

FAQs on Responsible Palm Oil Network, its Joint Position Statement and the palm oil issue.

Why have you put out this statement?

The issue of palm oil and how to address it is complex, with many groups debating many details and the situation itself changing over time. In the past, much time has been spent on highlighting minor points where we disagree and has often resulted in external audiences – both consumers and the industry itself – becoming confused.

We want to highlight the large areas where we all agree. We believe it is important to present a united front as a region. Releasing this statement helps to ensure we have a clear definition of success so that the market players and authorities, who are able to trigger large changes in the palm oil industry, know what we are asking for.

It has also helped to highlight just how many organisations want positive change on this issue to tackle the threat that unsustainable palm oil production has on the environment and its wildlife.

What is different about this statement?

This joint position and those who have signed on to it brings together groups who have often worked alongside each other on the issue of palm oil, but not always together. Its release signals to the industry that there are many voices in Australasia and south-east Asia who are in strong agreement on the steps needed to alleviate the threat of unsustainable palm oil, and are raising their voice loudly in unison. The various organisations and zoos behind this position statement will be working together to achieve these goals in the near future.

Why are zoos involved in this issue?

Modern zoos are committed to saving animals in the wild. Many zoos are involved because they believe they have a responsibility to address the issue of deforestation. Deforestation affects many species in the wild that are also within the care of zoos. With millions of visitors visiting zoos, they offer an unparalleled platform to engage the public in conservation actions and issues that can help secure the survival of species in the wild. Some zoos have already been addressing the issue of palm oil through campaigns onsite and online.

Why not call for all palm oil to be removed from products?

As outlined in the statement itself, we believe that avoiding palm oil altogether and asking for its removal across all products will have limited long-term positive outcomes. It also ignores other drivers of deforestation globally. As this group of organisations are wanting to see an end to deforestation, we acknowledge that encouraging mass boycotts of palm oil will likely push many manufacturers to source alternative oils – like soy or rapeseed – which can require 6 to 10 times more land than is needed for palm oil. The demand for edible oil is only going to increase, as world population increases, so it is crucial that we invest in developing sustainable systems that meet growing demands, rather than diverting markets to oils that could be just as damaging as, or more destructive than, unsustainably produced palm oil.

Whilst boycotts can play a role in driving change, we recommend that they be limited to companies refusing to show any indicators of change, rather than companies and products using palm oil and transitioning to more sustainable supplies. If a company chooses to boycott palm oil, we would hope that they are moving to an alternative oil that does not also drive global deforestation, and to be

able to demonstrate how the alternative product is being sustainably sourced. This group believes the transformation of the palm oil industry to more sustainable practices is possible, and if done well, it can be used as a model for other industries also driving deforestation.

Why is palm oil labelling important?

Unfortunately in Australasia, it is not mandatory to label palm oil, or any other vegetable oil, regardless of whether it is produced conventionally or sustainably. It is therefore almost impossible to tell if products contain palm oil, let alone if this palm oil is CSPO. Some of the members involved in this network are working with the community to highlight the need for clear labelling on products.

Some companies have already chosen to label palm oil on their products, and some have also labelled their use of CSPO, using the certified trademark and/or including it explicitly in the ingredients list. Fair labelling will allow us to recognize those companies who are really taking action to source their products sustainably. As it is not mandatory in our region, it means many companies can hide their practices from consumers. In Europe, and much of the US, it is now mandatory to label oils clearly, and it is our hope that the Australasian region soon joins the many nations opting to do this which, in turn, evens the playing field for all companies.

We know from Europe that once labelling becomes mandatory this can drive a higher increase in the demand for CSPO. In short, when companies need to write there is palm oil in their products they become more motivated to be able to prove they have sourced it sustainably.

How do I know what products to buy and what contains CSPO or conventional palm oil?

Unfortunately in Australasia, it is not mandatory to label palm oil (or any other vegetable oil). It is therefore almost impossible to tell if products contain palm oil, let alone if this palm oil is CSPO.

One thing you can do is to contact the manufacturer of a product and ask about the use of palm oil and if it is CSPO. The other is support companies which, despite the lack of legislation, are doing the right thing, by choosing to label palm oil in their ingredients list and using CSPO in their products. Other companies have provided updates on their webpages outlining their policies on palm oil, its sustainability and whether they intend to label the ingredient in the future.

Note that companies can become a member of the RSPO without actually yet sourcing or using CSPO in their products, so whilst being a member of the RSPO is a positive move forward and can highlight engagement in addressing this issue, it does not mean a company is using or committing to use CSPO in their actual supplies. Only when a company specifies that they are using 100% RSPO Certified Sustainable Palm Oil, can you be sure that it is starting to be put into their products.

What does the trademark for CSPO looks like?

Some companies may simply mention their use of CSPO in their packaging or website, others are using the certified trademark. Here is what you are looking for:



On a global scale, Australia and New Zealand are relatively small consumers of palm oil, so is it really an issue? Will market change in Australasian countries make any difference?

Although our nations and close neighbours are relatively small consumers of palm oil, when looking at global palm oil production and demand, we still have a responsibility to ensure that the oil we are using and supporting is being produced sustainably. Our consumption of palm oil is still contributing to this crisis. We also have an opportunity to lead other larger countries in the use of Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) and palm oil labelling.

We also need to walk the talk; we can't make demands of other nations and regions, without first having established good practice at home. It is vital we address our own consumption of unsustainable palm oil and our role in driving this industry first, before looking further afield.

What is Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO)?

Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) and palm kernel oil (CSPKO) is produced by plantations which have been independently audited and found to comply with the globally agreed environmental standards devised by the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). These sustainability criteria relate to social, environmental and economic good practice. They are also reviewed annually by the RSPO.

CSPO is a vital tick of approval, aiming to respect the rights of the millions of people who rely on this industry, including customary land owners, local communities, plantation workers and small farmers to ensure that no new primary forests are cleared for production, and that mills minimise their environmental footprint. No land cleared after 2005 can be certified under the RSPO, meaning that future production is forced to make use of the millions of hectares of land already cleared and degraded in order to obtain certification and meet consumer demands.

Who are the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)?

Established in 2004, the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a multi-stakeholder initiative dedicated to promoting sustainable production of palm oil worldwide. RSPO's more than 1000 members include palm growers, oil processors, traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, investors and non-government organisations working in social and environmental areas. Founding members included World Wildlife Fund, Unilever and the Malaysian Palm Oil Association.

How do I know I can trust the RSPO and its certification methods?

When it comes to palm oil, currently RSPO Certified Sustainable Palm Oil is the best option in protecting wildlife and human livelihoods, whilst still ensuring the majority of the market can improve its practices. Whilst there are other certifications and laudable commitments that companies can make – such as those to zero-deforestation and full supply chain traceability – the RSPO is the largest and most recognised certification system globally, relying on multiple stakeholders from all facets of the industry working to transform and improve practices. It also involves transparent reporting at every step of the supply chain. Committing to using 100% RSPO Certified Sustainable Palm Oil still allows companies to also commit to zero deforestation and full traceability, which this network would also welcome. However the definitions of 100% CSPO, as outlined by the RSPO, are transparent, independent and globally recognised.

Are the RSPO and its CSPO certification perfect?

We acknowledge that the RSPO is not perfect, nor do its criteria for CSPO production meet this network's definition of 'best practice,' at least not yet. By supporting CSPO and the RSPO, we aim to

place more importance and more pressure on the RSPO itself and the Principles & Criteria of CSPO to enable it to become a stronger organisation, and so that it continually improves its practices and those of its members.

A vote of no-confidence in the RSPO and its certification methods could enable other countries to establish their own certifications, which do not have the benefit of third-party global certification standards. We need to work to make one robust certification that becomes simple to recognize on products and the RSPO is our best bet.

Is Book & Claim or Green Palm the same as CSPO?

Book & Claim or GreenPalm is a supply chain method that is endorsed and supported by the RSPO, and included as a way to support the production of CSPO. However it does not mean that the product nor the company is actually using physical CSPO in its products. It is an offset system set up to increase demand for CSPO and to assist smallholders in producing CSPO, rewarding them for doing so. It has particularly been important for companies using fractionated derivatives of palm oil, where supply chains are more difficult to trace and where CSPO is not as readily available yet.

Using Book & Claim/GreenPalm is a great place to start for many companies, but should not be an end-goal for companies, and particularly not for the larger multi-national organisations. We would expect companies to be committing to move their supplies to actually include a physical supply of CSPO in their products. We support the use of Book & Claim as a step in the right direction, and a support to the industry. We acknowledge it particularly assists smallholders in palm oil producing countries to change their practices, but as a collective, we do not endorse it as the final end goal.

What does Mass Balance mean in terms of CSPO, and is it good enough?

Mass Balance is again a step further beyond Book & Claim. It refers to the supply chain option where a mix of physical CSPO and uncertified palm oil is mixed together. Like Book & Claim, Mass Balance enables companies to move their supplies to CSPO and support its production in the industry. It is a step beyond Book & Claim, because Mass Balance means that a product actually contains some physical CSPO. We welcome companies starting to use Mass Balance, but again do not endorse it as an end point, because the ultimate goal is for all companies to be using 100% physical CSPO, and not continuing to support the production of conventional, and often unsustainable, palm oil.

What is RSPO NEXT?

RSPO NEXT is an additional addendum to the current Principles and Criteria of CSPO certification. It was developed by a working group within the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, and provides guidance on the themes of zero deforestation, fire, no planting on peat, reducing greenhouse gases, transparency and respect for human rights. It is an initiative to engage with RSPO member companies that have already met the current requirements of the RSPO Principles and Criteria and, through their own policies and actions, have exceeded them. RSPO NEXT is an example of how the RSPO are still improving their own practices and certification standards.

What is the Palm Oil Innovation Group?

The Palm Oil Innovation Group supports the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil through demonstrating that innovation and leadership, in responsible palm oil production and use, is possible and that it can be adopted into the mainstream. Its members are committed to displaying best practice in regards to the Principles and Criteria (P&Cs) of the RSPO, particularly on the issues of deforestation, carbon stocks, biodiversity and social impact. The RSPO P&Cs in their current format

do not always set clear enough performance standards for certified growers regarding these issues. Although they state many examples of best practice, without clear mandatory standards, a range of performance levels are possible within RSPO certified members. The POIG ‘Charter’ for palm oil producers is based on the RSPO P&Cs, but goes further to set even stronger standards on key issues, including the protection of secondary forests identified via the High Carbon Stock (HCS) Approach. POIG members have begun to commission independent audits of their operations to ensure their policies and practices meet the POIG Charter and are truly free of deforestation.

Won’t a position like this simply drive more demand for palm oil?

There are products and instances when another oil may be used, instead of palm oil. We won’t be advocating for that manufacturer to use palm oil instead of their chosen alternative, as long as their alternative is also sustainably produced. We simply ask that if palm oil is used in a product, that it is RSPO Certified Sustainable Palm Oil.

As discussed earlier, palm oil is a high yield oil, and if produced sustainably, can be a better alternative in avoiding further rising deforestation compared to some alternative oils. However, companies are welcome to avoid palm oil and instead choose a sustainably produced alternative oil. We understand the environmental, economic and social importance of the production of other edible oils in Australia and other parts of the world.

Can palm oil be ‘orang-utan friendly’ but not sustainable?

Palm oil can be labelled as ‘orang-utan friendly’ but not be certified by the RSPO as sustainably produced. This is because not all palm oil comes from areas where orang-utans are found. Whilst orang-utans are a species that have been greatly impacted by unsustainable palm oil production, many other tropical regions around the world are producing palm oil and possibly negatively impacting the habitats and environments of thousands of other species. This is why it is important to support and strengthen a third-party certification system, rather than allow companies to market their products on terms that can be misinterpreted or misused.

Why focus on the year 2010 when discussing levels of forest cover?

2010 was set as the target year to restore forest cover based on timelines set by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. Whilst the New Plantings Procedures were established in 2005, they became auditable by 2010. So for things like High Conservation Value forest definitions and the related compensation mechanisms, 2010 became the year from which there was accountability for any further loss.

What about other commodities driving deforestation?

It is our hope that the methods undertaken by the organisations supporting this statement, will be able to be used in the future to address other commodities driving deforestation globally

What about human rights in palm oil production?

We acknowledge there are many human rights issues and social impacts of palm oil production, with many people and communities negatively impacted over its history. Our expertise is in the environmental and wildlife impacts of palm oil production and we recognise there are many other organisations more experienced and qualified in tackling the people side of the issue. The Principles and Criteria behind Certified Sustainable Palm Oil production include requirements relating to the

people involved in this industry, so by supporting the RSPO and the production of CSPO, we are also assisting in improving the social aspects of this industry also.

What can I do to help?

Many of the organisations supporting this position statement have been campaigning on this issue and are able to provide tangible actions for you to take, to make your voice heard and contribute to a more sustainable palm oil industry.

The voice of a customer is an influential thing for a company, so please do not underestimate your ability to persuade companies to change their practices.

Examples of ways you can do this include:

- Visiting the Zoopermarket online at Zoos Victoria's website and discover which companies are committed to CSPO and email them to either ask for a CSPO commitment or thank them for making the switch already.
- Add your voice to the thousands asking for clear labelling of all oil via Unmask Palm Oil's campaign.
- Get in touch with the maker of your favourite products, via their website, social media pages or consumer care contact centres, to ask about their commitments to palm oil.
- Look up the World Wildlife Fund's Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard to see which companies are making the transition to CSPO and helping improve the industry.