



Inquiry into labelling of palm oil

The House Economics Committee has commenced its inquiry into the Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2011 that will require makers or distributors of foods with palm oil as an ingredient to actually list palm oil on its contents label.

Currently, food containing palm oil can be labelled as containing vegetable oil. Much palm oil production is associated with deforestation and the destruction of wildlife habitat, including that of the Orang-utan. However, some palm oil is produced sustainably.

The Senate passed the Bill in June, shortly after a Senate Committee conducted a separate inquiry into an earlier version of the Bill.

The key provisions of the Bill are to:

- as a matter of food standards, require Food Standards Australia New Zealand to require producers, manufacturers and distributors of food containing palm oil or where palm oil is used in its production, to list palm oil as an ingredient, regardless of the amount of palm oil involved; and
- as a matter of consumer law, provide that palm oil content, or the use of palm oil in producing a product (not limited to food), is relevant to whether a person has engaged in misleading conduct.

The Committee is accepting submissions to the inquiry. The Committee will also consider submissions made to the prior Senate Committee inquiry, both before and after the 2010 election. Interested parties only need to make a submission if they wish to update their previous one.

Chair of the House Economics Committee Craig Thomson said, “The Committee recognises the community interest in the issues around the Bill such as preserving forests and the habitat of the Orang-utan.

“In addition to these community concerns, the Committee will also examine the Bill’s other aspects, such as trade, food quality, costs to business, and the rights of consumers.”

Submissions are due by Monday, 15 August.

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