

# The Dirt on Palm Oil: How It Endangers Sumatran Tigers

By Jamilla Year 4

**Unsustainable palm oil plantations are a major factor contributing to the endangerment of Orang-utans and Sumatran Tigers in Indonesia and Malaysia.**



A Sumatran Tiger looking for food.

Have you ever thought about what's in your products? Palm oil is found on almost ½ of our supermarket shelves. It can be found in two minute noodles, chocolate, shampoo, cookies, cake, candles, bread and breakfast cereals. Sometimes palm oil is referred to as vegetable oil, so you may not realise you are using it.

Palm oil is the oil of choice in farming as it is the cheapest to produce and has multiple uses. Each palm tree lasts for 30 years and will fruit all year round. The fruit contains 50% oil which is much higher than other oil based fruit.

Palm oil has become increasingly popular in the food industry as it has a longer shelf life than any other vegetable oil. It gives the food a smooth texture and has a neutral taste, making it ideal for cooking with.

Currently, Indonesia and Malaysia produce more palm oil than any other countries as these tropical climate countries have large areas of land perfect for growing palm trees. However, the process of producing palm oil requires the large scale of removal of natural rainforests to allow for the planting of palm tree forests. One of the quickest and cheapest ways to clear the rainforests is through fire. This process has resulted in Orang-utans and Sumatran

Tigers being displaced, leaving them without a food source or the ability to camouflage. Around 300 football fields are cleared every hour to make way for palm oil plantation, causing Sumatran Tigers to struggle to “blend in the background,” said Toorong Zookeeper, Ben. When their natural foliage is burnt down so palm trees can be cultivated, it makes it easier for the hunters to find them.

However, there is something everyone can do to help protect Sumatran Tigers and Orang-utans in the wild. Shoppers are encouraged to buy products which contain sustainable palm oil. The Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) label can help shoppers to identify sustainable palm oil products, “So people can buy palm oil products sustainably.” said Ben, a zookeeper from Toorong Zoo. The label shows a palm leaf surrounded by the words, RSPO and Certified Sustainable Palm Oil written around the palm leaves. ■