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**Why this palm oil rant?**

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WHY do some people hate **palm oil** so much? First, they say **palm oil** is bad for the heart by claiming that it contributes to cholesterol problems. Now that science has proven otherwise, they look for another excuse to find fault with **palm oil**.

Since the environment has become a global concern, with issues like climate change and global warming dominating the media, the critics now say **palm oil** is bad for the environment. They have even gone to the extent of claiming that oil palm cultivation kills the orang utans. And because of that, they ask consumers to boycott **palm oil**.

Poor **palm oil**. It has to endure all kinds of criticism. Is it because **palm oil** is a product of developing countries? Perhaps **palm oil** would be viewed differently if it came from the developed world.

Come to think of it, nothing negative has been said about soya bean or rapeseed oil. Never mind the fact that these crops have their own failings, not only nutritionally but also on matters related to the environment. One glaring case is the clearing of land in Brazil to grow soya beans.

I speak on behalf of small oil palm farmers. Cultivating oil palm has literally transformed our lives. We used to have problems making ends meet but when the government helped us get acquainted with oil palm, abject poverty became history.

It is through selling oil palm fruits that we managed to send our children to universities. This was unthinkable in the days when we struggled to earn a living. Now, most of our children have become successful professionals and we definitely have to thank **palm oil** for this.

I am not sure why these non-governmental organisations are pursuing their anti-**palm oil** campaigns. Is it to make life difficult for us? The way their arguments go, they would rather see the orangutans multiply than a rural family improve on their livelihood.

Are these groups really interested in the green agenda? Or is it just a convenient way for them to raise funds? What annoys us most is that there does not seem to be an end to this rubbish.

 Take, the Roundtable on Sustainable **Palm Oil** (RSPO), for example. It started as a very good platform where stakeholders in the **palm oil** business come together to strategise how best to contribute to the green cause. The buyers came with all kinds of promises.

 They agreed to pay a premium for all RSPO-certified **palm oil**. This did not truly materialise except maybe for a small tonnage. Now close to two million tonnes of Malaysian **palm oil** are RSPO-certified but nobody wants to pay premium prices for the oil.

 The latest development is that they have insisted on additional greenhouse-gas criteria for **palm oil**.

 This will no doubt make life even more difficult for those in the **palm oil** industry. I wonder if these people will stop demonising **palm oil**.

 Many believe that since the issues raised against **palm oil** help these detractors to earn their living, they will probably never stop finding fault with the commodity.

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