

Partial success in Sri Lanka: Dole withdraws from National Park



Sri Lankan elephants

Nov 10, 2011

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The Dole corporation, well known for bananas and other tropical fruit, has responded to the protests of international environmental organizations against building new plantations in a tropical forest area and elephant habitat in Sri Lanka. An area of 1.500 hectares adjacent to the Somawathiya National Park had already been clear-felled, and bananas had been planted. Another 4.700 hectares of land in the National Park, a declared nature reserve since 1986, were supposed to follow. The area is home to 400 Asian elephants and other endangered animal and plant species.

Now, Dole responds to Rainforest Rescue in writing. Following the reports on deforestation in the National Park, the company's subsidiary Dole Lanka has "met with several environmental organizations". Dole continues: "Given the importance of these reports, Dole Lanka has discontinued various farming activities on the disputed land on September 23rd, 2011. On October 28th, 2011, Dole Lanka decided to cease all further work in the affected area and informed its local partner Letsgrow about the company's intention to withdraw from all activities in the area in question by November 11th, 2011."

The company stated that Dole Lanka has closed a contract for the cultivation of the area with Letsgrow Limited. According to local organizations and scientists, the military of the South Asian island republic is also involved in this land and plantation deal. Adjacent to the

Somawathiya National Park with its 378 square kilometres, the army operates a military zone. Allegedly, the military illegally assigned parts of the land to Letsgrow – although the land is officially under the control of environment and wildlife protection authorities.

Furthermore, it still remains unclear what happens to the banana plantations already built and to Dole's partner company Letsgrow. Rainforest Rescue demands that the damages caused must be repaired and that the natural vegetation on the cleared areas must be restored.

Environmentalists report that the companies even cleared forest areas belonging to the National Park.

Rainforest Rescue supported the environmentalists' efforts by means of its protest campaign "Sri Lanka: Dole bananas pose a threat to the National Park and elephants" that nearly 18.000 people participated in. See Dole's complete response in the following.

*From: Kontakt@dole.com
Date: 2011-11-07 09:54:35 MEZ
To: info@regenwald.org
Subject: Dole Lanka*

Dear Mr. Schenck, dear Mr. Behrend,

with interest, we took note of your coverage regarding the business activities of Dole Lanka (Private) Limited ("Dole Lanka") in Sri Lanka, and we want to comment on the issue as follows:

Dole Lanka manages the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. As part of its business operations, Dole Lanka has closed a contract with Letsgrow (Private) Limited ("Letsgrow") concerning the management of a specific property provided by Letsgrow. Letsgrow is neither a subsidiary nor an affiliate of any other kind of Dole Lanka.

Recently, media reports have appeared claiming that parts of the land provided for Dole Lanka are located in the Somawathiya National Park. Dole Lanka has met with several environmental organizations expressing similar views.

Given the importance of these reports, Dole Lanka has discontinued various farming activities on the disputed land on September 23rd, 2011. On October 28th, 2011, Dole Lanka decided to cease all further work in the affected area and informed its local partner Letsgrow about the company's intention to withdraw from all activities in the area in question by November 11th, 2011.

Subsequently, Dole Lanka got in touch with the Department of Wildlife Conservation, the government authority responsible for monitoring the national parks, and asked for advice in this matter.

Dole Lanka plans to cooperate with experts in order to avoid any negative impact on the elephants that its business activities in Sri Lanka could have. Contrary to some reports, Dole

Lanka has not inflicted harm or damage on any elephant during the period of its business operations in Sri Lanka.

In conclusion, it should be noted that Dole Lanka has not made any deals with the Sri Lanka Army (SLA). Dole Lanka sets a high value on integrity and works in accordance with the highest ethical standards.

Kind regards,

Dole Team Germany

For further information please contact:

Sylvain Cuperlie

Vice President Worldwide Corporate Responsability and sustainability

Dole Fresh Fruit Europe

Stadtdeich 7

20097 Hamburg

Tel +49.40.32.90.60