

What's The Deal With Palm Oil?

☆ How To Vegan ☆

Episode #20

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What Is Palm Oil?

Palm oil is derived from the fruit of the oil palm tree. The palm fruit yields both palm oil and palm kernel oil. Palm oil is extracted from the pulp of the fruit and is an edible oil that's used in food. Palm kernel oil is extracted from the seed of the fruit and is used in the manufacture of a shit ton of household and beauty products. It's also used as a biodiesel - and lots more.

Is Palm Oil Vegan?

Yes. Palm oil is technically vegan since it comes from a plant and not an animal.

What Is Palm Oil Used For?

Palm oil is in SO many things! Examples include: candy, cookies, lip balm, vegan butter, vegan cheese, lots of processed foods, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, cosmetics, & lots of household goods.

FYI: Palm oil is found in nearly 50 percent of all packaged goods!

Palm oil can be listed under a W I D E variety of names. Including: glyceryl stearate, palm kernel oil, palmate, sodium laurel sulphate, laureth sulphate, stearate, stearic acid, & vegetable oil.

There are currently **over 200 palm oil derivative terms** in use!

A-Z Alternative Names For Palm Oil: <https://goo.gl/1MnGjM>

Palm Oil Free Product List: <https://goo.gl/MpNvQg>

Environmental Issues With Palm Oil:

- oil palms can only be grown in tropical regions (such as Indonesia, Malaysia & Columbia), making the land available to produce these plants pretty limited
- an area of forest equal to 300 football fields is being destroyed every hour
- the burning of peat forests to clear land for palm oil plantations is a major cause of air pollution in Southeast Asia
- Southeast Asia is one of the most biodiverse regions of the planet. It's land mass comprises only 3% of the world's surface, yet it contains around 20% of all plant, animal and marine species on the planet

Animal Rights Issues With Palm Oil:

- during the past decade the orangutan population has decreased by approximately 50 percent in the wild. This is primarily due to human activities including rainforest destruction for palm oil plantations
- in 1990 there were around 315,000 orangutans. Today it's estimated that fewer than 50,000 exist in the wild, split into small groups with really little chance of long-term survival
- of the 50,000 or so surviving orangutans, more than 2,500 are killed every year in relation to palm oil production
- in 2006, at least 1,500 orangutans were clubbed to death by palm workers
- palm oil enables animal poachers and traders access to areas that were once remote

Human Rights Issues With Palm Oil:

- the palm oil industry is known for it's awful human rights abuses including the illegal seizure of indigenous peoples' lands, child labor, labor trafficking & unprotected work with hazardous chemicals
- often times what happens is palm oil farm workers end up like indentured servants, working to pay off their debt to these people who came in and illegally took their land
- widespread toxic pesticide use is extremely harmful to farmers

Why Can't We Just Replace Palm Oil?

- palm oil requires 4-10 times less land than other oil-producing crops
- the demand for palm oil is HUGE
- in Indonesia and Malaysia, a total of 4.5 million people earn their living from palm oil production
- replacing palm oil with other types of oil is not always feasible due to palm oil's unique properties as food ingredient
- palm oil is cheap to produce and is highly profitable

Is Sustainable Palm Oil Even A Thing?

- in theory, palm oil CAN be made sustainably by using degraded lands and grasslands instead of forests and on mineral soils instead of peatland (especially if the crops are rotated)
- but according to many, sustainable palm oil just doesn't exist
- there is massive, widespread corruption, smuggling and greed in most of these high producing countries (and like I mentioned earlier...so many human rights violations)
- the end result (whether it's sustainable or unsustainable) is the same: so much land being destroyed and used since demand still outnumbers the supply
- groups like RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) have taken it upon themselves to make sure companies are certified through them and practice "sustainable" methods of production

About The RSPO:

- the [RSPO](#) was established in 2004 to promote the growth and use of sustainable oil palm practices and products through credible global standards and engagement of stakeholders
- the RSPO aims to have growers and millers adhere to 163 criteria to be certified sustainable. This includes everything from best practices on soils, the protection of primary forest and ensuring human and worker rights

- the reality is, is that some of the companies that are RSPO certified have still been implicated in illegal forest clearance
- a lot of people question the credibility and honesty of the RSPO and other “sustainable palm oil” groups since so many forests are still being cleared and animals are still being killed
- palm oil is NOT sustainable at the rate we’re currently demanding it, even if these systems were working as they’re supposed to...which they’re not

What Can YOU Do?

- the demand from large corporations isn't going away any time soon, so I personally think it's best for individuals to try to reduce their consumption of palm oil to take some pressure off of the system
- one way you can do that is to eat a primarily [whole-foods, plant-based diet](#)
- if you're eating something processed, make sure to check the ingredient list
- use apps like [Palm Oil Scanner](#) or [Sustainable Palm Oil Shopping](#)
- if palm oil is on the list, consider the impact
- urge companies to abandon the use of palm oil in their products
- ask your governments to call for mandatory labeling of palm oil on ingredient labels
- talk to your friends and family about palm oil
- your voice is powerful
- the ripple effect is REAL