

# Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products

What do rain boots, many wooden doors, wicker baskets, most perfumes and shampoos, golf balls, colas, certain cancer-fighting drugs, guitars, and chewing gum have in common? Many are made from substances that come from some of the millions of plant species that thrive in Earth's rain forests. Until very recently, most rainforest products were produced with little regard for how their production affected the rainforest ecosystems.

Fortunately, many farmers, companies, landowners, and consumers worldwide are producing or buying products grown, raised, or made through sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture is a method of agricultural production and distribution that tries to achieve one major goal—to protect the ecosystems and the people and wildlife that live within them. This goal is achieved by providing incentives to farmers who comply with strict agricultural management and production methods. Some of these methods include using fewer pesticides, planting crops without tilling the soil, conserving water and keeping it clean, and managing fertilizer use, among others.

In this laboratory activity, you will identify some of the foods and other items around your home that come from tropical rain forests. Then you will determine which of the foods or items on your list were grown or produced by sustainable agricultural methods. Finally, you will develop two recipes that use only sustainable rainforest products.

## OBJECTIVES

**Identify** some of the foods and items in your home that come from Earth's tropical rain forests.

**Determine** which of the items on your list were grown or produced using sustainable agricultural methods.

**Develop** two recipes that use *only* sustainable rainforest products.

## MATERIALS

- highlighting marker
- pencil
- references

**Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products *continued***

**Procedure**

1. With an adult’s permission, investigate your home to identify some of the many foods and other items that come from Earth’s rain forests. When you find a food or other type of item, mark it off in the table below.

**SOME COMMON FOODS AND OTHER ITEMS FROM RAIN FORESTS**

Food/Item		Food/Item		Food/Item	
allspice		coffee		papayas	
avocados		cola		paprika	
bamboo		cucumbers		patchouli (perfume)	
bananas		dracaenas		philodendrons	
black pepper		eucalyptus		pineapples	
Brazil nuts		ginger		ramie (fabrics)	
cashews		grapefruits		rattan (furniture)	
cayenne pepper		guavas		tangerines	
chicle (chewing gum)		latex (rain gear)		tapioca	
chili peppers		limes		teak (wood)	
chocolate (cocoa)		macadamia nuts		tung oil	
cinnamon		mangoes		turmeric	
cloves		nutmeg		vanilla	
coconuts		oranges		wicker (baskets)	
coconut oil		palm oil		zebra plants	

2. Based on your survey, do you think there are other foods or items not listed in the data table that come from the rain forest? List at least five rainforest products that are *not* in the table that people commonly use every day.

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3. For at least 10 items on your list, use reference sources to determine how these foods and items could be grown or produced using sustainable agricultural methods. Highlight these items in the table.
4. From the highlighted items, develop two recipes, one for a snack and one for a drink, which use *only* sustainable rainforest products. Write your recipes, along with directions on how to make them, below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

**Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products** *continued*



*From the Kitchen Of* \_\_\_\_\_

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**Analysis**

**1. Examining Data** Which of the foods and items in your data table are grown or produced using only sustainable farming methods?

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## Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products *continued*

**2. Classifying Data** Can the items in the table be grouped or classified? If so, explain how.

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**3. Analyzing Data** What foods or items on your list can you easily replace with sustainable farming products?

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## Conclusions

**4. Interpreting Information** One of the goals of sustainable agriculture, including sustainable rainforest farms, is to protect the farmers and those who work the farms. How can this be achieved?

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**5. Drawing Conclusions** List at least four ways in which sustainable agricultural practices contribute to ecological balance on the planet.

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**6. Drawing Conclusions** What role do you think consumers can play in supporting sustainable agriculture?

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# Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products

## Teacher Notes

**TIME REQUIRED** One 45-minute period to answer the questions and discuss results; approximately 30–45 minutes at home to conduct the survey.

### RATING

Easy ← 1 2 3 4 → Hard

Teacher Prep–2

Student Set-Up–1

Concept Level–2

Clean Up–1



Alyson Mike  
East Helena  
Public Schools  
East Helena, MT

## THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

**Make Observations** Students make observations and collect data to complete the survey.

**Analyze the Results** Students analyze their findings by answering the Analysis questions at the end of this activity.

**Draw Conclusions** Students draw conclusions by answering the Conclusions questions.

**Communicate the Results** Students communicate their findings when they answer the questions posed at the end of the activity.

## TIPS AND TRICKS

Some students may need assistance in determining which rainforest products were grown or produced by sustainable methods. Students can find information at their local library. If the Internet is available, students may visit the Rainforest Alliance Organization's homepage.

Students could visit their local supermarket, try to find out what brands of bananas and coffee are sold, and whether or not they were produced on sustainable farms. Students could make inquiries about the wood products and furniture sold at local department stores.

If time allows, have students work together in small groups to prepare at least some of the recipes they developed. Enlist the help of the home economics or family and consumer science teacher, if possible.

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Fortunately, many farmers, companies, landowners, and consumers worldwide are producing or buying products grown, raised, or made through sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture is a method of agricultural production and distribution that tries to achieve one major goal—to protect the ecosystems and the people and wildlife that live within them. This goal is achieved by providing incentives to farmers who comply with strict agricultural management and production methods. Some of these methods include using fewer pesticides, planting crops without tilling the soil, conserving water and keeping it clean, and managing fertilizer use, among others.

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## MATERIALS

- highlighting marker
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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products** *continued***Procedure**

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2. Based on your survey, do you think there are other foods or items not listed in the data table that come from the rain forest? List at least five rainforest products that are *not* in the table that people commonly use every day.

**Answers may vary.**

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3. For at least 10 items on your list, use reference sources to determine how these foods and items could be grown or produced using sustainable agricultural methods. Highlight these items in the table.
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**Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products *continued***



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**Analysis**

**1. Examining Data** Which of the foods and items in your data table are grown or produced using only sustainable farming methods?

**Answers may vary. Many brands of coffee, bananas, oranges, and cacao are available as certified sustainable rainforest products.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Identifying Sustainable Rainforest Products** *continued*

- 2. Classifying Data** Can the items in the table be grouped or classified? If so, explain how.

**Students should find that most of the sustainable rainforest products are foods.**

- 3. Analyzing Data** What foods or items on your list can you easily replace with sustainable farming products?

**Answers may vary. Most products from any type of sustainable farm cost a little more than similar products and items produced on conventional farms. Some consumers cannot afford or are unwilling to pay these higher prices.**

## Conclusions

- 4. Interpreting Information** One of the goals of sustainable agriculture, including sustainable rainforest farms, is to protect the farmers and those who work the farms. How can this be achieved?

**Farmers and workers and their families may be protected in several ways. In many countries, farmers practicing sustainable agriculture are educated and given incentives to maintain their farms by their governments. Their workers are often paid wages well above the minimum wage for the area.**

- 5. Drawing Conclusions** List at least four ways in which sustainable agricultural practices contribute to ecological balance on the planet.

**Answers may vary. Sustainable farming practices use fewer pesticides and fertilizers, reduce soil erosion, minimize waste, reduce water pollution, and reduce the use of nonrenewable fuel sources, among other benefits.**

- 6. Drawing Conclusions** What role do you think consumers can play in supporting sustainable agriculture?

**Consumers contribute to sustainable agriculture by demanding and purchasing certified products whenever possible, joining organizations that support sustainable farming methods, and supporting local companies and organizations that strive to maintain sustainable agriculture.**