



## **Navigating Questions About Palm Oil in Girl Scout Cookies**

*For Girl Scout volunteers to use with families, older girls, and customers*

Thank you for all you do for girls. We know you're often at the forefront of your communities when it comes to questions about Girl Scouts, so we're making sure you have the most accurate and updated information about the recent news story about the palm oil industry and Girl Scout Cookies. We're aware of the potential concerns you, your Girl Scouts, their families, and your cookie customers have about palm oil in our cookies, and we take the matter seriously.

Here are some talking points you can use with families, older girls, and customers if questions arise:

- We're aware of the concerns about how palm oil is gathered. To be clear, child labor has no place in the production of Girl Scout Cookies. We have worked with, and continue to work with, our bakers to increase the transparency and sustainability of our production lines and ingredient sourcing. If certain suppliers are not following safety and ethical standards, we rely on our bakers and the [Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil \(RSPO\)](#), of which Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA) is an affiliate member, to take action quickly.
- The world's food supply is intricately tied to the use of palm oil, which is an ingredient found in the majority of baked snacks sold in the United States. Although we continue to explore alternatives, at this time, there are no viable or readily available alternatives.
- Palm oil is used in many of the products on supermarket shelves, from margarine and chocolate to ice cream, soaps, cosmetics, and fuel for cars and power plants. It's smooth and odorless, making it an ideal ingredient for foods such as baked goods. It also has a natural preservative effect that extends the shelf life of foods.
- Because few alternatives exist and palm oil is used widely in the food industry, we believe promoting proper manufacturing principles is our responsibility. We have worked to ensure that our ingredients are part of an ethical supply chain, and we rely on our bakers and the RSPO to ensure that our suppliers are following safety and ethical standards.
- The RSPO is a nonprofit organization of growers, buyers, manufacturers, conservationists, and other interested parties striving to develop and follow best practices to ensure an ethical supply chain.
- The RSPO's mission includes advancing the production of sustainable palm oil products, establishing global standards for the palm oil supply chain, and engaging and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligning to these standards. The RSPO has banned the use of child labor since its founding, and it established clear standards and protocols, including age verification, to protect children's rights.
- Palm oil is an agricultural commodity, similar to flour, soy, and sugar. Although it's easier to trace commodities in global supply chains today thanks to technology and data collection, tracing bulk commodities, such as palm oil, remains complex and a large investment of time and resources for companies.
- Little Brownie Bakers (LBB) is managed by Ferrara, a related company of the global manufacturer Ferrero Group, that received the highest certification level afforded by the World Wildlife Fund for sustainable practices; LBB's goal is to achieve 100% RSPO-segregated certified palm oil for all Girl Scout Cookies it produces.
- ABC Bakers will continue to work with our suppliers and the RSPO to encourage the development of an economically and logistically feasible supply chain for sustainable palm oil.
- For more information from our licensed bakers, visit their websites: [Little Brownie Bakers](#) and [ABC Bakers](#).
- Read more from the [RSPO](#).

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What do I do if girls have questions or concerns about palm oil?**

This issue is complex, even for adults. Here are some ways to help girls explore the topic.

- Suggest older girls lead a discussion about the topic together as a troop.
- Share the Girl Scout Cookie FAQs from GSUSA or your council about the topic.
- Consider the reasons behind the issue. What are the root causes? Discuss the “why” behind the topic, so girls can fully understand the issue and what they can do to create change. As they dig deeper into the topic, they can ask “why” many times along the way to get to the root cause.
- Encourage them to research what other people, organizations, or businesses are doing to ethically use palm oil locally, nationally, and globally.
- Facilitate a discussion about how girls can make a difference locally, nationally, or globally.

### **Are there any additional resources to support this topic?**

For more information, use the following resources:

- [Girl Scout Cookie Program FAQs](#)
- To learn more about the RSPO, read [their stance](#) on the recent news articles and review their [Sustainable Palm Oil Toolkit for Kids](#)
- [Little Brownie Baker FAQs](#)
- [ABC Baker FAQs](#)

### **Are there any badges or awards that girls can earn as they explore the use of palm oil?**

- No, however, we recommend the following resources:
- The [It's Your Planet—Love It! Journeys](#) are a great place to start if girls are interested in environmental topics.
- Girl Scout Juniors through Ambassadors can also earn one of the [highest awards](#) if they decide to create a Take Action project based on what they learn.
- The [Girl Scout Senior Eco Advocate badge](#) helps girls learn about an environmental issue they care about.

### **My Girl Scouts don't want to sell Girl Scout Cookies because of the palm oil issue; how do I address this?**

Participation in the Girl Scout Cookie Program is always optional and never affects a girl's ability to participate in other Girl Scout activities. We hope girls will thoroughly explore the topic, understand how palm oil is so intricately tied to our world's food supply, and approve of the steps we've taken to work with our bakers to ensure an ethical supply chain. We also hope girls will decide to participate in the Girl Scout Cookie Program and use their funds to take action on topics they care about in their local, national, and global communities.