



Still time to add a New Years resolution for 2024

■ BY DELORES SAVAS

“A Nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.

Forest are the lungs of our lands, purifying the air of our land and giving strength to our people”.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Two weeks have passed since many people made New Year’s resolutions, and as usual, many have fallen by the wayside. However, there is one planet-saving resolution that hopefully many will respond to, and that is to protect the rain forest, with all its inhabitants.

The number one way to make a resolution is to stop your use of palm oil and to let companies know why you will not use their products. It is the cause of the drastic decline of the rainforest and all its inhabitants, including the land and its animals. Plus, palm oil use is said to be detrimental to the health of people, both young and old, and pets. This resolution will be difficult, because cheap palm oil is found in almost every product we use.

What is unhealthy about palm oil, palm kernel oil, coconut oil and the so-called healthy tropical oils? They earned a bad reputation because they are high in saturated fats which boost cholesterol and triglycerides, both of which are factors for heart disease.

Who oversees these products in the United States? The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is the agency that is responsible for protecting the consumers against impure, unsafe and fraudulently labeled products. The FDA, through its Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, regu-

lates foods other than the meat, and poultry, and egg products regulated by the Food and Safety and Inspection Services, FSIS.

What happened here? And what are the dangers of using palm oil? According to a Palm Oil Fact Sheet from the Rainforest Action Network, “Palm oil is a globally traded agricultural commodity that is used in 50 percent of all consumer goods, from lipstick and packaged food to body lotion and biofuels. It is used in about half of the products on supermarket shelves. Imports to the United States have jumped 485 percent in the last decade.”

In addition, “Approximately 85 percent of palm oil is grown in the tropical countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Papua New Guinea on industrial plantations that have severe impacts on the environment, forest peoples and the climate.”

The Rainforest Action Network lists the following results of the consequences of the use of palm oil:

Palm oil destroys rainforests. Indonesia’s tropical rainforest is among the world’s most diverse. They provide critical habitat to species including highly endangered Sumatran tiger elephants and orangutans. The Indonesian government has converted approximately 18 million more hectares of rainforests into palm oil plantations, an area the size of Missouri.

Palm oil causes climate change as rainforests are razed to create industrial palm oil plantations, releasing massive quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In fact, deforestation causes 80 percent of Indonesia’s CO2 emissions, making the tropical nation the world’s third

largest emitter of greenhouse gases.

Who is responsible for the North American food and agribusiness companies that purchase from, operate, and own many palm oil plantations in South Asia? They are a powerful force in the palm oil market. The largest privately owned company in the U.S., Cargill, dominates the American palm oil, market. They own five palm oil plantations in Indonesia and are the largest importer of palm oil into the U.S. A large and growing number of investigations have shown that Cargill’s palm oil has destroyed forests, eliminated biodiversity, and harmed forest peoples.

According to Stop Deforestation, each year Procter & Gamble buys more than 600,000 megatons of palm oil to make everything from Head & Shoulders shampoo to Crest.

Recent pressure has forced some changes at P&G, as well as Cargill. P&G reports that they are now members of the Roundable on Sustainable Palm Oil, and committed to their 2018 standards. They say that since 2021, they have used 100 percent RSPO certified oil, and are working “with a diverse range of partners – both within and beyond our supply chain and are committed to ensuring the responsible production and consumption of palm oil.” Cargill also reports membership in the Roundtable, and issues a sustainability report each year.

Science Alert, an Indigenous movement in Brazil, is working to stop the deforestation in the rain forests there, and reported the following:

- There were 17 million animals that died in Brazil wildfires in 2020. The estimate came from scientist who examined the remains of carcasses they found up to 48 hours after the

fire event. The rate of climate change makes such wildfires inevitable.

- Once the habitat is destroyed, they are on the way to extinction. According to recent estimates the world is losing 137 species of plants, animals, and insects every day to deforestation.

- As the rain forest species disappear so do many possible cures for life threatening diseases.

- Palm oil deforestation is killing the last orangutans who need the trees to survive on our planet. These animals live in Palm trees and are killed as rapid as the disappearance of the trees.

Credit must be given to McDonald’s, Starbucks and Pepsico, all of which have committed to no-deforestation palm oil products. Other healthy oils can be used in the hundreds of products on the market, but palm oil can be manufactured cheaply at the expense of the consumer.

“The Rain Forest is not dying, it is being murdered,” said Txai Surui, of the Paiter Suri, the Indigenous community in Brazil.

It is up to the consumer to let companies know they will not buy their products unless they commit to no-deforestation palm oil products

More columns will follow on the rain forest that has been called the lungs of our planet. Its lungs are now burning, and the problem must be addressed by adding this to your New Years’ resolutions.

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rainforest-rescue.org
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