

CLEANER PRODUCTION IN PALM OIL INDUSTRY, SRI LANKA

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This thesis was submitted to the Department of Civil Engineering of the University of Moratuwa in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.



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DECLARATION

This thesis is a report of research out in the Department of Civil Engineering University of Moratuwa between August 2003 and October 2004. Except where references are made to other work the contents of this thesis are original and have been carried out by the under signed. The work has not been submitted in part or whole to any other university. This thesis contains 83 pages.



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ABSTRACT

Oil palm was introduced to Sri Lanka from Malaysia in late nineteen sixties. As of now, after approximately three and a half decades, it has spread over 10,000 acres of the southern part of the Island. Watawala, Namunukula, Agalawatta and Elpitiya are the four key companies that share oil palm plantations, which are distributed mainly in the Galle District.

However the country has only one palm oil mill owned by Watawala Plantations Ltd. located at Nakiyadeniya in Galle District, processing over 19,000 tonnes of fresh fruit bunches annually.

The main objective of the research is to identify the applicability of cleaner production in to the Sri Lankan palm oil industry and to present places where CP can be adopted in the Sri Lankan palm oil industry through technical, financial and environmental evaluation of CP options and identification of their priority levels in implementation. In addition, development of a proposed Industry-Specific Effluent Discharge Standard for Sri Lankan Palm Oil Industry is considered as a key objective in this study.

After comparing some of the Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) performed for similar products in other countries, it was identified that the crude palm oil extraction process is the area that we have to concentrate, as it was the main stage of energy usage and environmental pollution. Therefore the scope of the study was narrowed down to factory operations, which covers all the stages of crude palm oil extraction.

To fulfil the main objective of developing cleaner production options for the factory operations, a walk-through audit was carried out followed by a detailed audit considering each and every process step of the factory. Detailed assessments were conducted in areas including material handling & consumption and waste generation with their characteristics. Electrical & thermal energy utilisation was analysed in detail to evaluate the current operational efficiencies and methods to minimise the losses. Energy and material balances were done in calculating actual process requirements and estimating existing losses. A Boiler heat balance and evaluation of electrical efficiencies of each and every process machinery were conducted with industry experts to find out the losses and to identify the places where improvements can be made without drastic changes to the existing operational methods. Calorific values and moisture contents of key waste streams of the plant were analysed in order to determine energy inputs and evaluate the possibilities of operating the plant self-sufficiently, energy wise. Opportunities of modifying the physical state of raw material and recycling of utilities & waste materials from the process were assessed during the audit. Observations and conversations with the employees were major tools used in the audit and the employee recommendations or comments on CP improvements were considered important in identifying and prioritising the final CP options. Technical feasibility and environmental sustainability were the main evaluating criteria of selecting the key cleaner production options for the factory processes.

The measured moisture-free base calorific values of EFB, PPF & PKS indicate that it is possible to have a cogeneration plant onsite which could fulfil the Plant's electrical and heat (steam & hot water) requirements. The flue gas analysis carried out in the factory boiler indicates that the excess air percentage is higher than the recommended value. Correcting this will increase the boiler efficiency as the flue gas losses decrease. In addition, complete burning of the fuel will decrease the amount of hazardous pollutants being emitted into the surrounding environment. According to the measured values and the boiler heat balance carried out it is seen that there is a possibility of using flue gas heat to replace steam at some processes. Blow down losses of the boiler could be further reduced by treating (reducing TDS) inlet water to the boiler. As a result of the electric power analysis of almost all the plant electrical machinery it is seen that most of the machines (over 60%) are operated at less than half load conditions, which contributes to low operation efficiencies, low power factors and due to all these considerable wastage in electrical energy consumption.

It was identified that by making effortless changes to the existing handling systems could minimise the product losses and at the same time improve the final product quality, making the operation more profitable. In addition, income from by-products will enhance the economic viability of implementing the selected cleaner production options.

Wet extracting of crude palm oil from palm fruits generates large quantities of wastewater. Raw Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME) can be considered as one of the highest industrial polluting sources having BOD, COD and TDS values as high as 26,000, 67,000 and 72,000 mg/l respectively. As there is no industry specific standard for palm oil industry in Sri Lanka, the factories have to comply with the General Effluent Discharge Standards specified by the Central Environmental Authority (CEA). The treated effluent quality of the range BOD₅²⁰ 1,000 – 1,360 mg/l, COD 2,371 – 2,880 mg/l and TDS 21,800 - 22,410 mg/l achieved in the existing pond system of Nakiyadeniya Pail Oil Mill does not comply with the CEA general standards. Analysis of POME treatment technologies in practice and in experimental scale revealed that achieving compliance with set CEA General Standards is a difficult task. Further, the effluent discharge standards laid out in other countries, applicable to POME discharge, shows the stringent nature of the Sri Lankan general standards and difficulty in complying with the set standards. The generation of the proposed standard considered applicability of treatment technologies used worldwide in Sri Lankan conditions (Best Practical Technologies) and effluent disposal standards adopted in other countries.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

	Declaration	i
	Abstract	ii
	Acknowledgements	iv
	List of Contents	v
	List of Figures	vii
	List of Tables	ix
	List of Annexes	xii
	Abbreviations	xiii
1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Study Objectives	1
1.3	Scope of work	1
1.4	Cleaner Production in Sri Lanka	1
1.4.1	<i>What is Cleaner Production</i>	2
1.4.2	<i>NCPC of Sri Lanka</i>	2
1.4.3	<i>Project SMED</i>	3
1.5	Palm oil industry in Sri Lanka	4
1.5.1	<i>Introduction</i>	4
1.5.2	<i>Process Descriptions</i>	4
1.5.3	<i>Waste treatment & Disposal</i>	7
1.6	Layout of the Report	8
2.0	LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1	Palm Oil	10
2.2	Palm Oil and its Derivatives	11
2.3	Life Cycle Analysis	12
2.4	CP and Employment	13
2.5	Quality Control of Palm Oil	15
2.6	Waste Streams of Palm Oil Mills and Potential Usage	16
2.6.1	<i>Empty Fruit Bunches (EFB)</i>	17
2.6.2	<i>Palm Press Fiber (PPF)</i>	19
2.6.3	<i>Palm Kernel Shell (PKS)</i>	19
2.6.4	<i>Palm Kernel Cake (PKC)</i>	20
2.6.5	<i>Decanter Cake (DEC)</i>	21
2.6.6	<i>Boiler Ash (BA)</i>	21
2.6.7	<i>Palm Oil Mill Effluent (POME)</i>	22
2.7	Cogeneration Systems in Palm Oil Mills	23
2.7.1	<i>Calorific Value of Palm Oil Mill Biomass Residue</i>	25
2.7.2	<i>Efficiency of the Boiler</i>	25
2.7.3	<i>Electrical Energy</i>	26
2.7.4	<i>Efficiency of the Steam Turbine</i>	26
2.7.5	<i>Utilisation Factor</i>	26
2.7.6	<i>Use of Condensing Turbines</i>	27
2.7.7	<i>Improvements With Co-generation Systems</i>	28
2.8	POME Treatment & Discharge Standards	28
2.8.1	<i>Existing Treatment Methods</i>	29
2.8.2	<i>Experimental Treatment Methods</i>	31
2.8.3	<i>Effluent Discharge Standards</i>	38

LIST OF CONTENTS

3.0	METHODOLOGY	39
3.1	Introduction	39
3.2	Planning & Preparation for the CP Audit	39
3.3	Conducting the CP Audit	39
3.3.1	<i>Material Balance</i>	39
3.3.2	<i>Energy Balance</i>	40
3.4	Laboratory analysis of Waste Streams	40
3.4.1	<i>Wastewater Treatment System</i>	40
3.4.2	<i>Development of an Industry Specific Standard for POME Discharge in Sri Lanka</i>	42
3.4.3	<i>Analysis of Solid Waste Streams</i>	43
3.4.4	<i>Heat Generation System - Boiler Analysis</i>	43
3.4.5	<i>Electric Power Utilisation</i>	44
3.5	Identification of CP techniques & Benchmarking	45
4.0	RESULTS & DISCUSSION	46
4.1	Analysis of Production Patterns & Yields	46
4.1.1	<i>Mass Balance of the Production Process</i>	48
4.2	Analysis of the Energy Management System	50
4.2.1	<i>Factory Total Energy Use Profile</i>	50
4.2.2	<i>Analysis of Electric Power Consumption</i>	51
4.2.3	<i>Electrical Energy Utilisation</i>	51
4.2.4	<i>Analysis of Factory kVA Demand</i>	54
4.2.5	<i>Factory Electric Power Measurements & Analysis</i>	55
4.2.6	<i>Boiler Flue Gas Analysis</i>	58
4.2.7	<i>Boiler Heat Balance</i>	59
4.2.8	<i>Thermal Energy Utilisation</i>	62
4.3	Analysis of the Waste Management System	63
4.3.1	<i>Analysis of POME Treatment</i>	63
4.3.2	<i>Waste Streams and Potential Uses</i>	72
4.3.3	<i>Analysis of Solid Waste Streams</i>	73
4.4	Analysis of Factory Water Utilization	76
4.5	Analysis of Human Resources in Nakiyadeniya Palm Oil Mill	77
4.6	Factory Laboratory Analysis	79
4.7	General Housekeeping of the Factory	80
5.0	CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	81
5.1	Effluent (POME) Treatment & Discharge Standards	81
5.2	Thermal Energy Utilisation	81
5.3	Electric Energy Utilisation	82
5.4	Alternative Products from Waste	82
5.5	Production Scheduling and Final Product Quality	82
6.0	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	83
6.1	Use of EFB as a Fuel	83
6.2	Converting into a Co-Generation System	83
6.3	Biogas from POME	83
6.4	Improving Harvesting Techniques	83
6.5	Bio Fuels form Palm Fruits	83
	List of References	
	Annexes	

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.1:** Flow Diagram of the Palm Oil Mill at Nakiyadeniya
- Figure 2.1:** Cross Section of an Oil Palm Fruit
- Figure 2.2:** Composition of Fresh Fruit Bunches
- Figure 2.3:** Co-generative system used in palm oil mills
- Figure 2.4:** Simplified Block Diagram of the Membrane Process for POME Treatment
- Figure 3.1:** Sample Collection Points of the Nakiyadeniya POME Treatment System
- Figure 4.1:** Monthly Variation of FFB Processed at Nakiyadeniya Mill
- Figure 4.2:** Monthly Variation of Kernels Processed at Nakiyadeniya Mill
- Figure 4.3:** Monthly Variation of CPO & Kernel Oil production at Nakiyadeniya Mill
- Figure 4.4:** Analysis of Mass Balance of the Production Process
- Figure 4.5:** Factory Total Energy Use Profile
- Figure 4.6:** Factory Total Energy Cost Profile
- Figure 4.7:** Factory Electrical Energy Use Profile
- Figure 4.8:** Analysis of Monthly Consumption of Electrical Energy
- Figure 4.9:** Analysis of Monthly Electricity Bill
- Figure 4.10:** Analysis of Electrical Consumption for Production
- Figure 4.11:** Efficiency Variation of Motors with Motor Loading
- Figure 4.12:** Power Factor Variation of Motors with Motor Loading
- Figure 4.13:** Measured Operational Load Analysis of Factory Machinery
- Figure 4.14:** Measured Operational Power Factor Analysis of Factory Machinery
- Figure 4.15:** Monthly kVA Demand Analysis of the Factory during April, 2001 to March 2004
- Figure 4.16:** Flue Gas Analysis of the Solid Fuel Fired Boiler
- Figure 4.17:** Inlet and Outlet Streams of the Solid Fuel Fired Boiler

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 4.18:** Energy Balance Graph of the Solid Fuel Fired Boiler
- Figure 4.19:** Temperature variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.20:** pH variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.21:** BOD variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.22:** COD variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.23:** TSS variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.24:** TDS variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.25:** Oil & Grease variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.26:** Total P variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.27:** Total N variation during the POME treatment system
- Figure 4.28:** Water Balance for Nakiyadeniya Palm Oil Mill
- Figure 4.29:** Organisation Chart of the Staff of the Palm Oil Mill



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LIST OF TABLES

- Table 1.1:** Oil Palm Plantation Distribution of Sri Lanka
- Table 2.1:** Ideal Compositions of Palm Fruit Bunch
- Table 2.2:** Major Products of Malaysian Palm Oil Industry
- Table 2.3:** Effects of Processing and Storage on the Quality of Palm Oil
- Table 2.4:** The Chemical Composition of Solid Waste Streams
- Table 2.5:** The Calorific Values of Key Solid Waste Streams
- Table 2.6:** The Nutrient Content of EFB
- Table 2.7:** Mineral Composition Palm Press Fiber
- Table 2.8:** Approximate Analysis of Palm Kernel Shells
- Table 2.9:** Mineral Composition of Palm Kernel Cake
- Table 2.10:** Nutrient Composition of Decanter Cake
- Table 2.11:** Chemical Composition of Boiler Ash
- Table 2.12:** Calorific Value of Mill Biomass Waste
- Table 2.13:** Electrical Energy Required in Palm Oil Mills
- Table 2.14:** Efficiency of Pack Pressure Steam Turbine & Heat Utilisation Factor
- Table 2.15:** Analysis of Condensing & Non-condensing Turbines
- Table 2.16:** General Characteristics of Palm Oil Mill Effluent
- Table 2.17:** Mean Effluent Characteristics of POME Treated by Pond System
- Table 2.18:** Upgrading of Pre-treated Palm Oil Mill Effluent by Water Hyacinth
- Table 2.19:** Summary of Analysis of Treated POME Samples Taken from Representative Treatment Systems
- Table 2.20:** Effect of Sequential Treatment of POME on COD, BOD, TDS and pH
- Table 2.21:** MABR Performance on Steady-state Conditions
- Table 2.22:** Removal of Turbidity, COD & BOD from Membrane Process

LIST OF TABLES

- Table 2.23:** Mean Concentrations and % Removal of SS, BOD and COD for UASB, Activated Sludge and Rock Bed Filtration Processes
- Table 3.1:** POME Test Parameters
- Table 3.2:** Test Parameters for Solid Waste Streams
- Table 4.1:** Palm Oil & Kernel Oil Production Patterns in the Palm Oil Mill (*Annex H*)
- Table 4.2:** Monthly Electrical Consumption of the Palm Oil Mill (*Annex H*)
- Table 4.3:** Monthly kVA Demand Analysis of the Palm Oil Mill
- Table 4.4:** Plant Electrical Machinery and Their General Working Performance (*Annex H*)
- Table 4.5:** Flue Gas Analysis of Solid Fuel Fired Boiler at Nakiyadeniya Palm Oil Factory
- Table 4.6:** Measured Energy Data of the Boiler
- Table 4.7:** Energy Balance for the Solid Fuel Fired Boiler
- Table 4.8:** Wastewater Qualities along the Existing Treatment Process
- Table 4.9:** Analysis of Pond Dimensions and Hydraulic Retention Times
- Table 4.10:** Removal Efficiencies of Existing POME Treatment Technologies
- Table 4.11:** Removal Efficiencies of Experimental POME Treatment Technologies
- Table 4.12:** Effluent Discharge Standards Applicable to Palm Oil Industry
- Table 4.13:** Proposed Industry Specific Standard for Wastewater Disposal in Palm Oil Industry, Sri Lanka
- Table 4.14:** Analysis Results of Solid Waste Streams
- Table 4.15:** Current and Potential Uses of factory's Waste Streams
- Table 4.16:** Analysis of Factory Raw Water Consumption
- Table 4.17:** Labour Deployment of the Palm Oil Mill

LIST OF TABLES


Table 4.18: Laboratory Test Guidelines of the Palm Oil Mill

Table 4.19: Comparison of Sri Lankan Conditions with Industry Standards



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LIST OF ANNEXES

- ANNEX A:** Report on Analysis of Wastewater Carried Out for Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya. (Dry Season), By University of Moratuwa.
- ANNEX B:** Report on Analysis of Wastewater Carried Out for Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya. (Wet Season), By University of Moratuwa.
- ANNEX C:** Report on Determination of Calorific Value for Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya. By Industrial Technology Institute.
- ANNEX D:** Report on Boiler Energy Balance for Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya. By National Engineering Research & Development Centre.
- ANNEX E:** Report on Boiler Flue Gas Analysis for Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya. By National Engineering Research & Development Centre.
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- ANNEX F:** Photographs of Palm Oil Mill, Nakiyadeniya.
- ANNEX G:** Effluent Discharge Standards Applicable to Palm Oil Industry
- ANNEX H:** Findings of the Cleaner Production Audit
(Nakiyadeniya Palm Oil Mill)

ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	- Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer
ADB	- Asian Development Bank
BA	- Boiler Ash
BC	- Belt Coupling
BOD₅²⁰	- Biochemical Oxygen Demand, 5 day at 20 ⁰ C
CEA	- Central Environmental Authority
COD	- Chemical Oxygen Demand
CP	- Cleaner Production
CPO	- Crude Palm Oil
DC	- Direct Coupling
DC – GB	- Direct Coupling with Gear Box
DEC	- Decanter Cake
EFB	- Empty Fruit Bunches
FFA	- Free Fatty Acid
FFB	- Fresh Fruit Bunches
ITI	- Industrial Technology Institute
KO	- Kernel Oil
NCPC	- National Cleaner Production Centre
NERD	- National Engineering Research & Development
O & G	- Oil and Grease
PKC	- Palm Kernel Cake
PKS	- Palm Kernel Shells
POME	- Palm Oil Mill Effluent
PPF	- Palm Press Fibre, Sri Lanka
RBD	- Refined Bleached Deodorised
SMED	- Small & Medium Scale Entrepreneur Development
TDS	- Total Dissolved Solids
Temp. ⁰C	- Temperature, degrees Celsius
Total N	- Total Nitrogen
Total P	- Total Phosphorus
TSS	- Total Suspended Solids
UOM	- University of Moratuwa