

Palm oil in sweets

From the sweeties.net wiki

Palm oil is an edible vegetable oil made from the pulp of the fruit of the African oil palm. It is used in food, cosmetics and biofuel, and in 2017 it made up about 36 per cent of all oil produced from oil crops worldwide.

Why makers use it

Palm oil is highly saturated, so it is solid at room temperature in temperate climates. That makes it a cheap substitute for butter or hydrogenated vegetable oils wherever a solid fat is needed. Published ingredient lists for Kit Kat and for Maltesers in several countries include palm oil or palm fat.

It is also very productive. Palm plantations use about 5 per cent of the world's vegetable oil farmland but produce about 38 per cent of its vegetable oil, and a palm plantation yields around 10 times as much oil as soya, sunflower or rapeseed.

Why campaigners object

Palm oil production is a serious concern for environmental and human rights groups. Forests in parts of Indonesia and Malaysia have been cleared for oil palm plantations, causing deforestation, loss of biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions, and significant losses of habitat for orangutans, including the critically endangered Sumatran orangutan. Indonesia produced 60 per cent of the world's palm oil in 2022.

Sweets have featured in the row. In 2010 Greenpeace targeted Kit Kat over palm oil from Indonesia, and a viral video pushed Nestlé to change its sourcing: see [KitKat, Greenpeace and the palm oil campaign](#) In 2009 Cadbury faced a backlash in New Zealand after replacing some cocoa butter with palm oil: see [Cadbury and the palm oil backlash in New Zealand](#)

There is another side. A 2018 report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature acknowledged that palm oil is much more efficient than other oils in its use of land and water, although deforestation causes more biodiversity loss than switching to other oils.

Certified sustainable palm oil

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, or RSPO, was set up in 2004 to promote sustainable palm oil through global standards. Products containing certified sustainable palm oil can carry the RSPO trademark. Deforestation has decreased on RSPO certified plantations, but peatlands have continued to be drained and burned for new certified plantations, and some environmental organisations have criticised the scope of the scheme.

Finding it on the label

UK labelling rules do not let palm oil hide. Refined vegetable oils can be grouped as vegetable oils, but only if the specific plants are named straight after, as in vegetable oils (palm, rapeseed), sometimes with the words in varying proportions: see [how to read a sweet label](#)

Each sweet card in our pick and mix shows its full ingredients list, so you can check for palm oil before you buy.

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