



**Wetlands International**

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Reg. No: 09099028

Ede, the Netherlands, 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2009

To:

Sir Henry Keswick  
Matheson & Co. Ltd.  
3 Lombard Street  
London EC3V 9AQ  
United Kingdom

Dear Sir Henry Keswick,

We are writing to you regarding the concession of P.T. Astra Agro Lestari (AAL), in the Tripa coastal peat swamp forest in Aceh Province, Indonesia.

We write to you as director and chairman of Jardines in the name of all our members and supporters, to request that you take action to ensure that AAL cease land clearance and planting activities in Tripa and facilitate the integration of the whole concession within the Leuser Ecosystem as a critical conservation asset of global significance. As you have recently been honoured for “services to British business interests overseas and for charitable activities”, including associations with organisations promoting environmental conservation, we are confident that you will take immediate action. The background and case supporting this urgent request is provided in the paragraphs below. We would be pleased to provide further clarification.

The AAL concession is located within an area of forest which provides a green buffer zone that protects communities from the effects of future storms or a new tsunami. The area lies within the Leuser Ecosystem, an area of outstanding, world-renowned biodiversity value. Furthermore, the forests within the concession area support one of the few remaining significant populations of the *critically endangered* Sumatran Orangutan. In fact, the UNEP/UNESCO Great Ape Survival Programme (GRASP) lists Tripa as a priority site for this species as it supports the highest density of Orangutans found anywhere in the world. The area is also important for local livelihoods, providing food and shelter. In fact, there are many policies and laws in place to protect the area from development (1).

We are aware that AAL and Jardine Matheson claim to have conducted “environmental impact studies” prior to commencing operations in Tripa. However, our investigations found that no environmental impact studies were made available to any relevant stakeholders (Aceh government, Environment Ministry in Aceh, local communities, associations). This implies that these environmental impact studies, if existing, have never been approved by Nagan Raya District, or the Aceh Government. We would be pleased to receive and review the Environmental Impact Assessment.

We are aware that AAL plans to develop “only half of the concession for environmental concerns”. However, ANY development of the land within this concession will be highly detrimental to the local environment far beyond the concession boundaries. The entirety of this flat area is vulnerable to future tsunamis, is of high biodiversity value and contains a high density un-protected carbon stock in Aceh. Fragmentation of the remaining forest constitutes a significant threat to biodiversity, and an aerial assessment of the area - conducted in June 2009 - shows a considerable negative impact on the standing forest. Finally, drainage of the vulnerable peat domes has an enormous impact on the peat swamp ecosystem over a huge area, including forest areas far beyond the concession itself. Our aerial assessment shows widespread damage and dying forests as a result of these drainage activities. Please, have a look at the attached report on this.

We have evidence that Astra Agro Lestari’s activities in Tripa are contravening fundamental Indonesian laws. AAL has planted oil palms on deep peat and continues to use burning as a method of land clearance, as shown by satellite mapping and during our aerial assessment in June 2009. Burning on Tripa by AAL has also been documented by Indonesian newspapers in November 2008. Please note that the situation in Tripa is not an isolated incident, as AAL is also involved in burning and planting on deep peat in Borneo on a large scale.

We find it frankly shocking that your company is turning a blind eye to the activities of AAL. We are confident that you will take immediate action to stop all activities in Tripa. AAL should cease land clearance and planting activities in Tripa and facilitate the integration of the whole concession within the Leuser Ecosystem as a critical asset for conservation in Aceh.

Sincerely yours,

**Jane Madgwick**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Wetlands International

**James Turner**  
Forest Campaigner  
Greenpeace UK

**Sean Whyte**  
Chief Executive  
Nature Alert



**Hardi Baktiantoro**  
Director  
Centre for Orangutan Protection



**Helen Buckland**  
UK Director  
Sumatran Orangutan Society

**Simon Counsell**  
Executive Director  
Rainforest Foundation UK



**Lars Løvold**  
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Rainforest Foundation Norway



**Michael Kennedy**  
Director  
Humane Society International



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
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**Virginia Young**  
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This is an open letter that will also be sent to the UK government, different media and the secretariat and member of the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil.

(1) Annex: Some of the most significant policies and laws on Tripa:

- a. Peat of greater than three meters depth should automatically be afforded legally protected status (*kawasan lindung*) under Presidential Decree No. 32/1990 and Government Regulation No. 47/1997.
- b. The 2005 Post-tsunami Master Plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the region and people of the province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam and Nias Island, agreed by the Indonesian people and authorities, emphasizes the need for the development of a green coastal buffer zone.
- c. The destruction also contravenes the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change (Indonesian Law No. 17/2007), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Presidential Decree No. 48/1991) and Convention on Biodiversity (Indonesian Law No. 5/1994).
- d. At Provincial level, the Governor of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam enacted a moratorium on forest logging in July 2007 (Instruksi Gubernur NAD No. 5/ 2007) that prohibits logging on all non-private and non-community land, including within oil palm concessions.
- e. Finally, the Governor has created a policy paper to support its “Aceh Green” vision to stimulate a green sustainable economy in Aceh.