

MORE THAN BIOFUELS

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The figure of [KarmeLe Llano](#), a recurring character at this Ateneo, has recently been praised in a [nice article by the writer Rosa Montero](#). The text reviews and values the exceptional career of this Bilbao veterinarian who has been working in the field in Indonesia for almost 10 years. The cultivation of African palm is the main problem suffered by the Indonesian jungle, where one of the [highest deforestation rates in the world](#).

KarmeLe, as Rosa Montero in turn reflects in the article, usually alludes to biofuels as the main factor that promotes this

deforestation, but it is important to note that **palm oil is mainly used for the agri-food industry and cosmetic products**.

It is not about hiding the extra pressure that the growing demand for biofuels can generate on tropical forests (in fact, in light of this alert the European Union [the revision of its energy objectives for the introduction of biofuels in transport was considered](#)), but currently the largest Part of the palm oil is already present in a multitude of food, hygiene and cosmetic consumer products, a fact that the average consumer is beginning to discover and should value. For this reason, companies like **Ikea** have begun to manage this issue, [announcing that they will study alternatives](#) to replace palm oil in their products (candles, food products, etc.); Another example is **Nestlé**, which after [an impressive communication campaign](#) promoted by Greenpeace [announced that it was going to do without Sinar Mas](#) as a supplier of palm oil.

Palm oil production is a true industry of great importance for the economy of countries like Indonesia (along with Malaysia the largest producer). [Export figures, associated employment, etc. they are very noticeable](#), but there are two things to keep in mind when assessing their impact. In the first place, **most of the profit is generated outside the country**, since the palm oil is finally transformed by the large agri-food multinationals in China, the United States or the European Union, the main importers of the oil. And, secondly, we should introduce into the equation the **economic cost generated by the large-scale ecological transformation** that Indonesia has undergone to house the African palm monoculture: is the cost being assessed? loss of biodiversity, loss of genetic resources, contribution to climate change?

Initiatives such as [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil \(RSPO\)](#) seek to reduce the environmental impact of the industry of palm oil but, as many environmental organizations denounce, the underlying problem is deforestation and the transformation of the primary forest (high biodiversity, store of forest and genetic resources, subsistence mode of indigenous cultures, etc.) into a monoculture intended solely and exclusively for the production of vegetable oil.

On this subject, the highly recommended article ["The guilty secrets of palm oil: Are you unwittingly contributing to the devastation of the rain forests"](#), by Martin Hickman, winning article [The Foreign Press Association Media Awards 2009](#).

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