

Findus Group – makers of Young’s Chip Shop

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

Our business is a relatively small user of palm oil and uses this ingredient only where it brings particular benefits to a product in terms of flavour profile or cooking performance. We have however been pursuing for some years a programme to reduce our overall use. In 2009 we made a commitment that any palm oil we continue to use will be only from certified sustainable sources by 2015 (earlier if possible) – in line with the objectives set by the WWF. We anticipate a significant reduction in our total UK use of palm oil in 2010 over 2009:

2009 - 2,500 tonnes.

2010 - 1,500 tonnes

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

At present our use of certified sustainable palm oil is around 500 tonnes a year. This will increase in line with our commitment to use only palm oil from certified sustainable sources by 2015.

3. Who do you source your palm oil from?

We source all our palm oil in the UK via our supplier, AAK.

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?

We source in the UK via our supplier, AAK. This includes both bulk palm oil and RSPO certified palm oil.

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?

We have committed to source only palm oil from certified sustainable sources by 2015. We also have an innovation and product development programme which is intended to optimise our use of alternative oils such as sunflower and rapeseed (this is also in line with our nutrition policy which seeks to use the healthiest possible oils in our products). In October 2009 our efforts in this area were recognised by the WWF in its Palm Oil Buyers’ Scorecard. This awarded our business a ‘Three Palm’ rating and placed us as the best food manufacturer (and fourth company overall) in its assessment of palm oil use in Europe.

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

Yes, by 2015.

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

No. Our business is following a journey to exit completely from non-sustainably sourced palm oil. We believe this route is preferable to buying green palm certificates.

c. Are you a member of the RSPO?

Yes, as is our supplier.

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

We play an active role in the RSPO. Our oil buyer sits on the Trade and Traceability Working Group of the RSPO and attended the last Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil in Kuala Lumpur (November 2009).

Our annual report to the RSPO on our use of palm oil for 2009 is now due and will be filed within the next few weeks.

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

We declare our use of palm oil on labelling as 'vegetable oil'. This is because most of the palm oil we use is in a blend involving up to four different vegetable oils. As well as being complex these blends are bespoke to our business and therefore commercially sensitive.

We are currently reviewing the declaration we make for those few products which use palm oil only and will move to ensure this is clearly labelled as such.

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

We do not use palm kernel oil. Our UK use of palm oil is now predominantly for our Young's Chip Shop range, where it is used in the batter for reasons of taste and product performance. We have reduced the palm oil usage in this range by 50% over the past 3 years. We are pursuing a programme to change this to a combination of sustainable palm and other oils such as sunflower and rapeseed and expect to achieve this within the next 12 months.

We have already removed palm oil from many of our other best selling retail products – such as Young’s Scampi and Young’s Cod Fish Fingers - during the past 2 years.

9. We understand that the following products contain palm oil or palm kernel oil. If this is not the case please can you clearly state NO next to the product listed.

Young’s frozen fish Yes – see above.

Young’s chilled fish No – no palm oil