

# Make a Difference for Wild Orangutans

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo is committed to raising awareness about the complex issues surrounding palm oil. For more information go to [www.cmzoo.org/Conservation/PalmOilCrisis](http://www.cmzoo.org/Conservation/PalmOilCrisis)

## What is Palm Oil?

- It is a form of edible vegetable oil obtained from the fruit of the African oil palm tree.
- African oil palms originated in West Africa, but can flourish wherever heat and rainfall are abundant.
- Currently the majority of all palm oil is grown and produced in Borneo and Sumatra.
- Palm oil is the most widely produced edible oil.
- 33 million metric tons are produced in Indonesia and Malaysia per year (2009) and this is increasing.
- You probably eat and use palm oil every day. It is found in many foods, cosmetics and bath products.
- Demand for this commodity is rapidly increasing because of recent trans-fat health concerns and bio-fuel development.



## How does Growing Palm Oil affect Rainforests?

- Palm oil plantations are not part of the rainforest; palm oil is an introduced agricultural crop.
- When palm oil is produced at certified sustainable plantations and mills, HCV (high conservation value) areas are protected, which includes areas where orangutans are found.
- When palm oil is produced NON-sustainably through destruction of HCV rainforest and peat swamps, this destroys critical rainforest habitat for orangutans, elephants, tigers, sun bears, rhinos and many other species.

## Orangutans

- The wild population of Bornean orangutans is estimated at 45,000.
- There are fewer than 7,300 Sumatran orangutans in the wild; they are listed as one of the top 25 most endangered primates in the world.
- Orangutans are only found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra.
- Orangutans give birth once every 6-10 years, the longest interbirth interval of any mammal, resulting in a slow reproductive rate.
- Orangutans are the only Asian great ape; they are the largest arboreal mammal on earth.
- After logging rainforest habitat, palm oil companies often use uncontrolled burning to clear the land or peat swamp. In 1997-98 a devastating fire killed almost 8,000 orangutans in Borneo.
- Orangutans will be extinct in the wild in 10-15 years if the palm oil industry, deforestation and burning of peat forest do not change.



## Rainforest and Wildlife in Borneo and Sumatra

- Indonesia is facing the highest rate of tropical rain forest loss in the world.
- The deforestation rate is about *18 square miles every day*, or 6,500 square miles per year.
- There are 9.2 million acres of degraded land available that could be used for palm oil plantations (*Fairhurst & McLaughlin, March 2009*). Instead, many companies choose to use high conservation value rainforests in order to gain the additional timber profits.
- Sumatra has 201 mammal species, 580 birds, 217 reptiles, over 70 amphibians, 272 fish and 15,000 plant species. Flagship species include elephants, rhinos, orangutans and tigers.
- Borneo has 222 species of mammals, 420 birds, 180 reptiles, 150 amphibians, 394 fish, and 15,000 plants. Borneo is home to orangutans, elephants, clouded leopards, proboscis monkeys, sun bears, and hornbills.



## Local People in Borneo and Sumatra

- The land for new plantations is often forcibly taken from indigenous people who traditionally owned the land, when palm oil is produced NON-sustainably.
- Palm oil is a huge industry, employing many people. On certified sustainable plantations and mills the workers have decent housing and wages; schools and health clinics are also available. At plantations and mills that are NOT certified, conditions for workers and their families are not regulated.
- Local people can and should be trained in environmentally sustainable agriculture, reforestation techniques, ecotourism, and other sustainable trades, crafts and professions. This is happening in some areas and it is very exciting.

## RSPO – The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

- This is a multi-stakeholder group with many members including social and government organizations, companies, businesses and government institutions.
- RSPO developed and is currently implementing certification standards for sustainable palm oil. Visit [www.rspo.org](http://www.rspo.org) for more information.
- Companies who are members of the RSPO are required to abide by RSPO principles and guidelines.
- Supporting the RSPO's efforts toward certified sustainable palm oil is extremely important.

## Looking at the Big Picture of Palm Oil

- Palm oil plants produce more vegetable oil than other sources. For an acre of land planted with oil palms, compared with canola or soy, oil palms produce about 5 to 10 times the amount of vegetable oil per acre. Palm oil can be a more environmentally friendly source of vegetable oil than other vegetable sources, but *ONLY IF* it is produced sustainably.

## Palm Oil as a Source of Biofuel

- One goal of biofuel is to decrease greenhouse gasses and mitigate global warming.
- HOWEVER...when rainforests and peat swamps are destroyed to produce palm oil for biofuel, the net carbon result may be more detrimental than using fossil fuels.
  - WHY? Rainforests filter massive amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. When palm oil is produced through deforestation, the burning peat soil and loss of rainforest actually causes an *increase* in greenhouse gasses, which contributes to global warming.
- Demanding fuel-efficient vehicles and enabling the majority of consumers to afford them may be a better environmental direction for solving the energy crisis.



### Here is how YOU can help!

- Use CMZ's shopping guide – support companies who are members of RSPO.
- Write to your favorite companies and restaurants to educate them on the importance of using certified sustainable palm oil.
  - Encourage them to become members of RSPO, to do business with companies that supply certified sustainable palm oil, and to label their products accordingly.
- Write to US and Indonesian government officials and tell them you care about the deforestation occurring in Indonesia and Malaysia. Biofuel made from palm oil is *NOT* a “green” solution to the energy crisis and it actually contributes to global warming.
- Ask for FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council) wood products and lumber.
- Use recycled household and office paper products.
- Learn more. Spread the word. [www.cmzoo.org/Conservation/PalmOilCrisis](http://www.cmzoo.org/Conservation/PalmOilCrisis)

**Demand Certified Sustainable Palm Oil & Product Labeling.  
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