



Palm Oil Policy

1. Purpose

Recognising the risk that unsustainable oil palm production can be linked to biodiversity loss, climate change and exploitative labour practices, this policy sets out the University's position and courses of action to be followed by all relevant staff regarding palm oil¹ in our supply chains.

2. Background

Palm oil is found in a variety of consumer goods, in particular processed foods, cosmetics and cleaning products. While the University of Edinburgh does not purchase raw palm oil, it does buy confectionary, bakery items, cleaning products and other goods that contain palm oil.

Unsustainable oil palm production can negatively impact the environment, workers and communities in palm oil producing countries in Southeast Asia, West Africa and Latin America. The impacts include deforestation, biodiversity loss, land grabbing, and human rights abuses (including modern slavery).

In response to risks associated with unregulated oil palm production, many organisations have committed to sourcing palm oil from certified sustainable producers. Boycotting palm oil is not seen as a sustainable approach as it could increase the demand for lower yielding oil crops that require more land to produce an equivalent amount of oil.

This policy forms part of a wider University commitment to social responsibility and sustainability in supply chains, reflected in the [Procurement Strategy](#), [Social Responsibility and Sustainability Strategy](#) and, more recently, the [Good Food Policy](#). It also links to the University's [Modern Slavery](#) commitment. The policy has been developed as part of a programme of work on embedding social responsibility and sustainability considerations into procurement, led by the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) and the Procurement Office.

3. Scope

This policy has been developed by the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS), the Department for Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE), the Procurement Office and Estates. It applies to University of Edinburgh sites.

¹ This policy uses 'palm oil' as a catch all term for all oil palm-derived ingredients, including palm oil, palm kernel oil, fractions and derivatives.

4. The Policy

The University is committed to purchasing products that contain sustainably sourced palm oil wherever possible, as well as contributing to wider engagement and progress on this issue. This will be fulfilled by the following actions:

1. The University's Department for Accommodation, Catering & Events (ACE) whilst considering financial viability, will seek to purchase food products that contain sustainably produced palm oil from a certified physical supply chain wherever possible².
2. The University's Estates Department and ACE Property will seek to use cleaning products that contain sustainably produced palm oil from a certified supply chain wherever possible³.
3. Delegated authorities of Court who are commissioning procurements or specifying relevant goods or services must demonstrate these commitments by:
 - a. Ensuring questions or requirements relating to the sustainability of oil palm ingredients are included in relevant tenders managed directly by the University.
 - b. Encouraging procurement consortia who manage framework agreements to include such considerations in shared procurements.
 - c. Contacting suppliers of catering and cleaning products to explain the University's position, request compliance with our minimum sourcing requirements and encourage continuous improvement.
4. We will continue to research and implement strategies to support the most sustainable standards of oil palm production and, if relevant, propose new targets at the next Policy review.
5. Collaboration will be sought with other universities and public sector bodies across the UK, to improve awareness and action on palm oil sustainability.
6. The sustainability issues surrounding palm oil will be communicated to staff and students through events and online content.
7. Learning and teaching on palm oil will be encouraged and supported. Where relevant, living labs research will be used to inform the University's approach.
8. Links with certification bodies and standard setters will be investigated in partnership with academic colleagues.
9. Investors will be engaged through our membership in PRI to further understand opportunities and risks for responsible investment.

5. Procedure and responsibility

ACE Catering is responsible for point 1 of the policy. Estates and ACE Property are responsible for point 2. The Procurement Office is responsible for point 3, with support from ACE Catering and SRS where appropriate. The Department for SRS will lead on points 4 to 9. A full Implementation Plan is available on request.

² This means palm oil that is sourced via a mass balance, segregated or identity preserved supply chain. The University will seek to buy segregated and identify preserved palm oil wherever possible.

³ This means palm oil that is sourced through a physical supply chain or is covered by credits. For example, the RSPO's Book and Claim supply chain enables manufacturers and retailers to buy credits from RSPO-certified growers, crushers and independent smallholders.

6. Equality and diversity

This policy fits within a wider procurement strategy and advocates conforming to all applicable public procurement regulation, which includes consideration of 3 Equalities Duties. A separate Equalities Impact Assessment has therefore not been carried out for this specific policy.

7. Support systems

The SRS Department can provide contacts and advice regarding implementation of this policy.

8. Approval and review

Reviewers	This policy has been reviewed by the Joint Director of Procurement, the Director of Catering (ACE), the Director of Property and Residential Services (ACE), the Head of Support Services (Estates) and the Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability.
Final approval by	University Executive
Consultations held	Colleagues from the Procurement Office, Estates, and ACE were consulted during the development of this policy. We sought feedback from academic colleagues where appropriate.
Date of commencement of policy	14/05/2019
Dates for review of policy	14/05/2022
How policy will be reviewed	SRS, Procurement, ACE and Estates will jointly review the policy every 3 years.
Policies superseded by this policy	This is the University's first Palm Oil Policy.

9. Contact

For further information, contact srs.department@ed.ac.uk. Please contact us if this policy is required in an alternative format.