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Oil Palm Development in Africa

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It was reported in 2013 that all African countries were net importers of vegetable oils. Imports of palm oil and soybean oil alone represented 123 per cent of the continent's total production of oils and fats and were forecasted to grow. Since the last decade, countries from the African oil palm belt have been firmly determined to raise Africa's production of palm oil not only to ensure a sufficiency of oils and fats for its populations, but also to regain its share in the world market for vegetable oils. Data on the areas planted with oil palm show an average increase of 26 per cent in 2016 compared to 2013 resulting from an increase of 39 per cent in the areas of smallholdings and 8 per cent in those of industrial plantations. The minimum fresh fruit bunch (FFB) processing capacity has risen to 6 368 880 tonnes per year, not including that of the widespread local low-performing palm oil mills. The most threatening of the new challenges facing oil palm development is the unfair anti-palm oil label "No Palm Oil" on products imported from Europe whose lifestyle and civilisation are models and targets for populations of underdeveloped and developing African countries. Prospects – for rural development and poverty alleviation, for birth of entrepreneurial plantations, for increase in consumption of palm oil in the European Union, for distinguishing environment and social considerations from anti-palm oil propaganda, for control and prevention of civil unrest, to name a few – are assets with great promise for oil palm development in Africa.

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