

## **Supporting the EU deforestation regulation to save rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia**



*Figure1 –intact rainforest/ slash and burn for palm oil plantations in Borneo*

*Photo: Deutsche Umwelthilfe/Cyriacks*

## **Saving Rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia - the project**

Indonesia and Malaysia are two of the world's largest producers of [palm oil](#), timber, rubber and coffee and important suppliers to the EU. The expansion of cultivation areas in these countries often leads to deforestation and thus to high greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the loss of tropical forests and biodiversity. In addition, human rights and land rights are often under threat. In Malaysia, particularly in the state of [Sarawak](#), there are major problems caused by deforestation for the cultivation of palm oil and timber. In addition, indigenous communities are severely affected by land rights violations. In [Indonesia](#), the expansion of palm oil plantations in particular continues to pose a threat to primary forests.



*Figure2 – slash and burn for palm oil plantations in Borneo*

*Foto: Deutsche Umwelthilfe/Cyriacks*

In June 2023, the [EU regulation against deforestation \(EUDR\)](#) was adopted to reduce the EU's ecological footprint and strengthen the protection of forests worldwide and will enter into force from December 2025. It aims to prevent the import of products into the EU that are linked to deforestation and forest degradation. The EUDR offers a significant opportunity to strengthen global forest protection in Southeast Asia and

improve environmental and human rights standards. Against human rights violations, like illegal land grabbing, threats to local communities or violence against persons engaging against deforestation, the German supply chain act can be applied. DUH has experience from similar cases in Brazil and has handed in a complaint to the [competent authority in Germany last autumn](#). From 2026, EU corporate social due diligence directive (CSDDD) will enter into force and replace the national legislation.

However, the perception of different actors has varied. The EUDR has met with considerable resistance from the [Indonesian](#) and [Malaysian](#) governments and commodity producers and traders. Experts and local communities are concerned that the law could penalize Southeast Asian commodities on the international market. Above all, they are concerned that small farmers who do not have the means obtain the necessary documentation and sell their crops through middlemen could suffer as a result.

#### *What has been achieved so far*

1. Teaming up with the University of Singapore: Analysing the situation after the presidential elections in Indonesia and their impact on the environmental sector.
2. Participation in the Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil (FONAP) Promoting sustainable practices in the palm oil sector.
3. Expert discussion 1: Reception of the indigenous organisation SAVE Rivers from Sarawak, Malaysia, in cooperation with Human Rights Watch.
4. Expert discussion 2: Online expert dialogue on preparing civil society for EUDR implementation - discussion of challenges and opportunities.
  - a. Target group: NGOs and science.
  - b. Objective: Networking for later project activities and knowledge generation.
5. Expert discussion 3: Online expert discussion on the implementation of the EUDR by companies - discussion of challenges and opportunities.
  - a. Target group: Companies, politics, authorities.
  - b. Objective: Networking for later project activities and knowledge generation.
6. Creation and publication of an [EUDR fact check](#): In response to widespread misconceptions about EUDR, we have produced a fact check and circulated it, particularly among businesses.





Figure2 - Expert discussion on human rights violations with SAVE Rivers from Malaysia in 2024. Foto: Deutsche Umwelthilfe/Cyriacks

## Research trip in 2025

1. Together with the Sascha Tischer, head of the German Multi Stakeholder initiative Forum für Nachhaltiges Palmöl (FONAP) we will undertake stakeholder meetings in Indonesia and/or Malaysia with relevant political stakeholders and representatives of companies to support the implementation of the EUDR
2. We will also meet with local NGOs, researchers and possibly journalists to jointly discuss how the EU legislation can support the safeguarding of the forests and how they can support detecting violations.

## Expanded Activities

Deutsche Umwelthilfe is able play a critical role in lowering the import of linked to deforestation and human rights conflicts in Indonesia and Malaysia through targeted actions:

### *Advocacy Work with State Actors from Indonesia and Malaysia*

1. **Highlighting Benefits:** DUH can demonstrate in detail that the EUDR represents an opportunity to improve the sustainable use of critical raw materials and curb deforestation. By emphasizing long-term environmental and economic advantages, DUH can facilitate acceptance among political stakeholders.
2. **Facilitating Dialogue:** Organizing discussions between representatives from the German and EU economy and Indonesian authorities to address concerns

and co-create solutions that balance environmental goals with economic interests. DUH has shown in the past that we are able to perform at discussions at high political levels.



*Figure3 – DUH team in talks on deforestation and palm oil conflicts with the Bupati (regent) of the state district of East Kalimantan, Indonesia, 2019 Foto: Deutsche Umwelthilfe/Cyriacks*

#### *Using the EUDR and CSDDD complaint mechanisms*

3. **Uncovering violations of the EU deforestation regulation:** By using shipping data, customs declarations or our new whistleblowing platform **aktie** ([www.aktie.earth](http://www.aktie.earth)) we would be able to uncover violations of the EUDR and report to the competent authority of the EU member state.
4. **Uncovering human rights violations:** By applying the German supply chain law or from 2026 on, the EU corporate social due diligence directive (CSDDD), DUH would team up with local partner NGOS Satya Bumi and SAVE Rivers to uncover illegal land grabbing.

#### *Awareness Raising and Networking*

5. **Information Campaigns:** Raising awareness about the importance and benefits of the EUDR for forest protection and sustainable development.

6. **Networking:** Creating platforms for dialogue between smallholders, businesses, and authorities to develop collaborative solutions and enhance mutual understanding.

#### *Integration into the Existing Project*

The outlined activities align with our current project goals, focusing on the sustainable use and protection of tropical forests in Southeast Asia. These actions will complement ongoing efforts such as:

- Participation in forums like the Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil (FONAP).
- Facilitating expert discussions to prepare civil society, businesses, and policymakers for EUDR implementation.
- Publishing fact-checks to dispel misconceptions about EUDR and its implications.

The integration of these expanded activities will strengthen our impact by addressing both structural and grassroots challenges, fostering collaboration, and ensuring sustainable outcomes for Southeast Asian ecosystems.