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“Development on the margin”

## Is it Really 'all for Africa'? - The Fraudulent Social and Ecological Argumentations of Oil Palm Developing Institutions

MATTHIAS WALTERT<sup>1</sup>, KADIRI SERGE BOBO<sup>2</sup>, OLIVE YIIKA NGALIM<sup>2</sup>, LARS GORSCHLÜTER<sup>3</sup>,  
CHRISTIAN KIFFNER<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Dept. of Conservation Biology, Germany*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Dschang, Dept. of Forestry, Cameroon*

<sup>3</sup>*SAVE Wildlife Conservation Fund, Germany*

<sup>4</sup>*University of California at Davis, United States of America*

### Abstract

The increasing world-wide demand for palm oil is leading to increased investments also in Africa, especially after the deforestation ban in Indonesia. In order to 'sell' their strategies to socially and ecologically responsible shareholders and international organisations, local government officials and agro-investors argue for palm oil development using keywords such as 'economic development', 'poverty alleviation' and even 'nature conservation'. Based on a case study from the Korup region, West-Central Africa, we show that such argumentations may be flawed and even fraudulent, by comparing the probable future livelihoods of people of 38 villages after creation of a 60,000 ha oil palm plantation with their current economic situation. We also discuss the potential effects of oil palm development for the protected areas in the region. Based on a sample of 194 households from seven villages in the region, the current yearly income of the 38 villages located within the designated plantation area can be estimated at € 2,745,196 (€ 1,762 per household, mainly from farming). Based on estimates of household size, this equals a daily income of 1.4 € person<sup>-1</sup> day<sup>-1</sup> and is well above the poverty line of 1 US\$ (0.70 € person<sup>-1</sup> day<sup>-1</sup>). After creation of the plantation, resources currently free but very important to people (water, firewood, food and other forest products and ecosystem services) would likely disappear, leading to migration and increased pressure on protected areas. A concerted international effort is needed to increase pressure on African government officials to halt such developments and to guide investments in Africa into more sustainable and socially and ecologically acceptable endeavours.

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