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The Carbon Cost of Palm Oil Production in Malaysia

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Agriculture, in common with other industries, is increasingly being required to account for its contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are driving global warming, and climate change. In Malaysia, the dominant presence of oil palm, which now occupies some 13 per cent of the total land area (18% in the Peninsular; 2006 figures), justifies particular attention. This paper summarises the results of a recent study, which evaluates the balance between sequestration and emission of GHG resulting from oil palm cultivation, associated land use change, and processing of products in the palm oil mill. The study, which covers the 25 years from 1981 to 2005, quantifies the major sinks and sources of C and evaluates the C balance, using a number of alternative options and assumptions. The main results are outlined here and probable future developments, likely to impact on the balance, are evaluated.

Keywords: *Oil palm, land use change, carbon sequestration, carbon emission, greenhouse gas.*