



GLOBAL NEWS

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Palm oil; Is it slowing global warming or is it in fact a climate killer?¹

Everyday we see the advertisements on television about sponsoring an animal in the wild for £2 a month and watch with a tearful eye when they show scenes of an endangered animal, thinking to ourselves, why? Why are these poor creatures being treated this way? Why are some human beings so neglectful and careless? Why are they showing us adverts of tropical animals that live on the other side of the world when there is none here in the UK? What do they expect me to do? Everyday, (in my case) we stroll past some form of tasty treat, whether it be in our cupboards or on a shop shelf and contemplate about whether or not we are going to indulge?...Do you rush into the supermarket to get your pamper essentials and quickly grab that bottle of lotion because it looks like its going to be a good one? that it will benefit us? What we don't realize everyday though, is how much our sweet treats or household goods are participating towards these endangered animals needing our help.

How often do you do your research on your treats and where it was sourced from? This could be anything from chocolate bars to a hair or face mask. Hopefully after having a read of this article you will feel more obliged to do your research before hand.



Studies suggests that if you were to shop for a brand containing palm oil, you would benefit more if it was less refined. These types of palm oil are easily found at registered health stores.⁷

Is palm oil a health essential?...

As we all know from the many health statistics given to us by our GPs, friends, family and the many magazines we read: Saturated fat is not good for our health. Palm oil has a high count of saturated fat so how can it possibly be healthy for us? Well, the main type of saturated fats found in palm oil are 'Palmitic acids' and high contents of this can cause some serious damage⁸, although palmitic acid can be good for us, this is only the case when consumed in moderation. It seems palm oil can benefit us as it also has a high content of mono-saturated fats which are an essential fatty acid that has many good uses such as; it strengthens bones, aids weight loss, improves insulin sensitivity and improves heart health⁹. It has been told that the nutrients in palm oil such as coenzyme, phytoosterols and phospholipids can all help with improving functions in our heart, brain and memory and even lower our cholesterol!¹⁰ Palm oil is packed full of vitamins varying from vitamin E to vitamin K and even Omega 3 and also includes an all important anti-oxidant; Beta-

carotene. Beta carotene is useful for many things, a few being: balancing hormones, strengthening the immune system and is also useful in the prevention of cancer. The Vitamins that are found in palm oil are also very beneficial to pregnant women and young children. Vitamin A,D,K and E are all found in this oil and are essential to the health of children and pregnant women, deficiencies of these vitamins in these stages can have a huge impact on health¹¹

It all sounds very appealing don't you think? What we have to remember is that palm oil is still high in saturated and unsaturated fats so the benefits of it will only be seen through moderation of consumption.



"A campaign was launched in September 2018 to educate shoppers and retailers about making better purchases"²

...Or a health ditch?

There are always two sides to every story, what if I were to tell you there has also been tests that prove palm oil may increase the risk of cancer? We consume this the majority of the times and not even realize we are doing so as most packaging disguises it under the 'vegetable fats and acids' section at the back of the packets! When palm oil is overheated it produces glycidyl esters and byproducts, both of which are causes of malignant and benign tumors¹², now I'm not sure about you but I would definitely be thinking twice about consuming this oil if there's a chance I can harm myself by doing so!

The majority of times we actually see palm oil in a product is on the rare occasions we check the ingredients and fat contents of what we are consuming, meaning it is mainly found in a packaged product. The truth is, Palm oil is in over 40% of products covering the entire supermarket floors¹³, they range from foods, cosmetics, biofuel and even in our detergents. The palm oil used in these 'packaged goods' is usually refined which basically means it has been cut down with chemicals making it not so good for us

after all, as refined palm oil loses the majority of its vitamin E and beta-carotene¹⁴.

To have all the benefits of palm oil, you must be using an unrefined source. These sources are usually found in the pricey health stores and come in the form of 'red palm oil' based on its reddish tint. Red palm oil is usually sourced from plantations that prioritize sustainability and not sources that think we have a never ending supply of biofuels on this planet. It hasn't just been thrown in with any old product like a chocolate bar or a bottle of shampoo, it hasn't been refined using chemicals or bleaching agents, it is bought how it should be...pure, meaning it contains all the antioxidants and carotenoids needed, in their true form¹⁵.

Lets just touch up on the health of another very important thing...our planet earth. Production of palm oil is causing a huge strain on many factors in our world. It is causing our planet to be very unhealthy, and I can assure you nothing good will come of that. What will happen to us if our world dies?



*"Through bribery and lobbying, corporations are able to make agreements to burn down entire plots of rainforests in order to make room for the palm trees. Not only the beautiful life is destroyed irreversibly, the fumes from the fire themselves represent a huge threat to our planet. The rainforest typically serves a vital role in absorbing greenhouse gases and offsets some of our carbon footprint of our planet. However, all these carbon emissions are released into the atmosphere all at once when the forests catch fire. One of these fires can produce more carbon daily than the entire economy of United States"*³



“In 2013, a palm oil certification was launched which annually audits farms against rigorous environmental and social standards designed to reduce deforestation, improve and protect biodiversity and support worker empowerment”⁴



Palm oil and poverty...

According to research, palm oil manufacturers actually claim that it reduces poverty. For every hectare of land a farmer could see up to a £3000 return. It is seen as a source of sustainability because it actually *“generates ten times the energy it consumes and for every hectare of land you get on average, six tons of palm oil; producing a ton of palm oil requires significantly less space than producing soya or rapeseed, which need ten times the amount of space in comparison to palm oil to produce the same quantity”*¹⁶. It is seen as sustainable although statistics show that to prepare a piece of land for a plantation, farmers have to burn through masses of carbon filled land making the carbon footprint of a 2 liter bottle of bio-diesel 2000 times worse than a liter of fossil fuel, *“biodiesel via palm oil increases emissions by 31% due to forests being converted into plantations”*¹⁷.

What about the locals? The other people living close by to a plantation? These people are not asked consent if/when a plantation increases in size, they have no say either way and are forced to move from their homes and villages with force. These people lose all their livelihoods, homes and biofuels as when a plantation is put into place most reservoirs or other water sources become contaminated with the chemicals used to run the plantation, completely ruining their chances of fresh water or fish, giving these poor people no other option but to move elsewhere¹⁸. There will soon come a time that there will be no more land to farm on, in the 1950s the earth was blessed with 15% of rainforests covering the planet, now we are less than 50% that number¹⁹. In Indonesia alone millions of hectares of land is currently being used as palm oil plantations, that is as much as the equivalent of four times the size of Wales!

Where does that leave the locals? It sounds to me that plantations are compounding poverty not reducing it. To get a plantation in place these locals must be removed, and their entire lives with them; sacred sites, graves, crops.

The sad truth...

Palm oil plantations are rapidly increasing in numbers across Indonesia, meaning that habitats of other animals are rapidly decreasing. Based on research alone, just 400 Sumatran tigers are residing on this earth, 300 of those being in an enclosure for their own safety and only 100 being out in the wild!²⁰ These are a breed of tigers only found on the Indonesian island of Sumatra and their habitat consists of mountains, lowlands and peat forests. All these habitats are currently being used for palm oil plantations forcing this particular breed out. Palm oil cannot be blamed for all of this although I'm sure it has played a huge part in it all.

The Sumatran government has made an oath to attempt to double the population of Sumatran tigers over the next decade but haven't really made much improvement as of yet²¹.

Because of humans hungry ways, these beautiful creatures are becoming extinct. The average amount of land to be used for

new plantations per hour is 300 football fields an hour...yes you read it right PER HOUR!²² What we have to sit back and think about is, is this acceptable? Maybe it is worth checking that products ingredients after all to see if your purchases support this. Deforestation plays a massive part in the increase of animals becoming endangered or extinct, soon we will live in a world with none of these creatures...overtime they will simply become a myth, so sad.

“The equivalent to six football fields a minute is being demolished for palm oil plantations”

It doesn't stop there...

There are more and more varied species of animals becoming affected by the loss of habitat everyday. Monkeys, tigers, birds, rhinos, elephants. They are all getting affected in some shape or form.

The Indonesian island, Sumatra is home to two rare types of elephant. The Sumatran elephant and the Bornean pygmy elephant. There are less than 2000 Sumatran breeds left and less than 1500 of the Bornean²³. These elephants are pushed to react with humans in an un-natural way, they become aggressive as their habitat gets smaller and humans are forced to kill or be killed²⁴.

There is also a Sumatran rhino which is classed in the 'critical' category of becoming endangered. This was the nearest form of rhino to the woolly rhino which is now, once again, extinct. It has been said that this is the closest mass extinction the world has seen since the dinosaurs²⁵.



The orangutans...

When a new palm oil plantation is being prepared, there seems to be no or little thought put into who already resides on that piece of land. As we already discovered, the equivalent of 300 football fields an hour is being demolished; what about the nature? Statistics already show that almost 80% of the entire earth's orangutans have been lost in just under twenty years due to plantations, that is 6000 orangutans a year!²⁶ They lose their habitat when their homes are destroyed and burned for plots of new plantations.

We have to stop and ask ourselves who are the real victims in all of this? Is it the underpaid workers basically being used as slave labor? The children who are being forced to work as child laborers? Or is it in actual fact the ones who don't have a voice to defend themselves? The tigers, the elephants, the rhinos, the orangutans? The creatures who called these rainforests home for centuries before humans decide to see palm trees as a source of profit. What will the next ten years bring? The possibility of extinction?



What type of human do you have in your imagination when you think of a person capable of doing this? Is it a villain from a movie or is it an evil demon? Maybe it is neither, maybe we should look closer to home and start realizing that if our lifestyle choices were different then maybe, just maybe, there would be a different scenario playing out. Next time you go shopping will these images stay in your thoughts to help prevent you from making irresponsible product choices? At the end of it all it is our decisions that add fuel to the fire of the rainforests.

*"The main threat to the survival of orangutan populations in the wild is the massive expansion of palm oil plantations"*⁶

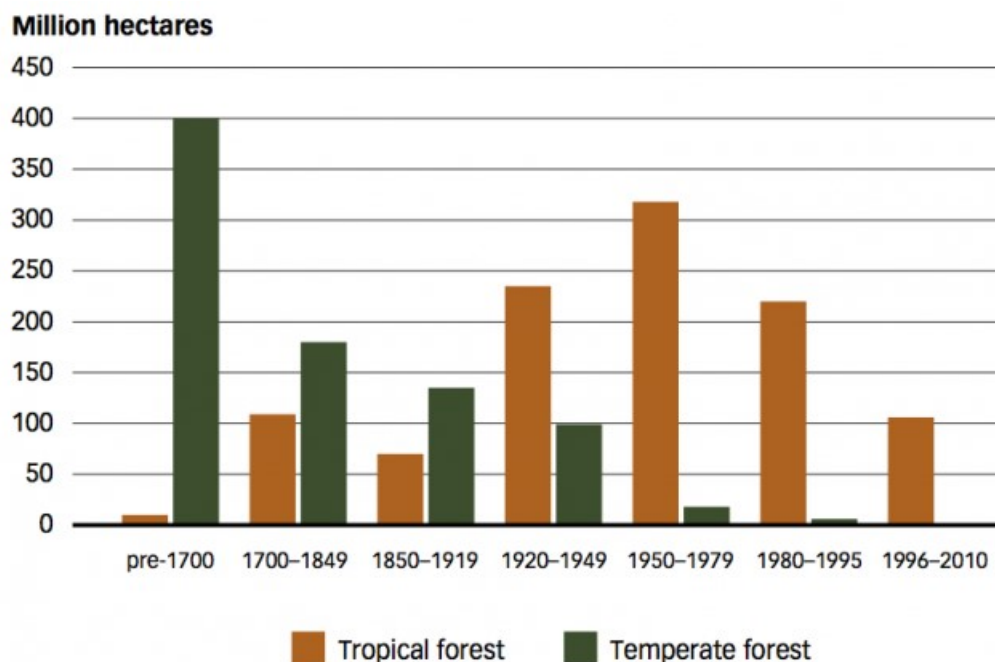
How the story ends...

If this article has opened the eyes and the minds of at least one reader then that is a start. The only way this can become better is to start all over again, there is probably a lot more that the human race can do to sustain this planet and what's left of its creatures. We need to stop funding towards the damage of our biodiversity levels and concentrate more on making this world come alive again, to breathe again as it was meant to.

Rainforests breathes in a huge percentage of greenhouse gas caused by fossil fuels and the human lifestyle and in return breathes out oxygen for us to live on. It also breathes in more than it breathes out, taking away more than we can imagine of the carbon filled gas²⁷. What will we do without them? They are our earths lungs after all.

You can all make your own minds up after reading this article, whether that be to continue as you are doing or to make small changes in promoting the well being of our biofuels and planet. You may think how can I, an individual make a change to all this damage already? But that is where we all come in to the equation, if we all make even the smallest adjustments then we are on the right path.

So the answer as to how does this story ends is with you.



The bar graph shows the decrease in tropical and temperate forests since before the 1700's due to Deforestation.²⁸

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