# Oil palm scheme in Siberut, Indonesia

The Indonesian military are putting pressure on the indigenous people of the island of Siberut to allow a 70,000 hectare oil palm plantation and associated transmigration scheme to go ahead, regardless of the fact that the island has been designated as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Indonesia's palm oil industry is currently undergoing a boom. The Indonesian government wants the country to overtake Malaysia as the world's largest palm oil producer early next century. All over Sumatra, mature rainforest is being felled to make room for more plantations. There are signs the boom may already be peaking. Earlier this year the government put a stop on new foreign investment in this sector in Western Indonesia. But the speculators cannot lose. Whether or not they plant oil palms, the timber from the forest sites they have cleared will earn them billions of rupiah.

Source: Down to Earth 33, May 1997