

## ICELAND TO BE THE UK'S FIRST MAJOR SUPERMARKET TO REMOVE PALM OIL FROM OWN LABEL FOOD

### Collapse in orangutan population provides urgent need for action

Iceland, the UK's leading frozen food specialist, today announces that it will stop using palm oil as an ingredient in all its own label food by the end of 2018. Today it can report that the project is already well underway, with palm oil successfully removed from 50 percent of its own label range; 130 products will have been reformulated by the end of the year.

Already this year, Iceland has brought out 100 new lines without palm oil, including the new summer range, and by the start of 2019 will have launched over 200 new lines that do not contain palm oil.

Growing demand for palm oil for use in food products, cosmetics and biodiesel is devastating tropical rainforests across South East Asia. In Indonesia and Malaysia, where expanding palm oil and wood pulp plantations are the biggest driver of deforestation<sup>1</sup>, many species are being threatened with extinction, including the orangutan, already critically endangered. Recently published studies show that Bornean orangutan numbers more than halved between 1999 and 2015, with only 70,000–100,000 individuals remaining<sup>2</sup>. In Indonesia alone, 146 football pitches of rainforests are lost every hour<sup>3</sup>. Deforestation also results in increased global carbon emissions. In 2014, Indonesia had the fourth largest greenhouse gas emissions, mostly as a result of deforestation<sup>4</sup>.

### **Palm oil is currently found in 50 per cent of all supermarket products, from bread to biscuits and breakfast cereal to soap. Despite this:**

- 35 per cent of consumers are unaware of what palm oil is.
- Once informed about palm oil and its effects on the environment, 85 per cent state that they do not believe palm oil should be used in food products.

Iceland has made this ethical decision to remove palm oil in order to demonstrate to the food industry that it is possible to reduce the demand for palm oil whilst seeking solutions that do not destroy the world's rainforest.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wri.org/blog/2017/07/drivers-deforestation-indonesia-inside-and-outside-concessions-areas>

<sup>2</sup> Ref: Voigt et al., Global Demand for Natural Resources Eliminated More Than 100,000 Bornean Orangutans, Current Biology (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2018.01.053>

<sup>3</sup> 2012-2013: MoEF (2014) Deforestasi Indonesia Tahun 2012-2013, Lampiran 1, Tabel 1.1, gross deforestation 953,977ha

2013-2014: MoEF (2015) Deforestasi Indonesia Tahun 2013-2014, Lampiran 1, Tabel 1.1, gross deforestation 567,997ha

2014-2015: MoEF (2016) Deforestasi Indonesia Tahun 2014-2015, Lampiran 1, Tabel 1.1, gross deforestation 1,223,553ha

<sup>4</sup> World Resources Institute, CAIT: climate data explorer. Based on emissions data for 2014, including land-use change and forestry emissions, <http://cait.wri.org/historical/> viewed 21 February 2018

# Iceland

**Richard Walker, Iceland Managing Director, comments:** "Until Iceland can guarantee palm oil is not causing rainforest destruction, we are simply saying 'no to palm oil'. We don't believe there is such a thing as guaranteed 'sustainable' palm oil available in the mass market, so we are giving consumers a choice to say no to palm for the first time.

"Having recently been to Indonesia and seen the environmental devastation caused by expanding palm oil production first hand, I feel passionately about the importance of raising awareness of this issue – and I know many British consumers share my concern and want to have a real choice about what they buy. This journey has shown me that, currently, no major supermarket or food manufacturer can substantiate any claim that the palm oil they use is truly sustainable, as the damage being caused to the global environment and communities in South East Asia is just too extensive."

**John Sauven, Executive Director of Greenpeace UK comments:** "Iceland has concluded that removing palm oil is the only way it can offer its customers a guarantee that its products do not contain palm oil from forest destruction. This decision is a direct response to the palm oil industry's failure to clean up its act.

"As global temperatures rise from burning forests, and populations of endangered species continue to dwindle, companies using agricultural commodities like palm oil will come under increasing pressure to clean up their supply chains. Many of the biggest consumer companies in the world have promised to end their role in deforestation by 2020. Time is running out not just for these household brands but for the wildlife, the climate and everyone who depends on healthy forests for their survival."

## **Iceland has a long history of campaigning and leading positive change for the environment:**

- Being the first major retailer in the world to pledge to remove plastic packaging from its own label food by 2023
- Being the first UK supermarket to remove artificial flavours and colours from its own label food
- Being a world leader in banning GM ingredients

## **The No Palm Oil Journey**

The Iceland no palm oil pledge is that by the end of 2018, 100 per cent of the supermarket's own label food lines will contain no palm oil, reducing demand for palm oil by more than 500 tonnes per year.

Iceland has only ever worked with trusted suppliers with whom it has forged strong relationships throughout the supply chain – and the response from Iceland's own label suppliers to the no palm oil campaign has been incredibly enthusiastic. Prior to work beginning on this initiative palm oil was present in 130 lines, accounting for approximately 10 per cent of Iceland's own label food.

## **The Palm Oil Alternatives**

There are a number of alternatives to palm oil that are not destroying the rainforest. These will vary depending on individual product requirements, meaning that there will be a mix of oils and fats involved. Alternatives will include sunflower oil, rapeseed oil and butter.

This shift away from palm oil has been enabled due to a significant investment of £5 million from Iceland, which will ensure that consumers can make this choice to support the planet with zero or minimal impact on the cost of the food they buy.

## **ENDS**

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## **ABOUT ICELAND**

Iceland is recognised as the leader in frozen food with over 900 stores in the UK. The company prides itself on being a convenient and friendly place to do the family's weekly shop, as well as meet everyone's daily top-up shopping needs for fresh, chilled and frozen food and groceries.

For the last three years Iceland's nationwide online shopping service was named the UK's best in the Which? supermarket survey, and for 20 years Iceland has offered a unique, free home delivery service for in-store purchases.

Since 1970, Iceland has been proudly demonstrating to shoppers just how the Power of Frozen can deliver an extensive choice of high quality, great-tasting food from fine sources around the world at great value prices.

With the Power of Frozen at its heart, Iceland naturally generates low levels of food waste. The company is also known as a pioneer in removing artificial colours, flavours and non-essential preservatives from its own label products. It has ranked as one of the UK's Best Big Companies to Work For in each of the last 12 years, and was number one in both 2012 and 2014.

In 2018 Iceland committed to becoming the first major retailer, globally, to eliminate plastic packaging from all of its own label products by the end of 2023.