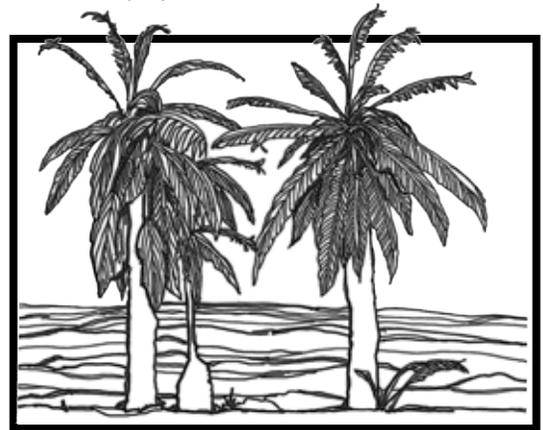


What Is Palm Oil?

Palm oil is an edible vegetable oil that comes from pulping the fruit of oil palm trees. About half of all packaged goods sold in grocery stores contain palm oil and 85% of the world's supply comes from Indonesia. It has become an important source of income and employment for this country. To harvest palm oil all of the rainforest trees in the planting area are cut down and the remaining roots and branches are burned which releases huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. The peatlands where the forests grow are carbon-rich ecosystems that hold billions of tons of carbon through thousands of years of accumulating leaf litter and organic material. After the palms grow, oil is produced from the fruit and is added to chocolate, margarine, biscuits and hundreds of products we use everyday.



Why Is Palm Oil A Problem? Palm oil plantations are the leading cause of rainforest destruction in Indonesia. Logging and plantation development in the tropical rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra have polluted rivers, destroyed fragile ecosystems and pushed populations of some of the world's most endangered species to the brink of extinction.

Do We Need A Solution? Here are some thought starters. Read the following statements, make a few notations on how you feel after each one, then write three paragraphs on your beliefs about the importance of finding a solution.

With every slice of toast we eat, most of us are also eating a slice of the rainforest. _____

The international community could demand that oil palm plantations are not developed in forested areas and that companies only get their products from plantations that do not destroy more rainforest. _____

Nearly 2.5 million acres of Indonesian rainforest is cleared every year. Sun bears, Orangutans, Clouded leopards, Gibbons and Pangolins are now all endangered due to increased deforestation. _____

About 15% of palm oil production is now certified sustainable palm oil. This oil has been produced following a set of guidelines that protects primary rainforest so that no new areas with conservation value can be logged for palm oil production. Although these guidelines exist they are not clearly defined or enforced. _____

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was set up to protect native peoples, wildlife and plantation workers. As a producer of sustainable palm oil, members are not to destroy any primary forest. _____

When 200 year old rainforest trees are chopped down and oil palm trees are planted in their place up to 90% of the wildlife disappears. _____