

# PALM OIL: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly



## What is Palm Oil?

Palm oil is the most widely consumed vegetable oil on the planet and can be found in around 50% of products on supermarket shelves. This versatile oil appears in food products, toiletries, household products, and even fuel.

### The problem with palm oil is how it is produced.

Over 85% of the global palm oil supply comes from Indonesia and Malaysia, where some of the world's most biodiverse forests are being torn down to make way for palm oil plantations. It is estimated that approximately one football pitch sized area of forest is lost every 25 seconds in Indonesia. As the forest disappears, orang-utans lose their homes, food sources, and lives.

## The Good



In 2014, an EU directive was introduced to help consumers identify and avoid palm oil.

Palm oil must be explicitly listed as an ingredient, rather than under the vague label of "vegetable oil". However, this only applies to food products and is still hidden in various products such as toiletries and household chemicals.

In efforts to reduce the number of illegal palm oil plantations, many companies have now signed up to RSPO (Round-table on Sustainable Palm Oil). By doing so, they have pledged to source palm oil from one or more traceable sources, which do not mix sustainable and non-sustainable palm oil. RSPO certified brands can be recognised by this logo:



## The Bad



However, there is an argument that no palm oil production can be said to be truly sustainable.

The RSPO has been heavily criticised for not setting high enough standards or enforcing regulations. There is little evidence of any improvements in the protection of orang-utans, or in the sustainability of the certified plantations.

At Monkey World, we strive to use palm oil free alternatives wherever possible, including in our Gift Shop and Cafes, however they are increasingly difficult to source. For our annual Easter egg giveaway only one supermarket was able to offer us an affordable, palm oil free alternative.



## The Ugly



The increase in global demand for palm oil has contributed to wild orang-utan populations plummeting over the last 20 years.

Since 1999, over 100,000 orang-utans have been killed in Borneo alone. In 2016, Bornean orang-utans joined their Sumatran cousins as they were upgraded to critically endangered.

Orang-utans have slow reproductive rates, with females having one offspring every 6-8 years. With up to 25 orang-utans currently dying every day in Borneo & Sumatra, they cannot compete with the declining wild populations.

