
[Indonesia: NGOs denounce misleading propaganda of APP](#)

Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) is a giant pulp and paper company which has long been deforesting Indonesian forests in Riau province, Sumatra, destroying Kerumutan's and Bukit Tigapuluh's peat forests. Most of the estimated 25 percent deforestation of the original natural forest cover has taken place on carbon rich soils.

The damage carried out by APP has several implications: it destroys the territory and livelihoods of indigenous communities who have been living there for centuries; it threatens the survival of some of them; it leads Sumatran tigers, elephants and orangutans to the verge of extinction; it causes millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions as the forest is cleared and drained peat soils oxidize, pushing Indonesia into third place (behind China and the U.S.) of greenhouse gas emitters.

It is difficult to think that with such a profile APP could earn some credit. However, the company is trying to promote their corporate responsibility and paper products through propaganda.

During the 12th Annual RISI European pulp & paper outlook conference held in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on March 10, APP attempted to promote their "corporate responsibility". Several Indonesian NGOs reacted calling on buyers and investors of APP "to reject the company's misinformation and stop purchasing or financing the company until it met conditions articulated in an open letter calling for reforms in Indonesia's pulp and paper sector".

In a joint communiqué NGOs denounced that a series of TV paid programming (infomercials) touting APP's environmental and social accomplishments may be "an effort to pave the way for the company's anticipated initial public offering (IPO) of its Chinese division, and comes at the same time as new investments in direct sales capacity in Europe and North American paper markets. In the early 2000's, APP defaulted on a debt of more than U.S. \$13 billion and became Asia's biggest bankruptcy. In the aftermath of the bankruptcy, significant legal, social and environmental issues associated with the company's pulp production, natural forest clearance and pulpwood sourcing operations emerged".

WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia, the national environmental forum in Indonesia which has over 450 member NGOs, blew the whistle on the misinformation campaign and alerted consumers: "We're trying to set the record straight for APP's customers and investors who may have been taken in by APP's misleading advertisements and glossy brochures," said Teguh Surya Campaign Director of WALHI. "APP and its affiliates continue to do more damage to Indonesia's forest dependent communities, wildlife and the world's climate than any other single corporate player. Being associated with APP poses major reputational risks to companies that do business with it", Teguh said.

Rivani Noor of the Indonesian national network, Community Alliance for Pulp and Paper Advocacy (CAPPA) bears witness of APP's deeds: "Indonesian NGO's and the communities we work with have experienced the devastation caused by APP firsthand, so we can't be fooled by infomercials or environmental prizes," he said.

APP's record of destruction and violation of community rights cannot be cleaned up with propaganda.

CAPPA's Rivani Noor declared that "We urge APP to stop the destruction of natural forests and peatlands, respect community rights and tenure, resolve existing disputes and retract misleading statements about their low carbon footprint. This is how APP can go beyond business as usual and help fulfill Indonesia's greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and the transition to an equitable and low-carbon future for all Indonesians".

Article based on the "Open Letter to Customers of and Investors in the Indonesian Pulp and Paper Sector" (<http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id>), and the joint communiqué "Indonesian groups reject APP's green claims at RISI Paper Conference", sent by Rivani Noor, Coordinator, Community Alliance Pulp and Paper Advocacy (CAPPA), e-mail: rivani@cappa.or.id. More on APP's social and environmental impacts is documented at:

<http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id>, <http://www.savesumatra.org/index.php/link>, <http://www.environmentalpaper.org/indonesiaroundtablesummary.htm>, and photos of APP impacts at: <http://www.eyesontheforest.or.id>