

Statement in Support of Sustainable Palm Oil

The conservation organizations listed below are committed to driving the palm oil industry in the right direction, and support a move to sustainable palm oil and not a blanket boycott.

Palm oil produced according to the standards set by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) or Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG), as of 2018, is required to be deforestation-free. Manufacturers, retailers and traders all over the world have made bold commitments to removing deforestation from their supply chains – some are making swifter progress than others towards meeting these commitments.

There are no quick fixes, but the following actions will go a long way to cleaning up the palm oil industry:

- Palm oil producers must stop converting forests, peatlands and other sensitive natural habitats to oil palm plantations. Instead, they should increase yields on existing plantations, and any expansion should be restricted to degraded land that is not classified as High Conservation Value or High Carbon Stock. They also need to be transparent about their production methods and avoid labour, land and human rights violations.
- Companies manufacturing or selling products made with palm oil and its derivatives need to investigate their suppliers and only source palm oil from responsible growers, ensuring their supply chain is traceable, and communicating honestly with their customers about their progress on their journey to using solely sustainable palm oil.
- We expect the RSPO and its members to adhere to the criteria and take action when there is evidence of non-compliance.
- Consumers can support retailers and manufacturers which are committed to removing deforestation from their products, join social media campaigns to drive the industry in the right direction, and support conservation organizations who are working to break the link between palm oil and deforestation.

There is no denying that the rapid expansion of the palm oil industry over the last 30 years has had a catastrophic environmental and social impact across Southeast Asia, South America and Africa. Consumers all over the world have been horrified to learn about the destructive practices rife within the industry, and the orangutan has become an emblem for the clash between development and conservation.

Boycotting palm oil is a legitimate expression of consumers' social and environmental concerns, but the question we urge individuals and businesses to ask themselves is:

Will this action help wildlife, forests and communities?

The problem with a blanket boycott is that it punishes indiscriminately. It removes the market for palm oil from those companies which are making genuine efforts and progress towards sustainability, as well as those which aren't. And if we remove the market for sustainable palm oil, we also remove the incentive for companies to abide by the better management practices which reduce the footprint of the industry – in terms of impacts on wildlife, forests, climate and human rights.

A blanket boycott of palm oil could lead to the following unintentional consequences:

- **More deforestation, not less**

If the international market for palm oil disappears, palm oil companies and smallholder farmers alike could switch to producing an alternative crop. Oil palms are the most productive oil crop in the world, producing around 35% of global vegetable oil supplies on less than 10% of the total land under oil crops¹. A switch to another type of edible vegetable oil (such as soybean oil) would require up to nine times as much land to produce the same yield. This will increase natural habitat loss, species loss and other impacts.

- **Increasing demand**

A blanket boycott of palm oil could drive the price of palm oil down. This could increase demand, especially in markets which have less interest in sustainability. This reduces the incentive to produce environmentally sustainable palm oil. All agriculture has an impact: bananas, beef, cane sugar, chocolate, coconuts, coffee, pineapples, soybeans, tea and vanilla are all produced in previously forested tropical areas². With over 4.5 million people in Indonesia alone relying on the palm oil industry as their primary source of income, palm oil is here to stay. What we need to do is ensure that it is cultivated in the least damaging way possible. Oil palms do not need to be grown at the expense of forests and other sensitive natural habitats. Instead we need to break the link between development and the degradation of natural ecosystems.

The conservation organisations committed to driving the palm oil industry in the right direction, and support a move to sustainable palm oil and not a blanket boycott are:

Sumatran Orangutan Society
Chester Zoo
Conservation International
Jane Goodall Institute Australia
Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari
Hutan KOCP
Earthworm Foundation
Solidaridad
Global Environment Centre
Orangutan Conservancy
Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre
Save Orangutans
Save the Rhino International
Borneo Rhino Alliance
Lincoln Park Zoo
San Diego Zoo Global
Houston Zoo
The Living Rainforest
Naples Zoo
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Wildlife Reserves Singapore
Taronga Conservation Society Australia
Auckland Zoo
The Deep
National Wildlife Federation
Land Empowerment Animals People (LEAP)
Yorkshire Wildlife Park
Indianapolis Zoo
Paradise Wildlife Park/Zoological Society of Hertfordshire
Orana Wildlife Park
Lubee Bat Conservancy
Oregon Zoo
Jenkinson's Aquarium
Zoos South Australia
Orangutan Republik Foundation
Borneo Child Aid
Tulsa Zoo
Little Rock Zoo
Staten Island Zoo
Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium
Saint Louis Zoo
Malaysian Primatological Society
Chicago Zoological Society / Brookfield Zoo
Amici della Terra Onlus
Great Plains Zoo
Santa Barbara Zoo
Audubon Nature Institute
Orangutan Land Trust
WWF
World Land Trust
Borneo Futures
Global Canopy
Borneo Nature Foundation
Zoological Society of London
Orangutan Outreach
Orangutan Veterinary Aid
Danau Girang Field Centre
Borneo Wildlife Preservation
Now Twycross Zoo
WildCats Conservation Alliance
Save the Orangutan
Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
Conservation Medicine
Copenhagen Zoo
Beauval Nature
Zoos Victoria
Woodland Park Zoo
Wild Planet Trust
Dartmoor Zoological Society
Wellington Zoo
National Marine Aquarium
Bristol Zoological Society
Forever Sabah
Marwell Wildlife
Crocodiles of the World
Toronto Zoo
The Big Cat Sanctuary
Detroit Zoological Society
Perth Zoo

Wildlife Conservation Network
Oklahoma City Zoo
Columbus Zoo
Seratu Aatai
PM Haze
Kansas City Zoo
Blank Park Zoo
Wild Welfare

Fondation Ensemble
Ocean Conservation Trust
Aidenvironment Asia
Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park
International Elephant Foundation
Zoo Knoxville
Verify Humanity
Zoo New England

¹ IUCN: Palm Oil and Biodiversity (<https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/palm-oil-and-biodiversity>)

² Meijaard E and Sheil D (2019) The Moral Minefield of Ethical Oil Palm and Sustainable Development. *Front. For. Glob. Change* 2:22