

To: Senate Community Affairs Committee

Re: Submission addressing the Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009

As a community member, the Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009 is of interest for environmental and ethical reasons. Both of these areas of concern encourage my support for the passing of The Bill and provide motivation for this submission.

Firstly, my experience living in and working with rural communities in Indonesia has strengthened my understanding of the pressure that unsustainable palm oil production places on hugely important natural ecosystems in Asia and local livelihoods. The vast majority of palm oil production in Indonesia is carried out by methods that are destroying natural environments and depleting natural resources essential to community life. Despite interest shown by large-scale palm oil users in the Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil, little change has yet been seen and deforestation of peat lands continues in Indonesia. This is worrying not only for the loss of peat land ecosystems, but also for the massive amounts of carbon released from cleared and burnt peat lands.

At the other end of the production chain, consumers deserve the opportunity to choose products that intentionally source palm oil produced by sustainable means. Misleading statements should be removed from packaging and replaced with clear, transparent labelling that ensures an informed choice can be made. Amending food labelling legislation will encourage manufacturers to seek out sustainably produced palm oil and therefore benefit the environment, local communities and consumers.

I commend Senators Xenophon, Brown and Joyce for sponsorship of The Bill and support this movement towards responsible labelling and hence, increased sourcing of certifiably sustainable Palm Oil.

Sincerely,
Laura Smelter