

Palm Oil Plight

The Scoop

Have you ever heard of palm oil? It's more present in your life than you probably think. Palm oil is used in food, pet food, bath products, cosmetics, and alternative fuels. More than likely, you have a product made of palm oil in your home right now.



What exactly is palm oil? As the name suggests it is an oil extracted from a species of palm tree. This tree grows well in Borneo and Sumatra, two Southeast Asia islands. These islands are also home to rainforests that house diverse species, including orangutans, elephants, rhinos, and tigers. In order to grow palm trees for palm oil huge swaths of this rainforest are cut down to create palm oil plantations. The devastation of this deforestation is widespread and, with continued unsustainable harvesting methods, will cause several species to go extinct.



Fortunately, there are sustainable harvesting methods in practice. Sustainable farms ensure that the land is used as productively and responsibly as possible, that employees are treated fairly, and that assessments are carried out to ensure that their practices are not environmentally catastrophic. These farming methods greatly reduce negative impacts on endangered wildlife as well as ensuring a higher quality of life for the native people.

How You Can Help

Boycotting palm oil products is neither reasonable or ethical. Palm oil farming brings economic well being to poverty stricken countries. In addition, palm oil actually produces more oil than other similar crops. Palm oil is also widely used and boycotting this oil would cause another crop to take its place.

The best method for reducing the impact of palm oil farming on crucial rainforest habitats is to shop sustainably. Cheyenne Mountain Zoo created an app that allows consumers to make sustainable choices as stores as well as lists of companies who use palm oil



sustainably. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) has created a certification that lets consumers know if a product uses sustainable palm oil.

To learn more and download the Sustainable Palm Oil Shopping Guide visit:
<http://www.cmzoo.org/index.php/conservation-matters/palm-oil-crisis/>

Sources:

“About Us.” *RSPO - Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil*, rspo.org/about.

“Palm Oil Crisis.” *CMZoo*, www.cmzoo.org/index.php/conservation-matters/palm-oil-crisis/.