



Unicorn Grocery and palm oil sourcing

2016 update

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.

For several years we have been encouraging our suppliers to switch to more sustainable sources, as well as seeking to avoid introducing new products containing palm oil. After a recent audit of all our products and extensive research carried out over the last two years, we have come to the following positions regarding palm oil in our products:

Palm oil as an ingredient:

At present, all the palm oil in our products is either:

- Certified Organic– this ensures 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) – there are various levels of certification available, some of which are more robust than others.

We are working with our suppliers to further improve the traceability of the palm in our products. By the start of 2017 we are hoping that any RSPO palm oil in our products will be certified or close to achieving certification through their 'segregated supply chain' model - one of their strictest levels of certification.

We have already dropped some product lines that don't meet this requirement. For others which we feel are key to our range and whose suppliers are willing to work with us, we are encouraging a switch from the lesser levels of certification (mass balance RSPO certification or the Green Palm voucher scheme) to an organic or fully segregated supply. In this way, over the next year we will create pressure back through the supply chain for a segregated supply of sustainable palm oil. We will review the position of these suppliers at the start of 2017.

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 will also continue to look into sourcing 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 and 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 vegetable 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 and 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.

Thus a complete boycott of palm oil may not be as effective as keeping the pressure on back up through the supply chain. 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.

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 range of goods we offer and the information we provide.

Suggested links for further reading:

Ethical Consumer - <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/ethicalcampaigns/palmoilcampaign.aspx>

Greenpeace - <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/forests/palm-oil>

Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG) - <http://poig.org/>

Green Palm scheme - www.greenpalm.org