

DO I DARE EAT THAT BANANA?

WHAT TO AVOID TO SPARE THE RAINFORESTS

PRODUCT	PROBLEM	WHAT TO DO
<i>Tropical Hardwoods</i>	Woods such as mahogany, tropical plywood (sometimes called lauan or meranti in the stores), teak, ipê, greenheart, ekki, ramin, wenge, cocobolo, zebrawood and padauk are all highly detrimental to the rainforests. Demand for these species is driving devastating logging, both legal and illegal, throughout the rainforests of the world. Logging is the number one cause of rainforest destruction in S.E. Asia. Philippines is now 80% deforested, Thailand, 80%, and two Malaysian states, 50%, all for logging for plywood. The US is the second largest importer of tropical hardwoods. The plywood is used for paneling, door skins, sub-flooring and sub-roofing, furniture backing and picture frame backing. The other woods are found mostly in furniture (all), futons (mahogany, ramin) but also in musical instruments (ebony, mahogany), picture frames (teak, rosewood, ramin), and even tool handles (ramin).	Avoid any wood product that you cannot identify as domestic and second growth. For plywood, use domestic softwood plywood (pine and spruce) or hardwood plywood (maple, beech and birch). Avoid tools with wooden handles unless they are oak, ash or hickory. Buy used furniture or antiques. Always ask if any tropical woods are independently certified, such as SmartWood™. These are okay to buy.
<i>Beef</i>	The largest cause of deforestation in Central America. The US is the largest importer of Central American beef. Because of its poor quality, it is used in processed beef products.	Avoid all processed beef (hotdogs, hamburgers and dog and cat food).
<i>Bananas</i>	This, the most popular fruit in the world, is responsible for massive degradation of the land, chemicalization, worker poisoning, and oppression. Workers all over the tropics are now attempting to organize for better conditions, but are being fired for it. New rainforests are being cleared daily for more plantations. Currently, no fresh banana available in the US is grown in a way that is not detrimental to the rainforests. Organic is better, but even those are grown on plantations that used to be rainforests. Good for Dole, bad for the rainforests.	Until bananas can be certified as Rainforest Safe™, the best bet is to avoid them entirely. If you must have bananas, eat only organic. Ask your grocer to order Rainforest Farms™ dried bananas. Eat locally grown organic fruit, such as peaches and apples.
<i>Coffee</i>	Coffee is highly responsible for the continuing loss of rainforests. Coffee growers in Central and South America are being convinced to convert their “shade-grown” coffee plantations into high-yield monocultures. This necessitates much higher use of chemicals, since the full-sun varieties (developed with the help of US scientists) is much less hearty. Vast areas of formerly productive coffee farms are being turned into chemicalized deserts. Birds using the farms drop from 93% of those in primary forests, to 3%. Good for those with stock in Monsanto, but bad for the rainforests.	Avoid coffee unless it is organic and shade-grown, and co-op grown. You can find this at specialty shops (almost all coffee from Africa and Asia is such), or look for labels such as Equal Exchange, Thanksgiving Coffee, Frontier Coffee and the Organic Coffee Company.
<i>Chocolate</i>	Much of Central West Africa’s rainforests have been converted to cocoa plantations. The workers are being poisoned from the use of agricultural chemicals and those shelling the nuts are contracting cancers of the hands and skin. This is now expanding to Central and South America.	Avoid chocolate unless it is organically grown. Newman’s Own Organics and Cloud Nine use organic chocolate from a co-op in Costa Rica.

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PRODUCT

PROBLEM

WHAT TO DO

Paper

More and more, temperate rainforests are being converted to tree farms for production of paper, be it newsprint, magazine paper or copy paper. In the process, jobs are lost through greater mechanization and exports of raw trees. The same is happening in the tropics as large corporations convert tropical forests to pulp plantations of non-native species. This dooms the wildlife and native peoples. The top exporters of paper to the US are Canada, Brazil and Indonesia, all countries where rainforests are being converted to paper plantations. All because our demand for paper is insatiable. According to the US Forest Service, our demand for paper has doubled since 1950, and will double again by 2040! Much of the last doubling was packaging; the current one is office paper.

Entirely avoid disposable paper products. Use real plates, napkins and bring a mug with you for drinks. Share newspapers with neighbors. Clean and recycle *everything* made of paper. Seek out paper with recycled content. Avoid packaged foods and use a reusable shopping bag. At the office, copy both sides, and use already used paper for draft printouts and memos.

Aluminum

Aluminum requires massive inputs of energy to mine, process and form into products. The entire Columbia River basin in the Northwest US was dammed to provide cheap power to the US aluminum industry. This has destroyed the Northwest fishing industry, which provided many more jobs and income. Now that power rates are climbing there, US companies, such as Alcoa and Reynolds, are mining aluminum in Central and South America. Venezuela is seeking to become the world's top aluminum producer. In the process, rainforest rivers are dammed for hydro power, vast areas of rainforests are flooded, human populations are displaced, and entire species wiped out. 70% of our aluminum is made into beverage cans.

Avoid aluminum if you can, but since aluminum recycles completely, if you use it, make sure you recycle it. *All of it*. You can save the energy equivalent to a beverage can of gasoline just by recycling that aluminum can! Making aluminum from recycled aluminum requires only 5% of the energy to make it from ore and kills no rainforests!

Gold

More than anything else, the quest for gold has been responsible for wiping out indigenous cultures the world over. And the process continues. In the US, gold was the greatest factor in wiping out native Americans. In the Amazon, gold miners constantly invade indigenous lands, murdering Indians and spreading deadly diseases. Entire ecosystems are contaminated from the chemicals used to process gold. In Papua New Guinea, the Ok Tedi gold mine — the world's largest — has silted the river with contaminated tailings, killing it and making life along the river impossible. The natives are suing the company. Recently in Guyana a tailings dam broke, spilling cyanide into the river, killing it for 5 miles downstream. The company was not kicked out — on the contrary, they received approval to expand the mine. 70% of gold production goes to making jewelry.

Avoid gold entirely. There is no good reason to buy it. If you own it, consider selling it.

Oil

Vast areas of rainforests in Ecuador, Bolivia, Indonesia and Nigeria have been contaminated by oil drilling operations. Natives of Ecuador are suing Texaco to clean up the mess it left from 22 years of oil production in the middle of pristine rainforests including a national park. According to the government's own figures, Texaco spilled 1.5-times the amount of the Exxon Valdez spill in 17 years, just from the main pipeline!

In Nigeria, activists attempting to get Shell to clean up the mess it has made of the Ogoni homeland were hanged by the military dictatorship.

Fifty percent of the oil we import is used to fuel our cars; 40% is burned to make electricity.

Drive less, walk, use a bicycle or mass transit. Car pool, ask your neighbors when they are going out. Turn out the lights unless absolutely necessary. Install energy efficient lighting (this saves you lots of money, too!). Turn down the thermostat in the winter and turn *off* the air conditioner.

Recycling saves large amounts of energy as well, as does buying used items.

Steel (Iron)

In Brazil, the *Carajas* iron mine, the world's largest, uses charcoal made from the surrounding forests to process the iron. This mine is estimated to consume 16% of the Amazon forests by the time it is spent!

Sell your car and don't buy another one. Recycle all metal objects. Most towns now have bulk recycling or try the phone book under "recycling".

For more information about or more help with reducing consumption of rainforest-destructive products, contact Rainforests Relief at the numbers or addresses on the front of this handout.