

The SDG Newsletter

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Palm Oil

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It is (or should be) common knowledge that palm oil is contained in various consumer products such as food, cosmetics and cleaning products. However, how much is really known about the greenwashing of palm oil?

90% of palm oil is produced in Indonesia and Malaysia: countries in which production is frequently criticized for human rights violations. Further, palm oil is a leading driver of deforestation, with arson being committed on rainforests in countries such as Indonesia. Unilever, Henkel and REWE, all being major palm oil consumers, are key organizers and members of the Forum for Sustainable Palm Oil (FONAP) of which the German Society for International Co-operation (GIZ) holds the presidency. Though this forum may at first appear like a good initiative, it is an exemplary example of greenwashing. Even their apparent sustainability labels are deceiving, as palm oil plantations may receive a sustainability certification, although they were originally planted on rainforest soil that was cut down some years prior. Furthermore, Indonesia's government has proposed a questionable strategy in order to greenwash their palm oil. They proposed viewing the planting of palm oil plantations as afforestation rather than deforestation. Their reasoning: palm trees are trees. However, about 85% of species are lost when rainforests are converted to palm oil plantations.

So next time you consider buying a product containing palm oil, think twice!

Sustainable Aviation Fuel

NINAD SATISH



The future of sustainability in aviation is largely centered around the use of an alternative fuel known as sustainable aviation fuel.

Sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, is similar to normal jet fuel, as it can be used in current airplanes, just as jet fuel can, but often has a lower carbon footprint. SAF can be produced from substances such as manure and sewage sludge, which would normally release methane into the atmosphere. Additionally, crops can be used to produce biofuel-based SAFs. As plants absorb carbon dioxide through photosynthesis as they grow, carbon dioxide can, in theory, be released later when the fuel is burnt, and still have little to zero net emissions.

A lower carbon footprint isn't the only benefit of using SAF. Some SAFs can also burn more cleanly, as they contain less of harmful substances such as sulfur and other substances known more generally as 'aromatic components'. The US Department of Energy reports that "many SAFs contain fewer aromatic components, which enables them to burn cleaner in aircraft engines."

Greenwashing

SOFIYA SAMOYLENKO



If you didn't already know, greenwashing is when companies incorporate "green" slogans, marketing and PR into their advertisement to convince the public they are environmentally friendly and sustainable. Unfortunately, many brands in different industries use greenwashing to seem more sustainable in their production processes; for instance, the fashion industry is prominent for creating hashtags or leading movements supposedly aiming to improve working conditions, use sustainable clothing materials, and reuse/repair clothes. For example, the clothing company Massimo Dutti has an organization and a hashtag on social media: #joinlife, which is essentially just a sham that aims to give the impression that the company is doing something for the environment (i.e. donating used clothes and using such "sustainable" materials like ALPACA WOOL).

How to avoid it:

- Shop at sustainable stores (e.g. there is a great one in Berlin called ECOALF)
- Check the label (ask questions like "Where was this piece of clothing manufactured?" and "What materials is it made out of?")
- look behind buzzwords & do your research (don't blindly trust companies/organizations that claim to be environmentally friendly)