

The Edible Oil Palm Tree (*Elaeis guineensis*)

A worksheet for Year 4

Do you recognise this tree?
Or maybe its fruits?



1

It is the Oil Palm Tree. Originally native to Africa, it is now also found in Indonesia and Malaysia. Two of the most popular vegetable oils come from this tree – palm oil and palm kernel oil. Palm oil comes from the orange fleshy fruits of the plant and palm kernel oil comes from the seeds within the fruit.

Can we eat these oils? What are they good for?

Yes – palm kernel oil is used in cooking and palm oil is found in nearly everything we use: pizzas, peanut butter, cookies, cereal, chocolate, margarine, plus food for animals, toothpaste, soap, cosmetics and fuel. It's an oil that can be used for so many useful things and it's really easy to produce. It can also be healthy for us – protecting our brains, preventing heart disease and increasing our levels of Vitamin A.

3 **What can we do about this?**
In 2004, the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) was formed. They are committed to making palm oil production as friendly to the environment, the wildlife and the communities that live there as possible. See their logo right.

What can I do to support this programme?

If you can, try to purchase RSPO certified brands from your local supermarket. In addition, other plant oils have similar health benefits to palm oil, so try to use a different type of oil in your cooking. Every little bit that you manage to do will help to make a difference.



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2 So, what's the big deal then?

There are several very serious problems when it comes to producing palm oils:

- **Tropical rainforests** are being destroyed to make way for oil palm tree plantations. And as these forests are destroyed, gases that contribute to climate warming are released.
- **The wildlife** that live in these forests have nowhere to live now that their habitats have been destroyed forever - the Bornean Orangutan, Pygmy Elephant and Sumatran Rhino are all facing extinction.



- **The rights of the people** who live in those places are also being ignored. Some of their land is cleared for oil palm trees without their permission, they are paid very low wages to work on the plantations and their working conditions are often not safe for them.

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Ideas and Activities to explore further:

- 1) Can you make a list of the pros and cons for growing palm oil? You will need to research some of the other benefits of producing palm oil online.

Pros for growing palm oil	Cons of growing palm oil:

- 2) Can you find some examples of RSPO certified products?
Make a list of brands to buy that the rest of your class or school could use as a shopping guide.



- 3) Write a mini glossary for some of the terms used in the above article on oil palm trees.
Examples could include:

Native

Habitat

Sustainable

Climate Warming

Plantation

Extinction

- 4) Design a poster to encourage other young people to take more of an interest in palm oil and the issues surrounding its production. What are the three main issues when it comes to growing oil palm trees?
- 5) Research some of the other animals that grow in Indonesian and Malaysian forests – such as the Sumatran Rhino and the Pygmy Elephant – that have been affected by the destruction of their habitats. Orangutans are not the only ones.

