

Action on Palm Oil

Palm oil is an important commodity in the global food and fuel market. It is used widely in foodstuffs like biscuits, domestic items like toothpaste and shampoo, animal feed and biofuels. Oil palms grow fast, the oil extraction process is efficient, and the economic benefits are persuasive.

Sadly, this has led to unsustainable cultivation. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that an average of 13 million hectares a year was lost to deforestation between 2000 and 2010: the World Wide Fund for Nature has compared this rate of loss to 36 football fields a minute. Oil palm cultivation is a significant threat to tropical forests: in particular, it is the main cause of rainforest destruction in Indonesia and Malaysia, where most of the world's oil palms are grown. As well as its environmental impact, this is threatening biodiversity: palm oil logging in Indonesia has become the greatest threat to the survival of Orang Utans in the wild.

Concerted campaigning in recent years has caused many prominent companies to join the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has recently issued reports of research conducted for it by Proforest analysing the palm oil supply chain and considering policy options. But it is important that the UK Government follows up this good work by setting a good example in ensuring its own commitment to increasing the use of sustainable palm oil.

Write or send the action card to Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and ask her to determine from the Office of Government Commerce what percentage of Government departmental procurement and contracted catering services uses sustainable Palm Oil. In the light of the Defra's recent reports, please ask them to consider how this percentage can be increased

You can contact the Office of Government Commerce at the below address. Alternatively consider arranging to meet your local MP and discuss your concerns in person.

The Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP
Defra
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Tel: 08459 33 55 77

Email: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Defra research: reports and key findings: <http://www.proforest.net/proforest-news/defra-palm-oil-report/defra-report-on-uk-palm-oil-consumption-and-sustainable-policy-options-published>