

Girl Scouts call on cookie bakers to address child labor

By The Associated Press

The Girl Scouts of the USA say child labor has no place in its iconic cookies and called on the two companies that bake them to act quickly to address any potential abuses linked to the palm oil in their supply chains.

The comments were sent in the form of a tweet to Associated Press reporters who released an investigation December 29 linking Girl Scout cookies and the supply chains of other well-known food brands to an estimated tens of thousands of children who often work unpaid for long hours in hazardous conditions to help harvest palm fruits on plantations in Indonesia and Malaysia.

“Child labor has no place in Girl Scout Cookie production,” the Girl Scouts tweeted. “Our investment in the development of our world’s youth must not be facilitated by the under-development of some.”

The Girl Scouts also referred to a not-for-profit global organization it belongs to called the Roundtable on



Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), which promotes ethical production, including the treatment of workers, writing: “If certain suppliers are not following ethical practices, we expect our bakers and RSPO to take action quickly to rectify those

exceptions.”

The Girl Scouts had not responded to repeated requests from The AP for comment about the findings ahead of the December 29 story, which found many children working in the palm-oil industry

COOKIE CONCERNS. A child collects palm kernels from the ground at a palm oil plantation in Sumatra, Indonesia, in this November 13, 2017 file photo. The Girl Scouts of the USA say child labor has no place in its iconic cookies and called on the two companies that bake them to act quickly to address any potential abuses linked to the palm oil in their supply chains. (AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara, File)

do not have access to adequate school or healthcare and that some never learn to read or write. The story detailed how others live in fear of being rounded up by police and tossed in detention centers because they were born on plantations to parents who are working illegally, and how girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Reporters traced child labor to the supply chain of one of the Girl Scout cookies’ bakers, Little Brownie Bakers, owned by the Italian confectionary brand Ferrero, which did not comment on the findings. The other baker and its parent company, Canada-based Weston Foods, did not provide any details about its supply chain, citing proprietary reasons. Both said they were committed to sourcing sustainable palm oil.

New U.S. dietary guidelines: No candy, cake for kids under age two

By Carla K. Johnson
AP Medical Writer

Parents now have an extra reason to say no to candy, cake, and ice cream for children before their second birthday. The first U.S. government dietary guidelines for infants and toddlers, released December 29, recommend feeding only breast milk for at least six months and no added sugar for children under age two.

“It’s never too early to start,” said Barbara Schneeman, a nutritionist at University of California, Davis. “You have to make every bite count in those early years.”

The guidelines stop short of two key recommendations from scientists advising the government. Those advisers said in July that everyone should limit their added sugar intake to less than 6% of calories and men who drink should limit alcohol to one drink per day.

Instead, the guidelines stick with previous advice: limit added sugar to less than 10% of calories per day after age two. And men should limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day, twice as much as advised for women.

“I don’t think we’re finished with alcohol,” said Schneeman, who chaired a committee advising the government on the guidelines. “There’s more we need to learn.”

The dietary guidelines are issued every five years by the Agriculture Department and the Department of Health and Human Services. The government uses them to set standards for school lunches and other programs.

Associated Press writer Marion Renault in Rochester, Minnesota, contributed.

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SNAKE WRANGLER. Ken Lee grapples a 10-foot-long Burmese Python spotted by residents of Tai Pak Tin village in Hong Kong’s rural New Territories district on December 1, 2020. When Lee catches snakes, he uses a range of equipment — puncture-proof gloves, sticks, hooks, a torch, and bags. At times, he even uses his bare hands. (Photo courtesy of Ken Lee via AP)

No snake soup for Hong Kong’s young snake catcher

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month, Lee was also called to a high-rise residential building in a rural area to capture a bamboo pit viper — a common, venomous green snake whose bite can cause a nasty swell.

The snakes he catches are sent to the Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Garden, a

local nonprofit organization that shelters rescued wild animals. After a health check, most of the creatures are then released back into the local parks.

“I hope all these wild animals could be returned to nature,” Lee said.

Currently, he works as a research assistant at four universities in the city and volunteers at the Hong Kong Society of Herpetology Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the study of reptiles and amphibians.

Even though Hong Kong has ample green areas that serve as different habitats for snakes, Liz Rose-Jeffreys, Kadoorie Farm’s conservation officer, thinks the city’s urban development may threaten the survival of snake species.

“I think this is one of mutual respect, really. They are our wild neighbors, they’ve been here a lot longer than us, and I think we have a duty to respect nature,” she said. “They form an important part of our ecosystem, so if we have to remove snakes, then it would upset the balance that has been established for many years.”

During these tough times, if you are able, please support local organizations, nonprofits, stores, shops, restaurants, and others by making donations or purchasing gift certificates!

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- 5 Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;
- 6 Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;
- 7 Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;
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