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## **Denial of long-term issues with agriculture on tropical peatlands will have devastating consequences**

Following the 16<sup>th</sup> International Peat Congress (IPC) in Kuching (Sarawak), Malaysia, widely read media reported that the congress supported the view that current agricultural practices in peatland areas, such as oil palm plantations, do not have a negative impact on the environment. However, this view is not shared by many of the participants, and does not reflect the broad message conveyed by the research presented at the congress.

In an effort to correct these statements, a number of the world's leading researchers and practitioners from around the world have come together to publish a letter in *Global Change Biology*, one of the world's leading environmental science journals. The 139 authors represent 115 government, academic, industry and non-governmental organizations from 20 countries. Forty of these organizations are based in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore; the countries most directly impacted by the adverse consequences of unsustainable management of tropical peatlands.

The consensus achieved in this paper is unprecedented. The letter confirms that the weight evidence presented at the congress, backed by many decades of scientific research, is unequivocal: business-as-usual management is not sustainable for tropical peatland agriculture and can no longer be justified.

While truly sustainable peatland agriculture methods do not yet exist, the scientific community and industry are already collaborating in the search for solutions, including interim measures to mitigate ongoing rates of peat loss under existing plantations. Not only is this of global importance in the fight against climate change, it is also key to ensure future economic wealth in tropical peatland rich regions. Indeed, failing to recognize the devastating far-reaching consequences of the way in which peatlands are being managed and failing to work together to address them could mean that the next generations will in fact have to deal with an irreversibly altered, dysfunctional landscape.

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