



Fact sheet on Palm Oil – NATRUE's position

“Sustainability and respect for biodiversity are core to NATRUE values, and NATRUE encourages the use of traceable, sustainable natural raw materials.”

Dr. Mark Smith – NATRUE's Director General

Facts about palm oil: Why and where is it used?

- Palm oil is the most widely used vegetable oil in the world and around 87% of the world production (63 million tonnes in 2015) comes from Indonesia and Malaysia^{1,2}.
- The oil is extracted either from the fruits (palm oil) or kernels (kernel oil).
- Palm trees are incredibly efficient: the yield per hectare of land is greater than for other oil crops like coconut (the second most efficient crop after palm; produces less than half as much oil per hectare), soya (the second most produced oil after palm; less than a tenth as efficient), rape or sunflower¹.
- The principle end user of palm oil is not the cosmetic but rather food or biodiesel industries.
- For cosmetics, palm derived ingredients are also used. Mainly these derivatives of palm (kernel) oil are used due to their functional properties (e.g. as emulsifiers).

What are the problems associated with this issue and possible solutions?

While fair and sustainable derived palm oil can provide a route out of poverty for local producers, unsustainable palm oil production is associated with a reduction in biodiversity, increased environmental pollution and an impact on climate change through rainforest deforestation¹⁻⁵.

Principle issues related with palm oil can be overcome through:

1. Sustainability of the palm (kernel) oil itself;
2. For cosmetics, the traceability of the many complex derivatives of palm (kernel) oil.

In both cases, it is necessary that cosmetic raw material supplier/producers are committed to sustainability measures across the entire supply chain to ensure transparency and traceability of palm (kernel) oil and its derivatives via certified sustainable palm oil schemes such as those operated by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)⁶.

What about NATRUE and palm (kernel) oil and its derivatives?

- A sustainable production and traceable supply chain should be the goal for any cosmetic ingredient to protect and manage these finite natural resources.
- The NATRUE criteria⁷ focus is on natural and organic ingredients in finished cosmetic products, and the NATRUE Scientific Committee recognises the concerns and acknowledges the challenges of palm (kernel) oil and its derivatives.
- A ban of all cosmetic ingredients derived from palm (kernel) oil that are not RSPO-certified (or equivalent) cannot be adopted at this time as certain ingredients are not available in certified quality and/or cannot be replaced by a non-palm alternative.
- To-date there is a growing availability of RSPO/fair trade/organic certified palm oil^{6,8} and NATRUE encourages all label users to use certified sustainable palm oil and palm (kernel) oil derivatives wherever possible.

References

¹ [Sustainable Sourcing Guide for Palm Oil Users, 2015. WWF, Conservation International](#)

² <https://palmoilalliance.eu/about-palm-oil/>

³ <https://www.rainforest-rescue.org/topics/palm-oil>

⁴ <http://greenpalm.org/about-palm-oil/where-is-palm-oil-grown-2>

⁶ [RSPO](#)

⁷ [NATRUE criteria](#)

⁸ [GreenPalm](#)