

We are very concerned about the enormous social and environmental impact caused by the production of palm oil in tropical regions. The rainforest destruction caused by palm plantations is not only threatening the survival of many wildlife species (orangutans, tigers, bears and more) but also displacing indigenous people and destroying their way of life.

We've been working on this issue for several years now; auditing our product range, carrying out extensive research, collaborating with like-minded organisations and campaigners to work out the most effective approach and talking to suppliers about what they can do. The boxes below and overleaf explain our current position on palm, with some more background to this overleaf.

Palm oil as an ingredient: In 2016, we decided that we would only stock products containing palm if it was either organic or RSPO certified. We also promised that by 2017 we would have moved further; only stocking RSPO palm that was certified through their 'segregated supply chain' model - one of their strictest, most robust levels of certification. Since then, we've worked closely with our suppliers to improve the traceability of the palm in our products and are pleased to say that we have very nearly accomplished this goal.

Currently, all the palm oil in our products is either:

- Certified Organic – ensuring a segregated, traceable supply from plantations that have not been planted on recently deforested land.

OR

- Certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) through their 'segregated supply chain' model - one of their strictest, most robust levels of certification* **

Where we've been unable to encourage suppliers to switch to organic or 'segregated supply' in their products, we have generally de-listed them. This has meant losing some popular lines!

**We have made one exception for a small business supplying our deli, who have genuinely struggled to find a suitable margarine, and therefore use one containing palm sourced with a lower level of RSPO certification.*

***Please also note that suppliers sometimes change their ingredient sourcing without letting us know – but we will keep checking back.*

Although we are a drop in the ocean, we feel that this approach has created some pressure back through the supply chain for a segregated supply of sustainable palm – something campaigners have identified as crucial (see overleaf).

The use of fairly traded palm oil will of course also be encouraged, although supply of this is sadly very limited. This generally comes from countries that have a long tradition of smallholder palm growing. And as always, we continue to add to our growing range of palm-free options.

Palm oil derivatives: Unfortunately, at the moment manufacturers are unable to source a guaranteed segregated supply of the many palm derivatives that may be used. This means our suppliers are relying on either sourcing from manufacturers who are members of the RSPO or on the Green Palm voucher scheme, or both.

For products that contain these palm derivatives (mostly household cleaners and toiletries, as well as some food items) we are keeping in touch with the manufacturers to ensure that these ingredients are being sourced as responsibly as possible and contributing to pressure up the supply chain for sustainable palm derivatives to be made available from a certified segregated supply. Most of our suppliers are already contributing to that pressure themselves. We will also continue to look for palm free choices.

Background to our position on palm oil

Globally, we believe a varied supply of vegetable oils, with more local supply & alternatives to palm where possible, is a better approach than relying on a mass-produced mono-crop exported from tropical climates. However, we think palm oil, if grown truly sustainably, can have a role to play in the global supply of vegetable fats.

An outright ban on palm oil would be barely achievable for us as a business – margarine, biscuits and pastries would become almost impossible to supply. Furthermore, we recognise that because of palm oil's high yield per hectare, the alternative oils are not always a more sustainable option. If a move away from palm took the industry towards an alternative tropical source of oil with similar properties (e.g. coconut oil), the same problems of deforestation & habitat loss would probably be re-created - any plant that's being grown in large quantities in tropical countries will lead to rainforest destruction if sustainable policies are not enacted.

"If all consumer goods companies stopped using palm oil, demand would switch to another vegetable oil – perhaps soy, rapeseed or sunflower. When grown in vast quantities all of these alternative oils have serious environmental problems, including rainforest destruction. The reason palm oil's popularity rocketed in the first place was due to it being a very land-efficient crop. You get a lot of oil per hectare, it requires relatively few pesticides and it's highly versatile" [Greenpeace](#)

Thus a complete boycott of palm oil may not be as effective as keeping the pressure on back up through the supply chain for palm oil that hasn't caused deforestation. Pressure from consumers via retailers, manufacturers to brokers, processors and growers is recommended by many of the campaigning groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth in the move towards sustainably produced palm, and we feel can play our part in this. See also Ethical Consumer's [palm consumer guide](#).

Whilst accepting oil that has organic certification and/or the RSPO certified sustainable segregated supply chain model, we also want to continue to push these standards forward to achieve much stronger regulation and higher standards of production.

Although we feel these certifications are a good starting point towards achieving responsible, sustainable production there is still a long way to go in terms of changing standard industry practice. We intend to keep the pressure on the supply chain for continued improvements, whilst at the same time encouraging individuals towards responsible consumption both through the goods we offer & the information we provide.