

# 2010 *What Matters?* Competition

## YEAR 7/8 WINNER

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#### What Matters?

All over the world, rainforests are being torn down to be used as furniture or ingredients in food products. Because of this, not only are our rainforests- and therefore our oxygen supply- being depleted, but many animals are endangered from a lack of habitat. Our only hope now is to put an end to deforestation to save our planet.

One of the main- or most campaigned- sources of deforestation is cutting down trees for palm oil. Most people probably would put a stop to this kind of activity if they knew it was going on. However, on food product labels containing palm oil the manufacturers often have the generic 'vegetable oil' written instead of 'palm oil' on the ingredients. One way that people can make a difference in this is to actively research which products actually do contain palm oil through websites and newspapers. Then they can tell their friends and family about it to convince them to stop buying these products. Also, they should notify the companies that they are unhappy with their palm oil usage.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently ran a survey called the Palm Oil Buyers Scorecard which assesses certain companies' on their use of palm oil and their willingness to adopt more sustainable practices, including buying palm oil that is certified sustainable. This scorecard ranked Coles and Woolworths at the bottom of a table of six leading food and grocery companies, scoring a 2 out of the possible 29. Woolworths announced that they will be clearly labelling which products contain palm oil. They will also switch to all sustainable palm oil by 2015, but being five years away, will this be soon enough?

Fortunately we have large organisations such as WWF on our side, and as long as there's something worth fighting for they will keep trying to solve our environmental problems. Some of the endangered animals that WWF are helping are the orang-utangs and the Sumatran tigers. The United Nations Environment Program is also trying to stop deforestation and they say that if we keep it up at this rate then 98% of orang-utang habitats could be wiped out by 2022. We can't just sit back and allow this to continue!

Palm oil is not the only source of deforestation, but trees are also cut down for paper and furniture as well, and we need to start questioning this. When we buy furniture we need to ask if the wood has come from a sustainable source, and if not, don't buy it! Buying products that aren't sustainable will only speed up the rate of deforestation. In total, deforestation is continuing at an alarming rate- on average 7.3 million hectares of trees are being cut down every year; including the ones that are re-planted. It's not just up to the companies to change their habits, but it is also up to us.

My vision for the future is that eventually every tree that is cut down will be replaced, and all illegal deforestation will be stopped. By supporting organisations like WWF and the United Nations Environment Program we can make this happen. Also, by recycling our paper and buying recycled paper we can save trees, and therefore the animals that live in the forests. Not only must we write to the organisations and tell people how to stop these things but we, ourselves, must be thoughtful consumers. Once a rainforest is cut down it can't just be replaced! So to save the animals and ourselves we must seriously try hard to stop the deforestation, or we will eventually face the consequences.