

Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009

I submit that Australian consumers be given the information to allow them to make an informed choice on the products they buy everyday in the supermarket.

Currently it is virtually impossible to establish which products on the supermarket shelves contain palm oil. As a volunteer for Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Australia over the past two years, I have become involved in putting together a list of palm oil free products which, while far from complete, is now available on the website at www.orangutans.com.au.

This has been a laborious task - even when inquiries are made to major manufacturers, the answers are often obfuscatory failing to confirm which products have palm oil. Given the number of guises under which palm oil can appear in a product, the consumer has very limited ability to make an informed decision on his/her purchase.

And yet there is demand for the information. We get numerous inquiries from the public asking us about specific products. In many cases, people are excited at the prospect of having found a product without palm oil but often, when the ingredients are fully disclosed and the questions asked of the manufacturer, palm oil or a palm oil derivative is shown to be present. Consumers shouldn't have to ask an organisation such as BOS Australia – nor indeed should they have to contact the manufacturer. They should be able to rely on the labelling to supply the information that is important to them.

There is growing awareness of the environmental degradation in Indonesia being caused by palm oil. Help Australian and NZ consumers make their own decision as to whether they want to be complicit in the destruction of the rainforest. Hopefully their decisions at the supermarket check-out will encourage manufacturers to find an alternative.

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