

Co-operative Food

1. How much palm oil do you use in your products?

The Co-operative Food uses c. 65,000 tonnes of palm oil per year in own brand products.

2. How much of that volume is from a sustainable source?

At present none of our products contains sustainable palm oil. We are currently in the process of converting 32 lines to sustainable palm oil, between April and June of this year.

The Co-operative Food has set a target that all suppliers that use palm oil and palm oil derived ingredients in Co-operative brand products must only use RSPO certified sustainable palm oil by 2015 at the latest.

3. Who do you source your palm oil from?

We have c.750 supplying sites making 3,000 Co-operative Brand products. Our supply base source all palm oil used in the manufacture of Co-operative Brand products on our behalf.

All suppliers of own brand products (food or non-food) are known and audited to ensure compliance with Co-operative Brand policy. We are able to link all products with their respective first and second tier suppliers, and specification exists for all ingredients.

Usage of palm oil is highlighted as every product requires a technical specification to be completed by the supplier. When this is filled in they have to detail traceability information regarding any palm oil contained in their products.

In terms of palm oil traceability we ask the following questions:

- INGREDIENT (including any trade name in brackets)
- SUPPLIER OF INGREDIENT
- COUNTRY, REGION & PLANTATION OF ORIGIN
- NAME OF COMPANY THAT OWNS/RUNS PLANTATION
- % OF EACH INDIVIDUAL SOURCE OF PALM OIL IN FINAL PRODUCT
- TOTAL % OF PALM OIL FROM ALL SOURCES IN FINAL PRODUCT

All suppliers are required to inform us of their plan to move to only using RSPO certified palm oil for Co-operative brand products, if they are using any RSPO certified sustainable palm oil in Co-operative brand products and also supply all information relevant to the certification of palm oil used in Co-operative brand products.

We ensure that all palm oil is sourced from members of RSPO and have set a timeline for the removal of unsustainable palm oil from our products.

4. Do you source your palm oil via a middle trader or directly from Palm Oil companies? If you source it through a middle trader, do you know which palm oil companies supply them?

See above

5. To avoid any confusion, question 5 has not been reproduced here because it contained references to some specific organisations not referenced in Panorama: Dying for a Biscuit

6. What are your plans with regard to the use of sustainable palm oil?

a. Have you set a deadline for when your products will contain only sustainable palm oil?

(As 2 above)

The Co-operative Food has set a target that all suppliers that use palm oil and palm oil derived ingredients in Co-operative brand products must only use RSPO certified sustainable palm oil by 2015 at the latest.

We are currently in the process of converting 13 lines to sustainable palm oil, between April and June of this year.

b. Have you bought any green palm certificates? If so, when did you buy them and how many?

We have briefed our supply base that GreenPalm is one of our permitted methods of certification, especially in instances where using physical sustainable palm oil would prove problematic (eg use of palm oil derivatives, in frying etc.). To allow us to report on any usage that our suppliers may cover off via GreenPalm, and also to show our support for this certification system we have become members of GreenPalm.

c. Are you a member of the RSPO?

Yes we are full members of RSPO and have representation on the Executive Board via British Retail Consortium. All own brand suppliers are required to only source their palm oil from RSPO members.

d. When was the last time you updated the RSPO about your actions?

The Co-operative Group (including Co-operative Financial Services) has reported on palm oil each year in our publically available CSR/Sustainability Report.

7. Do your products that contain palm oil state that on the label? If not, why not?

The Co-operative Food has been at the forefront of honest labelling since the 1980s. Since the mid-1990s we have, as part of our honest labelling policy, labeled palm oil (as well as all other material types of vegetable oil) in the ingredients list of all own brand products.

This is not a legal requirement and the generic 'vegetable oil' is often used instead. By giving the information on the ingredients that go into own brand products, customers can then make informed choices about whether they buy these products.

8. Which of your products contain palm oil or palm kernel oil?

We have 661 food products that contain palm oil across all three of our brand tiers Simply Value (value range, 19 products), The Co-operative (standard range, 601 products) and Truly Irresistible (premium range, 41 products).

We have c.100 non-food products that could have palm oil or palm kernel oil derived ingredients.

We also only allow palm oil, or a blend containing palm oil, to be used to fry any own brand products if those products are manufactured in countries or regions that traditionally use palm oil (eg Thailand, South East Asia etc.) or where there is a proven technical need for using palm oil to fry. In these instances express permission to use palm oil to fry must be given by Senior Food Technical Manager and the palm oil used must be RSPO certified sustainable palm oil.