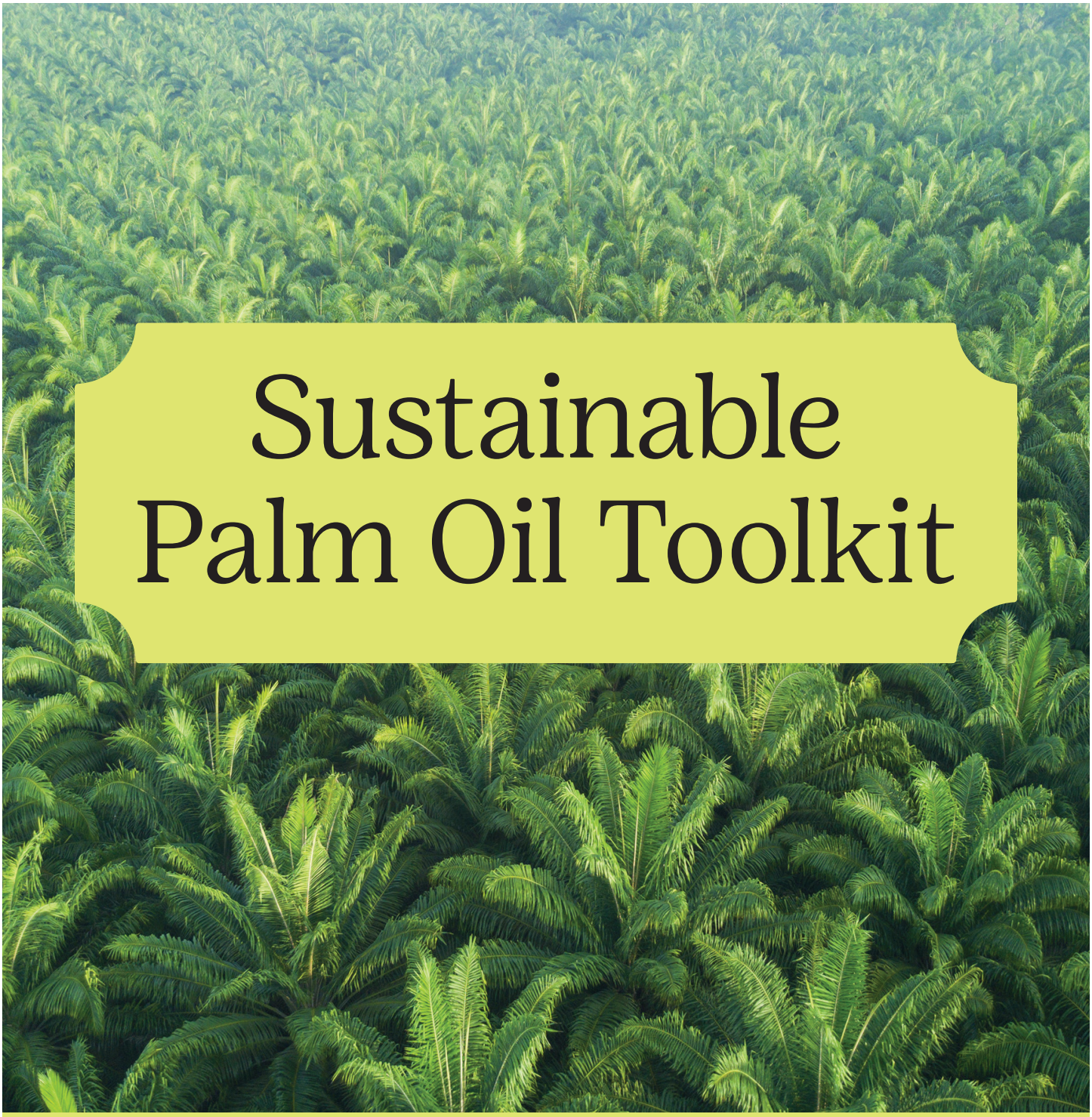
Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit



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girl scouts

CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL™ RSPO

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Volunteer Guide:
The RSPO's Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit for Kids

Learn how to guide your curious Girl Scouts so they understand what it means to be a global citizen who supports the use of sustainable palm oil.

Get Started

Girl Scout Cookies contain palm oil, a fact that concerns some Girl Scouts. However, Girl Scouts and our licensed baker partners, Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers, are working towards achieving 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil products for all Girl Scout Cookies. For now, both bakers use Mass Balance RSPO certified palm oil and include the RSPO Mass Balance logo (i.e. RSPO "Mixed" certification label) on their packaging.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) has created a toolkit to help young people understand where palm oil comes from, why it's used, and what it means to use sustainable palm oil.

When girls run their own Girl Scout Cookie businesses, they learn valuable skills. And like any business leader, girls need to know what goes into the products they sell and how those products affect nature and people. Girl Scouts, their families and cookie customers may have questions about the palm oil in Girl Scout Cookies. This guide is designed to help Girl Scout volunteers explore this complex topic with their cookie entrepreneurs.

1. **Ask girls what it means to be a global citizen.** Ask: What does "global" mean? What does "citizen" mean? And what does it mean to be a global citizen? Share: "Global" includes the whole world. When you're a citizen, you belong to a community of people. Global citizens understand how the decisions they make in their day-to-day lives can influence animals and people all over the world. Girl Scouts are global citizens who develop knowledge, skills, and values that help them make our planet a better place for all. **Ask:** What parts of the Girl Scout Law relate most to being a global citizen?

2. **Learn more about palm oil.** Start by talking about what girls already know. **Ask:** What do you know about palm oil? What questions do you have? **Share:** Palm oil and similar products are in many things we use every day, from lip balm to ice cream. When we use these products, we interact with our planet in ways that affect others. To understand complex issues about palm oil, Girl Scouts need to understand:

   - What is palm oil?
   - Where does palm oil come from?
   - How does palm oil get from the tree to you?
   - Which products contain palm oil?
   - Is palm oil bad for the environment?
   - What is the RSPO, and what does it do?
   - Why can't we replace palm oil with other oils?
   - What can we do?
   - What additional resources are available to learn more?

The RSPO's Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit for Kids helps answer these questions. Use the links and videos in its Additional Resources section to enhance the experience.

Younger girls: Use the toolkit as a visual guide to talk generally about each section. Show them the pictures and paraphrase the content in an age-appropriate way. Pause often for questions and to check for understanding.

Older girls: Break the girls into groups and let them pick a section or two to explore. Then have them share what they learned with the group and discuss how what they learned relates to their Girl Scout Cookie businesses.

3. **Learn about the use of palm oil in Girl Scout Cookies.** Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) and our licensed cookie bakers are members of the RSPO. Our licensed cookie bakers make all the cookies that Girl Scouts use to run their own businesses. Both bakers' future goal is to achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil products in all Girl Scout Cookies they produce. To read more about our bakers' positions on palm oil, visit their websites: Little Brownie Bakers and ABC Bakers.

   Younger girls: Show the group the baker websites, how to reach their FAQ pages, and how to find information about each baker's use of and position on palm oil. Read aloud or paraphrase what you find. Ask girls to explain in their own words what they understand. Discuss how palm oil relates to Girl Scout Cookies and their cookie business.

   Older girls: Break the troop into two groups and assign each a baker to research. Give Girl Scouts some time to research the baker's use and position on palm oil. Then give everyone time to talk through the research within their group. In the end, have a representative or two from each group share with the troop what they've learned about their baker. Discuss how palm oil relates to Girl Scout Cookies and their businesses.

4. **Be prepared.** Review the "Navigating Questions About Palm Oil in Girl Scout Cookies" so you understand Girl Scouts of the USA's stance on this topic and know how to respond to questions about the use of palm oil in Girl Scout Cookies.

5. **Make a difference.** Girl Scouts may be inspired make a difference. This could be as simple as setting team or personal goals for changing their own behaviors. Or they may be interested in learning about other global topics or sharing what they've learned with others. Here are some suggestions:

   a. **Earn the Global Action Award.** Girl Scouts at every level explore the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Girls may be inspired to learn about other topics that affect our global community. Learn more at girlscouts.org or visit the Volunteer Toolkit.

   b. **Complete a Leadership Journey.** Explore new topics, connect with the community, and make a difference in the world. Learn more at girlscouts.org or visit the Volunteer Toolkit.

   c. **Earn one of the highest awards.** Juniors, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors may be interested in earning their Bronze, Silver, or Gold Awards by creating a project focused on sustainable palm oil. Learn more at girlscouts.org/highestawards.

Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit for Kids

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CERTIFIED SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL™

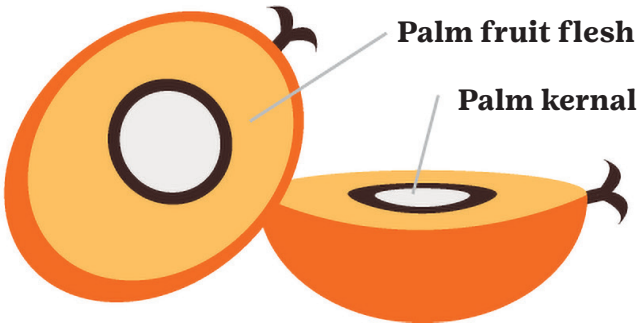
RSPO

What is palm oil?

Palm oil is a type of edible vegetable oil that you wash and cook with—just like olive, canola, sunflower, and coconut oil.

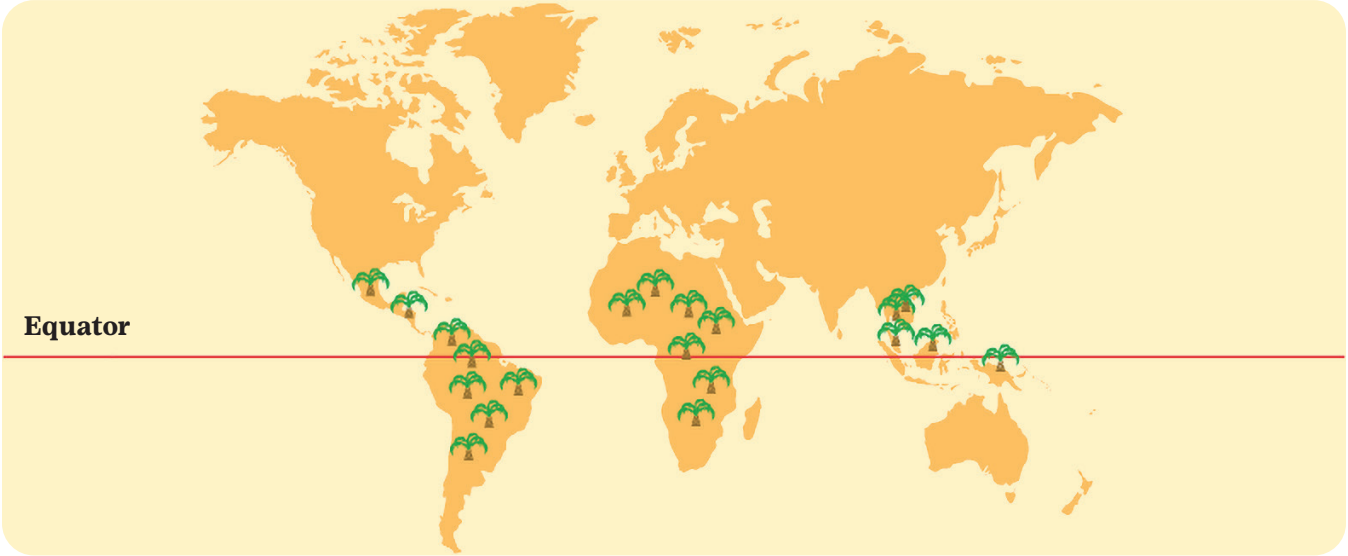
Palm oil is made from the pulp of a fresh fruit that grows in big bunches that are nestled between the branches (known as palm fronds) of oil palm trees. The fruit is then squeezed and pressed in a mill to make the oil.

Oil can be extracted from two parts of the fruit—the palm fruit flesh and the palm kernel.



Where is oil palm grown?

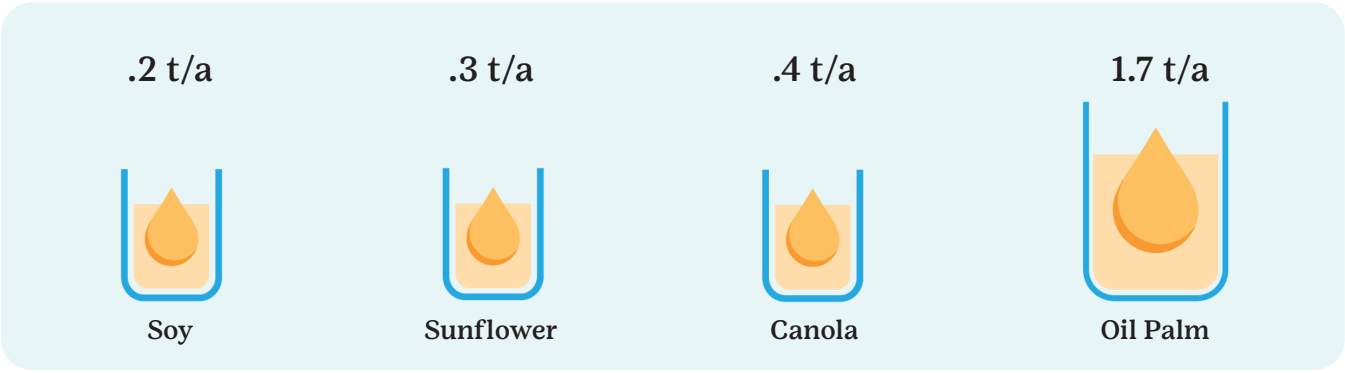
The oil palm tree originally comes from West Africa and only grows in the tropics, roughly 10 degrees above and below the equator.



The trees are grown on what are called oil palm estates or plantations, as well as small-scale family farms. Today, Indonesia is the largest oil palm grower in the world, followed by Malaysia. These two countries alone make up about 85% of the world's total palm oil supply. Thailand is the third largest producer, where almost 70% of farmers are small-scale farmers, which are commonly known as 'smallholders.'

Interesting fact: **Oil palm trees need less land than other vegetable oil crops. Other vegetable oil crops such as soy, sunflower, and canola actually use 4–10 times more land than oil palm trees to get the same amount of oil.**

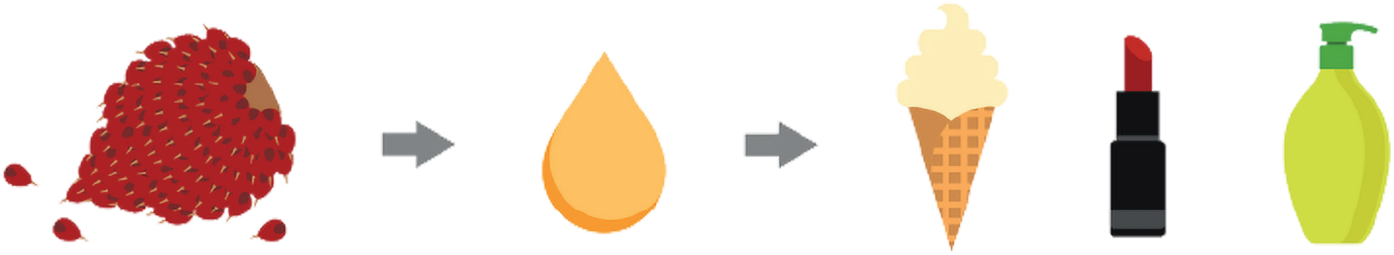
Comparison of global oil yields by crop plant (in tons per acre).



Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 2018

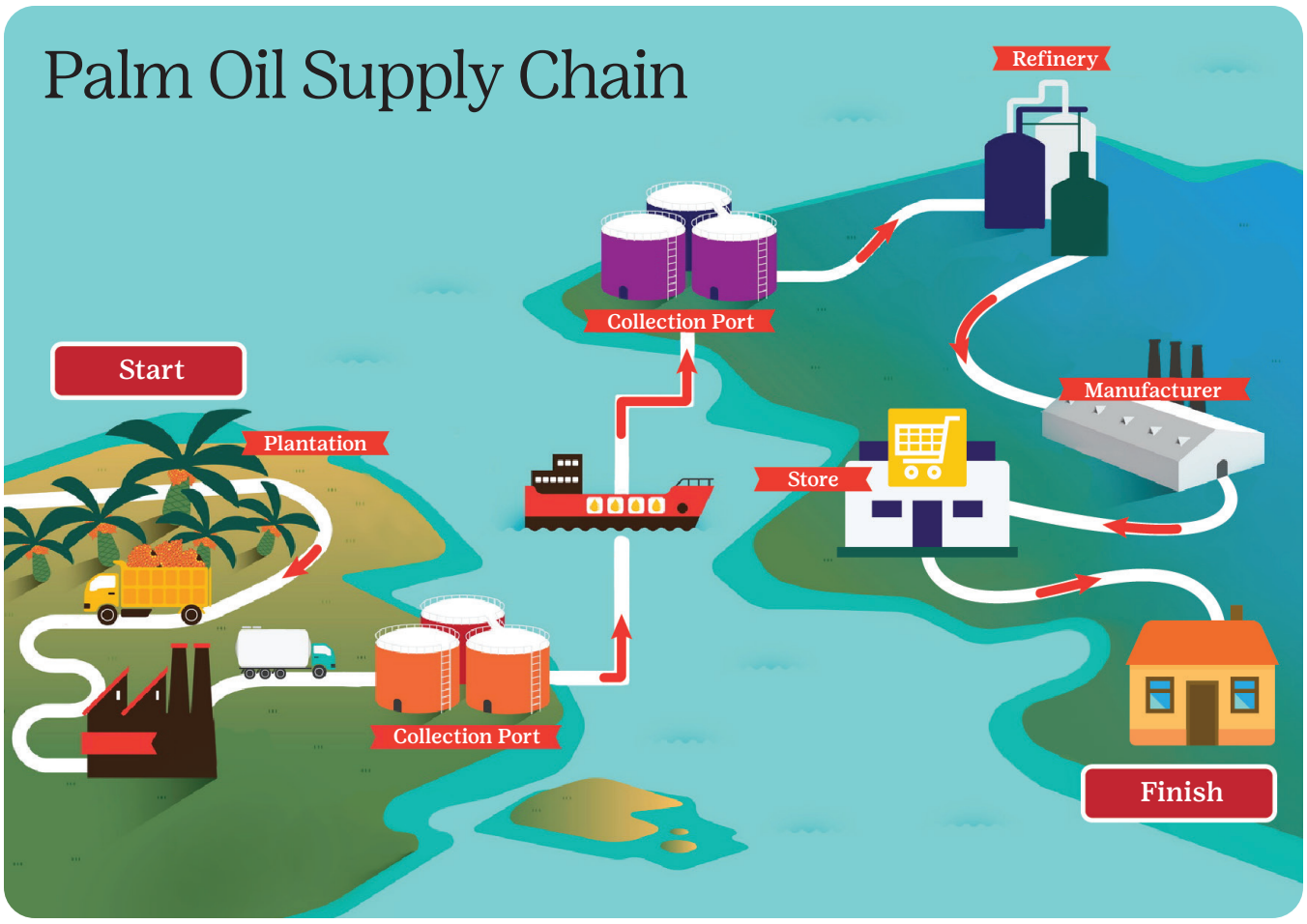
How does oil palm get from the tree to you?

Once the oil palm fruit bunches have been harvested (cut down) from the trees, they are sent to the oil palm mill. This is where the pressing and squeezing of the fresh fruit takes place to make the type of palm oil that is required for the many different products we use at home. We'll explain more about the types of products that contain palm oil in the next section but here are a few examples:



The palm oil supply chain is a big network and it involves many steps along the way before it gets to products on the supermarket shelves, and into your home. For example, if you and your family live in America or somewhere in Europe, it is very likely that the palm oil in the products you use has come all the way from Indonesia or Malaysia.

Activity: **Use your finger to trace the lines of the palm oil supply chain in the picture below to learn more about the steps involved in this process.**



What products contain palm oil?

You may be surprised to learn that palm oil is in almost everything! One of the things that makes palm oil quite different from other vegetable oils is that it can be used in many different ways.

For example, it can be made into a creamy, spreadable texture, or used at a high heat to make fried products crispy and crunchy. It can also become foamy and frothy for use in soap or shampoo, and it can even make packaged products last longer, naturally.

In Asian and African countries in particular, palm oil is also widely used as a cooking oil for frying.

Interesting fact: **Palm oil is in about 50% of packaged products at the supermarket that you and your family buy. From ice cream and chocolate, to pizza, cookies, and cereal, as well as body wash, shampoo, toothpaste, and many more!**

Is palm oil bad for the environment and animals?

Almost all land that is used for farming today was once forest or jungle. As the world's population has grown, our need for more food has also increased, which means land has been cleared for farming animals such as cows, pigs, and chickens as well as vegetable crops like corn, sugarcane, and oil palm trees. When land is cleared, however, this affects the natural environment of the plant and animal species that live there.

Gibbons

EBFoto/Adobe Stock

In some of the areas where oil palm trees grow, there are unique animals, such as chimpanzees, elephants, gibbons, orangutans, and tigers, as well as tropical rain forest tree species like kempas, ramin, and meranti. This is why we want to make sure that palm oil can be grown in a way that does not cause harm to the environment and natural habitat of these plants and animals, as well as the people living and working in these countries. The one way we can do this is by making sure the palm oil in our products is ***'sustainable palm oil.'***

What do we mean by sustainable palm oil?

When a farmer grows oil palm trees in line with a number of strict rules that protect animals, the environment, and people who live and work in oil palm producing countries—then the oil that comes from these farms is known as ***'sustainable palm oil.'*** The rules are set by an organization known as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).

About RSPO

The RSPO has been around since 2004 and works with all the different groups involved in the palm oil supply chain including the farmers, those who transport the oil around the world, banks, food brands you know and love, supermarket chains, and environmental and social non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Everybody in the RSPO works together to decide on the global rules for sustainable palm oil, and they all must follow these rules.

Today, the RSPO has more than 5,100 members worldwide who follow strict criteria that include things like:

- No clearing of new forests or areas with a high number of animal or plant species
- Protecting local communities to make sure their land is not taken from them to be turned into oil palm farms
- No use of fire to clear land
- Protect the rights of people and children living and working in oil palm plantations
- Reduce poverty by helping small farmers to be RSPO certified through training and funding

You may recognize some of the logos of the groups and organizations that started the RSPO:

RSPO Impact

19%
Proportion of global palm oil certified by RSPO

20 million tons
Volume of RSPO certified sustainable palm oil

5,104
RSPO members from around the world

101 countries
RSPO members come from every corner of the world

155,629
Individual smallholders with RSPO membership

1,095,346 acres
RSPO certified, smallholders-managed area

**Data as of May 31, 2021*

For the most recent data, visit rspo.org/impact.

Why can't we simply replace palm oil with other oils?

It may sound like an easy solution, but replacing palm oil with other types of vegetable oil would actually cause more damage and risk more forests (and much larger amounts of land) being cut down for crops to try to replace palm oil. Oil palm trees use 4–10 times less land than other vegetable oil crops to get the same amount of oil.

Secondly, millions of farmers and their families work on oil palm farms and this allows them to provide basic essentials such as food, clean water, housing, and a car. It also allows many of the smallholder (small-scale) farmers to send their children to school.

The best solution is to switch to ***sustainable palm oil*** rather than replacing palm oil with other vegetable oils.

Interesting fact: **It is estimated that more than 3 million smallholder farmers make a living from palm oil globally. In Malaysia and Indonesia alone, smallholders account for about 40% of total global palm oil production.**

RSPO certified smallholder farmer, Elizabeth Japari, from Toniting Village in Sabah, Malaysia has been making a living from growing oil palm for more than 20 years now.

What can we do?

We can all do our part to make sure our palm oil is sustainable and deforestation-free to protect wildlife, the environment, and the people in oil palm producing countries. The best way to do this is to buy products and support brands that use RSPO sustainable palm oil. There are a few ways you can check, but make sure you ask for your parents' help:

1. Check if your favorite brands are certified members of RSPO here
2. Look for the RSPO Trademark logo on your favorite brands and products. You can also check if a brand is using the RSPO Trademark here
3. Ask your parents to download the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Sustainable Palm Oil Shopping App (available at the Apple Store or Google Play) and check if a product you usually buy contains RSPO sustainable palm oil.
4. Check the WWF Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard to find out how your favorite brands are performing on responsible purchasing of palm oil. So next time you go grocery shopping with your parents, you will have a better idea of the brands and products who are doing the right thing and supporting sustainable palm oil. If your favorite brand isn't doing so yet, perhaps you can ask your parents to help you write an email to them to see where they are on their sustainability journey.

Interesting fact: **Since the RSPO Trademark was launched in 2011, it has grown from 12 countries to 60 countries. As of March 2020, the RSPO Trademark now appears on over 400 consumer products. The increase in RSPO Trademark use globally shows that many organizations are supporting more sustainable practices.**

Additional Resources from RSPO

Videos

- WWF video on why consumers should purchase products containing the RSPO trademark: youtu.be/xbws00eLlr0
- Demand Deforestation Free Palm Oil: youtube.com/watch?v=0MBeUxkuhGw
- Our Planet—Jungles: ourplanet.com/en/explore/jungles/

Resources from zoos & NGOs

- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Toolkit: cmzoo.org/index.php/palm-oil-tool-kit/
- Taronga Zoo - Raise your palm: taronga.org.au/conservation-and-science/act-for-the-wild/raise-your-palm
- Woodland Park Zoo Halloween Candy Shopping Guide: zoo.org/file/candy.pdf
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo Palm Oil Toolkit: cmzoo.org/conservation/orangutans-palm-oil/palm-oil-tool-kit/
- Chester Zoo Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit: chesterzoo.org/schools/resources/sustainable-palm-oil-toolkit/
- Palm Beach Zoo—Palm Oil Awareness: palmbeachzoo.org/palm-oil-awareness
- Zoological Society of London—Support Sustainable Palm Oil: zsl.org/about-us/sustainability-at-zsl/support-sustainable-palm-oil
- WWF—wwf.org.au/what-we-do/food/palm-oil#gs.2v5o1q

Resources for parents

- IUCN Palm Oil and Biodiversity: iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/palm-oil-and-biodiversity
- RSPO Principles and Criteria: youtube.com/watch?v=GQ9HN-dyRFg
- RSPO Human Rights youtube.com/watch?v=XJr_a0Dz5iw
- WWF—8 Things you need to know about palm oil: wwf.org.uk/updates/8-things-know-about-palm-oil Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

The RSPO is an international non-profit organization formed in 2004 with the objective to promote the growth and use of sustainable oil palm products through credible global standards and engagement of stakeholders.

rspo.org

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