

## **Deforestation**

### **What is deforestation?**

Humans have been cutting down trees for thousands of years to build homes and make fires. We are now cutting down forests faster than ever before, not only for timber and fuel but also to clear large areas for farming. Trees are also cut down to make paper – we use 1 million tonnes (985,000 tons) of paper every day! There are 3 trillion trees in the world, but 15 billion are cut down every year.

### **Palm oil, a big reason for deforestation.**

Palm oil is a smooth, creamy oil made from the fruit of the African oil palm tree. It is used in a huge number of products, from cooking oil and chocolate to cleaning products and lipstick. The palm oil tree is native to Africa, but it's now grown in other parts of the world on huge farms called palm oil plantations. Forests are cut down and replaced with palm oil trees, and that means animals lose their homes.

Palm oil is a preservative, which means it stops things from going off. It has many other names –at least 200! They include palm kernel, palmate, glyceryl, stearic acid, sodium kernelate and often it is just referred to as vegetable oil. So, it can be very difficult to know if your favourite products contain the oil. However, if you really want to avoid it, you can do some research on the internet to find brands that make a point of not using it.

### **Animals losing their habitats**

Orangutans have lost more than 80 percent of their forest habitat in the last 20 years. They are now at high risk of extinction in the wild.

### **Why do we need forests?**

Forests are not just a collection of trees – they are a vital part of a healthy planet.

As trees grow they use up carbon dioxide, a gas in the air that causes climate change. They soak up other harmful gases from the air, too. Forests are the “lungs” of the earth, pumping out the oxygen that we breathe. Trees also transport water from the soil back into the air, where it can form rainclouds that prevent droughts. The tree roots keep the soil in place and prevent it from being carried away by water or the wind. During heavy rainfall, trees slow the flow of water into rivers and streams, helping to prevent floods. About 80% of all living things found on land live in forests. This variety of life is called biodiversity. About 300 million people worldwide live in forests, and even more depend on them for their work and food.