Research Report

Model United Nations Oud-Beijerland

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Environmental commission

Regulating the expansion of palm oil plantations in rainforest areas while protecting biodiversity and local communities.

Introduction

Palm oil is one of the most widely used vegetable oils in the world. Palm oil can be found in food products, cosmetics, cleaning products and even biofuels. Because palm oil has productivity and low production costs, global demand for palm oil has increased rapidly over the past decades. However the expansion of palm oil plantations has come with environmental and social consequences. Large areas of rainforest have been cleared to make room for palm oil plantations especially in Southeast Asia, Africa and South America. This leads to the loss of biodiversity, contributes to climate change and often threatens the rights and livelihoods of indigenous communities. Because palm oil is traded globally the issue affects producers, consumers, businesses and governments worldwide. International cooperation is therefore essential to ensure that palm oil production becomes more sustainable while protecting both people and nature.

General Overview

The scale of the problem is immense. Global demand for palm oil continues to grow as the world's population increases and industries require amounts of vegetable oil. Indonesia and Malaysia together produce the majority of the world's palm oil making them key players in the palm oil industry. To meet this demand, millions of hectares of rainforest have been converted into palm oil plantations. Rainforests are among the biodiverse ecosystems on Earth and provide habitats for countless plant and animal species. When forests are cleared these ecosystems are too. Many species become endangered. In addition rainforest destruction releases amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere contributing to global climate change. Peatlands, which store amounts of carbon, are particularly vulnerable when they are drained and cleared for agriculture.

Impact on Biodiversity

Palm oil expansion threatens wildlife. Many species need rainforest habitats to survive. When forests are cleared animals lose their food, places to nest and paths for migration.

Some of the well-known animals in danger include orangutans, Sumatran tigers, pygmy elephants and rhinoceroses. When their homes disappear animals are pushed into spaces. This leads to competition

for food and a higher chance of extinction.
The loss of biodiversity also harms ecosystems. Healthy forests help control water flow, keep soil strong and support pollinators like bees. When biodiversity drops, these natural services weaken. Ecosystems become less resilient and less able to recover from damage.

Impact on communities

The growth of palm oil plantations can deeply affect communities. Many people who live in rainforest areas depend on the forest for food, medicine, traditions and income.

In some cases communities are forced to leave their land when it is taken over for plantations. Conflicts can arise when governments or companies give land rights without asking people. This often ignores their rights and way of life.

At the time the palm oil industry created jobs and helped economies grow in developing countries. This makes it hard for leaders to balance progress with protecting the environment and respecting human rights.

Importance of palm oil

Even with the problems palm oil remains a key economic commodity. Millions of people depend on the industry for work in rural areas.

Palm oil is also more efficient than vegetable oils. It produces oil per hectare of land. If we stop using palm oil we might need much more land to grow other oils. That could lead to deforestation.

For this reason many experts believe the best path is not to stop palm oil production. Instead the focus should be, on making it more sustainable. Better farming practices can reduce harm to nature and communities while still supporting livelihoods.

There are reasons why palm oil plantations keep growing:

Growing global demand

Palm oil is found in thousands of products around the world from processed foods to cosmetics and even biofuels.

When demand rises palm oil producers look for land to set up new plantations and produce more palm oil.

Economic Benefits

Palm oil exports bring a lot of money into the economies of palm oil producing countries. Governments often back palm oil plantation growth because it creates jobs, draws investment and boosts the economy.

Weak land management and enforcement

In some places environmental rules are not enforced strictly.

Illegal cutting of trees and clearing of land can happen when monitoring systems are weak.

Major Parties Involved

parties:

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP promotes sustainable development and protects the environment across the globe.

The organization helps governments make policies that balance growing economies with protecting biodiversity.

UNEP also spreads awareness about deforestation. And urges countries to work together on sustainable farming.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

The RSPO is a group that brings together palm oil producers, businesses, retailers and environmental organizations.

It created a certification system to promote palm oil production that's sustainable.

Companies that meet social rules can earn certification, which helps consumers spot more sustainable palm oil products.

Key countries

Indonesia

Indonesia is the producer of palm oil in the world.

Big parts of Indonesia's rainforest have become palm oil plantations in decades.

The Indonesian government faces the challenge of balancing money from palm oil exports with protecting the environment and climate targets.

Malaysia

Malaysia is also a palm oil producer worldwide.

The industry gives a boost to Malaysias economy and creates many jobs.

Malaysia has started many sustainability projects but cutting forests is still a major worry.

Brazil

Even though Brazil is famous for cattle and soy palm oil plantations are growing in some areas.

Brazil owns parts of the Amazon rainforest so land policies are very important for protecting biodiversity.

Possible Solutions

Sustainable Palm Oil Certification

Governments and companies can back certification programs like RSPO. These programs push palm oil production that hurts the environment less and respects workers and community rights.

Stronger Environmental Regulations

Countries can pass laws that limit tree cutting and protect forests that are very valuable, for nature. Better monitoring and enforcement can stop land clearing.

Protecting Indigenous Land Rights

Recognizing and enforcing land rights can lower conflicts and let local communities speak in development choices.

Reforestation and Restoration

Fixing forests can bring back biodiversity, soak up carbon dioxide and make ecosystems healthier.

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