

Supplementary methods

Using the latest economic statistics for oil palm agriculture in the Malaysian state of Sabah from the Malaysian Palm Oil Board, Kajang, we found the yield efficiency for the oil palm crop in 2006 to be 23.1 tonnes per hectare per year ($\text{ha}^{-1} \text{yr}^{-1}$) (fresh fruit bunches), the average oil extraction ratio during the period January to May 2007 to be 21.14%, and the average price of crude palm oil during the same period to be US\$591 or RM2,041 per tonne (Ringgit Malaysian).

By multiplying the yield efficiency of oil palm by its average oil extraction ratio and the average price of crude palm oil, we calculated the average revenue from oil palm agriculture to be $\$2,890 \text{ ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$. By subtracting the estimated average operating cost in a typical oil palm plantation ($\$812 \text{ ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$) from the estimated revenue ($\$2,890 \text{ ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$), we calculated the net profit of a typical oil palm plantation to be $\$2,078 \text{ ha}^{-1} \text{ yr}^{-1}$. Based on an estimated price of $\$5,728 \text{ ha}^{-1}$ for unplanted land, we estimated that the net profit generated by 1 ha of oil palm plantation could be used to acquire 0.36 ha of land for conservation annually.

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External links:

1. Malaysian Palm Oil Board, www.mpob.gov.my/
2. Sundaland and the islands of Wallacea, www.biodiversityhotspots.org
3. Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, www.rspo.org
4. Conservation International's Global Conservation Fund, www.conservation.org/xp/gcf/