

KitKat, Greenpeace and the palm oil campaign

From the sweeties.net wiki

In March 2010, KitKat became the face of an environmental campaign aimed at its maker, Nestlé.

The campaign

Greenpeace targeted KitKat for a boycott because of its use of palm oil from Indonesia. The group said the palm oil was linked to the destruction of forests that orangutans depend on. It made a YouTube video about KitKat that went viral, spreading around the world far faster than any press release.

Why palm oil matters

Palm oil turns up in a huge range of foods, sweets included. Growing it has driven deforestation on a vast scale in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia alone, the area planted with oil palms grew from less than 2,000 square kilometres in 1967 to more than 30,000 by 2000, and a 2007 United Nations Environment Programme report warned that most of the country's forest might be destroyed by 2022 because of palm oil and illegal logging. There has also been criticism of greenwashing, including producers that held sustainability certificates. See [palm oil in sweets](#).

Nestlé's response

Nestlé responded by announcing a partnership with The Forest Trust, a non profit group, to set responsible sourcing guidelines and make sure its products did not have a deforestation footprint. It set a goal of using fully sustainable palm oil by 2015. In 2017, Nestlé said that 58% of the palm oil it bought that year was certified as responsibly sourced.

Palm oil is still in KitKat

The campaign changed where and how the palm oil was sourced, not whether it was used. The listed ingredients of an original KitKat still include modified palm oil, alongside milk chocolate, wheat flour, sugar and cocoa.

The Fairtrade row

KitKat's ethics made headlines again in June 2020, when Nestlé announced that KitKat would end its relationship with Fairtrade and source cocoa from farms certified by the Rainforest Alliance instead. Cadbury had made a similar move away from Fairtrade a few years earlier: see [Cadbury, Fairtrade and Cocoa Life](#).

Not the only palm oil row

A year earlier, Cadbury had faced its own palm oil backlash in New Zealand and Australia, and backed down within weeks: see [Cadbury and the palm oil backlash in New Zealand](#).

Where KitKat came from

KitKat was created by Rowntree's of York in 1935, first as the Chocolate Crisp, after a worker suggested a bar a man could take to work in his pack up. It has belonged to Nestlé since 1988: see [when Nestlé bought Rowntree](#).

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