted Greenpeace data which said 20% greenhouse effect was because of deforestation. However, he did not find any further and stronger data to support this argument.

The degree further said that the collective opinion of the causes of deforestation is mostly based on old data, which is not suitable to explain the current situation. Based on his finding, Drajat suggested the restoration of palm oil plantation, referring to Bappenas (Indonesia's National Development Agency) policy, which is based on Sustainable Development principles: 1) the development and enhancement of product values; 2) the transparency of the development of palm oil plantation, 3) Public campaign related to sustainable palm oil, 4) to maximize the performance of RSPO, 5) to promote and implement conflict resolution, 6) to increase the farmer's access to natural resources, in their own region, 7) to implement ISPO and to strengthen its legal basic, 8) to manage primary forest and peatlands [8].

A study by [9] discussed how Indonesian government effort to solve the dispute between Indonesia and the EU on palm oil issues. One of the Indonesian government strategies for minimizing the effects of the negative campaign on oil palm issue was researching with the epistemic community. One of their results related to the deforestation is that deforestation occurred in some countries, which have non-tropical forests, while for some countries which have tropical countries, it is reforested. This research is aimed at showing EU's protection toward its vegetable market [9].

In sum, that research shared the same results: First, that palm oil does not have a contribution to deforestation, especially with lack of supporting data; Secondly, Indonesia is trying to anticipate negative campaigns on palm oil issues, conducted by international NGOs, such as Greenpeace and WWF, by educating the public. However, none of the research mentioned about Indonesian diplomacy toward palm oil issues. For a reason, this research is going to discuss another Indonesian government effort to manage palm oil issues, regarding the EU's resolution on palm oil and deforestation to secure EU's market for Indonesia's palm oil. It will study Indonesian diplomacy strategies from 2013 to 2017.

This paper uses the concept of economic diplomacy to research the efforts of the Indonesian government in minimizing the obstacles on selling palm oil in the EU

market. It is expected to explain such efforts have been made by the Indonesian government and the EU official.

According to [10], economic diplomacy is reactive toward market development and market change. Such diplomacy is also dealing with market power. It is implemented by conducting negotiated about policies with public and private sector cooperation relating to the exchange of goods and the production process. The private sector contributes to policy making and the negotiation process [10].

To deal with the EU resolution, Indonesia and the EU make some efforts, such as doing some initiatives and have bilateral negotiation, to secure a good market profit. Indonesia formed a joint committee aimed at preventing the implementation of the resolution of palm oil and deforestation, by collaborating with Malaysia to discuss the decision with the EU. Dependence between EU members supports the strength of this resolution and negotiations with palm oil producing countries. This resolution which reduces the use of palm oil as vegetable oil could provide a new place for vegetable oil produced by the EU.

In examining the Indonesian government's efforts to minimize the inhibition of marketing of palm oil on the EU market. The concept of economic diplomacy serves to review the efforts made by the Indonesian government regarding the resolution of palm oil and deforestation from the EU.

### 3 Methods

This research uses a qualitative method, which deals with social issues that exist in the community, namely environmental issues and the birth of palm oil resolution. This research will explain the impact of the resolution of palm oil on the EU vegetable oil market and on the value of Indonesian exports as well as what Indonesia's response to the resolution issued by the EU itself.

### 4 Data collection

This research also focuses on objects in a detailed understanding. Data collection techniques of this research are:

1) Interview based on data collection techniques related to direct interaction with the subject to find the problem being studied and depend on the information.

2) Documentation Study, based on data collection techniques without directly interacting with the issue but instead examining from the background of the subject related to the object of the research but through documents, consisting of 2 types of research documents: 1) Primary data, obtained through direct statements by actors experiencing the events (Ministry of Agriculture website, Ministry of Trade website and Europe Union website) or non-governmental organizations (such as GAPKI and Fediol). 2) Secondary data, obtained through writing by people in third parties (such as BBC, EU News, Tempo and Kompas).

3) Analysis Technique of this study by conducting interviews with informants as primary data collection

then collecting secondary data through literature review, primary data and secondary data. After that, the data that has been combined will be processed, and then will be analyzed with a predetermined concept for the knowledge of Indonesia's efforts in anticipating the marketing of palm oil on the EU market.

## 5 Results and discussion

Palm oil is one of the reliable export commodities for Indonesia to improve Indonesia's economy for three things: firstly, it creates employment opportunities for the community. Especially in the countryside, it can absorb 5.5 million people, who work on plantations, and 12 million others work in other related sectors. [11]; Secondly, Oil palm plantations play a role in improving the economy in the village, with most plantations located in 190 villages scattered throughout Indonesia. The increase in the palm oil industry significantly boosts the economy in these villages. Most poor people live in the villages, so the poverty rate decreases in the period 2005-2016 for 6 million people [12]; Thirdly, increase foreign exchange from 1.5%-2.5% of GDP [13].

The resolution of palm oil and deforestation from the European Parliament becomes a problem for Indonesia. EU officials support the resolution. According to the European Parliament, this is the first step to become a regulation in 2021 aimed at stopping the use of palm oil biodiesel. Supported by the Green groups of the European Parliament, the European People's Party as the largest party in the European Parliament, the Socialist Party and Democrats as the second largest party in the European Parliament [14]. According to the European Commission the reduction in the use of palm oil and other vegetable oils such as soybeans as biodiesel will be phased in until 2030, and palm oil is the same as in 2030, before palm oil in 2021, referring to the Energy Directive policy [12]. According to Indonesian Minister of Trade, Enggartiasto Lukita, the EU resolution was considered discriminatory. EU vegetable oil plantations are not much different from Indonesian oil palm ones, so there is a suspicion that the EU wants to protect the production of its domestic vegetable oil, rapeseeds, and sunflowers [15]. Protection of rapeseeds and sunflowers aims to protect domestic producers and increase EU exports for domestic vegetable oil. In their statement, The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [16] said: 1) This resolution is discriminatory and not by the role of the European Union as a champion of open, free-based rules and fair trade. 2) Referring to the EU research report in 2013, the main causes of deforestation were livestock (58 million hectares), then soybeans (13 million hectares), corn (8 million hectares), and oil palm (6 million hectares). 3) Palm oil as the most productive oil with a yield of 4.27 / ton/ha, compared with rapeseed 0.60 / ton/ha, sunflower 0.52 / ton/ha, and soybean 0.45 / ton / Ha. 4) a single EU certification scheme creates trade barriers. Also, Indonesia has an ISPO, like a palm oil certification, and focuses on environmental management and protection. 5) Resolution is protective. Rapeseed and sunflower are more recommended than palm oil. Based on the data, rapeseed and sunflower

encourage more deforestation than palm oil. 6) Resolution does not pay attention to 16 million farmers working on oil palm plantations. 7) Resolution ignores the efforts of the Government and various Indonesian stakeholders to protect the issue of sustainability and environmental development. As the oil palm moratorium, a single certification scheme is a collaboration between government - private - the community for peatland restoration, sustainable management implementation, and referring to the Paris Agreement [16].

However, this resolution is referred only for palm oil, while soybeans produced by the EU as contributors to greater deforestation do not get the same treatment. Also, the EU uses long enough data in reports on deforestation, namely data from 1990-2008 [17]. From the data, EU discussed the causes of deforestation caused by weak forestry governance and regulation are the main problems from the birth of deforestation. For that reason, the EU must strengthen cooperation with countries that produce deforestation to help overcome the problem of deforestation (Commission). The resolution is due to the achievement of objectives in the REDD policy and standardization of the RSPO. The formulation of a resolution by the European Parliament aims to minimize deforestation and environmental damage.

### **5.1 Indonesia's efforts to anticipate the impediment of palm oil in the EU market**

During the process of creating palm oil resolutions and deforestation, various attempts have been made by Indonesia to prevent this resolution from being approved by the European Parliament to the EU Commission. Indonesia's efforts are aimed at minimizing trade barriers for Indonesian palm oil on the EU market. Referring to the understanding of the WTO related to obstacles is regulation and standardization does not contain discrimination (the state inhibits the import of products needed by the industry [11]. Discrimination occurs in palm oil commodities, such as a reduction in the use of palm oil in the form of biodiesel up to 0% in 2021, and currently a decrease in 7% of the vehicle fuel mixture. The EU industry itself requires biodiesel from palm oil because it produces more than other vegetable oils such as rapeseed, sunflower, and soybeans. Also, in the form of food, 60% of products in the EU contain palm oil and cannot be replaced by other vegetable oils [11]. Here are Indonesia's efforts in anticipating the marketing of palm oil on the EU market referring to the concept of economic diplomacy, namely:

#### **5.1.1 Cooperation**

##### **5.1.1.1 Indonesia brings the issue of palm oil to the world trade organization forum**

In 2013, Indonesia's biodiesel exports to the EU decreased from USD 649 million to USD 150 million in 2016. This decline was due to the application of BMAD

(Anti-Dumping Import Duty) of 8.8%-23.3% [18]. Although the presentation of Indonesian biodiesel is not as big as for man, this decline can disrupt the role of palm oil which is environmentally friendly and does not support sustainability development [17]. Finally, on June 10, 2014, Indonesia consulted with the EU regarding 1) Council Regulation (EC) No 1225/2009 concerning the protection of the import sector from members of non-EU countries. 2) EU anti-dumping in 2013 on imported biodiesel. At the August 31, 2015, meeting, the Dispute Resolution Agency adopted an Indonesian report on anti-dumping measures on Indonesian biodiesel on the EU market (WTO). In the case of biodiesel, Indonesia has won an appeal with the EU at the WTO forum and the EU Court. Because of the request at the WTO forum, the EU was prohibited from implementing a policy to reduce palm oil biodiesel imports [11].

#### **5.1.1.2 National action plan (NAP)**

RAN (Rencana Aksi Nasional) or National Action Plan (NAP) is a policy established to achieve oil palm plantations that support sustainable development. Intended for all managers of oil palm plantation interests. The RAN has been planned since 2014 and will be implemented in vulnerable times 2018 to 2023. The NAP was prepared by the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil Forum (FoKSBI) and led by the government. RAN runs according to Regulation of Minister of Agriculture 11/2015, focusing on the certification of environmental palm oil reaching 70% in 2021. As well, it will be applied in 18 cities in Indonesia, including: 1) Increasing plantation capacity. 2) Environmental management. 3) Conflict Management and Management. 4) Implementation of ISPO in Indonesia [19].

##### **1) Increasing plantation capacity**

###### **a. Improving the quality of superior palm oil seeds**

To compete to produce excellent palm oil products and support sustainable plantations, a superior and certified seed is needed. Providing knowledge to farmers regarding superior certified palm oil seeds can increase palm oil production, also driven by understanding related prices that can compete with the palm oil market. The Ministry of Agriculture as the person in charge, needs to conduct training for farmers related to the use of certified palm oil seeds, then improve infrastructure, advance the franchise program, and maintain the distribution of superior certified palm seeds.

###### **b. Improved training for farmers regarding good farming practices**

Training for farmers is needed to develop productivity and oil palm production, by the principles of the Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) plantation. This is achieved by increasing the role of the private sector in GAP activities, oil palm companies carry out GAP training and establish the training centre in the palm oil plantation region.

##### **2) Second aspect: environmental management**

- a. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions due to forest fires

Forest fires that occur in Indonesia can hinder the achievement of the NAP. Therefore, a solution is needed that can overcome, such as developing a PLTB mechanism (land clearing without burning), then supporting and facilitating the deforestation program by building command posts and providing knowledge related to forest fire prevention training.

- b. Use of alternative energy from palm oil waste  
As a government policy the availability of electricity with the use of oil palm as alternative energy. Energy from palm oil waste can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by developing POME schemes (utilization of liquid waste).

- 3) Third aspect: governance and conflict management

- a. Land conflict resolution

In 2016, land conflicts in Indonesia occurred as many as 439 cases. This land conflict arises because of the gap in controlling the oil palm plantation land. To overcome this conflict must be done with the formation of a team that will resolve the land case, social strife at the provincial level.

- 4) Fourth aspect: implementation of ISPO

- a. ISPO received by national stakeholders and international markets

ISPO came into effect since 2011, but until now the application is not optimal. ISPO-certified palm oil has not been fully accepted by the global market. Therefore, the government will form a strategy of cooperation with palm oil consumer countries, such as through CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) between Indonesia and EU. Implementation of communication and promotion strategies in the international market, as well as increasing the role of ISPO to stakeholders [19].

- b. Indonesia forms a joint committee

Indonesia formed a joint committee aimed at preventing the implementation of the resolution of palm oil and deforestation. The joint committee will invite Malaysia, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, and Colombia [20]. Its primary mission is to convey the views of palm oil that are environmentally friendly and contrary to the image of palm oil on the EU market so far [21]. The joint committee inviting palm oil producing countries is expected to clarify the role of environmentally friendly palm oil and strengthen the position of palm oil in the international market. Indonesia and Malaysia and Colombia visited the Vatican on May 15, 2018. This agenda aims to discuss the prohibition on the use of palm oil as biodiesel [22].

### 5.1.2 Cooperation

#### A. Indonesia lobbies the EU member states

Indonesia's efforts to seek support for the positive role of palm oil in the eyes of EU officials and the EU community. Indonesia will negotiate with EU members to explain the purpose of environmentally friendly palm oil. Several EU member countries that will assist

Indonesia in improving the position of palm oil and minimizing regulations are established in 2021, such as: Italy, Vatican, and France. As one of the largest importers of EU imports of palm oil, with imports of 23%. Italy is also a country with high levels of negative campaigns for palm oil, such as food labels that read "senza olio di palma / without palm oil," and this is a form of discrimination (Antara News, 2018). In October 2017, Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, discussed with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Angelino Alfano, at a bilateral meeting to explain the role of palm oil that supports sustainable development [23]. The Indonesian Ambassador to Italy also lobbied Italy. Finally, Italy agreed to help and support Indonesian palm oil on the EU market, including helping when Indonesia brought this problem to the WTO forum [24].

Meanwhile, Vatican agreed to help Indonesia by facilitating a seminar in Vatican City, organized by the Indonesian government through Indonesian Embassy there. This seminar aimed to inform the European community that Indonesian palm oil is environmentally friendly and supporting sustainable development' principle. The government will explain the development of oil palm agriculture in Indonesia. Participants from the EU who will be invited are oil palm entrepreneurs, officials of the EU government, multinational companies, and attended by EU communities [25]. Indonesia also lobbied to the Vatican together with Malaysia and Columbia

The third country is France, while Indonesia also had started to lobby in 2016, as a country included in the 10 EU members who import the most substantial amount of Indonesian palm oil. However, this lobby was unsuccessful. Because France is a country which strongly supports the establishment of Resolution of Palm Oil and Deforestation. France also implemented additional taxes on imported palm oil since palm oil is considered not environmentally friendly and reduces its consumption. However, this tax was opposed by the French Parliament because it was not by the applicable trade regulations (Ministry of Commerce).

The selection of countries to be lobbied based on having a common interest in the import of palm oil and not wanting to reduce imports. Italy supports the import of palm oil, 60 (sixty) products in both countries contain palm oil which cannot be replaced by other vegetable oils. Furthermore, the lobby will be carried out to Spain, the Netherlands, and Germany [11].

#### B. Indonesia negotiates with the European Union

The process of forming a resolution in 2013, Katerina KONECNA as the reporter brought a report on palm oil and deforestation to the European Parliament. Finally, this report was approved by the resolution of palm oil and deforestation on April 4, 2017. This resolution resulted in various reactions from the EU and parties outside the EU. Especially, Indonesia is the largest palm oil producer in the world. Before this resolution was passed, on March 27, 2017, the Indonesian Ministry of Trade had sent a letter to the EU Commissioner, to confirm that palm oil is not as the most significant cause of deforestation, and it was hoped that the EU would

review domestic vegetable oils such as sunflower oil, rapeseed, and others. (Trade, Efforts that have been made by the [18]). Then in the same year on December 7, 2017, the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia rewrote to the EU Commissioner, the results of the vote of the EU Parliament regarding the RED Recast. This vote is discriminatory against palm oil without a review of EU domestic vegetable oils such as rapeseed and soybeans (Trade, Efforts that have been made by the [18]). Negotiations conducted by Indonesia and the EU, focusing on palm oil in the issue of sustainability development. This negotiation aims to maintain the national interests of both parties and eliminate the existence of trade politics.

## 6 Conclusion

This study focuses on Indonesia's efforts by collaborating between the government and the private sector to anticipate the decline in the marketing of palm oil on the EU market due to negative issues and standardization regulations in the EU domestic vegetable oil market. These efforts involve cooperation and negotiation between Indonesia (private and government) with EU officials. This cooperation and consultation aim to support the achievement of Indonesia's economic interests, namely the marketing of palm oil. Therefore, economic diplomacy by Indonesia to achieve national benefits in the natural resource marketing sector, namely palm oil. Indonesia also cooperates with palms oil producing countries such as Malaysia and Papua. For further research, the authors suggest discussing how the role of natural resources can influence trade and political relations between the two countries, especially Indonesia and the European Union.

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