

To whom it may concern,

I strongly support this bill, as do many others, and think it would be a huge step towards a safer, more sustainable future for animals and the environment. Please, people deserve to be informed about the terrible, destructive impact their food choices have on both the environment and its endangered inhabitants.

Oil palm is the world's most productive oil seed. Demand for the product has been growing by more than 9% per annum in the last decade. This is being driven by not only the food and cosmetic industry but more recently its usage as a biofuel.

The combined effect of logging and oil palm expansion resulted in Indonesia having the world's highest deforestation rate in 2006 according to a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report from 2007. It concluded that up to 98% of the orangutan habitat in Borneo and Sumatra may be destroyed by 2022 without urgent action.

The UNEP report, "The Last Stand of the Orangutan: State of Emergency", estimated that illegal logging accounts for more than 70% of the timber harvested in Indonesia and that it is occurring in 37 of the country's 41 national parks. The industry is driven by excess saw mill capacity and better returns for timber producers than utilising legally harvested timber.

In addition to the direct loss of habitat, there are flow-on effects from the opening up of the forest and introduction of network roads:

- * The creation of "forest islands", areas of land too small to support an orangutan population results in animals caught on these islands starving to death or turning to desperate food seeking measures.
- * The vulnerability of these areas to forest fires increases. The large quantities of dead wood littering the once forest floor provide the perfect combustion material for Kalimantan's famous uncontrollable infernos.
- * Microclimate changes impact fruiting in the forests. When local conditions deteriorate, orangutans are forced to move to new areas in search of food, bringing them in conflict with humans and often ending in them being killed as "pests".

In 1997 and 1998 thousands of orangutans perished either from starvation, fires or at the hands of people whose gardens they entered in search of food.

To be honest, it is the very least this government could do. You should feel obligated and I hope that if the bill is passed that you will feel some kind of pride knowing you have done something great for animals who, if they could, would only ask that their homes not be destroyed and their children not left orphaned.

Please find enclosed several photographs of the negative impact that the palm oil industry has on the land and on animals, especially orangutans.



Orangutan bashing: Indonesian activists attending to an injured Orangutan that was attacked by oil plantation workers residents in Sampit, Central Kalimantan in May 2009.





Photo of a site in Borneo cleared for a palm oil plantation, which will most likely remain depleted, becoming neither a sustainer of human or orangutan life. Palm oil seedlings in newly bare plains such as these can be seen as a food source for the newly homeless orangutans, making them agricultural pests; especially vulnerable without any protection from their usual jungle habitat.

Thank you in advance,
Jessica Armstrong
