

Customer Assessment of the Palm Oil Supply Chain

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Palm Oil, fractionated Palm Oil and Palm Kernel Oil are currently the main ingredients for margarine hardstock production in Europe. The supply chains of these products contain many steps starting from the oil palm plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia via oil mills, local refining and fractionation, bulking stations, intercontinental shipping, tank storage and final refining/modification including all intermediate transport. As end-user of palm products, Unilever must know if the oil is produced in an environmentally and socially responsible way, whilst food safety is guaranteed.

Environmental and social responsibility.

Since its start in 2004, Unilever played a leading role in the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), a private initiative involving all players of the palm oil supply chain including environmental and social NGO's (Non Governmental Organizations). To support this initiative, Unilever has carried out customer assessments of oil palm plantations using a questionnaire based on the RSPO criteria and Good Agricultural Practice guidelines.

Food safety.

The food safety risks have been assessed by audits of companies involved in all steps of the supply chain. These audits did highlight the risks involved in these steps. These audits were supported by an analytical program checking the "risky" contaminants in the crude oils arriving in the European refineries. The main outcomes are:

1. The levels of pesticides (actually used in plantations) in crude palm oil and palm kernel oil are below the industrial detection limit (LOD).
2. There is no risk of Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) contamination of palm oil and palm oil fractions since palm fruits are not dried before milling. Palm kernels are dried and analyses show that there is a risk of PAH contamination although this risk is relatively low.
3. Mineral oil contamination from transport and hydraulic oils/lubricants in oil mills is more and more under control. Further introduction of good practice guidelines should eliminate contamination.

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