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RSPO probe into hot spots heats up

INDONESIA FOREST FIRES: Sime Darby, KLK in the clear, TH Plantations likely, too

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THREE Malaysian plantation companies were not involved in the forest fires in Indonesia last month, according to the digital maps of their concession areas that were submitted to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

Sime Darby Bhd and Kuala Kepong Bhd (KLK) have proven that there were no hot spots within their plantations through these maps.

TH Plantations Bhd, which submitted its digital map ahead of last night's deadline, is likely to be in the clear, too, when an independent analysis is carried out over the next few days.

The other company that is also in the clear is Singapore-based Golden Agri Resources, the second largest plantation company in the world.

However, the RSPO said in a statement yesterday it has yet to receive

any submissions from PT Jatim Jaya Perkasa, the fifth member company, who had also been requested by the non-profit organisation to submit its digital map.

"We will initiate an internal complaint procedure against the company," RSPO secretary general Darrel Webber said in a statement.

According to RSPO, the analysis of the hot spot areas between June 1 and June 26 was carried out by two international research experts — Malaysian scientist and Geographic Information System expert Dr Khali Aziz Hamzah from Forest Research Institute Malaysia and the World Resources Institute.

The study takes into account the overlapping of the concession maps with the fire and hot spot maps generated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmosphere

Administration.

Its analysis of the first three companies showed that there were no hot spots within their plantation areas, although there were a few hot spots in "minority" parts where the respective companies put out the fires within 24 hours.

The multi-stakeholder organisation, which includes oil palm growers as well as retail organisations as part of its membership, said in an earlier statement the recent haze situation serves as a reminder to governments that such landscape-level management plans and the capacity to implement these plans should be ready before allowing large-scale development on peat systems.

RSPO encourages its members with existing plantations on peat to adopt fire prevention measures within their concessions.



RSPO encourages its members with existing plantations on peat to adopt **fire prevention measures** within their concessions. AFP pic