

Scientists find alternative to palm oil

21st September 2023



Palm oil is used in many things we eat and use every day. It is in food, in beauty products, and in biofuel. However, producing palm oil leads to environmental damage because of deforestation. A team of researchers in Scotland believe they have found an alternative

to palm oil. Scientists from Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh have created a wholly plant-based oil that is better for the environment and for our health. The university's new PALM-ALT product is 70 per cent better for the environment. This is because it is more sustainable and leads to less biodiversity loss. It is also healthier than palm oil, with 80 per cent less saturated fat and 30 per cent fewer calories.

The researchers believe their work could change how things are made. Around half of all the food and cosmetics we currently buy contain palm oil. The use of palm oil is growing, so more trees have to be cut down in tropical countries. PALM-ALT is made from a by-product from the linseed flower and rapeseed oil. Researcher Catriona Liddle spoke to the BBC about PALM-ALT. She called it the "holy grail" to replace palm oil. She found it does the same things palm oil does. She said: "We've put it through some special sensory testing to see if a panel can tell the difference between our product and traditional palm [oil], and they can't." She is now hoping businesses will start using it instead of regular palm oil.

Sources: bbc.com / stv.tv / dailymail.co.uk

Writing

Companies should stop cutting down trees to plant crops. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

palm oil / beauty products / environmental damage / plant based / biodiversity / fat / how things are made / tropical countries / holy grail / testing / traditional / businesses

True / False

- 1) Palm oil is used in cosmetics and biofuel. T / F
- 2) Palm oil production has caused a lot of deforestation in Scotland. T / F
- 3) The PALM-ALT product is 80% better for the environment than palm oil. T / F
- 4) PALM-ALT contains 30% fewer calories than palm oil. T / F
- 5) The use of palm oil in food and cosmetics is actually decreasing. T / F
- 6) The article says farmers in tropical countries are not cutting down trees. T / F
- 7) A researcher said that PALM-ALT and palm oil do totally different things. T / F
- 8) Businesses can tell the difference between PALM-ALT and palm oil. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. producing | a. chopped down |
| 2. leads to | b. well being |
| 3. alternative | c. usual |
| 4. health | d. include |
| 5. environment | e. causes |
| 6. believe | f. trials |
| 7. contain | g. the natural world |
| 8. cut down | h. making |
| 9. testing | i. think |
| 10. regular | j. substitute |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about palm oil?
- b) What do you know about what is in your food?
- c) Do you worry about what is in things like cosmetics and food?
- d) How worried are you about deforestation?
- e) How worried are you about the environment?
- f) How worried are you about biodiversity loss?
- g) Why is saturated fat bad for us?
- h) Do you worry about calories?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. palm oil leads to environmental | a. of regular palm oil |
| 2. a wholly plant- | b. calories |
| 3. This is because it is more | c. things are made |
| 4. 80 per cent less | d. based oil |
| 5. 30 per cent fewer | e. sustainable |
| 6. their work could change how | f. things palm oil does |
| 7. half of all the food and cosmetics we | g. in tropical countries |
| 8. more trees have to be cut down | h. saturated fat |
| 9. She found it does the same | i. currently buy |
| 10. businesses will start using it instead | j. damage |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do you think so much food contains palm oil?
- What do you know about tropical countries?
- What oils do you like that are in food?
- What do you think of coconut oil?
- How healthy and tasty is olive oil?
- How successful do you think palm-alt will be?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- eyabtu products
- because of tfoeisrtdaneo
- a woyllh plant-based oil
- This is because it is more ntulsiebasa
- less rtibieiydsov loss
- 80 per cent less ertadtusa fat
- food and secomistc
- taolcpri countries
- aeperlc palm oil
- special sroesyn testing
- ntldtioraai palm oil
- itaneds of regular palm oil

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. e	3. j	4. b	5. g
6. i	7. d	8. a	9. f	10. c

Role Play

Role A – Lip Stick

You think lip stick is the most important cosmetics. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their type of cosmetics. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): foundation, mascara or blusher.

Role B – Foundation

You think foundation is the most important cosmetics. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their type of cosmetics. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): lip stick, mascara or blusher.

Role C – Mascara

You think mascara is the most important cosmetics. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their type of cosmetics. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): foundation, lip stick or blusher.

Role D – Blusher

You think blusher is the most important cosmetics. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their type of cosmetics. Also, tell the others which is the least important of these (and why): foundation, mascara or lip stick.

Speaking – Cooking Oils

Rank these with your partner. Put the best oils at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| • Coconut oil | • Olive oil |
| • Palm oil | • Corn oil |
| • Peanut oil | • Sesame oil |
| • Sunflower oil | • Pork fat |

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	F	7	F	8	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.