



Noteworthy experiences in digitalisation by employers' and business membership organisations (EBMOs) in Latin America

## Technical Note: Guatemala

# Satellite Monitoring - Palm Oil

This Technical Note forms part of a collection of noteworthy experiences in digitalisation by employers' and business membership organisations (EBMOs) in Latin America, identified during research carried out by the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) for the production of the 2022 Regional Report "Where do Business Organisations Stand on the Road to Digitalisation? A look at Latin America". The aim of these noteworthy experiences is to inspire other EBMOs in their transition towards digitalisation. We would like to thank the ILO's South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) programme for its support in drafting this document, which will serve as a basis for an exchange of knowledge among EBMOs around the world.

### ► What is South-South and Triangular Cooperation?

South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) can be defined as collaboration between two or more developing countries, which frequently have the support of traditional partners, guided by the principles of solidarity and unconditionality, the aim of which is to put into practice inclusive and distributive development models governed by demand. SSTC complements North-South cooperation with joint action to encourage development opportunities. As can be seen from the Sustainable Development Programme 2030, SSTC has become an important means of international cooperation for development and an essential item in the United Nations toolbox.

### ► Summary

Guatemala's Gremial de Palmicultores de Guatemala (association of oil palm growers -GREPALMA) has developed a national system of monitoring for sustainable oil palm cultivation in Guatemala, aimed at ensuring that no further deforestation takes place in the country.

### ► What services does it offer?

This system offers the members of GREPALMA access to a near-real-time satellite monitoring platform, covering the companies' operations and the surrounding country within a radius of 100 km. The platform provides users with diffe-

rent filters to enable them to monitor the destruction of natural forest. This monitoring also differentiates between areas under management and/or conservation by companies, and identifies any incidents of fire or deforestation independent of the companies. Every quarter the external host creates a report on findings to enable follow-up and ensure that the goal of zero deforestation by members of GREPALMA is met.

#### ► How to join?

Members have a user code that gives them access to the system from the Internet or a mobile phone app. User codes are granted by GREPALMA and Satelligence, and each user has different access points and filters that they can use.

#### ► Why this project?

In 2018 GREPALMA and its members published “Política Ambiental y de Cambio Climático” (environmental policy and climate change) focused on various challenges with action to preserve the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2019 the application of this policy led to the adoption of a voluntary commitment to zero deforestation. To establish a baseline, GREPALMA carried out a study of land planted with oil palms during the period from 1989 to 2020, which would later be used to determine the degree of deforestation associated with oil palm cultivation. As far as GREPALMA and its members are concerned, it was essential to understand the real impact to counter the worldwide narrative that oil palm cultivation was associated with widespread deforestation. It should be noted that GREPALMA and its members began this project voluntarily as part of their corporate responsibility work with a view to maintaining the sustainability of their operations.

#### ► How was it developed?

In 2020, GREPALMA engaged a Dutch organisation (<https://satelligence.com/>) after a comprehensive external tender process lasting 6 to 8 months, in which they received three offers. The cost of the platform is financed by the members themselves,



making it a self-sustaining service. To strengthen the platform and validate the data, a working party consisting of various actors was created: member companies, representatives of GREPALMA, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of the Environment, as well as universities, environmental specialists, and others.

#### ► What impact has it had?

Thank to satellite monitoring, GREPALMA and its members have irrefutable evidence that oil palm cultivation has not resulted in deforestation on land owned by the members between October 2020 and June 2022. This enables the members to demonstrate their corporate responsibility and commitment to the sustainable development goals (SDG 13 and 15) to current and potential purchasers, creating a positive effect on their turnover.

This information also helps members with one of the stages required for their production to be certified as sustainable. Furthermore, it has also been possible to change the narrative concerning the relationship between oil palm cultivation and deforestation at a national level. The 1989-2020 study showed that only 0.67% of total deforestation in Guatemala in the last 32 years is attributable to this crop.

The use of data has also strengthened the reputation of the organisation and reinforced its lobbying strategy with the government and other actors. The data has also been used to encourage conservation and environmental restoration projects and to create and inform the Interinstitutional Zero Deforestation Workshop consisting of public and private bodies, academia, and international organisations.