

FACTSHEET RSPO

Name and Organisation

RSPO stands for Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil. The organisation with over 3000 members worldwide was founded in 2004 on the initiative of the WWF and aims to make palm oil cultivation more sustainable. RSPO brings together actors from all palm oil sectors, namely: producers, processors, distributors, investors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumers.

RSPO develops criteria which companies must meet in order to produce certified palm oil in a sustainable way.

In 2018, around 19% of the palm oil produced worldwide will come from RSPO-certified plantations, of which around 93% will come from Indonesia and Malaysia.

Criteria und Principles

RSPO defines the basic principles and develops detailed criteria on which certified palm oil cultivation is based. These principles and criteria are revised every 5 years. Since the work situation in the palm oil producing countries is sometimes quite different, national interpretations of the RSPO guidelines have now been drawn up for 11 countries.

The points below serve as a simplified summary of these criteria:





- No clearing of primary forests and ecologically valuable forest areas for plantations since 2005
- Protection of endangered animal and plant species on the plantation
- Protection of water, soil and air, i.e. no burning of forests.
- Compliance with legal regulations, including land use and property rights
- No child labour, but educational offers for the children living on the plantation.
- Integration and promotion of small farmers
- Control of the plantations by independent, authorized inspectors
- Certification process

If a plantation owner wishes to produce certified palm oil, he/she must become a member of the RSPO and then have himself/herself inspected by an independent inspection body. If the criteria are met, the plantation can now sell its palm oil as certified. The plantations should then be inspected once a year.

Identification models

There are four different ways in which certified palm oil can be processed and marketed. In case (1), palm oil of a certified plantation is sold directly for further processing. In case (2), certified palm oil from different plantations in the country of production is mixed in an oil mill and then resold as a certified palm oil mixture. In case (3), certified palm oil may be mixed with non-certified palm oil. The mixing ratio of the oil mill is known. In case (4), certified and non-certified palm oil are also blended. The proportion of certified palm oil in the mixture is not decisive. Producers receive one certificate per ton of certified palm oil, which they can resell. Buyers of a certificate thus acquire the right to label a non-certified product as «sustainable».

Overview of the four different labelling models of RSPO. Presentation changed according to WWF Germany (2012):

Model	Characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages	Trademark
(1) «Identity Preserved» Labelling: «This product contains RSPO-certified palm-oil»	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mixing in the oil mill Strict separation by plantation Control by independent organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great credibility 100% traceable product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cost-intensive and time-consuming possible discrimination against smaller producers 	
(2) «Segregation – Chain of Custody» Labelling: «This product contains RSPO-certified palm-oil»	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strict separation of certified and non-certified palm-oil Mixing of certified palm oil originating from different plantations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above, but in an weaker form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above, but in an weaker form 	
(3) Mass Balance Labelling: «Mixed» and note that «the production of certified and sustainable palm oil is promoted»	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No separation of certified and non-certified palm-oil Controlled mixing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to implement Possibility to switch to the «segregation» model at a later date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct traceability Transparency can be questioned 	
(4) Trading with Certificates (Book and Claim) Labelling: Note that «the production of certified and sustainable palm oil is promoted»	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No separation Online trading of certificates via «Green-Palm» 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very easy to implement Cheap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct traceability Transparency can be questioned According to WWF only suited transitionally 	

Criticism

The RSPO is always under criticism. The label is said to be a label fraud and in reality not sustainable at all. One of the main points of criticism is the inadequate, insufficiently strict criteria. On the other hand, there is criticism that many companies regularly violate the criteria and are still allowed to sell certified palm oil.

The WWF declares that it is aware of the problem, but that there is currently no better solution. Furthermore, the WWF wants to fight for stricter criteria.

Example from Switzerland: Migros



M-Budget Doppelkekse

500 g
Fr. 1.69
(Fr. 0.34 / 100 g)

Doppelkekse mit 30% Kakaocremefüllung
Zutaten: Weizenmehl, Zucker, Palmöl, fettarmes Kakaopulver 6%, Molke, Backtriebmittel: E500 und E503, Kochsals, Aromen, Emulgator: Sonnenblumenlecithin, Konservierungsstoff: Natriummetabisulfit.

The retailer Migros from Switzerland has chosen an interesting way of dealing with palm oil. For marketing reason, it was decided to not print a trademark of certified palm oil on the products despite the fact that certified palm oil was actually used.

Migros states that since 2008, the M industry has been supporting the production of sustainable palm oil by purchasing certificates. In 2011, Migros went one step further and decided to switch from certificates to the „segregated“ logistics option by 2015 instead of covering the palm oil requirements of the M industries. This means that the industrial companies buy palm oil from Swiss importers and processors who purchase physically sustainable, RSPO-certified palm oil.

This palm oil is physically traceable back to the plantation. Migros thus promotes the direct flow of sustainable palm oil. Currently, the M industry obtains 98% of the palm oil it uses in food production from sustainable sources (RSPO segregated).

Sources

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