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Research Article

Cotton as a Strategic Fiber of the Future and Cooking Oil Produced from Sunflower and Oil-Palm in Africa

Byamukama Willbroad[1*] | Edward Ssemakula[2] | Shaman Arinda[3] | Hillary Natumanya[4] | Christian Atukunda[5] |

1. Department of Crop Science and Production, Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Kabale University, P. O. Box 317, Kabale, Uganda.
2. Department of Agriculture, Agribusiness and Environment, Faculty of Agriculture, Environment, and Technology, Bishop Stuart University, P. O. Box, 09, Mbarara, Uganda.
3. Department of Agribusiness and Natural Resource Economics, Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Kabale University, P. O. Box 317, Kabale, Uganda
4. Global Water Partnership, Eastern Africa, P.O. Box 192, Entebbe, Uganda.
5. Department of Information Technology, Faculty of Computing, Library and Information Science, Kabale University, Uganda.

***Corresponding Author:** Byamukama Willbroad, Department of Crop Science and Production, Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Kabale University, P. O. Box 317, Kabale, Uganda.

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Abstract: The increasing global population has intensified the demand for sustainable vegetable oil production. Cottonseed, sunflower, and palm oil have emerged as efficient and promising oilseed crops. Cottonseed oil, a valuable byproduct of cotton lint processing, ranks among the top edible oils globally. Despite the historical focus on lint, there is growing attention to oil content, quality, and value addition, particularly in Africa. However, cottonseed oil remains underutilized compared to other oilseeds. This review explores the nutritional, economic, and industrial potential of cotton by-products, sunflower, and oil-palm oils. It evaluates biosynthetic pathways for oil production, investigates emerging nanotechnologies, and highlights both the opportunities and environmental and health concerns associated with palm oil consumption. The review provides practical recommendations for promoting food security, enhancing rural incomes, and supporting sustainable agricultural development in Africa.

Keywords: Cotton by-products, edible oil, sunflower oil, palm oil, food safety, nanotechnology, sustainable agriculture, Africa.

Introduction

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Uganda's economy, playing a vital role in job creation, enhancing food availability, generating foreign exchange, and supplying key raw materials to various industrial sectors. Data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicates that in the 2015/2016 fiscal year, agriculture accounted for 23.6% of the national GDP and provided employment to over two-thirds of the population. Among Uganda's key agricultural commodities, cotton holds historical and economic significance. Traditionally cultivated as a cash crop, cotton contributes not only to export earnings but also serves as a major input for domestic industries such as textiles and edible oil production.

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According to the Cotton Development Organization, the cotton sector supports the livelihoods of approximately 2.5 million Ugandans through the cultivation, processing, and sale of lint, garments, and a variety of by-products including soap, cooking oil, and animal feed [10].

First introduced by British colonial authorities in 1903, cotton was Uganda's pioneering commercial crop [16]. While the primary focus has long been on lint for fabric production [20], there is considerable potential in utilizing other components of the cotton plant. With the right policies, skills, and technologies, by-products such as stalks, husks, cottonseed, and short fibers could be transformed into additional revenue streams. Leveraging these underutilized resources could boost domestic value addition, open new markets, reduce dependence on imports, and minimize waste along the cotton value chain.

Objectives of the Review

1. To assess how cotton by-products can contribute to income diversification, increase value addition, and minimize waste in the cotton production chain, emphasizing their economic and environmental benefits.
2. To investigate worldwide trends in production, the associated health advantages, and the environmental impact of sunflower and palm oil use and manufacturing.
3. To emphasize the contribution of advanced technologies, including nanotechnology, in enhancing the safety, quality, and sustainability of producing cottonseed, sunflower, and palm oils.
4. To evaluate the potential of cotton by-products and oilseeds in strengthening food security and promoting economic growth in developing and low-income regions, with a particular focus on Africa.
5. To provide practical recommendations for maximizing the utilization of cotton by-products and vegetable oils while addressing health, culinary, and environmental considerations.

Materials and Methods

This review employed a structured and thorough methodology to collect, assess, and synthesize existing literature on cotton as a pivotal fiber and the production of cooking oils derived from sunflower and oil-palm.

1. Literature Search Approach

Databases: Sources were obtained from platforms such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar.

Keywords: Key terms utilized included "cotton by-products," "sunflower oil production," "palm oil processing," "oilseed crop innovations," "sustainable agriculture," and "nanotechnology in oil production."

Inclusion Criteria: The review incorporated peer-reviewed publications, reports, and conference materials published within a specified period, with a focus on studies relevant to Africa and broader global contexts.

2. Data Collection and Structuring

Information gathered encompassed research objectives, methodologies, core findings, and implications for sectors such as agriculture, industry, and health. The studies were organized thematically, addressing areas like economic significance, environmental effects, nutritional benefits, and technological progress.

3. Data Analysis

Information was organized thematically to cover economic significance, environmental impact, health and nutrition, and technological advancements. A comprehensive synthesis approach was used to draw conclusions and identify knowledge gaps.

Results and Discussion

1. Cotton Production and By-Products in Africa

Across the African continent, more than 3.5 million smallholder farmers depend heavily on the export of raw cotton lint for their livelihoods [1]. While lint remains the primary commercial product, the cotton crop holds far more value than just its fibers. In many least developed countries (LDCs), such as Uganda, cotton plays a crucial role in sustaining household incomes, with women comprising around 17% of the lead farming population. Since 2018, Sub-Saharan Africa has earned an estimated $15.5 billion from exporting over 1.5 million metric tonnes of raw lint, with more than 90% of the region's cotton output shipped abroad [17].

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Although these exports are economically significant, they underscore a heavy reliance on raw commodity markets among producing nations [11]. Despite multiple strategies aimed at increasing local processing and value addition, fully integrated cotton-to-textile supply chains remain limited or dormant in much of Africa. For example, in 2018, out of 1.272 million metric tonnes of lint harvested in Francophone African countries, a mere 19,000 tonnes or just 1.5% underwent domestic processing. This shortfall reflects ongoing structural and industrial constraints within the continent's textile and apparel sectors. However, it also presents a strategic opportunity: expanding the use of cotton by-products could diversify rural incomes and build economic resilience.

Cotton by-products are generally categorized into two groups: those derived from ginning and oil extraction activities such as linters, hulls, cottonseed oil, and cottonseed cake and those produced from the stalks of the plant, including fuel briquettes, pellets, mushroom substrates, and particle board materials [23].

Local processing of cottonseed oil and meal in Africa

Insights presented by [14] and shared during the June 2019 International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) workshop at the World Trade Organization underscored the emerging significance of cottonseed by-products within Africa's cotton economy. These by-products are becoming increasingly vital as a supplementary source of income for the continent's cotton-growing communities. When seed cotton is ginned, approximately 55% of the yield consists of cottonseed, while 40% is lint. Among the various by-products derived from cottonseed, edible oil stands out due to its high market value relative to weight, positioning it as a commercially attractive commodity. On the global scale, cottonseed oil contributes around 5.2% to the total edible oil supply.

Despite this potential, cottonseed and its related by-products remain significantly underutilized across much of Africa, as pointed out in [7]. Although the continent generates about 2.5 million tonnes of cottonseed annually roughly 5.8% of the global total only three-quarters of this output is actually processed into oil and meal. The unprocessed 25%, valued at an estimated $237 million, often goes to waste, especially in West African countries. Mali stands out as a notable exception, where 100% of the cottonseed produced is fully processed, a fact highlighted during the ICAC workshop.

Value of Oil, Meal, and Unused Cottonseed in Africa

Expanding the proportion of cottonseed processed into oil has the potential to boost farmer incomes, reduce Africa's dependency on imported cooking oils, and strengthen the region's overall food security framework [19]. At present, once seed cotton is harvested, many farmers customarily uproot and burn the remaining stalks and leaves a practice driven by the need to comply with pest control protocols [12]. This routine results in the loss of a significant portion of the plant's biomass, with stalks alone accounting for more than 80% of the total cotton plant matter.

In contrast, countries like India have adopted more efficient practices, transforming cotton stalks into eco-friendly fuel alternatives such as briquettes and pellets. These substitutes serve as a cleaner option to traditional fuels like firewood, coal, and charcoal. Furthermore, cotton stalks are not limited to energy uses they can be repurposed as organic fertilizers or growing mediums for mushrooms. For African farmers, tapping into these applications presents an opportunity to create new revenue streams, either by selling the raw material to processors or engaging in value addition on a smaller scale. Given the abundance of stalks following each harvest, they represent a readily accessible and underexploited resource. During the ICAC workshop held in June 2019, representatives from the "Cotton 4" countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali emphasized the untapped potential of cotton stalks as a base material for innovative by-products.

Cotton By-products

Cotton stalks have valuable characteristics as a fuel source, providing a high caloric value and low ash content. When compressed into briquettes or pellets, they serve as a smoke-free alternative to conventional fuels [8]. A study conducted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Zambia found that biomass briquetting or pelleting operations utilizing cotton stalks and other agricultural residues could compete with charcoal in terms of cost, create employment opportunities, and allow farmers to earn up to $25 per tonne for their stalks.

Prospective Gains from Cotton By-products

Biomass briquettes and pellets offer significant environmental advantages. In Tanzania, around one million metric tonnes of wood charcoal are consumed annually, with half of this amount used in Dar es Salaam. At the same time, the country's cotton harvest produces approximately 500,000 metric tonnes of stalks each year, the majority of which are burned in the fields.

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Converting these stalks into smoke-free briquettes could help alleviate deforestation, reduce air pollution, and address smoke-related health concerns, providing both economic and ecological benefits, as highlighted by [15].

Assumption for cotton production in Africa

Experiences from other nations, alongside success stories from businesses utilizing cotton by-products, suggest that similar outcomes are achievable in Africa. Expanding into cotton by-products offers considerable socio-economic benefits, such as generating extra income and employment for farmers, especially by allowing them to add value to the stalks they currently burn. The International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) estimates that West Africa could earn an additional $123 million by converting cotton stalks into pellets. Additionally, applying Indian microbial technology to remove gossypol from seed meal could yield $33 per ton of seed meal, contributing an extra $78 million to Africa's economy. Boosting local processing not only improves value addition but also creates jobs and reduces waste. Effective policymaking is essential to ensure that farmers benefit, either directly through involvement in value addition or indirectly through higher seed cotton prices. This additional income would help protect farmers from fluctuations in international lint prices, encouraging increased cotton production and addressing raw material shortages for numerous value-added industries in Africa. To fully unlock the potential of cotton by-products, efforts focused on capacity building, product commercialization, and the development of clear strategies are necessary to attract investment, facilitate technology transfer, and seize new opportunities.

2. World Sunflower Oil Production

Sunflower oil rank as the fifth most produce edible vegetable oil globally. The production of edible oils and fats has grown significantly in recent years, with approximately 400 million metric tons of seed production recorded in 2014 [9]. Oil production is closely tied to the specific crop, causing it to fluctuate from year to year. Sunflower oil is a key raw material in biodiesel production, a practice that began in South Africa in 1979 and has since spread widely, contributing to the rise in seed and sunflower oil prices worldwide.

Sunflower is a major oilseed crop cultivated globally for its high-quality oil and dietary fiber, both of which provide health benefits [3]. In countries like India and South Africa, sunflower farming competes with other crops such as maize, soybean, and sorghum [25]. As the global population continues to grow, the demand for sunflower seeds, oil, and by-products has increased, necessitating efforts to enhance sunflower production to meet this demand [24]. Sunflower, along with other oilseeds like soybean, rapeseed, peanut, and cottonseed, plays a dominant role in the global oilseed market.

Sunflower oil is considered a premium product due to its balanced content of linoleic acid and tocopherols. The rising demand for monounsaturated fatty acids has led to the development of new sunflower oil varieties. For instance, high-oleic-acid sunflower oil (HOSO) is becoming increasingly popular as it is more affordable than olive oil and provides better oxidative stability than traditional sunflower oil. HOSO is expected to see significant growth in both food and industrial applications worldwide [22]. Furthermore, new sunflower oil types, such as those high in stearic acid, have emerged due to their stability at high temperatures and beneficial effects on lipoprotein metabolism. These innovations are anticipated to drive up global consumption and industrial use of sunflower oil.

Palm oil and Sunflower Oil production

Palm oil production has seen remarkable growth over the past fifty years. In 1970, global production was only 2 million tonnes, but this figure surged by 35 times, reaching 71 million tonnes by 2018 [2]. This growth reflects the increasing global demand for vegetable oils. Since the 1960s, global vegetable oil production has expanded significantly, growing from 17 million tonnes to 170 million tonnes by 2014, with more recent figures reaching 218 million tonnes in 2018.

The rise of palm oil production is closely tied to the broader increase in vegetable oil demand. Palm oil is a highly efficient crop, contributing 36% of the world's oil production while occupying less than 9% of the land used for oil crops. This productivity has made palm oil a primary option to meet the growing need for vegetable oils [21].

Both sunflower and palm oils are edible oils derived from sunflower seeds and oil palm plants, respectively. These oils are crucial in food preparation and offer a range of health benefits due to their rich nutrient profiles [18].

Sunflower Oil

Sunflower oil is a non-volatile oil extracted from pressed or crushed sunflower seeds, with its industrial production first established in Russia [4]. While it is widely used in cooking, sunflower oil is also a common ingredient in cosmetics due to its moisturizing and emollient properties.

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The oil primarily contains a blend of monounsaturated fats (oleic acid, omega-9) and polyunsaturated fats (linoleic acid, omega-6). It is also abundant in vitamin E, sterols, squalene, and other health-promoting compounds, making it valuable for both dietary and skincare purposes. The balanced profile of fatty acids in sunflower oil contributes to heart health and helps manage various skin conditions [5].

Typical Composition of Sunflower Oil include; Palmitic acid (saturated): 4–9%, Stearic acid (saturated): 1–7%, Oleic acid (monounsaturated omega-9): 14–40% and Linoleic acid (polyunsaturated omega-6): 48–74%

3. Palm Oil Production

Palm oil is the most widely used and cost-effective cooking oil globally. It is derived from the mesocarp the reddish, fleshy part of the oil palm fruit. Though native to Africa, palm oil is now extensively grown in tropical regions like Southeast Asia and parts of Brazil. Its affordability and broad availability make it a staple in both domestic kitchens and commercial food production. Beyond culinary purposes, palm oil also plays a crucial role in the biodiesel industry, where it is processed into palm oil methyl ester. Characterized by its high saturated fat content, palm oil typically remains solid at room temperature.

Typical Composition of Palm Oil include; Glyceryl Laurate (saturated): 0.1%, Myristate (saturated): 1%, Palmitate (saturated): 44%, Stearate (saturated): 5%, Oleate (monounsaturated): 39%, Linoleate (polyunsaturated): 10% and Alpha-Linolenate (polyunsaturated): 0.3%

Both palm and sunflower oils are natural plant-based oils, each with unique characteristics. Sunflower oil is often recommended for cardiovascular wellness due to its favorable fatty acid composition, whereas high consumption of palm oil, given its saturated fat content, may pose cardiovascular risks. Economically, palm oil stands out as one of the cheapest oils available, while sunflower oil is prized for its multi-purpose uses, including its application in cosmetics as a skin moisturizer. Palm oil is heavily utilized in biodiesel manufacturing, whereas sunflower oil is more prominent in food and personal care product formulations.

Comparison between Sunflower Oil and Palm Oil

	Sunflower Oil	Palm Oil
Obtained from	Sunflower seeds	Palm oil plants
Color	light amber in color	slightly red
Origin	Russia	Africa
Rich in	Contains vitamins E and K	Contains beta carotene and vitamin E
Types	• High Linoleic • High Oleic • Mid Oleic	• Red palm oil • Refined, bleached, deodorized palm oil
Polyunsaturated fats	Good source of mono and polyunsaturated fats: 79% and 7%	Low in mono and polyunsaturated fats: 38% and 10%
Saturated fats	Low in saturated fat: 14%	High in saturated fat: 52%
Smoke point	High smoke point: good for searing, browning, high-heat frying	High smoke point: good for searing, browning, high-heat frying
Also used in applications such as	along with biodiesel also as an emollient	Biodiesel
Issues	Advised by physicians for cardiovascular problems	Not good for cardiovascular disorders
Cost factor	Costly	Cheaper
Health effects	• Cardiovascular Benefits • Prevents Arthritis • Prevention of Asthma and Colon Cancer • Lowers Cholesterol • Prevention of Other Cancers • Fights Free Radicals • Reduction of Cardiac Problems • Healthy Nervous System • Prevention of Infant Infection • Maintenance of a Healthy Immune System • Repairs the Body	Excess consumption of palm oil results in obesity which further may give rise to many health issues and problems.

Source: [6]

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Benefits of Sunflower Oil

Sunflower oil is a pure, light, and golden oil that contains a high amount of Vitamin E. It is extracted from sunflower seeds and can be used at high cooking temperatures. This oil is versatile and can be used in a variety of dishes, offering both health benefits and a flavorful addition to your meals.

Energy Booster and Immune System Support

Sunflower oil acts as an excellent energy booster. The saturated fats found in sunflower oil help strengthen the immune system, leaving you feeling more energetic. It's a good idea to add it to your meals, such as drizzling it over a fresh salad, to support energy levels and strengthen the immune system. A strong immune system helps your body fight or prevent sickness more effectively. Sunflower oil can also be used in baking cakes and biscuits, incorporating healthy ingredients like wheat, oats, and fresh or dried fruits when you try to include it in one or two of your daily meals to perform the following functions.

(i) Cholesterol Reduction and Heart Health

Sunflower oil is said to help lower cholesterol. Cooking or consuming sunflower oil can help reduce levels of low-density cholesterol in the body. It's important not to overuse it, as excessive amounts can be unhealthy. A balanced meal made with sunflower oil, whether for lunch or dinner, will help you maintain strength and good heart health. Remember, moderation is key to reaping the benefits.

(ii) Digestive Health

Sunflower oil is light, easy to absorb, and aids digestion. It can act as a mild laxative, preventing constipation and improving overall digestive health. You can incorporate it into your meals by using it in salad dressings or drizzling it over vegetables after baking. Healthy vegetables combined with sunflower oil can help boost your digestive system.

(iii) Skin and Hair Benefits

Sunflower oil is great for your skin and hair. It can help with acne, eczema, dry skin, and inflammation. Since sunflower oil is light and not greasy, it absorbs easily into the skin without clogging pores. You can create a face mask with sunflower oil to hydrate and nourish your skin. Additionally, it moisturizes dry hair, controls frizz, prevents thinning, and adds shine. Its light texture allows it to be applied directly to your scalp as a moisturizing treatment. Regular use can help strengthen your hair and prevent hair loss. Apply it to your hair, leave it in for a while, and be sure to wash it out thoroughly afterward.

Sunflower oil is perfect for stir-frying, deep frying, or as a salad dressing. It can also be used in baking treats for your family or as a skin care product. Enjoy preparing delicious meals and desserts for your loved ones, and pamper yourself with a fun spa day, making facial and hair masks with sunflower oil.

Sunflower oil is generally safe when consumed in moderation or applied to the skin, but there are some potential side effects and risks, namely;

(i) Allergic Reactions

People who are allergic to the Asteraceae/Compositae plant family may have an allergic reaction to sunflower oil.

(ii) Impact on Insulin and Blood Sugar

Diets high in sunflower oil can increase fasting insulin and blood sugar levels, as well as post-meal blood fats, potentially raising the risk of developing atherosclerosis in people with diabetes.

(iii) Metabolic Dysfunction

The health effects of sunflower oil depend on how it is processed. Refined sunflower oil, especially varieties with a high linoleic acid content (an omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acid or PUFA), may contribute to metabolic dysfunction. High temperatures during the refining process and cooking can cause these PUFAs to become unstable, leading to oxidation and the formation of harmful byproducts like aldehydes, toxic alcohols, and ketones. Excess consumption of linoleic acid from sunflower oil and other sources may lead to oxidative stress and negative health effects.

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(iv) Cooking with High-Linoleic Oils

Despite its high smoke point (450°F), sunflower oil may not be as stable as many believe when exposed to high heat. Studies show that repeated frying with high-linoleic oils like sunflower oil produces more harmful byproducts than oils such as olive oil. If you plan to cook with sunflower oil, opt for high-oleic varieties, which are more stable.

(v) Storage in Body Fat

When consumed in large quantities, PUFA-rich oils like sunflower oil can accumulate in body fat. When the body burns this stored fat for energy, it releases the same harmful compounds produced during the breakdown of PUFAs, which can promote inflammation and metabolic dysfunction. It's important to read food labels, as sunflower oil is often found in processed foods. To minimize exposure, choose whole foods instead. In conclusion, while sunflower oil has many health benefits, such as boosting energy, supporting digestion, and improving skin and hair health, there are potential risks, particularly when consumed excessively or improperly processed. Moderation is key, and opting for high-oleic varieties is a healthier choice when using sunflower oil.

Advantages of Palm Oil

Palm oil is derived from the fruit of the African oil palm and has been used for millennia. Over recent decades, it has become one of the most produced oils globally. The popularity of palm oil is due to its versatility. It is semi-solid at room temperature, making it useful as a spread. It is also resistant to oxidation, which helps prolong the shelf life of products, and it can withstand high temperatures, making it ideal for frying.

Palm oil is rich in antioxidants, particularly vitamin E. This vitamin plays a crucial role in maintaining a healthy immune system and facilitating cell communication. Research suggests that adequate intake of vitamin E can lower the risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, and age-related macular degeneration.

Potential Health Benefits of Palm Oil

Palm oil is an excellent source of antioxidants, though some of its beneficial properties may have complications for people with certain medical conditions. Scientific studies support several health benefits of palm oil, including:

(i) Better Brain Health

The vitamin E in palm oil, specifically tocotrienol, has been linked to improved brain health. Tocotrienol is effective at protecting brain tissue from free radicals. Some studies have shown that it may even prevent the progression of brain lesions. However, further research is needed to confirm these findings.

(ii) Promotes Heart Health

Palm oil's vitamin E content may contribute to better heart health. The antioxidant properties of vitamin E in palm oil have been shown to slow or even stop the progression of heart disease in some individuals. While more research is needed to replicate these effects, palm oil extract may offer benefits for those suffering from heart disease.

(iii) Vitamin Absorption

Palm oil may improve the absorption of vitamin A, a crucial nutrient for eye health and the functioning of the retina. As a fat-soluble vitamin, vitamin A requires fat to be absorbed effectively. Including palm oil in your diet has been shown to enhance your body's ability to absorb vitamin A and potentially other fat-soluble vitamins.

Disadvantages/Risks of Palm Oil

Despite its nutritional value, palm oil may have negative effects for some individuals considering the following risks before using palm oil in cooking:

(i) Increased Cholesterol Levels

While some studies suggest palm oil may lower cholesterol levels, others indicate it could raise levels of "bad" cholesterol. When compared to liquid oils such as olive oil, palm oil tends to perform less favorably. Some research found that palm oil increased cholesterol in healthy individuals. Although palm oil is healthier than butter, it's important not to add it on top of other oils in your diet.

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(ii) Linked to Atherosclerosis

Fresh palm oil and reheated palm oil contain different levels of tocotrienol. Reheated palm oil contains fewer heart-healthy benefits than fresh palm oil and may actually increase the risk of heart disease, such as atherosclerosis. If you're at risk for heart disease, it's advisable to avoid consuming reheated palm oil or foods containing it.

(iii) High in Saturated Fats

Palm oil is relatively high in saturated fats, comprising about 34% saturated fat. In comparison, olive oil contains less than half that amount. High consumption of saturated fats is linked to an increased risk of heart disease and other chronic health issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Sunflower oil is extracted from sunflower seeds and is widely used in cooking, particularly for frying, as well as in cosmetics for creams and lotions. It is rich in vitamins A, D, and E and contains low levels of saturated fat. The oil, when cold-pressed, has a light amber color and a mild, pleasant flavor, while refined sunflower oil is pale yellow. Refined sunflower oil maintains its quality well, with minimal loss in flavor. It is known for its good shelf life and slight tendency for flavor reversion. Sunflower oil is a valuable fatty acid source, providing essential energy and forming a major component of the body's fat stores. It also contributes to food preservation, keeping it fresher and healthier for longer. Additionally, sunflower oil helps the skin retain moisture without clogging pores or blocking oxygen flow. Its lightweight texture allows the skin to absorb it quickly without leaving a greasy residue. Sunflower oil also acts as a protective barrier, with studies showing that premature infants receiving daily skin treatments with sunflower oil are 41% less likely to develop infections in the hospital.

Palm oil is an edible vegetable fat derived from the reddish pulp of the oil palm fruit. Its characteristic red color comes from its high provitamin A content. Palm oil is often used for cooking, particularly frying, due to its high oxidative stability when refined. It is one of the few highly saturated vegetable fats and is cholesterol-free. However, like other saturated fats, excessive consumption may raise both LDL (bad) and HDL (good) cholesterol levels. Palm oil is commonly found in many processed foods. Research has demonstrated health benefits, such as increasing good cholesterol while reducing bad cholesterol.

Recommendations

Sunflower Oil

- While sunflower oil is a good source of essential fatty acids and vitamins, it should be used in moder tion. Overconsumption, particularly of refined sunflower oil with high omega-6 content, may lead to oxidative stress and associated health risks.
- Opt for high-oleic sunflower oil for cooking, as it offers a more stable fatty acid composition and greater resistance to oxidation at high temperatures. This makes it a healthier choice compared to regular sun flower oil.
- Sunflower oil is effective for moisturizing both the skin and hair without clogging pores. It can be applied as a lightweight moisturizer or used in face masks for skin hydration. For hair, it can help with frizz control, prevent thinning, and enhance shine.
- To prevent the formation of harmful compounds, avoid overheating sunflower oil, particularly refined varieties. High temperatures can cause omega-6 fatty acids to oxidize and degrade into harmful byprod ucts. Opt for cooking methods that involve lower heat, such as sautéing, or use it in salad dressings and baking.
- Incorporate sunflower oil into a diet rich in whole foods and be mindful of excessive omega-6 fatty acid intake from processed foods. Overconsumption may disrupt the balance between omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids in the body.

Palm Oil

- Although palm oil offers antioxidant benefits, including vitamin E, it is high in saturated fats. Overuse can increase LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels. It's best to use palm oil sparingly, particularly in processed or fried foods, to avoid potential health risks.

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- When reheated, palm oil loses much of its beneficial tocotrienol content and can produce harmful compounds that may contribute to heart disease. It's advisable to use fresh palm oil for cooking and avoid reheating it.
- For those concerned about saturated fat intake, consider using oils lower in saturated fats, such as olive oil, which may provide heart health benefits and help lower "bad" cholesterol.
- Palm oil is rich in vitamin E and tocotrienols, which have been linked to better brain and heart health. However, further research is required to confirm these potential benefits. Consuming it in moderation can contribute to antioxidant protection and overall health.
- Palm oil is commonly found in processed foods. While it offers some benefits, it's advisable to reduce consumption of processed foods containing palm oil, as they may also include other unhealthy additives.
- Since palm oil production can cause environmental harm, opt for sustainably sourced palm oil. Support brands that use sustainable practices to mitigate the ecological impact of palm oil cultivation.

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