

## West Africa Palm Oil Plantation Role Play

### Information for teachers

The people, country and companies in this role play are fictional, but are all based on real life scenarios.

There are a number of African nations hoping to follow the footsteps of the so-called 'Asian Tigers' like Malaysia and Indonesia, which have made hundreds of billions of dollars by converting huge tracts of rainforest into palm oil plantations. The two Southeast Asian countries produce about 85 per cent of the world's palm oil.

Palm Oil is the most widely used vegetable oil in the world, and demand is increasing. It accounts for 65% of all vegetable oil traded internationally. It is shipped to more than 70 countries around the world, where it is used in everything from biofuels to margarine, chocolate bars, biscuits, shampoo and candles.

Palm Oil can be harvested all year round, and needs relatively few pesticides and fertilisers. Palm Oil trees are very productive and yield more oil per hectare than any other oil crop in the world. This means more oil for less land.

However, often rainforests are cut down to plant palm oil, resulting in loss of habitats for flora and fauna, as well people who live in the rainforests. It also, of course, contributes to climate change.

Although some people want to boycott palm oil completely, others argue that this is not the answer as it would bring its own set of problems. They support standards around deforestation that companies can sign up to, similar to the way Fair Trade works.

In 2013, 16% of palm oil was certified as sustainable palm oil, meaning it meets standards around deforestation, lawfulness, transparency and social impact laid out by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

### For more information:

An interactive web page with easy to read information, interactive graphs and pictures. Your pupils may find some of the graphics on this web page interesting.

[www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/ng-interactive/2014/nov/10/palm-oil-rainforest-cupboard-interactive](http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/ng-interactive/2014/nov/10/palm-oil-rainforest-cupboard-interactive)

Say No To Palm Oil

Started by a thirteen year when he found out about unsustainable palm oil.

[www.saynotopalmoil.com](http://www.saynotopalmoil.com)

WWF Information about Sustainable Palm Oil

[http://wwf.panda.org/what\\_we\\_do/footprint/agriculture/palm\\_oil/solutions/roundtable\\_on\\_sustainable\\_palm\\_oil/](http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/footprint/agriculture/palm_oil/solutions/roundtable_on_sustainable_palm_oil/)

This WWF Australia page has interesting article called 'boycotting is not the answer'

[www.wwf.org.au/our\\_work/saving\\_the\\_natural\\_world/forests/palm\\_oil/what\\_wwf\\_is\\_doing/certified\\_sustainable\\_palm\\_oil/](http://www.wwf.org.au/our_work/saving_the_natural_world/forests/palm_oil/what_wwf_is_doing/certified_sustainable_palm_oil/)

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil

[www.rspo.org/about/how-we-work](http://www.rspo.org/about/how-we-work)

## Role Play Instructions

Divide the class into five groups. Give each group a different role card and ask them to read their role information.

*(You may want give them time to do more research at this point, and run the role play on another day. Otherwise they can just use the cards as they are.)*

Explain that each group represents a different person, who may be for or against a palm oil plantation in Cameroon. They are going to debate whether or not palm oil should be grown in the area. Ask them to spend time discussing what is on the card. Remind them that they are going to put forward the point of view on the card, not their own. You may like to ask them to make notes about what they might say.

Each group will need to choose a spokesperson. Ask each group in turn to put forward their case. Pupils can make notes as the other groups speak. When all groups have spoken, give pupils time to discuss what the other groups have said, then ask each group to respond.

Encourage them to use persuasive language, not just what is written on the cards.

At the end of the debate, ask them to vote in role on whether they think the palm oil plantation should go ahead.

They could then vote as they think themselves and give reasons why.

## Extension Activities

Ask pupils to write about their personal view, noting what different speakers said during the debate.

Find out about sustainable palm oil and plan a campaign  
See web sites on previous page, and the decision making activity in these resources

Investigate another way of making a living near a rainforest, while protecting it at the same time.

[www.sizeofwales.org.uk/projects/honey\\_bees.html](http://www.sizeofwales.org.uk/projects/honey_bees.html)



## Local villager in West Africa

You live in the village of Ubi. You and other villagers are looking forward to the palm oil plantation. There are very few jobs in this area, and people have to grow their own **cassava**, bananas, yam and coco to eat.

The plantation will provide good paying jobs and improve conditions in the village. It will not be near the village, but will make the lives of the people who live there much better. People will be able to have electricity and clean water. Maybe you could get a TV. Your wife is really excited about the thought of **indoor plumbing** as she and your daughters will not have to walk to get water any more.

Some local people are talking about protecting the forest, but there is plenty of it, and anyway, it is more important to have a better life style.

## Think about ...

How the lives of families in the village will change for the better.

Why people might be against the plantation and what you can say to them.

## Definitions to help you

Cassava                      a common vegetable in tropical areas

Indoor plumbing            taps in the house

## Multinational Company

You work for a company called Multipalm producing palm oil. Palm oil is a type of edible vegetable oil from the palm fruit, grown on the African oil palm tree.

Palm oil produces more oil per hectare than any other oil crop in the world, so you can make a lot of money. It uses less **fertilisers** and **pesticides** than many other oil crops, such as soybean and coconut oil.

Your company wants to set up a **palm oil plantation** in Cameroon. There are many benefits to growing palm oil in Central Africa. It grows well in a humid climate, and land prices and wages are low, so it is cheap to set up. A lot of land is suitable for the crop in Cameroon, so your company could make a lot of money. It is quite close to Europe, where there is huge demand for palm oil.

The government in Cameroon has said it wants to expand palm oil production by more than 26% by 2018. This means you should have no trouble setting up a new plantation.

### Think about:

How you can persuade people that a palm oil plantation would be a good idea.

Why people might be against the plantation and what you can say to them.

### Definitions to help you

**Fertiliser**                      a natural or chemical substance that is spread on the land to make plants grow well

**Pesticide**                      a chemical used to kill pests, especially insects

**Palm oil plantation**        a large farm growing only palm oil

## Local volunteer

You volunteer with a group of villagers called 'Club des Amis des Chimpanzes'. This means 'Friends of Chimpanzees Club' in French. The club was set up because some people hunt for **primates** in the forest and kill them to eat them or sell the meat. This is called bushmeat. You walk through the forest removing hunters' traps.

You are worried that if a **palm oil plantation** was planted here the forest would be chopped down and animal habitats would be lost for ever. When you are not in the forest, you show visitors photos and videos of the animals that could disappear if the forest is destroyed.

If there is a palm oil plantation, people who are willing to work for low wages will come from all over the country so local people will not get good jobs. These people will need to eat, so there will be more hunting for animals in the forest. Some primates could become extinct.

Many villagers depend on the forest for food and medicines. If all the **biodiversity** goes, there will be nothing left for them. You want to persuade people to protect the forest that is left.

## Think about:

What would happen if rainforest was destroyed to plant a palm oil plantation?

What you can say to persuade people to protect the forest.

## Definitions to help you

**Primates**                      mammals such as gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and monkeys

**Palm oil plantation**        a large farm growing only palm oil

**Biodiversity**                 the variety of plants and animals

## Eco Club member in Wales

You belong to the Eco Club in your school. Your class has been learning about rainforests and deforestation. You have a chance to talk to people in Cameroon about what you have found out.

Too much carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the **atmosphere** is causing climate change. This means that the earth is getting warmer, with more droughts, heatwaves, floods and higher sea levels. This affects people all over the world, but more in poorer countries, where people may have to go further to look for water, or have their houses destroyed by storms.

Trees absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and store it. They also give out oxygen. But when forests are cut down the trees no longer absorb any CO<sub>2</sub>, even worse, if they are burnt down they release the stored CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Rainforests are being cut down for their wood, for mining, to farm cows and to plant **palm oil plantations**. Up to 20% of greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation.

You know that in Indonesia and Malaysia orangutans have died because their homes have been destroyed. There will not be enough food for animals in a palm oil plantation. There are many **primates** in the forests in Cameroon, and you are worried that the palm oil plantation will put them in danger too.

### Think about:

What might happen if the forest is cut down to plant palm oil?

What you can say to persuade people to protect the forests.

### Definitions to help you

Atmosphere                      gases surrounding the earth

Palm oil plantation          a large farm growing only palm oil

Primates                         mammals such as gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and monkeys