Policy Position Statement

Palm Oil

APPROVED

Zoos SA recognises that palm oil production has been a significant driver for large-scale deforestation, threats to species and greenhouse gas emissions. To avoid further deforestation and habitat loss Zoos SA supports organisations that use, or are working towards using, certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO).

Zoos SA supports labelling for palm oil and CSPO so consumers can make an informed choice.

By facilitating change through partnerships, suppliers and community education, Zoos SA will work with likeminded partners worldwide to help break the link between palm oil production and deforestation.

Zoos SA's position is consistent with WWF International, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and other major Australian zoos.

What is Palm Oil?

Palm oil comes from the oil palm plant, native to West Africa, South and Central America. It is the most widely used vegetable oil on Earth and the demand for palm oil is increasing. Around half of the packaged products on Australian supermarket shelves contain palm oil or its derivatives including food products, plastics, detergents, shampoos, and cosmetics. Palm oil is also used increasingly as a biofuel.

Palm oil is often favoured because it is relatively inexpensive to produce, has a long shelf life, can be used in a wide range of products and contains no cholesterol.

Rationale

Unsustainable palm oil is a known driver of deforestation in tropical regions and therefore a significant threat to biodiversity. While non-forested land is available for plantations, many companies opt to first log forested areas to sell the timber. Zoos SA believes the practice of clear-felling to establish oil palm plantations is unsustainable and has an unacceptable impact on local communities and species.

Many of the species found at Adelaide Zoo are threatened in the wild by the cultivation of palm oil including Sumatran Orangutan, Sumatran Tiger and Asian Elephant

Unfortunately, finding an alternative to palm oil is unlikely to address these challenges. Encouraging a complete shift away from palm oil may push manufacturers to source alternative oils such as those derived from soybean, sunflower or rapeseed, which can require 4-10 times more land than that required for palm oil.

Palm oil is a major part of the economy with several million people employed in the areas where it is grown. Ceasing the industry without first establishing sustainable alternatives would threaten local livelihoods and put the environment at further risk by potentially driving communities to play a role in illegal activities such as wildlife trade.

Promoting CSPO will ensure global palm oil supply does not lead to further deforestation, that wildlife is protected and that local communities have a viable alternative income.

Zoos SA is committed to working with like-minded partners to call on companies to source and use only Certified Sustainable Palm Oil as certified through the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. The criteria and principles for certification can be viewed at: http://www.rspo.org/resources/

What is Zoos SA doing?

Zoos SA recognises the urgent need to protect habitat for wildlife threatened by unsustainable palm oil production, and as a zoo-based conservation society we believe by working with others we can make an impact.

Zoos SA will work to raise awareness of the impacts of unsustainable palm oil, promote CSPO and the value of appropriate product labelling for palm oil.

We will encourage our suppliers to use CSPO or other sustainable alternatives as certified by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. We will favour suppliers who have committed to using CSPO and over time eliminate the use or sale of products with unsustainable palm oil where a viable alternative exists.

We will provide ongoing support to conserve species in habitat affected by unsustainable palm oil through our conservation and education programs.

In 2023, The Palm Oil Scan App, created by WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums) was launched in Australia and New Zealand. Zoos SA is the leading Australian member, together with our international counterparts Cheyenne Mountain, Chester and Auckland Zoos. The app assists consumers when shopping to scan and choose products containing sustainably grown palm oil.

Zoos SA works together with the App members to regularly update and add Australian products in its database and rate Australian companies in the app to gauge their progress towards 100% RSPO Certified Sustainable Palm Oil use.

For more information on Zoos SA's activities visit our website at: http://www.zoossa.com.au/.

How our supporters can help

Zoos SA believes that every person can make an impact through the choices they make. To support our efforts we encourage supporters to:

- use the The Palm Oil Scan App when shopping to buy and be more informed about products that contain sustainably grown palm oil;
- write to their local MP expressing support for palm oil labelling in Australia;
- write to supermarkets requesting they promote and stock CSPO products;
- write to companies encouraging them to commit to CSPO or meet their public CSPO targets;
- buy CSPO products or sustainable alternatives;
- donate to Zoos SA's conservation programs; and/or
- become a Zoos SA member to support the organisation's important long-term conservation work.

Reviewing the Position Statement

Zoos SA's Position Statement – Palm Oil will be reviewed every two years or where circumstances warrant by the Zoos SA Board. This Statement will guide the work of all staff and volunteers of Zoos SA.

Next review due: September 2028

Reviewed and approved by the RZSSA Board September 2026

References

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil www.rspo.org

Palm Oil Scorecard 2016 (International) | Publications | WWF

https://www.worldwildlife.org/publications/palm-oil-scorecard-2016

World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (2021). A short guide on sourcing sustainable palm oil at your zoo or aquarium. Barcelona: WAZA Executive Office, 32 p