

MSPO and Japan's ASSC Forge Strategic Partnership to Drive Demand for Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil

The Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification scheme has entered into a landmark partnership with Japan's Global Alliance for Sustainable Supply Chains (ASSC), unlocking new opportunities to expand market access and accelerate demand for MSPO-certified palm oil across Japan's high-value industries.

ASSC is a respected Japanese sustainability platform that collaborates with major Japanese corporations such as Ajinomoto Co. Inc., Takasago International Corporation, Lion Corporation, Toyo Suisan, and Shiseido, among others. The alliance focuses on advancing ethical supply chains, fair labour practices, and human rights through international cooperation. This partnership positions MSPO at the heart of Japan's sustainable procurement ecosystem, enabling Malaysian producers to connect directly with buyers actively seeking responsible sourcing solutions.

The collaboration builds on the success of a comprehensive Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) conducted in 2023 by Ajinomoto Co. Inc. and ASSC, with MSPO's close support. Grounded in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the assessment validated the MSPO framework as robust, inclusive, and well-aligned with international expectations, especially in safeguarding smallholder livelihoods and protecting worker rights.

MSPO certification is audited by independent third-party certification bodies accredited to international standards, ensuring credibility, transparency, and impartiality. These audits assess a wide range of criteria—including environmental protection, social responsibility, labour conditions, and governance, and are conducted with clear, structured methodologies to ensure consistency and traceability. The legibility of the audit process further reinforces trust in the MSPO system among global stakeholders and buyers.

Partnership Formalised Through MoU

MSPO and ASSC have now signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), formalising their shared commitment to promote sustainable palm oil in Japan. This agreement sets the stage for deeper cooperation through ASSC's influential network of sustainability-oriented companies and procurement leaders.

Under the MoU, MSPO and ASSC will jointly deliver the following initiatives:

- **Joint Capacity-Building and Dialogue:** Hosting workshops and stakeholder briefings to enhance Japanese understanding of MSPO's deforestation-free commitments, social safeguards, and national-level enforcement mechanisms.

- **Advanced Traceability Solutions:** Co-developing tools and systems to ensure transparent supply chains, enabling traceable, MSPO-certified palm oil to meet the ESG requirements of Japanese corporates and consumers.
- **Targeted Advocacy and Outreach:** Coordinated advocacy campaigns to elevate MSPO's profile in Japan as a credible and nationally mandated sustainability standard with real-world impact, especially in smallholder inclusion and rural development.
- **Facilitated Market Access:** Promoting MSPO-certified products to ASSC member companies, facilitating direct engagement between Malaysian palm oil producers and Japanese corporations such as Ajinomoto, Takasago, and others within the ASSC network.

Unlocking Shared Value for Malaysia and Japan

This strategic partnership offers far-reaching benefits. For Malaysia, it strengthens the commercial appeal of MSPO-certified palm oil and creates new channels for export growth in Japan. For Japanese companies, it provides a trusted certification aligned with both global sustainability benchmarks and domestic consumer expectations.

ASSC will act as a core knowledge and advocacy partner for MSPO in Japan, helping build industry awareness, shape procurement decisions, and drive adoption of certified sustainable palm oil in one of the world's most quality-sensitive markets.

Together, MSPO and ASSC are setting a new standard for what meaningful international cooperation in sustainability looks like, translating shared values into tangible trade opportunities, social impact, and environmental integrity.

YB Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani

Minster of Plantation and Commodities

Remarks On The Partnership

“This strategic partnership between MSPO and ASSC marks a significant milestone in Malaysia’s efforts to champion sustainable palm oil on the global stage. It reflects growing international recognition of MSPO as a credible and inclusive certification that meets the highest environmental and social standards.

At its core, MSPO is not just about markets — it is about people. This collaboration opens up real opportunities for our smallholders, empowers our workers, and uplifts rural communities by ensuring that their palm oil can reach high-value, sustainability-conscious markets like Japan. We deeply value the trust shown by our Japanese partners, and we are confident that this partnership will foster shared prosperity, ethical trade, and long-term cooperation built on mutual respect and shared values.”