

Deforestation Palm Oil & You

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Palm Oil and Deforestation

Economic growth as a result of manufacturing and exportation of palm oil and consumption of goods with palm oil in them has led to a terrifying maelstrom of environmental impacts. Creation of palm oil plantations has meant deforestation and destruction of crucial habitats. Burning of forests has released toxic CO₂ gas into the atmosphere, thus exacerbating climate change and global warming.

How did this happen?

It's no surprise that chasing profits has had disastrous effects on the planet's health. Palm oil is no exception; the product itself is extremely useful in its capacities as a stabilizer in packaged foods, as a cheap frying oil, as biofuel, etc.

In the 1960s, a health-scare surrounding saturated fats began to take hold, influenced by new scientific research. Companies began to change the processes by which they created fat in foods—partial hydrogenation—which led to the creation of the even healthier trans-fats.

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In the early 1990s, Unilever sought to get away from the now maligned trans fats... and landed on a much healthier alternative. Palm oil was seemingly the only alternative. It would be able to handle extensive refining to a specific consistency without producing trans fats.

Thus, Unilever led a movement of other large companies to enter the 21st century under a new method of production.

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Corporate profits weren't the only thing feeding into the palm oil complex: GDP in India grew by more than \$1,000 over a period of 20 years. As GDP grew, the trend of fat consumption grew, as well. And what better fat to consume than the cheap, healthy(ish) palm oil?

It's not good for the animals....

Orangutans, native to Borneo and Sumatra are the species primarily displaced and depleted by palm oil plantations. As more space is cleared for plantations, valuable habitats are destroyed and Orangutan mothers are separated from their young.

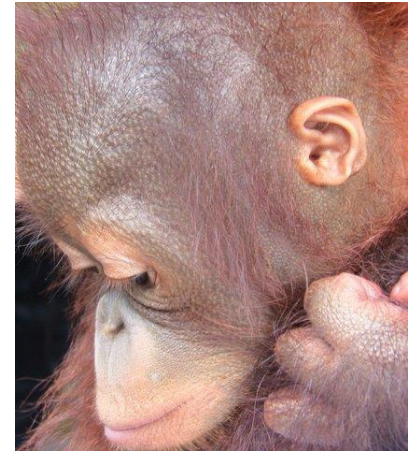


Orangutan Facts

The name “Orangutan” means “man of the forest.”

Bornean and Sumatran Orangutan are both endangered, though Sumatran more than Bornean.

The Orangutan population has been falling by roughly one percent every year for the last 60 years, due to forest fires, logging, and palm oil.



The sad truth:



Orangutan mothers are shot if they are found wandering onto palm oil plantations, trying to find their destroyed home, or in trees that have been designated to be cut down.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 Orangutan killed every year. With only 65,000 (a generous estimate) remaining in the wild, they will be extinct by 2050.

Orangutan share 97% of DNA with humans (that's 72% more than we share with our favorite pets—dogs) and yet still they are being murdered at an alarming rate, in almost complete silence.

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The population of Indonesia has increased by more than 230 million in the last 120 years. It will continue growing, demand for natural resources will continue growing, and the Orangutan population will continue shrinking.

The forests will continue to be cut down, and carbon dioxide will continue to fill the atmosphere at unmanageable rates.

This is a human rights crisis, too.

Populations of developing countries in Southeast Asia are disproportionately affected by climate change and global warming. They often have longer, more intense seasons, including the terrible monsoon season. Many of them are islands, as well, making them more susceptible to flooding and water damage.

Palm oil may seem like an economic savior in places like Borneo and Sumatra, Indonesia and Malaysia (who contribute to a large part of palm oil consumption, along with India and China). However, the long term costs are and will continue to be catastrophic.

What Can I Do!?!?

It's always a good idea to buy fresh and unprocessed foods, but it's not realistic or possible for everyone to be able to do that. Buying palm oil free foods is one big step, as well as finding certified sustainable palm oil foods.

There's one great way to do all of this, and it's through the sustainable palm oil shopping app, linked [HERE](#)

I have created a facebook group, linked [HERE](#), where we can formulate ideas and change together in a respectful and productive manner.

There's still hope

Bill Gates has recently begun funding research into [lab grown](#), [synthetic palm oil](#).

There's so much we can do as individuals to put an end to this crisis.

We can, we will do better.