FOR 100 %
SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL

LET US
WORK TOGETHER
IN THE

IVORY
COAST
As the leading European supplier of pastry and dough, Cérélia has always had a proactive CSR policy in every aspect of its business: workplace safety, employee welfare and participation in the company project, ethical relations with suppliers, etc. Our figures show the results of some of the action already taken.

Since 2015, our procurements of fats containing palm oil come from sources with RSPO* certification. Now we need to go even further: through Earth AND People, Cérélia is committed to developing sources of palm oil that are in strict compliance with the rules. To that end, we have been looking at the Ivory Coast, the largest producer among West African countries. With the help of TFT** we located partners and identified possible action.

Seven key principles of sustainable palm oil

1. Oil that does not lead to deforestation and protects all peatlands and high conservation value areas
2. Oil that is not produced through slash-and-burn agriculture
3. Oil that is produced by farmers using farming practices that are the safest for the environment
4. Oil from a supply chain where the parties involved hold the rights of local communities
5. Oil from a supply chain where the parties involved uphold the rights of workers
6. Fostering the development of independent smallholders
7. The origin of the oil is known and it is thus traceable

Cérélia has been a member of RSPO since 2013

* Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil** Founded in 1999, TFT (The Forest Trust) supports producers, processors and distributors to set up responsible supply chains overseas.
West Africa is the original home of the oil palm. The Republic of Côte d’Ivoire is the largest producer, ever since its oil palm plans of the 1960s and 1980s. The country covers its own needs and its people use the oil in the traditional way. It is also the only exporter in West Africa.

Two thirds of its production comes from village farmers, some 36,500 of them, and the remaining third comes from extensive plantations.

These village farms contribute greatly (60 %) to the material supplied to oil mills. However, the yield per hectare is low, making them uncompetitive. These independent growers have to face a number of issues, including in particular the ageing of their palms and the inadequate maintenance of soil due to a lack of financial resources and access to effective environmentally friendly protocols.

That is why Earth AND People can make a valuable contribution to the development of a sustainable palm oil industry in the Ivory coast.

The local partners working with Earth AND People decided to approach the two main players in the country, the SIFCA group and its subsidiary PALMCI, which share the desire to support village farmers.

SIFCA is a major player in the West African food business and it trades in, processes and markets oilseed products, sugarcane and natural rubber. Human development is a key priority for the company.

PALMCI is specialised in palm oil. It manages extensive plantations, known as integrated farming units (UAlS), processes palm oil and also works with thousands of independent growers.

The SIFCA group has been involved in social action for 50 years, and its sustainable development approach covers three areas: education, environment and sport and health. That helps to:

- Keep people on the land;
- Improve the wellbeing of rural communities, particularly women and children;
- Protect the environment and biodiversity.

In December 2015, PALMCI, SIFCA and Earth AND People signed a fair and sustainable partnership agreement.

Our five-year programme (up to 2020) has three targets:

- Supporting the development of the Ivorian sustainable palm oil industry by improving plantation yields without resorting to deforestation,
- Protecting the environment,
- Improving the living conditions of communities and farmers who rely on the oil palm for part of their livelihood.
Intervention in three broad areas

Earth AND People and its partners have taken action in the southwestern part of the country, in the vast farming area around Neka, a village of small planters.

**Action with farmers**
- mapping of the plantations of 210 village farmers from Neka and surrounding localities
- deployment of training in good farming practices

**Social action in rural areas**
- renovation and building of classrooms in a primary school
- building of a house for a midwife
- setting up a library for the rural area
- extending a school canteen and funding meals

**Self-supporting and durable projects**
- funding of scholarships for young volunteers from rural areas
- recovery and recycling of plastic waste
- support to women’s groups to make their activity durable

Places of intervention: the region of Bas Cavally and Neka Village

Bas Cavally is located close to the border to Liberia, 500 km away from Abidjan. It is a remote farming area that is far from the major infrastructure of the country. It is part of an extensive forest region including the Tai national park, which contains the last primeval forests in the Ivory Coast. Its vegetation and geography make it an environmentally sensitive territory.

Here, hundreds of village plantations produce oil for the mills of PALMCI. But their low yields could drive these smallholders extend their plantations by clearing forest land.

Neka Village is where the planters and their families live. Its 1621 inhabitants are governed by a village head, a land head and prominent people who keep the community together. These showed great enthusiasm about the farming project, as they understood the issues at stake and were receptive to the suggested social action.
Mapping of plantations around Neka Village

The mapping task was carried out by TFT from January to May 2016, with the aim of understanding the environment of the small growers: rural dynamics, location and quality of plantations etc., in order to identify their needs and adapt future action.

A review was conducted along with some 210 planters, who laid out their expectations and were interested in the sustainable development project.

Data collected through mapping:
- 253 plantations of oil palms were mapped;
- 128,427 plants over an area of 1061 hectares;
- 159 palms per hectare on average.

The survey further made it possible to:
- grasp the reasons for the low yield;
- identify the areas to protect and those to renew;
- identify the opportunities for action to improve the yield from plantations and also the living conditions of planters and their families.

Teaching fields for learning good farming practices

Based on those results, Earth AND People and its partners initiated a programme of training in good farming practices. It will run from June 2017 to January 2019, and will be organised by a team from PALMCI and a local team from the NGO Solidaridad, which has already conducted such a programme in neighbouring Ghana.

- Learners will be divided into groups in order to train the planters in good farming practices in the teaching fields. A comparison between yields from different plots will bring out the effectiveness of good practices and give farmers an incentive to apply them in their plantations. The aim is to develop independence and improve the yield from their palms.

- The second part of the training will relate to financial management and self-financing by planters so that they can run their plantations like true businesses.
At the same time, a school was enlarged and renovated, and a library was set up. It is intended for the 4400 children in the nurseries and primary schools of the area, with some hundred teachers.

A rural library in Irobo
The project was carried out with the help of the voluntary organisation Des livres pour tous. A team from the organisation will manage the library, which will be open to children and teachers, and also to the women in the area who will be able to attend literacy classes there.

Building of a house for a midwife in Neka
It will enable the village to receive a carer who is indispensable for the health of mothers-to-be. By allowing the delivery of babies at the dispensary and not at home, and by monitoring the health of mothers and infants, the midwife ought to help reduce the rate of maternal and infant mortality.

Extension of the school canteen in Irobo and financing of 120 meals a day for one year
The aim is to help reduce child malnutrition and also lower the school dropout rate, by giving parents incentive to send their children to school, for education and food.

Renovation of the primary school in Neka
Three classrooms were renovated, and three were built. They now accommodate 353 pupils aged 6 to 11 (years 1 to 5), who can study in a comfortable and clean environment.

Concern for the health of mothers and babies, and also that of school children, has led to two major projects: a house for a midwife and an extension for a school canteen. They were completed at the end of 2016 and inaugurated in March 2017.
Training young people to support farming entrepreneurship

Young people from rural areas were asked to apply for vocational training in farming, in medium-length and long courses. 15 young volunteers were given scholarships:

- 12 training courses leading to qualification in three months, from August to November 2016;
- 3 two-year courses from November 2016 to November 2018, to obtain a BTSA or a BTA.

The training is provided by the national institute for vocational agricultural training (INFPA) and ought to enable graduates to start and develop farming or breeding in their regions.

Developing the local economy through waste recovery

As often in Africa, the streets of Neka Village are littered with waste: plastic bags and containers, household waste, metals etc.

Earth AND People are trying to address the problem with the help of a self-supporting project. The aim is to avoid fly tipping by giving a new lease of life to plastic waste, after repurposing into objects that are useful to the community, for example.

Professionalising women’s activities

Another self-supporting project relates to women. It was suggested by PALMCI and SIFCA, and will be rolled out in 2017.

It intends to help a women’s group to professionalise their activities of vegetable growing and subsistence farming, and help them sell their products. The aim is that a third of their shared crop, in the form of cash or food, should be allocated to the canteen for children’s daily meals. The remaining two thirds will form their income, which they could plough back into their business.
Partners, industry, customers and financiers, we are all concerned by the conditions in which palm oil is produced.

Together!
Let us move faster and further!

Importing palm oil that is entirely sustainable, from plantations that are managed efficiently by well-trained growers, has become a necessity.

An alternative can be developed in the Ivory coast. One year after the start of our action, we see high adoption rates of the practices initiated, and the enthusiasm of communities.

But we need to speed up, develop, and extend our missions.

Earth AND People need you, your support and your contributions!

Please help us! And make our actions your own!

JOIN IN!