

# Save orangutans from extinction when you next shop

## – and put an end to the cruelty of palm oil

**A**true story of corruption, over-exploitation, merciless destruction of rainforests, and the genocide of one of the most charismatic and magnificent animals ever to have graced this earth.

And your local supermarket is, however unintentionally, linked to it all. What is more: when we do our weekly shopping, we are almost certainly contributing to the problem.

The good news is that you, as a consumer, can help to put an end to this horrific and cruel devastation of wildlife – you're taking the first step now by reading this.

The trail starts on the island of Borneo. An area of rainforest the size of three football pitches is cut down every minute of every day. This tropical island – the third largest in the world – is under siege as never before from loggers and plantation owners.

Along with the nearby island of Sumatra, Borneo's rainforests – home to countless species of wildlife, many not yet scientifically identified – are being laid bare by loggers at a rate which exceeds the now legendary logging of the Amazon. One animal that is critically suffering as a result also happens to be one of our closest relatives, the orangutan.

Why? Largely to meet a fast-growing demand for a product that few shoppers will have even heard of, but is in many of the household items you buy: palm oil.

**"The rate of loss of orangutans has never been greater than in the last three years, and oil-palm plantations are mostly to blame. We are facing a silent massacre, taking place far from where people can see what is going on. We need international co-operation now to address this crisis."** Dr Willie Smits, Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation's Founder/Chairman



### Palm Oil

Palm oil is everywhere. This internationally traded vegetable oil is found in thousands of popular products, including ice cream, chocolate, biscuits, crisps, margarine, toothpaste, soap, detergents and cosmetics. The shelves in your local supermarket are full of products containing palm oil, which is contributing to the annihilation of rainforest wildlife. Without knowing it, millions of people are fuelling a phenomenal growth in demand for a crop that is leaving a trail of destruction in its wake.



With the largest share of the UK food market Tesco can, if they wish, save both rainforests and orangutans.

Originally from Western Africa, the oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) has become the plantation crop of the 21st century. Where heat and regular rainfall combine, it can flourish. And Southeast Asia has become its home with ever-increasing areas being given over to this high-yielding crop.

Each decade since 1980, we have seen a doubling in palm oil production, mostly in Malaysia and Indonesia. These two countries account for the vast majority of global production, which is projected to double by 2020 with Indonesia expecting to triple the area under cultivation by

this time. And now Indonesia has just announced it will establish the world's largest palm-oil plantation on Borneo, covering an area of 1.8 million hectares (approx. 6950 sq miles) along the border with Malaysia. This high conservation value eco-area represents critical habitat for the orangutan and other wildlife. Millions of animals will be wiped out.

**"How much more forest will disappear, since this is a lucrative business? The expansion of plantations causes a significant loss of biodiversity, as well as poses a health hazard to people due to the haze from land being set on fire. Therefore, a control mechanism for better management practices in this sector should be strictly imposed."** Syamsidar, WWF Indonesia

India, China and the European Union make up the world's largest consumers of palm oil. The UK is the second-biggest importer of palm oil in Europe, behind the Netherlands.

### Biofuel

Since 1995, there has been more than a 90% increase in palm oil use in the European Union and this is set to rise drastically with the development of biofuels, which will utilise vast quantities of palm oil in its production. While this cleaner-burning renewable energy source is looked upon by some as an environmentally sensitive solution to the looming crash in the supply of crude oil, it is likely to be catastrophic for the remaining rainforests in Indonesia and Malaysia, if the policies governing plantations remain unchanged.



## Rainforests at Risk

Palm oil can be grown perfectly well on degraded land, already cleared of forest – of which there are millions of hectares available in Southeast Asia. But this is not happening.

Despite an abundance of degraded land available for plantations, many palm-oil companies are deliberately targeting forest areas for conversion. Legitimate palm oil companies prefer first to cut down the forests, as this provides them with an immediate and extremely profitable source of income from logging before a single palm tree is planted. Less reputable companies secure a permit to clear rainforest to make way for new palm-oil plantations (the only reason why they are granted a permit), but as soon as they have logged the forest, they disappear without trace, having made no attempt to cultivate the ground for oil palms.

**“It is the total clearance of forests, ultimately for the planting of oil palm, that has reaped by far the most havoc.”** Dr Ian Singleton, Scientific Director, Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme.

Palm oil companies are also responsible for many of the fires that plague the region year after year. After extracting the valuable timber,

they clear the rest of the land with fire. These fires rage out of control and devour vast tracts of pristine rainforests. There are grave concerns amongst conservationists in the region that this year's fire season could exceed that of 1997-98, in which a third of the wild orangutan population perished.

Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI), a leading environmental group, said in September 2005, it had reported 196 companies to the Indonesian Minister of Environment for allegedly clearing their land through large-scale open burning in Sumatra and Kalimantan. According to WALHI, many of the 196 companies were repeat offenders.

**“Natural forests in Sumatra are being cleared faster than at any time in history. Forest fires, forest conversion, and logging are causing severe damage to critical ecosystems.”** Desmarita Murni, Eyes of the Forest, Sumatra

**“Thousands of orangutans, gibbons and other animals are now exterminated by bulldozers to create enormous oil palm concessions. Every day, our radio station (Kalaweit) broadcasts messages to sensitise people about the oil palm issue in Indonesia.”** A.B.Chanee, Director, Kalaweit Association, Central Borneo

The conversion of forest to oil palm plantations displaces local communities, as well as orangutans and other wildlife that also depend on this forest for survival. In 2005, one of Indonesia's largest palm oil companies, the PT Makin Group, started to clear a newly acquired concession of 40,000 hectares in Central Kalimantan. The Orangutan rescue centre at Nyaru Menteng has already rescued nearly 100 displaced infants and adults from this region. This forest, with an estimated population of 500-600 orangutans, is now heading for total destruction. It is easy to see how just one company, clearing legally obtained forest for oil palm plantations, can have a devastating impact on once-healthy populations of orangutans.



PT Makin are clearing rainforest as you read this report.



### BOS - NYARU MENTENG

The BOS Central Kalimantan Center for Reintroduction of Orangutans

Address : PO BOX 70; Palangka Raya 73000, Central Kalimantan - Indonesia  
Phone : +62 (0)868 1210 6232; Fax : +62 (0)536 20998  
Email : bos\_nyaru Menteng@savetheorangutan.info

URGENT-----URGENT-----URGENT-----URGENT-----URGENT

**To : All Importers, Distributors and Retailers of palm oil and/or products containing palm oil.**

**From : Lone Droscher-Nielsen, Project Manager of BOS-Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Reintroduction Project, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Borneo, Indonesia.**

**Date : 7th August 2005**

**Re : Palm oil plantations – Rainforest destruction and the genocide of orangutans.**

I am wondering if you realize that all around me here in Indonesian Borneo, rainforests are being destroyed on an industrial scale, often illegally, and orangutans slaughtered in their thousands, - solely to provide palm oil ?

The situation in Indonesia is totally out of control. Locally we are virtually helpless to stop the forest destruction and the genocide of the orangutans. It is now time for the international community to take action.

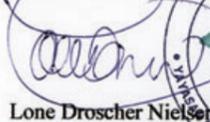
Production of palm oil does not have to be this way. There are already millions of hectares of open grasslands or degraded forest available and suitable for new palm oil plantations. The reason for converting primary forest into palm oil plantations is simply because of the extra profit the palm oil companies can make by selling the wood for the international markets such as Europe, USA and Far – Eastern countries.

Only the people and companies, who buy palm oil from countries like Indonesia, where the criteria for sustainability is being ignored, can put an immediate stop to the irresponsible destruction of this unique ecosystem and its wildlife.

I implore to you with all of my heart to do so today. It is impossible to exaggerate the urgency of the situation when we daily see orangutans being slaughtered or starving to death in palm oil plantations around us.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

  
Lone Droscher Nielsen



BOS is an Indonesian non-profit organization contributing to the conservation of the orangutans and their habitat

Bank Information: BNI, Fatmawati Branch, Jl R.S. Fatmawati Block 115 D. III, Cilandak-Jakarta Selatan 12430, Phone +62 (0)21 7500339 ;  
Acct. No.: 251.005558171.001; Acct. Name: Yayasan Penyelamatan Orangutan Borneo

## Orangutans at Risk

As forest is cleared, there is the obvious problem of the loss of orangutan habitat. Orangutans, facing starvation, desperately seek food in the developing plantations, and are considered an agricultural pest. Plantation owners often put a bounty on their heads and the emaciated orangutans are easy targets for capture.

The human-orangutan encounters can be quite horrific. Plantation workers often show no mercy; the orangutans are viciously attacked and tortured before being killed. If a mother is found with a baby, she will most likely be killed and the baby kept as a pet in a tiny cage or

chained up. Many of these orphans will end up being traded internationally.

It is estimated that no less than 5,000 orangutans are killed every year. At this rate, complete extinction of one of our closest relatives would occur within 10 years.

**“The palm oil industry has caused an extreme loss of habitat for wildlife such as orangutans, gibbons, tigers and elephants. This habitat destruction has also resulted in such wildlife becoming easy prey for hunters. In 2003, ProFauna reported that there are about 1000 orangutans caught annually for the pet trade.”** Rosek Nursahid, Director, ProFauna Indonesia.



# The Appalling Trail of Destruction Caused by the Palm Oil Industry



Burnt



Logged



Cleared

**Where rainforests once stood ....**



Intensively grown



Aggressively developed



Palm trees are replacing virtually all other rainforest life

**oil palm plantations are taking over...**



A bullet between the eyes killed this magnificent male orangutan



This female had been shaved of all her hair twice a week, chained to a bed and used for prostitution.



Although badly mutilated, it is believed this adult orangutan was buried alive.

**resulting in adult orangutans being slaughtered in their hundreds...**



Chopping off hands and heads is commonplace.



Trussed up and treated like rubbish.



Trapped, this male had fuel poured over him and was set alight. Rescuers found it dead in a pool of water where it went in a desperate attempt to put out the flames.

**shot, stabbed or set on fire - anything goes...**



Baby orangutan left in a wire cage with no protection from either the sun or rain.



Confined in a tiny crate - her mother having been killed.



An all too common site for rescue teams.

**and their babies either kept as pets or sold to wildlife dealers...**



Recovering at a rescue centre from a broken arm.



One of many babies missing their mothers.



A few of over 500 orphan orangutans currently being looked after in rescue centres throughout Borneo

**with only relatively few orphans rescued and taken into care by organisations such as...**

**...The Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, The Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme and The Sepilok Orangutan Appeal (UK)**

# Given palm oil is here to stay, what can be done to help save rainforests and all who depend on them?

## There is an alternative: it is called "non-destructive" palm oil.

The key requirements for sourcing non-destructive palm oil are really quite straightforward.

It should be sourced from plantations that:

- Use already-degraded land for palm oil production.
- Ensure that absolutely no high conservation value forests are cleared for oil-palm cultivation.
- Respect the traditional land rights of local communities.
- Do not use fire to clear areas.
- Ensure that corridors remain to connect existing forests allowing free movement of populations of animal species.
- Do not offer bonuses to kill orangutans.

Further information on criteria can be found at [www.sustainable-palmoil.org](http://www.sustainable-palmoil.org) & [www.palmoil.org.uk](http://www.palmoil.org.uk)



A truck load of palm nuts, which may have ended up in food in your local shops.



This baby had a hand chopped off by a logger.

## How can we make a difference?

The simplest thing is for us is to demand that any of our favourite products which currently contain palm oil, only contain palm oil from non-destructive sources. A recent survey by Friends of the Earth revealed that UK companies don't even know where their palm oil originates. And as consumers, we are also hamstrung by the fact that palm oil often gets labelled as simply vegetable oil. The government must be persuaded to make it compulsory for UK companies to label the exact type of vegetable oil in products that they sell (for example, as 'palm oil') and to disclose the original plantation source.

If companies fail to prove that their palm oil is from non-destructive sources, they must be considered to be contributing to the extinction of the orangutan. Consumers are entitled to know if their weekly shop is adding to the extermination of orangutans and other wildlife in Indonesia and Malaysia. By demanding a commitment from manufacturers to purchase their palm oil only from non-destructive sources, we can all contribute to the survival of this great ape – as well as many other species.

Never forget. One person can make a difference when others join in to create a force of unstoppable change. **"Let us remember, always, that we are the consumers. By exercising free choice, by choosing what to buy, what not to buy, we have the power, collectively to change the ethics of the business of industry. We have the potential to exert immense power for good—we each carry it with us, in our purses, cheque books, and credit cards."**  
Jane Goodall, "A Reason for Hope"

*"We often receive phone calls from palm oil plantation managers to come and remove orangutans from their plantations. Often we receive the message to hurry as they have already themselves caught the orangutan. We know this means trouble. In order to catch a wild adult orangutan and tie it down successfully, you would have to beat it unconscious first. Most orangutans having been caught by plantation workers die from concussions or internal bleeding. But nothing had really prepared us for the day when we were called by a plantation manager in Pundu, some 80 km from the project. Despite having been told several times not to catch the orangutans themselves, they continue to ignore our recommendations. When the team arrived, they saw an adult female lying on the ground not far from a newly cut down tree. As they approached, they noticed that she was not tied and concluded she must have been beaten unconscious by the workers. The female was still alive but only barely. She was covered in blood from several deep slashes from sharp machetes. One of her hands had almost been cut off, and was only held on by a little muscle and skin on the side. The other was likewise almost cut off but at the wrist. The machete had cut through skin, tendons and bone in one swift cut. Now the female was lying there in front of their eyes slowly bleeding to death. This is only one example of the price orangutans are paying for palm oil."*

Lone Droscher Nielsen

If you would like to become part of the solution to this problem, and help save both orangutans and rainforests, please join us in writing to the following companies asking for their assurance and evidence that palm oil used in the products they sell comes from a non-destructive source. We would be grateful to receive a copy of their replies.

Like Tesco (see front page) the following companies and many similar ones will all be stocking products containing palm oil.

**Tesco:**  
Sir Terry Leahy  
Chief Executive  
Tesco House  
Delamare Road  
Cheshunt  
Hertfordshire EN8 9SL

**Asda:**  
Mr. Andrew Bond  
Chief Executive  
ASDA PLC  
ASDA House Southbank  
Great Wilson Street  
Leeds LS11 5AD

**Morrisons:**  
Sir Kenneth D. Morrison CBE  
Executive Chairman  
Wm Morrison  
Supermarkets plc  
Thornton Road  
Bradford BD8 9AX

**Sainsburys:**  
Mr Justin King  
Chief Executive  
Sainsburys plc  
33 Holborn  
London EC1 2HT

**Waitrose:**  
Sir Stuart Hampson  
Executive Chairman  
Waitrose plc  
Central Offices  
Southern Industrial Area  
Bracknell  
Berkshire RG12 8YA

More companies and addresses are available at [www.SafePalmOil.org](http://www.SafePalmOil.org).

We would appreciate it if you would also inform the Government as well as your local MP and MEP of your concerns about palm oil plantations causing the destruction of rainforests and the resulting loss of wildlife.

**Jim Knight MP**  
Minister of Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
London SW1A 0AA  
(0207) 219 8209/8466  
[jimknightmp@parliament.uk](mailto:jimknightmp@parliament.uk)

**Alun Michael**  
Minister of State for Industry and the Regions  
Department of Trade and Industry  
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[alunmichaelmp@parliament.uk](mailto:alunmichaelmp@parliament.uk)

For contact details of your local MP, please visit:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/directories/hc/olists/alms.cfm>

For details of you MEP please visit:  
[www.europarl.org.uk](http://www.europarl.org.uk)

Please send copies of letters received to:  
BOS UK  
Freepost RLXK-GRCE-JTGT  
Aylesbury, HP22 4NH  
**Thank you**



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To find out more about this campaign and about palm oil, visit [www.SafePalmOil.org](http://www.SafePalmOil.org) or telephone 01296 640542

The following organisations have demonstrated their unflinching support for saving orangutans by generously contributing to the cost of this publication:

Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (UK)  
[www.savetheorangutan.org.uk](http://www.savetheorangutan.org.uk)  
Nature Alert (UK)  
[www.naturealert.org](http://www.naturealert.org)

Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (Australia)  
[www.orangutans.com.au](http://www.orangutans.com.au)  
Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (Germany)  
[www.bosf-deutschland.de](http://www.bosf-deutschland.de)  
Sumatran Orangutan Society (UK)  
[www.orangutans-sos.org](http://www.orangutans-sos.org)  
Sepilok Orangutan Appeal UK  
[www.orangutan-appeal.org.uk](http://www.orangutan-appeal.org.uk)  
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