

STATES OF JERSEY



ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE USE OF PALM OIL

Lodged au Greffe on 1st November 2021
by the Connétable of St. Martin
Earliest date for debate: 23rd November 2021

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

- (a) that there are global environmental issues caused by palm oil farming practices and to request the Council of Ministers to take the necessary steps for the Government of Jersey to lead by example and only use and procure products that do not contain palm oil;
- (b) to request the Minister for the Environment to bring forward legislation, in a timeframe deemed reasonable by the Minister, to the effect that any food item produced in Jersey is labelled with a clear statement of whether the food item contains palm oil or any palm oil derivatives; and
- (c) to request the Minister for the Environment, in a timeframe deemed reasonable by the Minister, to consult with local businesses and organisations, consumers, schools, charities and community groups to develop an Island-wide palm oil campaign that raises public awareness of the issue of its use.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. MARTIN

REPORT

Overview

Palm oil and palm oil derivatives are in a great number of everyday supermarket products¹ - food, cosmetics and detergents may all contain palm oil of some kind.² It is used so widely because it is a versatile oil with desirable properties; it is odourless, colourless, and has a natural preservative effect.³

Product-labelling does not always provide sufficient clarity for consumers to make informed decisions about what to buy.⁴ Hundreds of substances are derived from palm oil, and where these substances appear on product-labelling it is an indication (but no guarantee) that the product may contain palm oil.⁵

The palm oil industry has been heavily criticised for being responsible for the destruction of native forests in place of farming land. Destruction of the natural forest environments causes a negative impact on local communities and indigenous people, as well as loss of habitat to many species, including orangutans, rhinos, elephants and tigers.

Many palm oil producers have sought certification from organisations such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (R.S.P.O.) in acknowledgement of their sustainable practices. R.S.P.O. is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to make sustainable palm oil the norm.⁶ It has more than 4,000 members worldwide who represent links along the palm oil supply chain. Some organisations^{7,8,9} have criticised sustainable palm oil certification, saying that it is “meaningless”, having identified that some palm oil plantations were subject to deforestation and loss of habitat when they were converted from tropical forest to plantation in the 1990s and subsequently went on to gain certified status in the 2000s.

This proposition aims to set Jersey on course to reduce the amount of palm oil it consumes by developing awareness of the substance and highlighting the global impact of how it is produced, so that Islanders can make environmentally-conscious decisions about what they buy wherever it is practical and affordable for them to do so.

Part (a)

An agreed acknowledgement from the Council of Ministers that unsustainable palm oil farming practices exist is a logical starting point for initiating actions that the Assembly can bring forward. Such acknowledgement, together with a commitment from the

¹ [8 things to know about palm oil, WWF, 17th January 2020](#)

² [Palm oil labelling, Ethical Consumer, 23rd May 2019](#)

³ [Palm oil - what is it used for? Ethical Consumer, 10th July 2019](#)

⁴ [Palm oil labelling, Ethical Consumer, 23rd May 2019](#)

⁵ [Alternative names for palm oil, Orangutan Alliance](#)

⁶ [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil \(RSPO\)](#)

⁷ ['Meaningless certification': Study makes the case against 'sustainable' palm oil, Mongabay, 5th August 2020](#)

⁸ [Giving up palm oil might actually be bad for the environment, Smithsonian Magazine, March 2016](#)

⁹ [Can palm oil be more sustainable?, International Institute for Sustainable Development \(IISD\), State of Sustainability Initiatives, 14th May 2020](#)

Government to lead by example by taking the necessary steps to stop using any products that are made using palm oil would help to pave the way for others to follow. In practice, this would mean undertaking a review of products used by Government departments and finding alternatives where necessary. Such a review would include (but should not be limited to) food served in schools and the Hospital; detergents and cleaning products used in any government buildings, and the type of biofuel used by any Government vehicle.

Part (b)

Clear product-labelling should be put in place to enable consumers to make informed choices about what to buy. Product-labelling of items that are produced in Jersey and sold in Jersey should be an achievable goal. In practical terms, a change in labelling requirements should be introduced over a specified period of time to give producers reasonable opportunity to update their packaging or labelling, and at minimal cost.

The majority of packaged goods sold in Jersey are not produced on-Island, so this action alone would not mean that consumers benefit greatly. However, many of the large retailers with Jersey stores already have corporate statements or commitments to using 'sustainable' palm oil in own-brand products. In addition to this, many of the multinational consumer goods companies (e.g. Mondelez International¹⁰, Unilever¹¹, Nestlé¹²) whose well-known branded products are sold in Jersey supermarkets, have publicly stated their commitment to sustainably-sourced palm oil. It should be acknowledged that such public statements do not always hold up to scrutiny from campaigning groups like W.W.F.¹³ or the Rainforest Action Network. It is also important to note that there is some scepticism of the way in which palm oil is certified as sustainable.¹⁴ The actions set out in this proposition are therefore not intended to replace known palm oil products with 'sustainable' palm oil, but instead focus on helping consumers to shift to avoiding palm oil altogether wherever this is possible and affordable.

Part (b) represents a step in the right direction to enable Jersey shoppers to make environmentally-friendly choices about the products they buy. If Parts (a) and (c) are adopted alongside Part (b), then consumers will be able to make increasingly informed choices.

Part (c)

Campaigns in the U.K., and worldwide, have resulted in a greater awareness of the environmental impact of palm oil farming practices, and the ubiquity of palm oil and its derivatives in the products we use in everyday life.

The city of Chester in the U.K. became the world's first 'sustainable palm oil city'. Oxford launched the same campaign in 2019, and Singapore is aiming to become the world's first sustainable palm oil nation.

¹⁰ <https://www.mondelezinternational.com/Snacking-Made-Right/ESG-Topics/Palm-Oil>

¹¹ <https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/reducing-environmental-impact/sustainable-sourcing/transforming-the-palm-oil-industry/our-approach-to-sustainable-palm-oil/>

¹² <https://www.nestle.com/csv/raw-materials/palm-oil>

¹³ [Most brands fail to fully support sustainable palm oil..., WWF, 17th January 2020](#)

¹⁴ ['Meaningless certification': Study makes the case against 'sustainable' palm oil. Mongabay, 5th August 2020](#)

The campaign in Chester was led by Chester Zoo. Newquay and Saltash in Cornwall, as well as the City of Oxford¹⁵, have also joined the same campaign. Chester Zoo is calling on other communities to join, and is offering information and guidance, together with a “champions toolkit”, to villages, towns, cities, islands and nations around the world to create a network of Sustainable Palm Oil Communities.¹⁶ Jersey should take the opportunity here to take action towards encouraging Islanders to reduce the amount of palm oil products wherever possible, and acknowledge that ‘sustainable’ palm oil is not a good enough compromise. The Island should instead seek to limit consumption of *any* type of palm oil.

It is my belief that action on palm oil could be the first step towards a wider goal; the development of a ‘sustainably resourced Island’, in order to play its part in developing a more sustainable and environmentally conscious society. This could warrant global recognition and have a positive impact on the Island’s culture and global standing.

If this type of initiative had Assembly support, it would be logical to engage with Jersey Zoo and other environmental groups and charities, as well as businesses, schools and consumers. This level of engagement would increase the likelihood of participation and success.

Financial and manpower implications

It should be noted that if the Assembly agrees to adopt Part (a), there is likely to be an impact on the States’ finances. Alternatives to products that contain palm oil may be more expensive than those currently used and cost effective alternatives would need to be identified.

An indicative cost of £10,000 is suggested to cover the running of the palm oil campaign, but the exact figure would need to be determined by the Minister for the Environment because the cost could vary dependent on the level of engagement and involvement from non-Government groups or organisations in running a “Sustainably Resourced Island” initiative, with action against Palm Oil serving as the first step in this wider campaign. Liaison with Jersey Zoo may be a good place to start in order to achieve success with such an initiative.

¹⁵ [UK Cities and Towns Join Sustainable Palm Oil City Movement – Chester Zoo](#)

¹⁶ [Sustainable cities around the world – Chester Zoo](#)