

Scientists: Food Industry Must Improve Palm Oil Sourcing

WASHINGTON (UCS) — A [scorecard](#) [1] grading the palm oil sourcing commitments of [30 top companies](#) [2] in the packaged food, fast food and personal care sectors shows 24 of these household brands have inadequate commitments or lack commitments altogether.

Palm oil is used in thousands of products that Americans eat and use daily, like deodorants, ice cream and face creams. It's critical that companies producing these products make strong commitments to sourcing palm oil that prevents deforestation, which contributes to climate change. Palm oil production often relies on clearing forests or carbon-rich peatlands, areas of decayed vegetation, for plantations. All told, tropical deforestation accounts for about 10 percent of all climate change emissions.

"Multinational companies really hold the world's tropical forests in their hands," said [Calen May-Tobin](#) [3], lead analyst for UCS's Tropical Forest and Climate Initiative. "If these companies demand deforestation-free, peat-free palm oil, the producers on the ground would be forced to change their palm oil practices."

The scorecard, "[Donuts, Deodorant and Deforestation: Scoring America's Top Brands on Their Palm Oil Commitments](#) [4]," scored the 10 largest companies in each of the three sectors and found that the majority do not have commitments in place to fully protect forests or peatlands. The fast food sector scored the worst by far. Only two fast food companies, McDonald's and Subway, had strong enough commitments to receive points, though even those commitments are vague and outdated. The personal care sector scores were mixed as many of these companies rely on [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil certification](#) [5] to meet their commitments. This certification is an improvement over status quo production methods, but is not strong enough to protect all forests and peatlands. Nearly all the packaged food companies, except Kraft Foods, have commitments, and some were high achievers, but most have more work to do.

Some companies are demanding better for their consumers. Six companies on the scorecard have already committed to purchasing palm oil that is deforestation-free, peat-free, and can be traced in a transparent way. L'Oréal and Reckitt Benckiser, both personal care companies, as well as the packaged food companies Mondelēz, Nestlé, Unilever, and Kellogg's (Kellogg's updated its commitment after the scores were tallied), all have strong commitments.

Momentum is building as more companies recognize the importance of protecting tropical forests. If other major companies follow the lead of Kellogg's, L'Oréal, Mondelēz, Nestlé, Reckitt Benckiser and Unilever, pressure would build on the palm oil industry to adopt sustainable standards.

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“Many of the companies scored are iconic to American culture: McDonald’s golden arches, the Pillsbury Doughboy, Quaker Oats, ‘America Runs on Dunkin,’ and even the Old Spice guy,” said May-Tobin. “But what most Americans don’t know is that these products contain palm oil, a common vegetable oil that is a major driver of tropical deforestation. The scorecard shows that these corporations have not committed to addressing the problem.”

The Scorecard is designed to challenge the producers of these iconic American foods and products to demand a higher standard for palm oil: Colgate-Palmolive, Dunkin’ Brands, General Mills, McDonald’s, PepsiCo and Procter & Gamble. If these companies committed to transparently sourcing traceable, deforestation-free and peat-free palm oil it might create a tipping point that could transform the industry.

“The scorecard shows a mere half dozen companies leading the charge, with most of the others lagging behind,” said May-Tobin. “These corporations should live up to their ‘wholesome’ branding by demanding sustainable palm oil. To do so would save tropical forests, rich with biodiversity, and help limit the severity of climate change.”

[The Union of Concerned Scientists](#) [6] puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet’s most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe and sustainable future. For more information, go to www.ucsusa.org [7].

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[2] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/k-Kr6wUSyOqembIFCzBOVKVJ6XbVEVpjvohdETpvd7barXPVJ6X8VdVUQsFzzqdShPWqdTPhOr9Rffbsj-5b4_w2JgcX2uAvIZ2mYKrR0PI9WhZnQ9rOVKX2b0V5B_HYM-qenDT7-LsKyYMeVNZcs-yzORQX8FGT7esG7DR8OJMddICTzt-jLuZXTLuVKVI04TqztdU03x4-F3jNkNllpg8ViFXsVlxajGIngZSlvFfpOH35JflbRAunFqIvJlk2WWSMb5RERtAvZe1Njqf8EFEITsVYsCy-C2BEMYNhfbBPqbbbzxI9ygMAq81yRo_roE6y0z7kfEq89mH2Izh08a_6lJwq824twxgSMMrsOcu6FDq

[3] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/FZsS76QmjhONTBcQsKndTdETpvd7barX29J6XbVEVpjvuvdETp79Lf6zBcsrhKOEvhK-qejpeFVVryvMFoDY0IG1DojQzWLEiTBPuE6txfifG-xbundToho78ILZvC7PhOY-U_RXBQnC1TefFzDQkumKdp5dmUVPBgY-F6IK1FjwSYrLOtXTLuZXTdTDw0CXkrFL00sQxIKukDHHKkDHHKmq_U5Rtb5VR8ixMedHhV55d5CXDFzAQnQMk6

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[5] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/avndzgAcz8Arhpd7b5SkPhOVsTsSztBYQsIFLI8CQrILCzBBdZVYSztAsCYYqekNNJ6X8VZd6XVEVdAWDDDBK9_2ByvM1mE6txfifG-xbundWwpS4Z8-HW4JVsTtx5wsyO_R-ovd7bPXz_nKnhuo7sU-CevhhVqWtAkRrzDel3PWApM6CT3rNK_9TLuZXTLsTsS0387R8YTqztdU03xwDIW5VgbWnxGLBP1cInCjYL6yRq5QftB2kVlwnGWnETiuOxF0_OXKDDQbQ9RzcKCMYrmzOaaqbdTev79ELFwFqcfcjkVsSyOOUUr2oAc96y0ojmfSSa1Ew8NR3W6y2IGMBoQg22LNBro6y0x7o8kdIc6Zyg4

[6] <https://twitter.com/UCSUSA>

[7] http://cp.mcafee.com/d/1jWVlg418SyOqembIFCzBOVKVJ6XbVEVpjvohdETpvd7barXPVJ6X8VdVUQsFzzqdShPWqdTPhOr9Rffbsj-5b4_w2JgcX2uAvlZ2mYKrR0PI9WhZnQ9rOVKX2b0V5B_HYM-qenDT7-LsKyYMeVNZcs-yzORQX8FGT7esG7DR8OJMddzrNK_9TLuZXTLsTsS02rJhKCY01dHhV55d5CXDfzAQnQMkj67Ca9YKrhppssdxci64zh0cmH7Xr50Qg4oWxZ3h1aRoilq811nUOJl3h0gzl4a6S63uZJbP2Fn8UGR