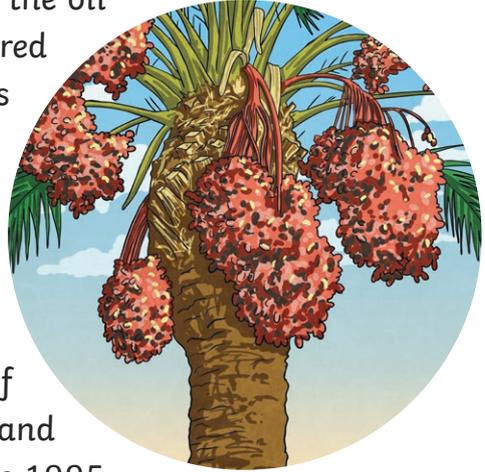


# Palm Oil

Palm oil is a vegetable oil derived from the fruit of the oil palm tree (*Elaeis Guineensis*). This reddish coloured fruit is about the size of a large olive and contains a single seed or kernel. Originally grown in West Africa, the palm tree is a tropical plant that grows in countries around the equator (such as Indonesia and Malaysia) as the tree thrives in hot, humid conditions. Each palm oil fruit contains 30-35% oil and a single tree produces 40 kilograms of palm oil every year. Palm oil is in increasing demand and global consumption of it has risen rapidly since 1995.



Today, it is believed that over half of the products for sale in the supermarket contain palm oil. Due to the world's population growth, the demand for palm oil is growing at an alarming rate and there are concerns about the impact that this is having on the environment and wildlife.

## Pros and Cons

The production of palm oil is a controversial topic. Palm oil is the main agricultural export of Indonesia and Malaysia and the production of it provides vital jobs and economic stability in these relatively poor countries. Palm oil has provided jobs for millions of small, rural farms helping them to get out of poverty and to provide for themselves and their families. Many developing countries depend on the palm oil industry in order to grow and prosper.

However, it is widely believed that the palm oil industry is having a devastating impact on the environment, namely the world's rainforests. **Deforestation** is destroying the habitat of many endangered animals such as orangutans, tigers and elephants. Burning forests to clear room so that people can grow palm trees means that the rainforests have less **biodiversity** and leaves animals homeless, starving or ultimately, both.

Another issue related to the growth of the palm oil industry is the negative impact that it has on **indigenous** people of the rainforests. As deforestation occurs, tribal groups are often forced to relocate to areas where resources are scarce and where they have to change their way of life. Sadly, the rights and local knowledge of these indigenous groups are rarely recognised or respected.

## Sustainability

As the world's population continues to grow, so will the demand for palm oil. So, what can be done to decrease the impact on the environment? Experts believe that palm oil can and should be produced but that it needs to be done in a sustainable and responsible way in order to limit the social and environmental costs.

The RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) was established in 2014 and is the globally recognised standard for sustainable palm oil. Forty per cent of the world's palm oil producers are members of the RSPO and are committed to producing palm oil according to eight different principles. These principles include respecting local communities affected by palm oil mills, complying with relevant laws and regulations and conserving natural resources and biodiversity of the environment.

### Did You Know...?

Palm oil is used in some chocolate to give it a shiny and smooth appearance. It also helps to stop it from melting. Remember to look for the RSPO label next time you buy a bar of chocolate to ensure that it contains sustainably produced palm oil!



### What Can We Do?

It is impossible to stop buying products that contain palm oil altogether. It is found in a wide variety everyday items from ice-cream to washing detergent to pizza. However, there are certain measures that we can all take to ensure that we are buying as responsibly as possible.



Look for the RSPO label - This will give you the confidence that the palm oil in the product was produced in a socially and environmentally responsible way.



If you can't find the RSPO label, look for the Green Palm label - This label indicates that the product is in support of the transition to sustainable palm oil and proceeds to the Green Label help growers to make the transition. producing palm oil in a sustainable way.

### Glossary

#### Deforestation

the action of clearing a wide area of trees and forests

#### Biodiversity

the variety of important plant and animal life in a particular habitat

#### Indigenous

originating or occurring naturally in a particular place

# Questions

1. How much oil does a single palm oil tree produce in a year? Tick one

- 30 kilograms
- 40 kilograms
- 35 kilograms
- 95 kilograms

2. Explain in your own words why the palm oil industry is mainly based in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

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3. Why do you think that the palm oil industry is described as being a 'controversial' topic? Explain fully referring to the text in your answer.

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4. How does deforestation affect the wildlife of the rainforest? Explain your answer fully.

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5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below:

*As deforestation occurs, \_\_\_\_\_ groups are often forced to \_\_\_\_\_ to areas where resources are \_\_\_\_\_ and where they have to change their way of life.*

6. Why is it becoming increasingly important that palm oil is produced in a sustainable way? Explain fully referring to the text in your answer.

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7. Find and copy a word that means *ideologies*.

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8. What percentage of the world's palm oil producers are members of the RSPO? Tick one.

- 30%
- 35%
- 40%
- 20%

9. Why is palm oil used in chocolate?

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10. How can shoppers help to reduce the impact that the palm oil industry has on the environment. Explain your answer fully.

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# Answers

1. How much oil does a single palm oil tree produce in a year? Tick one

- 30 kilograms
- 40 kilograms**
- 35 kilograms
- 95 kilograms

2. Explain in your own words why the palm oil industry is mainly based in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

**Pupil's own response, such as: The palm oil industry is mainly based in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia as they are near the equator and it says in the text that the palm oil tree thrives in hot and humid conditions. Countries near the equator are very hot and some receive a lot of rainfall.**

3. Why do you think that the palm oil industry is described as being a 'controversial' topic? Explain fully referring to the text in your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think that the palm oil industry is described as being controversial because there are positive and negative aspects to it. For example, the palm oil industry provides jobs and economic stability to lots of developing countries who now depend on it to grow. However, there are lots of negative aspects such as deforestation, the decline in biodiversity and the negative impact that it has on indigenous people.**

4. How does deforestation affect the wildlife of the rainforest? Explain your answer fully.

**Pupil's own response, such as: Deforestation affects the rainforest because it destroys the natural habitats and homes of animals and wildlife that are already endangered. It also reduces the biodiversity which means that those animals have less food to eat so they could starve to death.**

5. Fill in the missing words in the sentence below:

*As deforestation occurs, **tribal** groups are often forced to **relocate** to areas where resources are **scarce** and where they have to change their way of life.*

6. Why is it becoming increasingly important that palm oil is produced in a sustainable way? Explain fully referring to the text in your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: It is becoming increasingly important that palm oil is produced in a sustainable way because the global population is growing and it says in the text that the demand for it has grown rapidly since 1995.**

7. Find and copy a word that means *ideologies*.

**Principles**

8. What percentage of the world's palm oil producers are members of the RSPO? Tick one.

- 30%
- 35%
- 40%**
- 20%

9. Why is palm oil used in chocolate?

**Because it gives it a shiny, smooth appearance.**

10. How can shoppers help to reduce the impact that the palm oil industry has on the environment. Explain your answer fully.

**Pupil's own response, such as: Shoppers can help to reduce the impact that the palm oil industry has on the environment by only buying products that contain palm oil that has been sustainably produced. They need to look for the RSPO or the Green Palm labels on the products.**