The crisis caused by palm oil is urgent and the stakes are high, but luckily there is something you can do about it. With your help we can spread the word about palm oil and expose the links between snack foods and forest destruction and human and labor rights violations.

We have prepared this guide to help you to communicate clearly and effectively about palm oil so you can inspire your friends and family to take action and pressure America’s biggest snack food companies to break the link between their products and forest destruction and human and labor rights violations.

In this guide you will find:

1. **The key messages of our campaign.** These are the basic messages you can use when you are talking about the problems with palm oil and what the solutions are!

2. **Communication tactics.** A breakdown of the different communication tactics you might use to talk about the campaign with examples and tips on how to be a great communicator!

These tactics are:

- Writing letters to snack food companies
- Calling snack food companies
- Speaking to grocery store personnel
- Writing to newspapers & magazines
- Posting on Social Media (Facebook/Twitter)
- Talking to your friends/family/peers
Key messages of the campaign

When you are taking action as a Palm Oil Activist with RAN, you’ll likely find yourself needing to communicate about the Palm Oil campaign with the snack food companies, grocery store personnel, your friends and family and with strangers! Here are the basics on how to talk about the problems with palm oil and what the solutions are:

**The Problem:** The production of the palm oil used in American snack foods is destroying endangered rainforests while causing widespread human and labor rights violations and massive carbon pollution.

Whether we realize it or not, palm oil has become ubiquitous in our everyday lives. It is found in roughly half the packaged products sold in US grocery stores, including favorite snack foods like ice cream, cookies, crackers, chocolate products, cereals, doughnuts and potato chips. In fact, palm oil is most likely present in some form or another in nearly every room of your home.

Tragically, palm oil has also become one of the world’s leading causes of rainforest destruction. The unchecked expansion of palm oil plantations into the heart of some of the world’s most biologically diverse rainforests is pushing iconic wildlife species like the Critically Endangered orangutan to the brink of extinction in Indonesia and Malaysia.

This large-scale destruction of rainforests and carbon-rich peatland landscapes is also releasing globally significant quantities of carbon pollution into the atmosphere, making palm oil a major global driver of human induced climate change.

The production of palm oil is also responsible for widespread human and labor rights violations as Indigenous Peoples and rural communities are being forcefully removed from lands they depend on for their livelihoods. Children and vulnerable workers are frequently exploited and deprived of basic rights while they are forced to work in the harsh conditions of industrial palm oil plantations.

Consumers are often misled by “RSPO certified” or “Green Palm” labels. Unfortunately, these labels from the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) still allow palm oil producers that destroy rainforests and peatlands to be certified as “sustainable.”

**The Solution:** American food shoppers have the power to demand that their favorite snack makers stop contributing to forest destruction and orangutan extinction.

RAN is calling on the US snack food industry to help stop the destruction of some of the world’s most important rainforests for palm oil by committing to only purchase oil from suppliers that can guarantee it has been produced with the highest human rights, environmental, social and transparency safeguards.

Companies that produce, trade and use palm oil must go beyond the inadequate standards of the RSPO to be truly responsible. Snack food companies need transparent and traceable supply chains so they can show their customers where the palm oil they use in their snack food products was sourced from and how it was produced.

PHOTO: CARLOS QUILES
Communication Tactics

You can make a difference and it is as easy as writing a letter, making a phone call or talking to your friends and family. Here, we’ve broken down some of the most important types of communication tactics that you might use as a Palm Oil Activist! Here are some examples for you to base your communications on:

The Tactic: Writing letters to snack food companies

Why? Snack food companies are dependent on the people who buy their products. They care about what people have to say about their products and the reputation of their company and associated brands. You can help convince these companies to remove controversial palm oil from their products by writing to them to ask important questions about their palm oil purchasing policy and letting them know who you are and why you care.

Sample letter to a snack food company that uses palm oil

Dear the CEO of (snack food company name),
My name is Jess, I am a regular customer and frequently purchase your products. I have recently noticed that a lot of my favorite products contain palm oil. I am aware of the problems associated with palm oil production including rainforest destruction, human and labor rights violations and high greenhouse gas emissions so I am writing to ask you to explain what your company is doing to avoid buying palm oil that has lead to these unacceptable social and environmental impacts.

Do you know where the palm oil in your products comes from? Do you know how it has been produced? Do you have a plan for breaking the link between your products and forest destruction and human and labor rights violations?

I am shocked to find out that some companies do not know where the palm oil they use comes from or how it has been produced. I know that some companies rely solely on sourcing RSPO certified palm oil but I don’t trust “RSPO certified” or “Green Palm” labels because the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) still allows palm oil producers that destroy rainforests and peatlands to be certified as “sustainable.”

As a consumer, I don’t think it is acceptable for a company like (company name) to use palm oil that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations. Please stop purchasing palm oil that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations and commit to only purchasing palm oil that has been produced responsibly.

Tip: Most companies have a “contact us” link at the bottom or top of their main webpage where you can find their email and mailing addresses.

Tip: To hold them accountable, in your letter ask them to write back to you and outline what they are doing to remove palm oil tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations from their products.
The Tactic: Calling snack food companies

Why? Snack food companies are dependent on the people who buy their products. They care about what people have to say about their products and the reputation of their company and associated brands. You can help convince these companies to remove controversial palm oil from their products by calling them and engaging them in a conversation, asking them important questions about their palm oil purchasing policy and letting them know who you are and why you care.

Sample call to a snack food company that uses palm oil.

Hello, my name is Jess and I’m calling you today regarding (snack food company name) use of palm oil and products that are tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations.

As a consumer, I don’t think it is acceptable for a company like (snack food company name) to use palm oil that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations.

Please stop purchasing palm oil that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations and commit to only purchasing palm oil that has been produced responsibly.

I was hoping you could explain to me what your company is doing to avoid buying palm oil that has led to these unacceptable social and environmental impacts.

Do you know where the palm oil in your products comes from? Do you know how it has been produced? Do you have a plan for breaking the link between your products and forest destruction and human and labor rights violations?

Tip: Look on the packaging of snack food product to find the customer service phone number or check out the “contact us” link that most companies should have at the bottom or top of their main webpage.

Tip: To hold them accountable, tell the customer service person that you would like a call back regarding the answers to your questions etc.
The Tactic: Speaking with grocery store personnel

Why?: Snack food companies care about what the retailers selling their products have to say, and grocery stores care about what their customers and potential customers have to say! Engage to folks at “big-box” grocery stores (particularly those who have their own lines of products that use palm oil) in a conversation about the products that they stock, ask the hard questions and let them know who you are and why you care. You can plan to follow up with them a few weeks after you visit or call.

Sample conversation with a manager of a grocery store:

“Hi, my name is Jess. I am concerned because I have noticed that you stock a large number of products that contain palm oil. I also noticed that your own branded products contain palm oil.

I wanted to speak to you to make sure that you, as the manager of this store, are aware of the problems associated with palm oil production including rainforest destruction, human and labor rights violations and high greenhouse gas emissions. I have always trusted your company and I have assumed that you would be selling products that have been made responsibly.

I was hoping you could explain to me what your company is doing to avoid buying palm oil that has lead to these unacceptable social and environmental impacts?
Do you know where the palm oil in your products comes from?
Do you know how it has been produced?

Your company could be a leader. I think it is vital that your company commits to stop purchasing palm oil for your own products that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations. Please commit to only purchasing palm oil that has been produced responsibly and talk the the snack food companies who make the products you stock in your stores and encourage them to do the same.

Tips: Go to the customer service desk or register and ask to speak to the store manager.

Tips: If the manager can not answer your questions about their palm oil purchasing policy ask them to give you a call or email you to explain the answers to you after they have checked with their head office or palm oil procurement team.

Tips: Some grocery stores have a “customer service bulletin board” or a “community board”. Write a letter or pin a comment card (which you can download on the resources page) if you are having trouble getting a meeting with a manager.
Tactic: Writing to local newspapers & magazines

Why: You can get great exposure for the issue of palm oil by writing Op-Ed’s or letters to the editors of newspapers or magazines. The opinion section is often the most widely read part of a local paper and it’s easier than you might think to reach thousands of readers. If you have expertise or a public profile you may have the chance to write an opinion piece for the local paper, especially if you are involved in a controversial campaign (which by being a Palm Oil Activist, you are!).

Sample letter to the editor:

To the editor
Re: The Case Against Palm Oil, April, 2013

Why am I linked to destroying Indonesia’s rainforests?
My daughter is ten years old and I’m shocked to learn that the palm oil in her favorite snacks has been produced through destroying Indonesia’s rainforests. Clean air, a stable climate and biodiversity are going to be crucial for my daughter’s future so I’ve decided to take action by calling and emailing the companies that make her favorite snacks to convince them to only use palm oil that is being produced responsibly. I urge our community to join me, and and the makers of America’s snack foods to break the link between the snacks we feed our families, rainforest destruction, human rights and labor violations, and climate change.

Margaret Wilkinson
Berkeley, California

Tips: You can write a letter to the editor in response to an article relating to palm oil, food or health, forests, or even in response to an advertisement that snack food companies run promoting a product that contains palm oil.

› Be Timely: Write your letter within a day of the article or ad that you are responding to
› Include Contact Info: Include your full name, city, state, phone #
› Be Clear: Make one main point.
› Be Concise: 1- 3 paragraphs, 3-8 sentences, 40-100 words.
› Be Accurate: Letters that are factually inaccurate are not printed.
› Be Interesting: Get your reader’s attention and keep it to the end of your letter. Open with an interesting fact or strong statement about palm oil and keep your points as interesting as possible.
› Avoid Personal Attacks: Show respect for the opposite opinion. Let people know how you feel and tie your message to something local and relevant to your community. Because palm oil is everywhere, it is an issue that affects everyone – even if they don’t know it yet.
› Proofread: Re-read your letter. Check for grammar and spelling mistakes. If possible, ask another person to read your letter for accuracy and clarity.
› Write to a number of papers: Don’t just send letters to the biggest paper in town. The smaller the paper, the better the chances of getting your letter printed. Small weekly papers can help you reach hundreds or even thousands of people.
› Include an “ask”: Finish with giving people something to do! Ask them to read labels on their products or suggest that people ask snack food companies to stop purchasing palm oil that is tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations and commit to only purchasing palm oil that has been produced responsibly.

Tip: Op-Ed’s (Opinion Editorials) are longer articles of 500 to 800 words that summarize an issue, develop an argument, and propose a solution. Send the article to the editorial page editor with a cover letter explaining why it should be printed. The opinion piece has a better chance of getting printed if it is signed by someone prominent, even if you wrote it for him or her.
Tactic: Posting on social media

Why: Snack food companies really care what people think about their brand -- image, to them, is literally everything. Social media has become a major venue where companies seek to extend their brand in order to reach both current and potential consumers. This means that social media is a very powerful tool for taking action.

First and foremost, spreading the word about snack foods containing palm oil that may be tied to rainforest destruction via social media is quick and relatively easy, but it can have tremendous reach. With one post you can alert your friends and family to the problem and its solution, and your message will spread exponentially as your friends and family share it too. Because we know social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are places where companies are very carefully crafting their brand’s image, that gives us an enormous opportunity to get through to the companies as well.

Sample facebook post

» “What’s more important to you: Rainforests that are standing and orangutans that are not extinct, or peanut butter that you don’t have to stir? Seems silly, but that is a choice we are faced with every day, and many of us don’t even know it. I am working to do something about it, and you can too: http://ran.org/palmoilactionteam”

» “Palm oil production is driving deforestation in Indonesia and destroying precious habitat for critically endangered orangutans. You might be connected to the problem and not even know it: Palm oil is in roughly half of all products on your grocery store’s shelves. It’s probably in every room of your home. Get the facts: http://understory.ran.org/2013/05/16/your-supermarket-is-selling-rainforest-destruction-get-the-facts-on-palm-oil-and-the-us-snack-food-industry/”

» “FACT: Your grocery store is selling rainforest destruction. Get the facts. Then share them. http://understory.ran.org/2013/05/16/your-supermarket-is-selling-rainforest-destruction-get-the-facts-on-palm-oil-and-the-us-snack-food-industry/”

Or you can like and share RAN posts:

» https://www.facebook.com/rainforestactionnetwork/posts/10151646248545960
» https://www.facebook.com/rainforestactionnetwork?ref=stream

Sample tweets

» FACT: Your grocery store is selling #rainforest destruction. http://ow.ly/l78XT
» Are you connected to #rainforest destruction? Get the facts. Then share them. http://ow.ly/l7iom #palmoil
» I’m a proud snacktivist with the @RAN PalmOil Action Team! Get in on the action: http://ow.ly/lN3hY

Or you can like and share RAN tweets:

» https://twitter.com/RAN/status/337312103062970369
» https://twitter.com/RAN/status/340226407831588867
» https://twitter.com/RAN/status/340514167201079297

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THEPROBLEMWITHPALMOIL.ORG
Companies take it very seriously when they hear directly from their customers. Find out what company makes your favorite snack food, then blog about it (if you have a blog), tweet at the company (start the tweet with the company’s @NAME on Twitter) and post a comment on its Facebook page. The more status updates, tweets and blog posts you can make that ask the maker of your favorite snack food to stop purchasing palm oil tied to rainforest destruction and human and labor rights violations the better.

Tip: Use the hashtag #palmoil and #rainforest whenever you can, so that your tweets will be easier to find by people looking for info on palm oil and deforestation.

Tip: If you post a status update on Facebook about palm oil and rainforest destruction, don’t be afraid to get personal! Mention your favorite snack in particular, your disappointment to find out that its maker uses rainforest-destroying palm oil, and the name of the company that makes it—and make sure to tag the company. You can tag the company by typing the @ symbol followed by the company’s name, and Facebook will automatically suggest the company (or companies) it thinks you’re looking for.

**Tactic: Talking with your friends and family**

Why? The best way to grow a movement is for people who care about an issue to recruit their friends and family to join them in taking action. Talk to the people in your life about how this issue is relevant to them, why it is important to you, and what can be done about it!

Sample:

“I’ve been thinking a lot about palm oil. I know that the crisis caused by palm oil is urgent and the stakes are high so I’ve decided to do something about it. I’m now more conscious of the products I buy and the products that have palm oil in them. I’ve started to reduce my consumption and waste of highly processed foods by making more fresh and local food choices. I’ve also signed up to take action with a group called Rainforest Action Network to convince 20 of America’s favorite snack food companies to stop contributing to the destruction of Indonesia’s rainforests by taking palm oil tied to deforestation and human and labor rights violations out of their supply chains! I know that you care about climate change and human rights because ______, so I was hoping you might be interested in learning more about this issue with me! It would be great if you want to learn more about palm oil too and join me in being part of this growing and exciting movement that is working to protect rainforests and indigenous peoples rights from palm oil expansion.

Tip: Be yourself, be candid! Speak from the heart about why this matters-- that will mean a lot more to the folks who care about you than anything scripted. Don’t be afraid to tell them what makes you sad or angry about this issue, or excited about this campaign.

Tip: Connect them to the issue. Ask them what they find interesting or infuriating about the problems with palm oil, or what they think makes this campaign relevant to their lives.

Tip: Get real and relevant. Talk about how your lifelong love of wildlife, passion for stopping climate change, or interest in healthy and local foods makes this campaign relevant for your life.