



**WAZA**

*World Association  
of Zoos and Aquariums*

**A short guide on**

# **Sourcing sustainable palm oil at your zoo or aquarium**

Compiled by a sub-group of the WAZA Conservation  
and Environmental Sustainability Committee



Cover/back photo: Aerial oil palm land in Sabintulung village, Muara Kaman District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Photo © Ricky Martin/Center for International Forestry Research

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In 100 years, 97% of all **Sumatran tigers** (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) have been lost. They are victims of illegal hunting and human-wildlife conflict, but habitat degradation is the main threat to their survival. From 1990 to 2010, Sumatra lost about 40% of its forests, mainly due to the expansion of oil palm plantations, which threatens the survival of this species with an estimate of under 400 individuals remaining in the wild.

Photo © Amie Stubbs/Nashville Zoo



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## Aim of this short guide

This short guide was comprised by a sub-group of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Committee to help WAZA members understand and support the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) / Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding sourcing sustainable palm oil. Regardless of the location of your zoo and/or aquarium or the size of your budget, this guide contains simple steps to help you to start changing the way your organisation thinks about and sources palm oil.

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We also drew inspiration and material from:

- The WAZA Short Guide: *How to reduce single-use plastic at your zoo or aquarium.*
- The WAZA Short Guide: *How to choose responsibly sourced forest products at your zoo or aquarium.*



## Background

### What is palm oil?

Palm oil is the most widely-used edible vegetable oil around the world. It comes from squeezing the fruit of the oil palm tree (*Elaeis guineensis* and *Elaeis oleifera*). It is inexpensive and efficient, making it the world's most widely used vegetable oil — and global consumption is rising. Palm oil is widely used because of its versatility and its many properties such as being semi-solid at room temperature and stable at high temperature, resisting oxidation, and being odourless and colourless which helps preserve product integrity.

Although native to Africa, oil palms were brought to Southeast Asia in the mid-18th century, and Indonesia and Malaysia currently account for 84% of the world's palm oil supply (USDA, 2021). Millions of families depend on the palm oil sector in producing countries. In Malaysia, 4.5 million people make their living from palm oil production, which plays a crucial role in poverty reduction.

However, the unsustainable establishment of mass oil palm plantations is harming the environment, habitats and the species that inhabit those lands.

Between 1980 and 2020, global palm oil production increased from 4.5 million tonnes (IUCN, 2018) to 75 million tonnes annually (RSPO, 2016).

Palm oil can be found in about 50% of the products you can buy from a store, including pre-packaged foods, shampoo, chocolate, cosmetics, pet food, and cleaning supplies. Currently about half of people worldwide, predominantly in Asia and Africa, rely on palm oil as the cooking oil of choice.

As the global population continues to grow, so will the demand for palm oil which is expected to increase by approximately 1.7% per year until 2050 (IUCN, 2018). This expansion has historically driven deforestation, primarily in Southeast Asia, but also, and more recently, in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Tropical deforestation linked to unsustainable palm oil production has been responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, regional smoke haze, water pollution, human rights abuses, and has put wildlife conservation at stake in some of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Oil palm fruits that have been harvested in the oil palm plantation of the cooperative Bina Tani Muara Kaman Ulu, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Photo © Ricky Martin/Center for International Forestry Research



Woman selling oil palm fruits in Gabon.

Photo © Nathalie van Vliet/Center for International Forestry Research

### What is the solution?

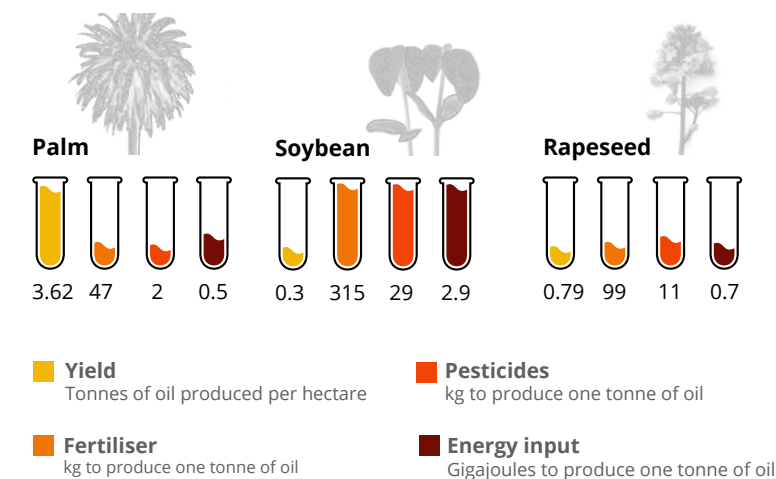
**The boycott of palm oil does not offer a long-term solution to the problem.**

Part of the solution is the promotion of certified sustainable palm oil production.

To boycott palm oil and switch to an alternative vegetable oil such as canola/rapeseed, sunflower, soy, or coconut would require between four to 10 times more land for growing as well as additional resources, fertilisers, and pesticides. This extra resource cost would result in greater deforestation, worsening the situation for other ecosystems, wildlife and their habitats, especially in tropical areas.

If palm oil is produced sustainably by protecting tropical rainforests, species, people within the industry and indigenous populations, it can be the most ecologically friendly vegetable oil available for mass consumption.

It is also important to recognise that the majority of calls to boycott palm oil are emerging from western regions like Europe, Australia/New Zealand, and North America. While these regions import palm oil, the bulk of importation and/or consumption is occurring in just four countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and China. If western regions were to boycott palm oil altogether, a market for unsustainable palm oil would still exist. This highlights the importance of transforming the market to make sustainable palm oil the norm.



When produced sustainably, palm oil is the most efficient and affordable option, requiring less land, pesticides, and fertilisers than other oil alternatives. © WAZA



## Who determines what is sustainable palm oil?

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), is a non-profit organisation that brings together all stakeholders of the palm oil industry including oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations, and is the best standard to certify palm oil as sustainable.

The RSPO's evolving **Principles & Criteria** (P&C) are the guidelines by which the RSPO determines if palm oil is sustainable or not. The P&C include 39 criteria under 7 principles that have been approved by the members of the RSPO. They focus on People, Prosperity, and Planet.



**When you consider the disastrous impacts of palm oil on biodiversity from a global perspective, there are no simple solutions. Half of the world's population uses palm oil in food, and if we ban or boycott it, other, more land-hungry oils will likely take its place. Palm oil is here to stay, and we urgently need concerted action to make palm oil production more sustainable, ensuring that all parties – governments, producers and the supply chain – honour their sustainability commitments.**

- Inger Andersen,  
Former IUCN Director General 2015-2019  
As quoted in IUCN News (Paris, 26 June 2018)

*Even though there are governmental standards that exist in countries that produce palm oil, such as the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) certification scheme and the Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) certification scheme, we believe that the RSPO is the strongest sustainable palm oil certification scheme that is currently available.*

## The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

The RSPO is an international, non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting responsible production of sustainable palm oil.

The RSPO certification scheme sets the highest standards for palm oil production and use. Products made with RSPO certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO) can be purchased from RSPO certified companies, from companies sourcing from RSPO certified supply chains, or identified by RSPO labels.

The RSPO has developed a system of product labeling that enables people to easily identify responsibly sourced palm oil products.

There are three different levels of trademark labels. "Certified" for Identity Preserved and Segregated palm oil, "Mixed" for Mass Balance palm oil, and "Credits" for Book and Claim palm oil.



*Definitions for these palm oil supply chains can be found on page 14 of this document*

## What does WAZA expect from the RSPO?

Although this guide recognises that the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is the most comprehensive and acknowledged palm oil certification scheme available, continuous improvements still need to be made. As conservation organisations, we can be a significant force in driving the palm oil industry in the right direction.

**We play an important role in advocating for the RSPO, but also in pushing for improvements within the RSPO where necessary.**

The RSPO standards were improved significantly in 2018 with the release of the new Principles & Criteria. However, the RSPO is a voluntary certification standard that brings together all stakeholders and is therefore not a quick fix and is not immune to challenges. To reach our collective goal of making sustainable palm oil the norm it will be a journey that will take the collaborative efforts of many organisations to push the RSPO to the next level.

Several of the organisations who contributed to this guide are members of the RSPO to advocate for the goals of environmental NGOs and the spaces and animals they protect. Other contributors work outside of the RSPO and cautiously support its efforts.

Regardless, we all hold the RSPO to high measure, and our support will continue as long as the protection of biodiversity and the environment is kept at the forefront of the RSPO's work.

Beyond ensuring that the 2018 Principles & Criteria are being followed by members, **we expect the RSPO at a minimum to:**

1. improve certification standards by promoting management and monitoring of conservation areas, including species and populations.
2. improve the certification system so that audits focus on impacts of actions rather than the actions themselves.
3. develop new approaches to measure biodiversity in sustainable plantations.
4. actively monitor its members for violations of the RSPO's standards and to act accordingly when violations are found.

For our part, we are dedicated to assisting the RSPO as biodiversity and animal experts and as educational institutions that have the ability to reach millions of people each year to help in the shared goal of making palm oil sustainable.

**Tree kangaroos** (*Dendrolagus sp.*) live in lowland and mountainous rainforests in West Papua, Papua New Guinea, and the far north of Queensland, Australia.

Habitat loss for logging, timber production, or conversion to coffee, rice, or oil palm plantations have become the major threats to their survival.

Photo © Amie Hindson/Zoos Victoria



# Animal species impacted by unsustainable palm oil

According to the IUCN, the expansion of oil palm plantations could affect **54% of threatened mammals and 64% of threatened birds globally**. The below graphic highlights only a few of the many species which are impacted by unsustainable palm oil.



Oil palms, the trees that produce the fruits processed for palm oil, thrive in tropical climates along the equator. These areas are home to the most biodiverse hotspots on the planet, containing millions of unique plant and animal species.

## The role of zoos and aquariums

Zoos and aquariums provide a direct link between the animals in their care and those animals' counterparts in the wild. As trusted conservation organisations, zoos and aquariums are best poised to educate the public and private sectors on how best to conserve wildlife and wild places. Keeping this in mind, we must use our collective power to champion the use of certified sustainable palm oil.

**In November 2017, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). The MoU lists seven specific goals, four of which are the responsibility of WAZA and its zoo and/or aquarium members.**



## The WAZA/RSP0 MoU has four key goals:

- 1 WAZA to encourage participation amongst its members in providing technical inputs to improve sustainability indicators and criteria of the RSP0 certification scheme, especially with regards to environmental responsibility and biodiversity conservation from the WAZA network;
- 2 WAZA to lead the coalition of zoos and aquariums to promote awareness on the products and consumption of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO) to the general public. Awareness campaigns should be carried out by either 50% of the WAZA members by 2023 or by all zoos which house charismatic species that are negatively impacted by unsustainable oil palm plantations by 2023;
- 3 50% of WAZA members commit to use only CSPO in the products they retail, purchase and consume in their premises by 2023;
- 4 Participation of WAZA in the RSP0 Biodiversity and High Conservation Value Working Group as invited resource persons, as needed, to provide information on potential *in situ* conservation projects for compensation projects and to provide local knowledge to inform decisions of the compensation panel.

You can read the MoU [here](#)

## Implementing an institutional policy on sustainable palm oil sourcing

Developing an institutional policy or position statement on sustainable palm oil provides direction to leadership and clarity to staff when trying to shift sourcing to suppliers committed to sustainable palm oil. Such a policy helps to provide explanations and guidance and will help WAZA members share the responsibility of meeting the goals of the MoU with the RSP0.

It would be helpful to find out what your local, regional or national legislation says about palm oil. Aligning your policy with local or national policies will make it easier to implement.

A template of a sustainable palm oil policy is later provided in this Short Guide. We invite each institution to adapt this policy in a way that is relevant and effective in their respective context.

A 2017 study by Tamaris-Turizo *et al.*, showed that the removal of habitats for the unsustainable, industrial-scale oil palm plantations has been followed by episodes of local extinction of different bird species such as the **white-tipped sicklebill** (*Eutoxeres aquila*) in the Orinoquía region in Colombia, known for its high density of oil palm plantations.

Photo © Charlie Jackson



Top: Tiger Trek Sumatran tiger exhibit  
Middle: Simulated plane journey to Indonesia  
Bottom: Interactive supermarket to empower guests and engage with companies

Photos © Taronga Zoo

## Case Study

### Taronga's Tiger Trek: Empowering consumers to save the Sumatran tiger from extinction

Taronga Conservation Society Australia | Australia

At Taronga, we believe that we have a responsibility to speak for wildlife and to tell their stories. As such, Taronga's Sumatran tiger exhibit, *Tiger Trek*, is built around what individuals can do from Australia to protect the Sumatran tiger.

The unprecedented and choreographed experience includes a simulated plane journey to Way Kambas National Park in Sumatra, Indonesia, where guests connect with Sumatran tigers. The guests then enter the national park and learn about the extent of deforestation and its impact on wildlife, whilst hearing about the solution provided by certified sustainable palm oil. Guests then make their way through an interactive western style supermarket experience, *Choice Mart*, featuring a wide selection of Australia's favourite and best-known brands and over 30 products.

Through the *Raise Your Palm* campaign, guests can help save the Sumatran Tiger by using an interactive app that they use to choose products for their shopping trolley, find out their sustainable palm oil rating and then email the companies encouraging them to source 100% segregated and certified sustainable palm oil and say thank you to those who have already made the transition.

Over 2 million guests have been through the experience, with over 130,000 emails sent to 11 companies.





Small producer showing  
oil palm fruit in Pachiza,  
San Martin, Perú.

Photo © Juan Carlos  
Huayllapuma/Center for  
International Forestry  
Research

## A policy template for your organisation

### **Sustainably Sourced Palm Oil Policy** (add your organisation's name and logo)

#### **Purpose**

Include an introduction to palm oil and its impact on the environment when produced unsustainably. It is important to define the difference between unsustainable palm oil and sustainable palm oil. Link this issue with animals in your care whose existence is threatened by unsustainable palm oil to bridge the gap between this topic and why your organisation is involved. Answer the question: "Why do we need a sustainable palm oil policy?"

Your organisation's involvement should cover any campaigns you have or are developing to support sustainable palm oil. When relevant, also include references to best practice or legal or social obligations. Then, provide a clear purpose for this policy.

For example, the purpose of this Policy on Sustainable Palm Oil is to:

- provide guidance to allow consistency and control over working with suppliers committed to sustainable palm oil;
- demonstrate accountability and best practice;
- provide guidance on sustainable palm oil procurement through contracts, retail, partnerships, and campaigns;
- to ensure consistent messaging to staff and visitors;
- support the MoU between WAZA and the RSPO.

#### **Responsibility**

Detail who oversees the policy and ensures resources are in place to make it happen. Which staff members will hold your organisation accountable for implementing this policy and how will they ensure goals are met?

#### **Scope & Compliance**

Include what your organisation has reasonable control over. You may need to define a boundary. Not every organisation has control over their entire site (outsourced shops or restaurants) – explain where you have control of decision making or, alternatively, where you have influence. Also state who at your organisation must comply with the policy such as staff, volunteers, suppliers and contractors. If you are the landlord, you can include clauses about sustainable palm oil use.

#### **Objectives**

State your objectives and how this policy supports the implementation and progress of other organisational strategies or policies.

For example, this Policy on Sustainable Palm Oil is required to support the implementation of *[organisation name]'s*:

- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Sustainable Procurement
- Environment Protection
- Environmental Sustainability Team Activities

#### **Time-bound plan**

Should include a clear time-bound plan as a goal to work towards. *E.g., by XX date we will have...*

#### **References**

Provide references or further reading material as required.



## Definitions

We suggest adding a Definitions section to your policy to give clarity about the definitions for keywords or phrases used. The section below provides some examples that could be included, but you may also want to adjust for your own regional and/or organisational context.

**HCV:** high conservation value – an area with outstanding and critical importance due to its environmental, socio-economic, cultural, biodiversity and/or landscape value; included as sustainable forestry criteria in 1999 (FSC, Forest Stewardship Council).

**HCS:** high carbon stock – carbon stock is the amount of carbon stored in a particular area (e.g., a forest or a peatland area). High carbon stock land is land with 35 tons of carbon above ground biomass.

**RSPO:** Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil – a non-profit that unites stakeholders from the seven sectors of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations. The RSPO has developed a set of environmental and social criteria which companies and farmers must comply with in order to produce certified sustainable palm oil.

**CSPO:** certified sustainable palm oil – palm oil that has been grown on a plantation that has been managed and certified in accordance with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil's Principles & Criteria.

**P&C:** Principles & Criteria – RSPO established a set of standards that define the practices for sustainable palm oil production. These standards address the legal, economic, environmental and social requirements of producing sustainable palm oil.

## Certification Mechanisms of the RSPO

**Book & Claim/Credits:** provides tradeable certificates for RSPO certified palm oil to the palm oil supply base. The supply base may then offer these certificates on a web based transaction system to end users who choose to support specific volumes of RSPO certified palm oil and/or their derivatives. It is the least rigorous mechanism, but is able to be initiated easily via web transaction within a day.

**Mass Balance:** physical supply chain. Administratively monitors trade in RSPO-certified sustainable palm oil and its derivatives throughout the supply chain, and is an interim solution until the trade in sustainable palm oil becomes mainstream. The Mass Balance system allows CSPO to be mixed with conventional palm oil at any stage of the supply chain process provided that overall company quantities are controlled.

**Segregated:** physical supply chain. Assures that RSPO certified sustainable palm oil and its derivatives delivered to the end user come only from RSPO certified sources, 100%. However, it allows mixing CSPO coming from different certified plantations so the identification of a single original source is not possible.

**Identity Preserved:** physical supply chain. This system assures that the CSPO and its derivatives delivered to the end user are uniquely identifiable to a specific mill and its supply base and are kept physically separated from all other oil palm sources throughout the supply chain. This is the most rigorous mechanism.

For more information, please visit:  
<https://rspo.org/certification/supply-chains>

## Case Study

### Moving consumers and corporations to sustainable palm oil

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo | United States

At the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, we focus on three areas: the education of our visitors/followers about the importance of RSPO certified sustainable palm oil, encouraging companies to commit to sourcing sustainable palm oil by joining the RSPO, and helping other organisations start their own sustainable palm oil awareness programmes.

In our primate building there is signage explaining palm oil as well as a mock store featuring products from companies committed to sustainable palm oil. This helps visitors understand the variety of products we purchase that can affect animals in the wild and encourages visitors to pay attention to which companies they are supporting.

To give visitors a tangible conservation action to support sustainable palm oil, we developed a sustainable palm oil shopping guide mobile app. Consumers scan the barcodes of products they wish to purchase and the app will identify if the company that makes the product is a member of the RSPO and how we have ranked their commitment to sustainable palm oil – 'Needs Improvement', 'Good', or 'Excellent'.



Staff at Cheyenne Mountain Zoo help build the bond between orangutans and visitors.

Photo © Cheyenne Mountain Zoo

Consumers are able to contact the companies in the app to thank them and encourage them to continue improving their palm oil supply chain. We also facilitate Zoo visitors sending letters and coloring pages that encourage companies to join the RSPO. Through consumer empowerment and direct communication with end-user companies, we are helping transform the market in North America.

To help other organisations start their own sustainable palm oil campaigns, we also created an open source palm oil toolkit with examples of signage/graphics, activities, handouts, images/videos, and more.

The sustainable palm oil shopping guide app empowers consumers to support sustainable palm oil.





## Case Study

### Championing Certified Sustainable Palm Oil

Wildlife Reserves Singapore | Singapore

Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) is committed to championing the use of Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) and be a strong advocate for CSPO in Singapore. We are a founding member of the Support Asia for Sustainable Palm Oil (SASPO) and a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) since 2016.

In 2017, we switched to using only RSPO-certified cooking oil in our food and beverage outlets and undertook an internal audit of edible and non-edible items commonly used in our parks. To demonstrate our commitment to the use of CSPO, we have released our official position statement on palm oil. As part of our green procurement policy, we also share our palm oil commitments with our suppliers for food and non-food products that contain palm oil and its derivatives.

Through our public education and advocacy efforts, we raise awareness of how the consumption of unsustainable palm oil products is a key driver of tropical deforestation, with the aim of nudging guests and employees to choose products made with CSPO. To reinforce the message, we will be strengthening our communication on the use of sustainable palm oil through new interpretives at our orangutan exhibit. In addition, we have devised a two-prong campaign for 2021 – with the first targeting employees and the second, aimed at guests and members of the public. Our employee campaign aims to ensure our colleagues are aligned with the organisation’s stance and equipped with the knowledge to be confident advocates.

Top: An interpretive sign used to educate visitors about the impacts of unsustainable palm oil and how the solution is to support sustainable palm oil.

Bottom: Employees are strong advocates of sustainable palm oil in their own work and when talking to guests.

Photos © Wildlife Reserves Singapore



## Sustainably sourced palm oil products audit

Use the results of the full audit of palm oil consumption on site to complete this table. Palm oil or palm oil derivatives are found in about 50% of products including: human food & beverages, animal diets & enrichment, soaps, cleaners, detergent, sanitisers, vehicle fluids, paints, medical supplies, veterinary medicines, and more.

To get tips from Cheyenne Mountain Zoo on doing inventories, click [here](#)

For another example of how your zoo/aquarium can start monitoring sourcing, you can access Chester Zoo's Supplier Palm Oil Audit template [here](#).

Which department or area is responsible for product procurement?	Product including brand name if applicable.	Which company makes the product? <i>Brands are often under a larger parent organisation</i>	If the company is not committed to certified sustainable palm oil. <i>Encourage them to join the RSPO or switch to a different company who has already joined the RSPO.</i>
<i>For example: Maintenance</i>	<i>Brand name hand soap</i>	<i>Company XYZ Inc. - RSPO member</i>	<i>N/A</i>

## Exemptions

Organisations often make exemptions to this policy for human health and safety, animal welfare reasons or where there is no other practical alternative product or distribution method currently available. It would be helpful to dedicate an employee to be the point of contact for determining when an exemption needs to be made and is acceptable.

You may wish to list possible exemptions in your policy to avoid confusion (e.g., specific veterinary medicines).

Native to the tropical rainforests of Southeast Asia, the population of the **Malayan tapir** (*Tapirus indicus*) is estimated to be fewer than 2,500 individuals following a decline of more than 50% over the last three generations. The decline is mainly due to rampant deforestation as a result of the conversion of its habitat to oil palm plantations.

Photo © Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo





With most of their native range overlapping with some of the most important producer regions of palm oil (e.g., Sumatra, Borneo, Malaysia, Thailand), **Clouded leopards** (*Neofelis sp.*) are threatened by forest degradation and habitat loss, principally as a result of selective timber extraction and subsequent conversion to oil palm.

Photo © Jonathan Ross/Nashville Zoo



Top: Zoo guests can donate to enrich forest habitat in Kutai National Park. Photo © Indianapolis Zoo

Middle: A seedling being planted in Kutai National Park. Photo © Anne Russon

Lower: Indianapolis Zoo naturalist interpreting durian fruit with guests. Photo © Ian Nichols

## You can be a Hutan Hero too, and help wild orangutans

Indianapolis Zoo | United States

As a voting member in the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the Indianapolis Zoo works to engage the Indianapolis community to use wildlife-friendly palm oil products. Through informal interpretation and formal education programmes, the Zoo engages guests on grounds and provides actions that guests can immediately take. Guests are encouraged to download the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's palm oil app while they are at the Zoo, and staff in the Simon Skjodt International Orangutan Center encourage visitors to support enriching the forest habitat of orangutans by donating during their visit. Since 2014, Zoo guests have donated over USD35,000 to the Kutai Forest Enrichment Project through the Zoo's cashless donation kiosks.

Signage also plays a significant role in the Zoo's plan to get this message out. The exhibit includes interactive kiosks for guests to explore what they can do to help, and an area called Hutan Heroes introduces a few champions of the sustainable palm oil movement.

Always striving to achieve more, the Zoo has taken steps to remove unsustainable palm oil from its events. ZooBoo, an event that runs throughout the month of October, has moved to only providing treats that are listed as "orangutan-friendly". Through a strong social media plan, families and members of the local community are also encouraged to do the same. As the Indianapolis Zoo continues to look for ways to use more wildlife-friendly palm oil, existing projects are a working reminder to the community that small steps in the right direction can help us all do more for our environment.



## Communication

Communicating your commitment to source only sustainable palm oil is critical for your policy's success. It is important to ensure that staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders understand why your organisation is enacting this policy. Explain to staff the importance of supporting sustainable palm oil and give them the chance to ask questions and engage. Depending on your organisation's framework, getting the support of your Board of Directors could also be crucial. By first getting the support of relevant parties within your organisation, you will make it easier to communicate this new sustainable palm oil policy with vendors, suppliers, partners, and others. External communication with the public

and your visitors should take place once your policy has been implemented successfully and your organisation is on its way to sourcing 100% sustainable palm oil. Craft easy-to-understand messages that can be used throughout your organisation such as in signage, shows & demonstrations, or during special events and celebrations (e.g., if your zoo passes out candy at Halloween ensuring that all of the candy is sourced from companies committed to sustainable palm oil and advertising as such to the public). It is important to emphasise that every step towards implementing this policy protects wild species.

## Creating Partnerships

Partnering with like-minded organisations will increase the success and impact of your efforts to promote and source sustainable palm oil. Partnerships can be made with local schools and universities, local government, local business, and other zoos and aquariums or environmental groups. Different partners will have different perspectives and experiences meaning they bring new ideas to your collaboration.

**Sumatran orangutans (*Pongo abelii*)** are seriously threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation due to the expansion and impacts of unsustainable oil palm plantations on their populations, which has decreased around 80% in the last 75 years.

Background photo: Kerinci Seblat National Park, Sumatra. © Luke Mackin

Front photo © Cheyenne Mountain Zoo



## On the palm of your hands

Africam Safari | Mexico

In 2011, the Africam Safari conservation education department started the campaign "On the palm of your hands", aimed at the general public, and whose main objective is to make palm oil known among our visitors as well as the implications of its consumption, the ecological impact that has on the animal species and the tropical forests from around the world. The campaign also has a focus on the situation in Mexico and how can our visitors take simple steps from their homes in order to make their palm oil choices more sustainable.

During our visitor talks, we talk to our explorers about the presence of palm oil in our daily lives, its importance, and its efficiency. We also introduce the work that the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) does as the most trustworthy palm oil certification scheme. We teach our explorers and encourage them to take action for sustainable palm oil use by reading the tags in the products they buy and sending letters to the producers whose products do not clearly specify the source of the palm oil they are using. If, on the contrary, the producer specifies it, our explorers will encourage them to join the RSPO.

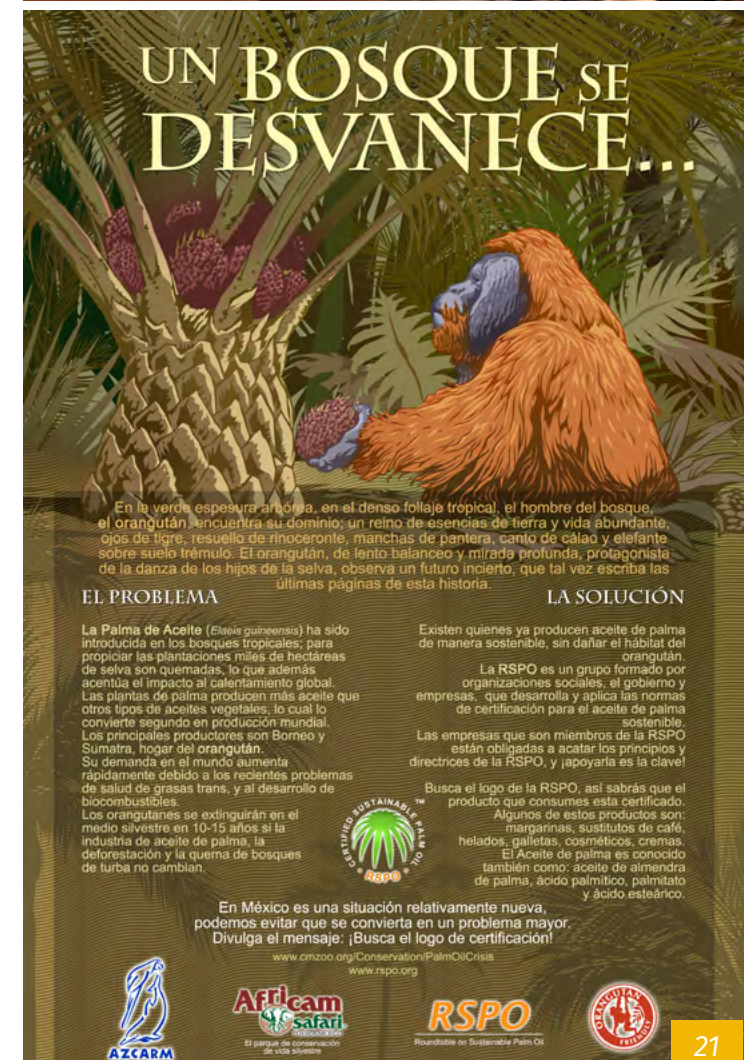
From this campaign and to spread it within the Latin American and Mexican Zoo and Aquarium community, a poster was presented at the joint Latin American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (ALPZA) and the Mexican Association of Zoos, Breeders and Aquariums (AZCARM) Congress in 2012.

Top: Young explorers during one of our visitor talks

Bottom: Poster presented to the Latin American and Mexican Zoo and Aquarium community.

Photos © Africam Safari Puebla

## Case Study





## Engaging visitors and promoting behaviour change

The movement towards sustainable palm oil has demonstrated that businesses, non-governmental organisations, growers/farmers, the general public, and others have the collective power to change business practice and individual behaviour. Involving all of these stakeholders in the decision making process around sustainable palm oil has ensured stronger environmental and human protections within the palm oil industry and has furthered the goal of making sustainable palm oil the norm.

Around the world, zoos and aquariums have the potential to positively impact the conservation awareness and environmental behaviour of millions of people annually. Zoos and aquariums can play a supportive role in local, national or international campaigns to educate consumers and businesses about sustainable palm oil.

However, palm oil is often viewed differently depending on the region, and it is important to recognise that different zoos and aquariums will need to utilise different approaches in how they educate on sustainable palm oil. For example, zoos and aquariums in Southeast Asia may need to consider their relationship with the governments of Indonesia and Malaysia, the world's largest producers of palm oil, or they may be more focused on the environmental concerns surrounding haze. Some zoos and aquariums may be located in countries that do not have transparent sourcing, so they may want to focus on ensuring that companies are transparent with the public about their product sourcing. Other zoos and aquariums may be more focused on the public image of sustainable vs. unsustainable palm oil. All of these situations represent valid campaigns that can help inspire you to get started.

For more information on how zoos and aquariums are working to influence pro-environmental behaviours, we suggest reading *"Social Change for Conservation — The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy"*.

**Western lowland gorillas** (*Gorilla gorilla*) can be found in some of the most dense and remote rainforests of Central Africa. Poaching for bush meat, illegal trade and habitat loss due to the growth of extractive industries (e.g., logging) and the expansion of agriculture, and particularly of unsustainable oil palm plantations, pose the major threats to the survival of this subspecies of gorilla.

Photo © Bristol Zoological Gardens



## Case Study

### Zoos Victoria – Don't Palm Us Off

Zoos Victoria | Australia

In 2009, Zoos Victoria launched 'Don't Palm Us Off'. The campaign aims to facilitate the introduction of mandatory palm oil labelling laws for food products in Australia and New Zealand and create a consumer-driven market for Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO).

Over the past ten years, the campaign has helped to educate our community about the complex issues of palm oil. It has amplified the voices of more than 640,000 Australians calling on government to change labelling laws and on big brands to improve their palm oil sourcing. These calls for change have been made via emails, petitions and through the interactive 'Zoopersmarket' experience onsite at Melbourne Zoo. As a result we have seen the state of Victoria publicly support palm oil labelling reform and significant sourcing

shifts within big brands – including helping Australia's largest confectionary company switch to 100% Segregated CSPO.

Zoos Victoria audits the biggest users of palm oil twice a year to track positive progress or inaction and to spark proactive discussions with these brands. The leaders in the confectionary space are showcased in the annual Orang Utan Friendly Easter Guide.

A final decision on the labelling of palm oil in Australia and New Zealand remains in the hands of a government forum. Securing this change remains a key objective of the campaign, along with assisting food brands to improve their supply chains and continually educating our community about the merits of CSPO.

Visitors to Melbourne Zoo's Orang Utan Sanctuary can scan their favourite food products at the 'Zoopersmarket' and send an email direct to decision makers calling for action.

Photo © Cormac Hanrahan/Zoos Victoria





## Case Study

# Increasing demand for deforestation - free sustainable palm oil

Chester Zoo | United Kingdom

The Chester Zoo Sustainable Palm Oil Challenge campaign began in 2012. Our first steps focussed on internal communication and procurement, ensuring staff and suppliers understood the issue and the solutions available, and were on board with procuring CSPO. A collaboration between our own field programmes department at the zoo, marketing and learning teams then established a public programme to communicate this complex conservation issue.

Through the campaign, we have worked to influence business, the palm oil industry, national and international Governments and certification schemes. The key has been working collaboratively within our own industry (national and international zoo association bodies) and alongside other NGOs to amplify a joint message on the issue and solutions for palm oil.

We launched a behaviour change programme 'Sustainable Palm Oil Communities' in 2017, aiming to increase demand for CSPO one city at a time. This project created a network of organisations in Chester, from restaurants, cafes and businesses to schools and manufacturers, all united to help tackle the crisis. From working with communities to educating zoo visitors and schools, empowerment is at the heart of our approach. We were able to announce Chester as the World's first Sustainable Palm Oil City in 2019. Cities and towns nationwide are now working with us to take on the concept in their own area.

Our procurement strategy is now moving on and expanding to deforestation free commodities, and we are progressing plans for updating policies, engaging once again with suppliers and externals to deliver a deforestation-free goal for our supply chain.

Chester Zoo's campaign went beyond their facility, where it started, and ended with the whole city of Chester being declared World's first Sustainable Palm Oil City in 2019.

Photos © Chester Zoo



**Sun bears** (*Helarctos malayanus*) are among the many species being pushed to the brink of extinction by unsustainable oil palm plantations. The growing habitat loss due to the destruction of forests and the fragmentation of its territory in favour of agricultural land for oil palm plantations are considerably reducing its habitat and its chances of survival.

Photo © Chester Zoo





## Overcoming reported barriers

The following are some of the common issues and barriers that may be preventing you from sourcing sustainable palm oil at your institution, and some suggested ways to overcome them.

### *“Changing products is too expensive.”*

Try to negotiate with suppliers, they may be willing to offer a discount based on the longevity of your partnership if you are entering a contract or because of your organisation’s conservation work and potential non-profit status. However, it’s incredibly important to understand that the monetary cost of switching to sustainable suppliers is necessary to be considered a credible conservation-minded organisation. Not sourcing sustainable palm oil while asking others to, will not hold up to scrutiny from the public and peers.

### *“We cannot find CSPO committed suppliers to replace suppliers using unsustainable palm oil.”*

Some specific products either have very few suppliers or even just one supplier. If you cannot find an alternative supplier for products that are needed, then this is a great opportunity to encourage your supplier to commit to CSPO. Often suppliers do not know that their customers want a commitment to CSPO, so it is not a priority for them. By making them aware and encouraging commitment you are pushing to make sustainable palm oil the norm.

Work with other zoos in your region and regional/national associations, as there may be shared suppliers, particularly in niche sectors such as animal feed or veterinary supplies.

### *“Who are the RSPO, I have never heard of them?”*

Founded in 2004, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), is a non-profit bringing together all stakeholders of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks and investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations. The RSPO has developed a set of environmental and social criteria which companies must comply with in order to produce Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO). When they are properly applied, these criteria can help to minimise the negative impact of palm oil cultivation on the environment and communities in palm oil producing countries. The RSPO has more than 5,000 members worldwide who are committed to produce, source, use, and/or promote certified sustainable palm oil.

Endemic to the tropical forests of northwestern Colombia, the fourth biggest producer of palm oil in the world, **cotton-top tamarins** (*Saguinus oedipus*) have lost more than three-quarters of their original habitat due to deforestation. Lands are used for agriculture, farming, oil palm plantations, and logging.

Photo © Adrian Mann/  
Adelaide Zoo



### *“We have existing contracts with suppliers not committed to sustainable palm oil.”*

Make your current supplier aware of your change in policy and specify that you would also like for them to adhere to this policy. Hopefully your supplier will want to work with you and make this change. Many suppliers are realising the social and economic benefits of making the change to certified sustainable palm oil. For new contracts, be sure to specify your new sustainable sourcing requirements.

### *“We don’t run the restaurants/gift shops ourselves.”*

Use existing arrangements or contracts to your best advantage for change. Make sure that new contracts are tighter in terms of sourcing sustainable palm oil. Restaurants in particular are stakeholders in the palm oil industry and can have a big impact on sustainable sourcing. Ask your current retail/food & beverage partner to join the RSPO and commit to sustainable palm oil.

### *“There are limited options for government zoos (we have restrictions on which providers we can choose, usually we must choose the cheapest option).”*

To switch suppliers, you can try to pursue an exemption or request a case study project to start the change in policies. Beyond the supply chain you can advocate on behalf of sustainable palm oil to your government. See if you can start conversations about legislation that would prevent products related to deforestation from entering your area - like unsustainable palm oil. Do what you can and continue to push the initiative forward any way you are able to.

### *“We don’t trust RSPO certification – there is no evidence that it works and there are negative stories in the media.”*

The RSPO is the most comprehensive and robust certification standard for sustainable palm oil. Sustainable palm oil is the solution to prevent tropical deforestation as alternative oils would cause even greater deforestation because they require four to 10 times more land to produce the same amount of oil. When there are negative stories in the media surrounding palm oil it is often because the media either don’t know about sustainable palm oil as the solution or they do not understand the process of the RSPO. We encourage you to refer to the [RSPO’s updated 2018 Principles & Criteria](#) which govern RSPO members in how they produce and source palm oil sustainably. These 2018 changes provide strict environmental criteria such as no planting on peat, no using fire to prepare land, no planting in High Conservation Value or High Carbon Stock forest, protection of wildlife, and more. We also encourage you to check out the additional resources at the end of this guide which include studies surrounding the effects of RSPO certification.

### *“Our staff or board of directors is not supportive.”*

Emphasise your organisation’s commitment to conservation and try to discover why concern exists. Is their concern something that you can address? Use the WAZA/RSPO MoU as leverage to highlight all WAZA members’ shared responsibility in making sustainable palm oil the norm.



## Start at home

A final note of caution for any visitor awareness campaign directed at using sustainable palm oil: Do not start a campaign asking visitors and businesses to change their behaviour unless you have started with an internal process to only use CSPO at your organisation. People are quick to spot inconsistencies and it is important that we all change our actions to protect wildlife and wild places.

## Already sustainably sourcing, what more can your zoo or aquarium do?

Thank you for all of the work you have done to support sustainable palm oil! Here are a few ideas on how you can keep pushing sustainable palm oil forward:

- Tell other organisations about your experiences: share your successes and the challenges you overcame so that other organisations feel prepared to start their own journey to supporting and sourcing sustainable palm oil.
- Educate your visitors and followers about sustainable palm oil.

- How have your suppliers responded to your requests for sustainably sourced palm oil? Share these conversations and supplier names with other WAZA members to help them in their own conversations with suppliers.
- What other areas are you able to influence? Is your organisation about to get involved in local or national legislation? Can you start asking companies to act responsibly and source sustainable palm oil?



**Asian elephants** (*Elephas maximus*) are found throughout the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Wild populations are severely impacted by habitat shrinkage and fragmentation which results in food shortages, disruption of ancient migratory routes, and smaller home ranges. Increasingly, wild Asian elephant herds are unable to mix with one another, contributing to the risk of inbreeding and genetic issues for future generations of elephants.

Photo © Oregon Zoo



## Case Study

### Protecting Borneo elephants and mobilising consumers

Oregon Zoo | United States

In 1994, Borneo elephant Chendra was found wandering - orphaned, wounded, and hungry - near an oil palm plantation in Sabah. Unable to release her back into the wild, Malaysian wildlife officials found her a home with the Oregon Zoo elephant family in 1999.

Since then, the Oregon Zoo has advanced efforts to promote human-elephant coexistence in Borneo while advocating for deforestation-free palm oil.

The Oregon Zoo provides training and ranger salaries for the Sabah Wildlife Rescue Unit to improve the welfare of orphaned elephants in human care. Through financial support to HUTAN Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Programme (KOCP), and Project Seratu Aatai, the zoo is advancing collaboration with palm oil workers and companies to build tolerance,

improve worker safety and create forested wildlife corridors through plantations.

At home, the Oregon Zoo engages its 1.6 million annual visitors and 3.3 million social media followers on the palm oil issue through storytelling, action campaigns and RSPO membership. Since 2015, the zoo's purchasing plan ensures that all palm oil-containing products sold on grounds are made by RSPO-member companies. The zoo also led a coalition action campaign resulting in a Fortune 500 corporation improving its palm oil sourcing policy.

Chendra not only survived against the odds, she inspired a global movement to break the link between palm oil and deforestation.

Left: Borneo elephant Chendra with elephant herd at Oregon Zoo.

Right: Borneo elephants on an oil palm plantation in Sabah, Malaysia.

Photos © Oregon Zoo







Inhabiting the forests of West Africa, mainly in Liberia, the **Pygmy hippopotamus** (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) is classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Their wild population is estimated to be less than 3,000 individuals. Their main threat is the loss of their habitat, the forest, which is being logged and converted into unsustainable oil palm plantations.

Photo © Torben Weber/Zoo Basel



## Addressing palm oil issues on site and through the supply chain

**Zoological Society of London | United Kingdom**

ZSL has had a policy to use certified sustainable palm oil since 2011, and we have been auditing compliance against this commitment. We make suppliers aware of our palm oil policy and have found it relatively easy to introduce improvements when a new contract is agreed e.g., this is a non-negotiable when selecting external caterers, confectionary suppliers or cleaning products.

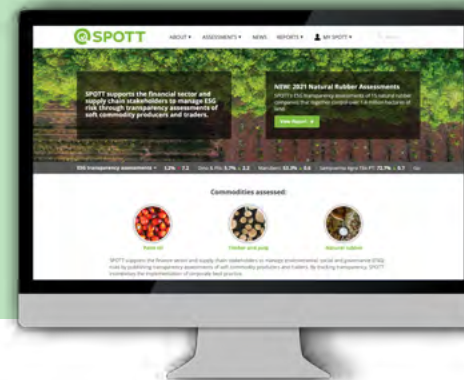
We also want to make sure all products used at both ZSL London and Whipsnade Zoo meet our commitment, so we've developed a standardised supplier questionnaire to help review other product categories. One challenge we expect is relatively low awareness amongst suppliers of products that haven't had the same consumer pressure as the food and beverage industry. We suspect some might report 'no palm oil used' when they might not know the multiple names palm oil and palm oil derivatives can be listed under. As we assess the

results, we'll develop an action plan for how we work with our supply chain to raise awareness and further promote the use of certified sustainable palm oil.

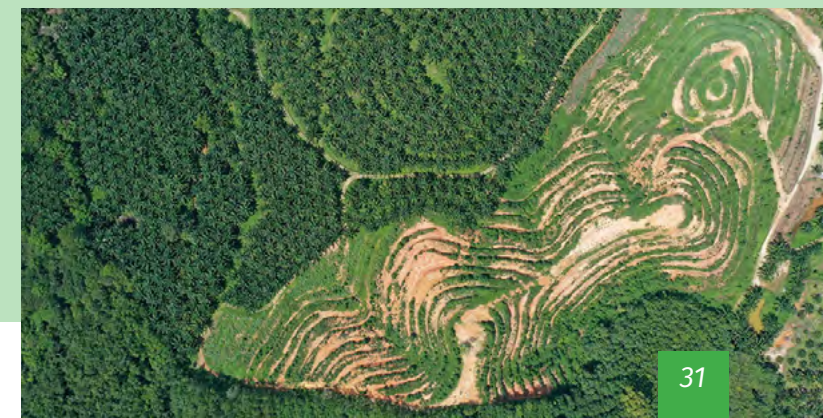
ZSL's Sustainable Business and Finance team works to engage with the palm oil sector to improve transparency and encourage implementation of more sustainable practices. One of ZSL's initiatives is **SPOTT - the Sustainability Policy Transparency Toolkit** - a free, online platform assessing commodity producers, processors and traders on their public disclosure related to ESG issues. SPOTT benchmarks palm oil companies annually against over 100 sector-specific indicators. Users of SPOTT can identify areas where a company is making continuous improvement or where engagement may be needed. In this way, SPOTT supports constructive industry engagement by investors, ESG analysts, buyers and other supply chain stakeholders - those with the power to influence companies to increase disclosures and improve their practices on the ground.

On the island of Borneo, at least 50% of all deforestation between 2005 and 2015 was related to unsustainable oil palm development.

Photo © Zoological Society of London



SPOTT is a free, online platform that benchmarks palm oil companies annually against over 100 sector-specific indicators.





## Utilisation of a picture book as a tool for raising awareness

### Toyohashi Zoo and Botanic Park | Japan

In order to spread awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in Toyohashi Zoo and Botanic Park, a picture book is utilised in collaboration with some zoos in Japan and Shizuoka University. This picture book is designed to provide an opportunity to think about the relation between the natural habitats of endangered species and our daily lives. In addition, we introduce the concept of sustainable palm oil.

Since the issue of palm oil products is closely related to our daily lives, the usage of palm oil is set as the main theme of this book. The use of an effective and convenient tool which can appeal to all ages, especially to younger ages, is beneficial in spreading awareness about the SDGs. To fulfil a social mission as a zoological institutions, we should actively take this sort of simple and steady approach.



Top: Visitors to Toyohashi Zoo and Botanic Park attend an educational talk on the problems behind unsustainable palm oil production, its relationship to wildlife conservation, and how to make better choices as consumers.

Photo © Toyohashi Zoo and Botanic Park

Bottom: Picture book used at Toyohashi Zoo and Botanic Park to raise awareness about how the use of unsustainable palm oil can affect wildlife.

Photo © Shizuoka University



**Cassowaries** (*Casuarus sp.*) are native to the tropical forests of Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and northeastern Australia. Recent studies (Pangau-Adam *et al.*, 2015) have found that cassowaries are intolerant of heavy forest disturbance and that forest degradation needs to be addressed in order to secure their populations.

Photo © Chester Zoo





## Additional resources

The following is a selection of additional resources that may help you get started on your journey towards sourcing only CSPO and campaigning to educate the public and suppliers on CSPO.

Visit the WAZA Palm Oil Resources Website to access and see more resources.

### WAZA Palm Oil Resources Website

In April 2021, WAZA launched the **WAZA Palm Oil Resources Website**, which contains a number of tools and resources that can help WAZA members support the WAZA/RSPO MoU | [Visit the website](#)

### Useful links

- The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil's website | [Access](#)
- Palm oil and biodiversity conservation | [Access](#)
- WWF's palm oil resources | [Access](#)
- Cheyenne Mountain Zoo's palm oil resources | [Access](#)
- Chester Zoo's palm oil resources | [Access](#)
- ZSL SPOTT website | [Access](#)
- Conservation International's palm oil resources | [Access](#)
- European Palm Oil Alliance | [Access](#)

### Videos

- Palm Oil and Biodiversity (IUCN) | [Watch video](#)
- How Palm Oil Producers Can Help Elephants and Orangutans (Oregon Zoo) | [Watch video](#)
- How to ensure Sustainable Palm Oil | [Watch video](#)

The WAZA Palm Oil Resources website  
[www.wazapalmoil.org](http://www.wazapalmoil.org)

### Scientific studies

- Oil palm and biodiversity: a situation analysis by the IUCN Oil Palm Task Force | [Access](#)
- Oil palm expansion transforms tropical landscapes and livelihoods | [Access](#)
- Biodiversity impact of RSPO certification - an assessment of good practices | [Access](#)
- Profitability and Sustainability in Palm Oil Production | [Access](#)
- Setting the biodiversity bar for palm oil certification | [Access](#)
- The environmental impacts of palm oil in context | [Access](#)

### Educational resources

Sustainable Palm Oil Colouring Book for Kids (RSPO) | [Download the resource](#)

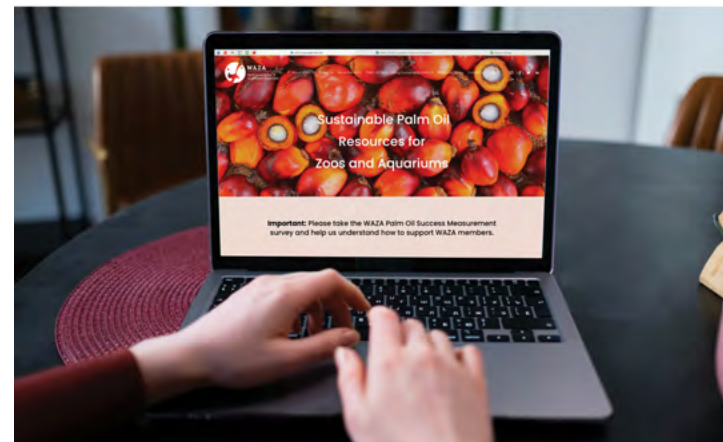
The Palm Oil Challenge (Chester Zoo) | [Access resource here](#)

Palm Oil Messaging (Cheyenne Mountain Zoo) | [Access resource here](#)

### Other useful resources

Evaluating the effectiveness of Palm Oil messaging at Fresno Chaffee Zoo | [Download the resource](#)

Documentation Center - European Palm Oil Alliance | [Access resource here](#)



## Acknowledgements

For any zoo or aquariums wanting to get more involved, we highly encourage joining the RSPO as an Ordinary member. Ordinary members are able to vote in RSPO affairs and more directly influence the path of sustainable palm oil. To learn more please contact us and visit <https://rspo.org/members>

Thank you to the organisations who submitted case studies for this short guide and continue to set the example for how the WAZA community can support sustainable palm oil.

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