

Malaysia plans green palm oil certification scheme, says paper
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File photo of a worker collecting oil palm fruits at a plantation in Sepang. — Reuters pic

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 1 — Malaysia, the world's No. 2 palm oil producer, will come up with a certification scheme to ensure the tropical oil is grown without clearing forests and destroying wildlife, a newspaper reported today.

The *Business Times* quoted Commodities Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok as saying the Southeast Asian country had to act on its own, signalling it was responding to growing scrutiny by green groups and activists.

"This is at a preliminary stage," Dompok said during a working visit to promote Malaysian commodities in Australia.

"But we will go ahead because the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil keeps on changing its goal posts on how to produce sustainable palm oil," he added, referring to a body of planters and green groups tasked with certifying green palm oil.

Malaysia joins top palm oil producer Indonesia that is set to issue its own certification for planters next year on growing concerns that the RSPO has been dominated by green groups and sales of eco-friendly palm oil have been slow.

Malaysian Palm Oil Council chief Yusof Basiron said the Malaysian scheme will emulate the one by Indonesia, which is mandatory and where offenders could be punished by law.

"The industry is already highly monitored. We will just tweak it a little bit and look at what the market and the NGOs want," said Yusof who was also in Australia for the working visit.

"If they don't want deforestation, then we will include it in the certification requirements. If they don't want orang utan to be destroyed, we will include it too," he added.

The RSPO scheme is voluntary but in recent months it has taken a harder stance on plantations. In April, the RSPO censured Malaysia's No. 2 planter IOI Corp for green violations and suspended ongoing plans to certify its estates. — Reuters

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