

Submission for truth in Labelling Palm Oil Bill 2009

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I appeal to the senate committee looking at the merit of mandatory labelling of palm oil in food and cosmetic products, to consider the impact wholesale deforestation is having on both global warming and the destruction of the natural habitat of many animal species, including the orang-utan.

In September 2009 ,my husband, my children and myself ,took a trip to Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo and saw first hand both the destruction of natural forest environments and the direct impact on orang-utan populations. We visited two rehabilitation centres and were simultaneously glad such places could help these helpless animals, but also very sad that they were needed at all. It was apparent to us that the local population were trying to respect global pressure to protect the orang-utan, but at the same time the financial benefits of palm oil production is impossible to resist in such a poor nation. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the richer western countries to provide education and support for viable alternatives. This must start on our own doorstep.

The Heart foundation tick and dolphin friendly labelling have been well received and accepted amongst Australian consumers. Nutrition panels are now looked at daily when people do their shopping. Palm oil labelling or orang-utan friendly stickers on everyday items both food and soaps/shampoos is an immediate way for people to make informed decisions on their purchases.

Environmentally aware manufacturers should be proud to display such labelling and Australians would be I am sure, quick to support such producers. I have researched palm oil to make informed purchases, but the average shopper has no idea that palm oil may be listed under up to a dozen different names on current packaging.

To smoke cigarettes, not wear a seatbelt, drink and drive are all poor choices. However those choices are made with all the information laid out and transparent.

To not label products that either do not contain palm oil as a vegetable oil component, or do contain palm oil (but from a sustainable, renewable plantation) and as a result preserve and protect diminishing orang-utan habitat is a tragedy. People need this information so that they can make informed choices.

Companies such as LUSH cosmetics and skin care have taken this even further and eliminated palm oil from their products entirely. This has proven to be, not only an ethical decision but a hugely successful financial decision, as their sales increase on the back of being orang-utan friendly!

If we sit on our hands when we have evidence to tell us palm oil plantations are both eliminating whole animal species and contributing in a large way to global warming it is monumentally short sighted and irresponsible.

We can not replace the millions of hectares, already destroyed by greedy farming practices and ignorance.

We are in a position to say no more

We can ask manufacturers to look beyond what is cheapest and easiest, or be accountable for the choices they make

Those companies who are making responsible choices can be proud to have this displayed on their products for all to see

Mandatory labelling of palm oil is essential



This is Pete, a 28 year old Orangutan who was rescued from being kept as a pet, after his home was logged. Pete has never reached full physical maturity due to neglect and starvation. His life has improved but he will never live again in the forest.

Unfortunately due to financial constraints and work commitments, it is unlikely that I would be able to give evidence before a Senate Committee hearing in Canberra.