

All About Palm Oil

What is Palm Oil?

Palm oil is an oil made from the fruit of the palm tree. It is used in lots of different foods that we eat but growing palm trees damages the world's rainforests and affects all of the animals that live in them, too.

Did You Know...?

- Palm oil is the most widely **consumed** vegetable oil on the planet!
- About half of all packaged products sold in a supermarket contain palm oil!
- These trees grow naturally in West Africa but are now mostly grown in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Why Is It Useful?

Palm oil is a very useful ingredient in many different products. For example, it is used in margarine because it stays solid at room temperature, in chocolate because it makes it look shiny and in soap because it helps to moisturise our skin!

What's the Problem with Palm Oil?

Palm trees grow best in a tropical climate so many farmers are clearing large areas of tropical rainforest in

order to grow lots of trees together. Clearing rainforests is called **deforestation**. The problem is that these tropical rainforests are home to a diverse population of animals and plants. Many animals who live in the rainforests, such as orangutans, are already **endangered** and are now losing their natural habitat because of intensive palm oil farming.

What Can We Do to Help?

If we want to help protect our rainforests, we can choose to do some or all of the following:

1. Buy products that do not contain any palm oil.
2. Only buy products which contain sustainable palm oil. This means that the palm oil was grown and made in a responsible way which does not harm animals or the rainforests.



- Write to the manufacturers of our favourite foods to persuade them to use sustainable palm oil, if they do not already.

Glossary

consumed – A food (or drink) which is eaten or used up.

deforestation – The action of clearing a wide area of trees.

endangered – An animal species which is in danger of extinction (dying out forever).



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Questions

1. What is palm oil made from? Tick **one**.
 - lots of different foods
 - rainforests
 - palm leaves
 - the fruit of the palm tree
2. Why is palm oil used in margarine? Tick **one**.
 - It helps it to stay shiny.
 - It stays solid at room temperature.
 - It is a very useful ingredient.
 - It damages the world's rainforests.
3. Why are animals losing their natural habitat? Tick **one**.
 - because they are endangered
 - because of intensive palm oil farming
 - because many products contain palm oil
 - because palm trees grow naturally in West Africa
4. Which animals living in the rainforests are already endangered? Tick **two**.
 - orangutans
 - dogs
 - snakes
 - tigers
5. Where are palm trees mostly grown now?
 1. _____
 2. _____
6. Look at the section under the subtitle **What's the Problem with Palm Oil?** Find and copy a word which means that there are a wide range of all types of animals and plants.

7. Why should we help to protect the rainforests for the future?

Answers

1. What is palm oil made from? Tick **one**.
 - lots of different foods
 - rainforests
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 - because palm trees grow naturally in West Africa
4. Which animals living in the rainforests are already endangered? Tick **two**.
 - orangutans**
 - dogs
 - snakes
 - tigers**
5. Where are palm trees mostly grown now?
 - 1. Indonesia**
 - 2. Malaysia**
6. Look at the section under the subtitle **What's the Problem with Palm Oil?** Find and copy a word which means that there are a wide range of all types of animals and plants.
diverse
7. Why should we help to protect the rainforests for the future?
Pupils' own responses, such as: We should protect the rainforests because they are home to lots of different animals and plants.

All About Palm Oil

What is Palm Oil?

Palm oil is an important and widely-used vegetable oil which is made from the fruit of the palm tree. It is used in a huge variety of different foods and household products but growing palm trees affects the world's tropical rainforests by contributing to **deforestation**. Many **endangered** species which inhabit these rainforests are harmed by the widespread farming of palm oil.

Did You Know...?

- About half of all packaged products sold in a supermarket contain palm oil!
- Iceland, a supermarket in the UK, has decided to cease using palm oil in their products because they think the way it is made causes too much harm to our rainforests.

Why Is It Useful?

Palm oil is an incredibly useful ingredient which is found in many kinds of different products sold in our supermarkets. It remains a solid at room temperature, is inexpensive and helps to moisturise our skin. As a result, palm oil is

included in many products we use every day, from chocolate to instant noodles and shampoo to soap.



What's the Problem with Palm Oil?

Palm trees grow naturally in a tropical climate so many farmers are clearing tropical rainforests in order to farm large areas of palm trees in a **plantation**. Clearing rainforests by felling or burning trees is known as **deforestation**. However, these ancient rainforests are a habitat for a diverse population of animals and plants. Many animals who live in the rainforests, such as orangutans and tigers, are already **endangered**. Also, rainforests help to keep our air clean by absorbing harmful carbon dioxide and producing oxygen.



What Can We Do to Help?

There are several ways in which we can help protect rainforests for the

future. Firstly, we can choose products that either do not contain any palm oil or those which contain sustainable palm oil. This means that the palm oil was grown and made in a responsible way which does not harm animals or the rainforests. Secondly, we can write to the manufacturers of our favourite foods to persuade them to use sustainable palm oil, if they do not already.

Glossary

deforestation – The action of clearing a wide area of trees.

endangered – An animal species which is in danger of extinction (dying out forever).

plantation – An area in which trees or crops have been planted.



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Questions

1. How is palm oil used? Tick **one**.

- from the fruit of the palm tree
- in a huge variety of different foods and household products
- in the widespread farming of palm oil
- to contribute to deforestation

2. In which products is palm oil included? Tick **two**.

- chocolate
- shampoo
- furniture
- clothing

3. Where do palm trees grow naturally? Tick **one**.

- in a supermarket.
- in a cold climate.
- in a desert.
- in a tropical climate.

4. Match each statement to the correct subtitle.

Why Is It Useful?

What's the Problem with Palm Oil?

Palm oil is used in many kinds of products in our supermarkets.

Farmers are felling trees in rainforests in order to grow palm trees.

Palm oil is used in some products because it moisturises our skin.

Lots of different animals and plants live in rainforests.

5. Fill in the missing words.

About _____ of all packaged products _____ in a supermarket contain _____ oil.

6. Find and copy a word which shows that a supermarket in the UK has stopped using palm oil.

7. What do you think will happen if farmers continue to fell or burn trees in the rainforests?

8. Explain why we should help to protect the rainforests for the future.

Answers

1. How is palm oil used? Tick **one**.

- from the fruit of the palm tree
- in a huge variety of different foods and household products**
- in the widespread farming of palm oil
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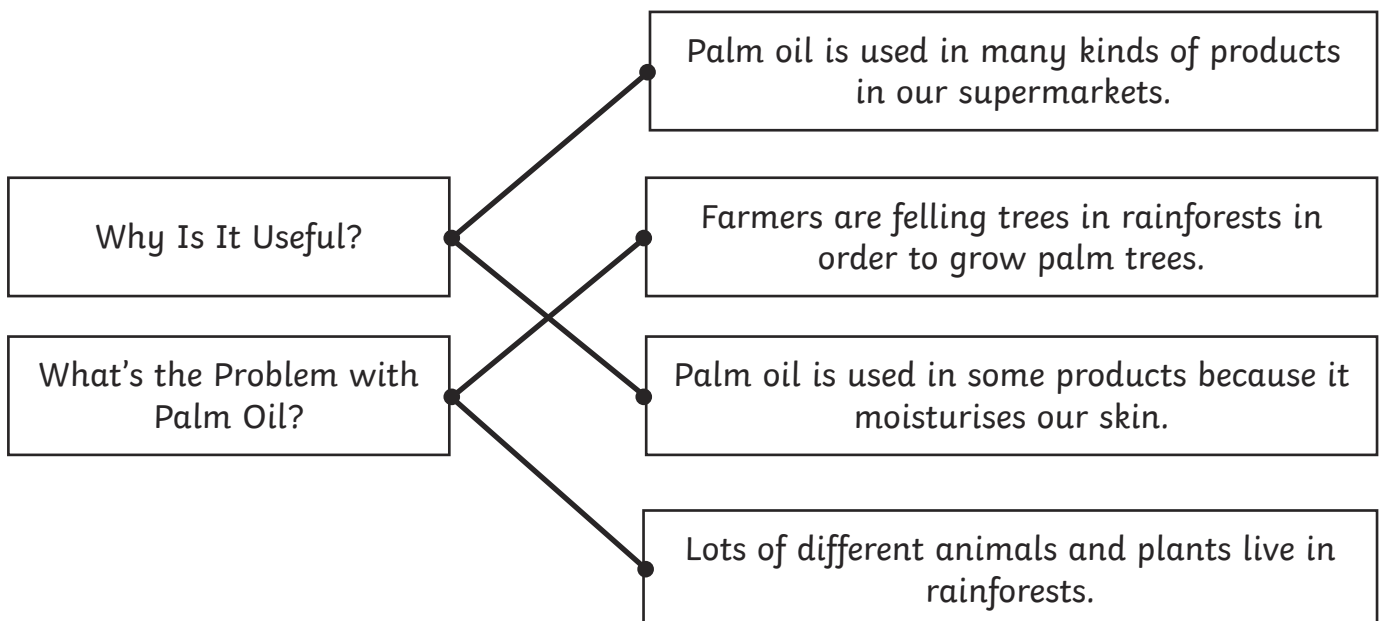
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- chocolate**
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- furniture
- clothing

3. Where do palm trees grow naturally? Tick **one**.

- in a supermarket.
- in a cold climate.
- in a desert.
- in a tropical climate.**

4. Match each statement to the correct subtitle.



5. Fill in the missing words.

About **half** of all packaged products **sold** in a supermarket contain **palm** oil.

6. Find and copy a word which shows that a supermarket in the UK has stopped using palm oil.

cease

7. What do you think will happen if farmers continue to fell or burn trees in the rainforests?

Pupils' own responses, such as: There will be no rainforests left and many endangered animals, such as orangutans and tigers, will lose their homes.

8. Explain why we should help to protect the rainforests for the future.

Pupils' own responses, such as: We should protect the habitats of endangered animals and look after rainforests because they also help to keep our air clean.

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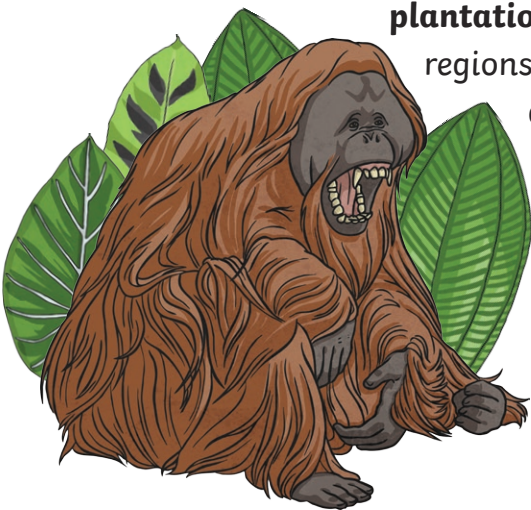
About half of all packaged products sold in a supermarket contain palm oil, a vegetable oil which is derived from the fruit of the palm tree. It is included in a wide variety of different foods and household products. However, the manufacture of palm oil is **controversial** because it often involves farming large areas of palm trees on land that was previously tropical rainforests. The **deforestation** of ancient and biodiverse tropical rainforests has been linked with a decline in habitats for endangered species and also with an increase in air pollution.

Why Is It Useful?

Palm oil has many special properties which make it an incredibly useful ingredient in various products which we buy. For example, it remains a solid at room temperature, is inexpensive and, due to its skin-conditioning ability, it even helps to moisturise our skin and hair! Consequently, palm oil is included in many daily-use products, from chocolate to instant noodles, shampoo to soap and even in biofuel which can power transportation or provide heat!

What's the Problem with Palm Oil?

Palm trees grow naturally in West Africa, a tropical climate. However, palm tree **plantations** are currently being developed in widespread regions of Indonesia and Malaysia. These countries are home to areas of tropical rainforests, which are being cleared to make way for the **plantations**. Clearing rainforests by felling or burning trees is known as **deforestation**. This is **controversial** because not only are these ancient rainforests a habitat for a diverse population of animals and plants, but they



Did You Know...?

- Greenpeace – an organisation concerned with protecting rainforests and our natural world – say that, in Indonesia, an area the size of a football pitch is cut down every 25 seconds.
- Sometimes palm oil might not be clearly labelled on the ingredients lists of products. Other names might include: vegetable oil, vegetable fat or even glyceryl!

also help to provide essential oxygen and absorb harmful carbon dioxide, keeping our air clean. Many species – including orangutans, tigers and elephants – which live in the rainforests are already at a risk of extinction and need their habitats to be protected in order to prevent further losses.

What Can We Do to Help?

There are several ways in which we can help to protect the tropical rainforests.

Firstly, we can choose to buy products that do not contain any palm oil at all. Iceland, a supermarket in the UK, has decided to stop using palm oil because they think its manufacture results in too much harm to our rainforests. Alternatively, we could buy products which contain **sustainable** palm oil – that which was grown and made in a responsible way, not harming the biodiversity of the rainforests. Finally, we could contact the manufacturers of our favourite products in order to urge them to use **sustainable** palm oil across all of their products.



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Glossary

controversial – Likely to cause public disagreement.

deforestation – The action of clearing a wide area of trees.

plantation – An area in which trees or crops have been planted.

sustainable – Keeping a balance by avoiding reducing natural resources.

Questions

1. What fraction of all packaged products contain palm oil? Tick **one**.
 - about a quarter
 - about a third
 - about a fifth
 - about a half
2. Why is the manufacture of palm oil controversial? Tick **two**.
 - because it gives us various different products
 - because it is linked to a decline in habitats for endangered species
 - because it involves farming large areas of palm trees where tropical rainforests are
 - because it is inexpensive

3. Give one example of a product which includes palm oil.

4. Look at the **Did You Know...?** fact box. What does the author mean when they say Greenpeace is '**concerned with protecting our natural world**'?

5. Fill in the missing words.

Clearing _____ by _____ or _____ trees is known as deforestation.

6. What do you think will happen if farmers continue with deforestation?

7. Why do you think the author has told us that palm oil might be labelled in different ways?

8. Why should we persuade the manufacturers of products which use palm oil to change what they do? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Answers

1. What fraction of all packaged products contain palm oil? Tick **one**.
 - about a quarter
 - about a third
 - about a fifth
 - about a half**
2. Why is the manufacture of palm oil controversial? Tick **two**.
 - because it gives us various different products
 - because it is linked to a decline in habitats for endangered species**
 - because it involves farming large areas of palm trees where tropical rainforests are**
 - because it is inexpensive
3. Give one example of a product which includes palm oil.
One answer from the following choices: chocolate, instant noodles, shampoo, soap or biofuel.
4. Look at the **Did You Know...?** fact box. What does the author mean when they say Greenpeace is '**concerned with protecting our natural world**'?
It means that they worry about and work hard to look after parts of our world, such as rainforests, and keep them safe.
5. Fill in the missing words.
Clearing **rainforests** by **felling** or **burning** trees is known as deforestation.
6. What do you think will happen if farmers continue with deforestation?
Pupils' own responses, such as: There will be no rainforests left and many endangered animals, such as orangutans, tigers and elephants, would lose their homes.
7. Why do you think the author has told us that palm oil might be labelled in different ways?
The author is helping us to identify or find palm oil in lots of different products so we know it is there.
8. Why should we persuade the manufacturers of products which use palm oil to change what they do? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it important for them to change what they are doing because the manufacture of palm oil is controversial. It contributes to deforestation and we should be protecting the tropical rainforests for endangered animals.