



Young Climate Warriors Challenge / Topic – 5th Dec 2025.

Palm oil ... bathroom products

What do you think shampoo, margarine, shower gel, oven chips, deodorant, biscuits, bread, and ice cream may all have in common? Have you heard of palm oil? 85% of global production comes from Malaysia and Indonesia. Large areas of rainforest and peatlands have been destroyed to make way for palm oil plantations, and endangered species – like orangutans, pygmy elephants and rhinos – are suffering due to habitat loss. Find out [how palm oil is threatening orangutans](#).

You are challenged this week to become a detective!!! Head to your bathroom and see how many products you can find that contain palm oil – be warned – it's not always easy to spot! There are over 200 different names used for labelling palm oil products, and only about 10% include the word 'palm'! 'Start by looking out for 'palm' – such as Palmate, Palmitate, Palmitic Acid, and Palm Stearine. Also keep an eye out for the words Glycerin, Stearyl Alcohol, Stearic Acid, Sodium Lauryl Sulfate and Vegetable Oil as these can also refer to palm oil derivatives. You can view a list of [alternative names for 'palm oil' here](#) – it's a crazy long list! Bathroom toiletries are a much-gifted Christmas present – check out the labels when buying presents and see below about 'sustainable' palm oil.

But what's the relevance to climate change? Palm oil plantations are having a substantial impact on climate change – in two specific ways. Forest fires are often used to clear land to enable palm oil plantations to be grown, releasing millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide and soot into the atmosphere. In other cases peatlands are drained to make way for plantations, releasing the stored carbon into our atmosphere.

Now, here's a tricky question – should we all stop using products containing palm oil? Well, avoiding palm oil altogether could actually encourage companies to seek other types of vegetable oils – like soybean, coconut, rapeseed, or sunflower. Palm oil trees are really productive per hectare... so changing to these alternatives would need more land ... and possibly therefore more deforestation and habitat loss. So 'boycotting' is not the answer. Choose 'sustainable palm oil' to help tackle these issues – seek out the

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) label . You could maybe ask your parent/carer to download [this Palm Oil app](#) (supported by WWF). It means you can scan a product barcode in your supermarket and see if the company is committed to only buying Sustainable Palm Oil.

Send an email to hello@youngclimateguardians.org and tell us when you have completed this challenge!