

# Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0959-6526(15)00272-3

DOI: [10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.03.051](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.03.051)

Reference: JCLP 5319

To appear in: *Journal of Cleaner Production*

Received Date: 19 September 2014

Revised Date: 17 March 2015

Accepted Date: 17 March 2015

Please cite this article as: Hansen SB, Padfield R, Syayuti K, Evers S, Zakariah Z, Mastura S, Trends in Global Palm Oil Sustainability Research, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2015), doi: 10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.03.051.

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Word count: 8,068 (not including figure and table placement indications)

## Trends in Global Palm Oil Sustainability Research

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**Keywords:** Palm oil; Sustainability; Industry-university collaboration; Publications; Trends; Bibliometric; ISI.

## Abstract

In the past decade, palm oil has risen to become the most produced and consumed vegetable oil in the world. Growth of commercial plantations in Southeast Asia and recent expansions in West Africa and Latin America have led to a growing call for the sustainable production of palm oil, driven to a large extent by concerns over the associated impacts of deforestation and biodiversity losses. This study investigates the academic response to the calls for the sustainable production of palm oil by identifying and analysing Thomson Reuters Institute for Scientific Information indexed palm oil sustainability related publications from 2004-2013. The results show that the total number of publications has increased exponentially from 11 in 2004 to 713 by 2013. However, this growth is shown to be carried mainly by research within technical aspects of palm oil residue use; publications in the categories of land use & land use change, biodiversity and socio-economic aspects have increased, but the growth has been markedly slower. It is thus argued that there is currently an imbalance in research strategies since the focus towards technical topics is at odds with the major sustainability issues raised about palm oil production. To address the current imbalance in palm oil research, this study proposes a holistic framework for palm oil sustainability research with the aim of achieving multidisciplinary studies and emphasizing collaboration between industry and academia. Research sponsors and public bodies in charge of science, social science and technology research frameworks will thus benefit from improved understanding of where research and development resources can be allocated to facilitate the transition towards improved sustainability.

## Abbreviations

ARPOS	Academic Research on Palm Oil Sustainability (Malaysian Research Network)
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
HCS	High Carbon Stock
HCV	High Conservation Value
iLUC	Indirect Land Use Change
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
LUC	Land Use Change
LULUC	Land Use & Land Use Change
POME	Palm Oil Mill Effluent

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