

Story from the field

Capacity building and engaging smallholder farmers on Nature Positive Farming

Lessons from the first pilot in Siak and Pelalawan

What is Nature Positive Farming?

The Nature Positive Farming programme¹ is an early engagement programme for companies and landscape initiatives to support non-certified oil palm smallholder farmers to protect High Conservation Values and natural ecosystems as part of responsible sourcing commitments.

Nature Positive Farming is built around facilitated, **structured dialogue** with smallholders and their communities. It aims for **conservation and support agreements** between smallholders and project partners, for maintaining and enhancing environmental and social conservation values on and around their farms.



The Pilot Project

The Nature Positive Farming programme was launched by the HCV Network in 2021 and was first piloted, funded by the CGF Forest Positive Coalition, in an oil palm production landscape in Indonesia, within the Siak Pelalawan Landscape Programme (SPLP).

The link with SPLP was to understand how the Nature Positive Farming can be integrated into the Village Support Programme of the SPLP. The objective of the pilot was to field test the first two components of the programme in one of the SPLP villages.



Figure 1 NPF programme components

During 2021 the activities were as follows:

Planning and preparation:

- Receive feedback from an SPLP coalition member on opportunities and challenges to link Nature Positive Farming (NPF) with existing smallholder initiatives
- Adaptation of globally generic NPF farmer training modules to develop NPF materials contextualized for the Siak and Pelalawan districts.
- Selection of a village within the SPLP for piloting NPF
- Socialization with 35 stakeholders from the district government, Environmental NGOs, farmer organisations, and SPLP Village Facilitators, to discuss how NPF can contribute to local sustainability agendas.

¹ For more information on the Nature Positive Farming programme please visit:

[Smallholders](#) | [Our Work](#) | [HCV Network](#)

www.siakpelalawan.net

Training and dialogue

The village of Rawa Mekar Jaya in Siak was selected for the pilot. The village is located on peatland soils, has large areas of remaining forest and is directly adjacent to Zamrud National Park.

This makes the village a key area for protecting forest and peatland ecosystems and services. The village has previously taken steps towards protecting some of its forests by registering a Village Forest Area, with NPF being able to compliment and build on this.

Activities included:

- Providing training to trainers. Participants included SPLP Village Facilitators and community-support representatives from across Siak and Pelalawan. Once trained they have a responsibility to promote the NPF concept in the villages through providing training and support to farmers.
- Providing training to village representatives and farmers with mixed production activities including oil palm, rubber, horticulture, and sago. Discussions included using NPF best practices within current farming, within the Village Forest Area, and for forest management and monitoring.

Profile of Rawa Mekar Jaya



Population
of People
520



Village Area
15,900 ha



Village Forest Area
3,433 ha



Remaining Forest Area
3,980 ha



Train the Trainer
Participants
32



Village Training
Participants
38



NPF Pilot Visit in Rawa Mekar Jaya Village (October 2021).

Photo credit: HCVN

Take-home message from introducing NPF with farmers from Rawa Mekar Jaya

Villagers felt that using the NPF self-assessment questionnaire was a simple way for them to identify conservation values that are relevant to their context, and a range of practices important for maintaining natural ecosystems and the natural resources the villagers depend upon. It helped the village to determine the necessary village resources and capacity to implement those practices.

These practices include:

- Protecting natural ecosystems and ecosystem services such as no clearing of natural vegetation directly along watercourses for vegetable gardens or oil palm, no use of fire to prepare lands, and no peatland canal establishment that penetrates directly into the river. The community also recognized as good practice the development of regulation on entering the Village Forest Area including no burning and no cutting trees policy. Practices at household level include using household waste as organic fertiliser, and building a separate water reservoir for agriculture purposes.
- Protecting conservation species including Sumatran tiger, Malayan sun bear, agile gibbon amongst others: no hunting/trapping of protected species, report poaching activities to the local authorities, establish fishing groups to promote practices that maintain the fish stock.

Going forward on implementing these practices confidently, the villagers saw value in being able to receive on-going guidance. They highlighted the need for more in-depth training on best practices when they plan to establish new oil palm plantations.

The villagers also recognized that for successful protection of the remaining forests in the village, NPF practices need to be applied at the village level.

This would require additional support to the village to be able to apply protection measures beyond the individual farmers.

Building on the NPF pilot

During the socialisation on NPF with stakeholders, Siak district authority affirmed that the NPF program could support the implementation of sustainable agriculture activities and as a result support the local communities in following Green Siak roadmap.

SPLP and HCVN will further explore how using the NPF self-assessment with smallholder producer communities can support elaborating locally adapted structures and mechanisms for village forest conservation and support agreements. This aims to increase linking forest protection with the roles and interests of district authorities, companies and other stakeholders as well as improving the capacity of villages to gain access to conservation and support agreements.

Implementation of the NPF program can be further upscaled to other priority villages in Siak and Pelalawan and integrated into the Village Support Programme already implemented in 15 villages (end of 2021).

Based on the lessons from the pilot the global NPF concept will be further developed. This includes adding integrated monitoring, reporting and verification components to the concept, which is aligned with reporting frameworks. Finally, a smallholder adapted 'No Exploitation' module will be added to the NPF concept to complete companies' NDPE requirements.



The NPF pilot was implemented by HCVN and funded by CGF Forest Positive Coalition of Action