

WHAT'S WRONG WITH PALM OIL?

WHAT IS PALM OIL?

Palm oil is a type of vegetable oil made from the fruit of the African oil palm tree, which originates from West Africa. It can be grown successfully in any humid tropic climate – and today, palm oil is grown throughout the world.

- Palm oil accounts for 35% of the world's vegetable oil production.
- 85% of all globally produced and exported palm oil comes from Malaysia and Indonesia.

PALM OIL IS BAD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

Palm oil is one of the worst agricultural crops for the environment.

- Palm oil trees grow best on land that has not been previously used for agriculture. This means that every day more virgin rainforests are cleared to make room for expanding palm plantations.
- Rainforests have incredibly high levels of biodiversity. Palm oil plantations have incredibly low biodiversity – hundreds of thousands of square miles growing just one plant.
- Chemical pesticide and fertilizers used on palm oil plantations run off into the landscape, polluting local rivers and poisoning people and animals for miles around.
- Palm oil plantations lower the water table, permanently changing the entire region. As the land gets drier, trees die, and the remaining forest yields less fruit for wildlife.



PALM OIL IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

Indonesia now has the third highest greenhouse gas emissions in the world, thanks to deforestation for palm oil.

- Land is cleared using slash-and-burn practices. These fires frequently get out of control.
- They destroy land outside of the plantations and harm people and animals.
- Smoke from these agricultural fires fills the air for months at a time.

Worse yet, the primary rainforests that are targeted for palm oil plantations sit on top of peat bogs.

- The peat bogs store more carbon dioxide than any other ecosystem in the world. Burning them releases more carbon dioxide than burning any other type of forest.
- Peat bog fires can burn underground and cause fires to erupt miles away.

PALM OIL IS A LEADING CAUSE OF ORANGUTAN EXTINCTION.

If the current rate of palm oil industry expansion continues, orangutans will be extinct within the next decade – if not sooner!

- It is estimated that 1,000-5,000 orangutans are killed every year because of palm oil development.
- The loss of orangutan habitat is so severe that the UN has declared the situation a “conservation emergency”.
- In just the last decade, the orangutan population has dropped by 50% - during the same time, the land used for palm oil plantations has doubled.
- Orangutans have lost 90% of their primary tropical rainforest habitat and the wild populations that are left are cut off from each other, left in genetic and reproductive isolation.

PALM OIL IS BAD FOR FARMERS, BAD FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND BAD FOR THE ECONOMY.

- Plantations are notorious for poor working conditions: chemicals, child labor, and long hours. Migrants from other regions are brought into work (sometimes with coercion and deceit).
- In addition, palm oil plantations are frequently established on contested land often resulting in indigenous communities losing their land to large corporations.
- Share-cropping programs “lend” money to farmers to buy supplies to begin growing palm oil trees. These trees do not bear fruit 3-4 years. The high start-up costs mean that farmers rarely manage to earn back enough money to pay the debt and are left in worse poverty than they began. Growing palm trees strips the soil of nutrients leaving poor conditions for farmers to grow other crops once the palm trees are no longer yielding fruit.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Palm oil has become increasingly desirable to manufacturers because it is widely available, cheap to produce, and has a broad spectrum of uses.

WHAT PRODUCTS CONTAIN PALM OIL?

- Almost 50% of all household and food products sold in the throughout North America, Europe, and Australia.
- 10% of all supermarket products: everything from shampoo, toothpaste, washing detergent, cookies, peanut butter, lotion, make-up, and much more!
- Over 70% of palm oil is used in food, but there’s a growing push to use palm oil as bio-fuel.

PALM OIL IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH.

Palm oil is a highly saturated fat, unlike most vegetable oils. Saturated fats can have negative effects on your health: they increase cholesterol, are a leading cause of cardiovascular disease, and contribute to Type 2 diabetes. While some saturated fat is necessary in the diet, palm oil isn’t being used to replace traditional saturated fats (which come from meat and dairy) - it’s being used in lieu of traditional, unsaturated vegetable oils, which are generally healthier than palm oil.

WHAT ABOUT “SUSTAINABLE” PALM OIL?

There is no such thing as sustainable palm oil! Palm oil cannot be grown without harming the environment.

Some palm oil products are labelled as RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) certified. However, the RSPO is doing an inadequate job of enforcing its own standards and setting them rigorously enough to ensure that palm oil production is done in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and socially responsible. Unfortunately, many members of the RSPO are still purchasing palm oil from suppliers who are actively engaged in the destruction of rainforest and therefore threatening the survival of the orangutan.

IF IT’S IN EVERYTHING, HOW DO I AVOID IT?

It’s tough, but it’s absolutely doable! You can start figuring out if the products that you buy on a regular basis have palm oil in them – if they do, move to an alternative one, or put pressure on the makers to eliminate palm oil from the ingredients.

Even if you don’t boycott palm oil entirely, you can reduce your consumption of palm, one step at a time! If we all work together to move away from products containing palm oil, we will reduce the global demand for the product, and give the corporations a reason to stop planting more!

For tips, see “**3 Easy Ways to Kick Palm Oil out of Your Life**” at www.orangutan.org/palmoil



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