

Kathy Cloninger, CEO
Girl Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10018-2798

February 28, 2011

Dear Ms. Cloninger,

I understand that next year your organization, Girl Scouts USA, will be celebrating 100 years of supporting girls to become tomorrow's leaders. I can't think of a more auspicious way to celebrate this important anniversary than to announce that Girl Scouts has finally decided to align its values with Girl Scout branded products and break the link with controversial palm oil.

Rainforest Action Network (RAN) has been contacted by community members and organizations across the nation, including two Juliette Girl Scouts from Ann Arbor, Michigan - Rhiannon Tomtishen and Madison Vorva - concerned about the use of palm oil in the manufacture of Girl Scout cookies. I understand that on a conference call on September 29, 2008, the girls presented their case for replacing palm oil linked to orangutan extinction with an alternative oil to members of your organization. During that call, GSUSA staff promised the girls a meeting with representatives from Little Brownie Bakers on the 10th of October to give them a chance to speak with the bakers. But, despite following up multiple times with GSUSA staff, including Mr. Barry Horowitz, throughout the spring of 2009, nobody from GSUSA responded to their emails and the call never happened.

I am writing to express concern about the disturbing connections between Girl Scout cookies and Cargill-supplied palm oil, which is driving orangutan extinction, deforestation, climate change, and human rights violations including the use of slave labor.

Rainforest Action Network supports the inspiring work of Madison, Rhiannon and many other girls across the country and I would like to work with Girl Scouts USA to develop a palm oil policy designed to break the link between the Girl Scout cookie brand and rainforest destruction.

As the most respected organization supporting girls in becoming tomorrow's leaders, it is important that you look into the issue of palm oil more deeply to align your organization's values with the products to which the Girl Scout logo is attached, particularly considering the following:

- Tropical rainforest destruction is responsible for 15% of current global greenhouse emissions; Indonesia is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world after China and the USA. Eighty five percent of Indonesia's emissions are from rainforest and peatland destruction.
- The leading cause of tropical deforestation and peatland destruction in Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands is palm oil plantation expansion.
- Palm oil is a key ingredient in every single Girl Scout cookie brand, save one.

- The US Department of Labor recently added palm oil cultivated in Indonesia to the global list of commodities linked to slave labor and/or child labor.
- RSPO membership does not provide any assurance that palm oil supplied by member companies is sustainable. The only enforced requirement of RSPO membership is annual membership fee payment. Member companies have been documented clearing forest, peatland and critical wildlife habitat while ignoring human rights – all of which are prohibited in the RSPO principles and criteria.

Madison and Rhiannon are two inspirational women – they have spent years working hard to live up to the Girl Scout mission statement which says “Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.” Madison and Rhiannon’s outrage at the senseless killing of orangutans and the clear-cutting of their forest habitat led them to take a stand and declare that Girl Scouts USA can do better. RAN is proud to support girl scout activists asking Girl Scouts USA to lead through example by showing that orangutan extinction and climate change have no place in their cookies or any other consumer product.

Our research into your supply chain has raised some alarming flags which we look forward to discussing in person. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your team in-person in New York or San Francisco to discuss further your plans to address this issue. It’s important that Rhiannon and Madison attend this meeting. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

We invite Girl Scouts USA to protect rainforests, communities, and the climate by eliminating egregious palm oil from your Girl Scout cookie ingredients.

Respectfully yours,



Ashley Schaeffer
Rainforest Agribusiness Campaigner
Rainforest Action Network