Palm oil is pressed from the fruit of the oil palm tree. You may not notice it, but palm oil is almost everywhere. Because it is so cheap, industry has been using it in recent years in food, detergents and diesel fuel. Oil palm plantations are spreading as demand for the oil rises.

Oil palms only grow in places that also suit the rainforest, and so to make room for plantations, countless giant trees are being felled – often illegally. According to the United Nations, oil palm plantations are the main reason why nature is being destroyed in countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. Worldwide, we are losing an area of rainforest as big as 35 football pitches every minute.
THE PROBLEM

USES
About half the products in your supermarket contain palm oil – for example processed foods, cosmetics, soaps and candles. More and more palm oil is also being added to diesel fuel.

PLAN-TATIONS
Most palm oil is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia. The plantations need a lot of chemicals, and almost no animals or other plants live in them.

DEFORESTATION
Worldwide, palm oil plantations cover 170,000 sq. km – that's more than England and Wales combined. That area was once covered by rainforest.

THE EFFECTS

HABITAT
As the forest shrinks, the number of endangered orang-utans, Borneo pygmy elephants and Sumatran tigers is also declining.

LAND GRABBING
People are often brutally evicted from their land for plantations. If they resist, they are threatened and often arrested.

CLIMATE CHANGE
A huge amount of CO₂ – up to 6,000 tonnes per hectare – is released when a rainforest is destroyed. An average European would need 800 years to produce that much.

THE SOLUTION

SHOP WITH CARE
It’s possible to live without palm oil – healthier too.

CHECK THE CONTENTS
Palm oil can hide behind many names. When in doubt, ask the manufacturer.

INFORM OTHERS
Share what you have learned about palm oil and its effects with others. Tell your friends and family about it, or give a report in class.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT RAINFOREST-RESCUE.ORG/TOPICS/PALM-OIL