

Is Palm Oil a Force for Good? Normative and Evidence-Based Approaches to Commodity Branding in Southeast Asia

Indonesia and Malaysia are world leaders (by volume) in palm oil production, and key players in a US\$65 billion annual global trade in edible oils, cosmetics and biofuels. For example, Indonesia's oil palm harvest in 2016 was 34 million tons, for which an area the size of Liberia has been converted to meet production targets. Palm oil is a versatile, multipurpose oil, and some would argue it should be treated as a strategic national commodity. This panel will ask, among other things, how competing discourse coalitions are representing palm oil production in countries like Indonesia, and to what extent these representations match the realities on the ground. Contributors are invited to examine competing discourses and media representations of rural development and patterns of palm oil production. Paper submissions are welcome from postgraduate students and academic staff with an interest in debating the current trends in commodity branding and the impacts of palm oil production in Southeast Asia. Comparative papers with a focus on Indonesia, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries are welcome.

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