

Attention: The Senate

Re: The Food Standards Amendment

Hello, I am writing to plead the case to label all Palm Oil as an ingredient and any Palm Oil derived ingredient in all food, consumables, clothing - basically everything that is sold in Australia. I want to know what I am buying and do not want to buy anything that contains Palm Oil or derivatives of Palm Oil.

To myself and many others, the Palm Oil issue is the most important issue of this day. Not only is it important to keep wild Orangutans roaming the forests they have called home for their existence, it is important for Climate Change.

The amount of carbon gases released into the atmosphere when ancient peat bogs are dug up to plant Palm Oil is hugely significant. If we don't put a stop to deforestation in Borneo and Kalimantan for Palm Oil plantations we are playing Russian roulette with the future of this planet. Here is why:

Fires are used to create agricultural lands, including large palm tree plantations to supply palm oil. The dried-out peat ignites easily. Peat fires also burn underground, travelling unseen beneath the surface to break out in unexpected locations. Fires ravage the area, destroying remaining forest and wildlife, filling the air above Borneo and beyond with dense smoke and haze and releasing enormous quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere. The destruction had a major negative impact on the livelihoods of people in the area. It caused major smog-related health problems amongst half a million people, who suffered from respiratory problems.

The dry years of 1997-8 and 2002-3 (El Nino) in particular saw huge fires in the drained and drying-out peat swamp forests. A study for the European Space Agency found that the peat swamp forests are a significant carbon sink for the planet, and that the fires of 1997-8 may have released up to 2.5 billion tonnes, and the 2002-3 fires between 200 million to 1 billion tonnes, of carbon into the atmosphere. Using satellite images from before and after the 1997 fires, scientists calculated (Page *et al*, 2002) that of the 790,000 hectares (2,000,000 acres) that had burned 91.5% was peatland 730,000 hectares (1,800,000 acres). Using ground measurements of the burn depth of peat, they estimated that 0.19–0.23 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon were released into the atmosphere through peat combustion, with a further 0.05 Gt released from burning of the overlying vegetation. Extrapolating these estimates to Indonesia as a whole, they estimated that between 0.81 and 2.57 Gt of carbon were released to the atmosphere in 1997 as a result of burning peat and vegetation in Indonesia. This is equivalent to 13–40% of the mean annual global carbon emissions from fossil fuels, and contributed greatly to the largest annual increase in atmospheric CO₂ concentration detected since records began in 1957.

Indonesia is currently the world's third largest carbon emitter, to a large extent due to the destruction of its ancient peat swamp forests to make way for palm oil plantations.

Personally, I don't want to be responsible for this destruction and I would support a total ban on palm oil to send a powerful message to the Government of Indonesia and Malaysia.

If Australia can for once stand up for the good of this Earth I will be proud to be Australian - right now I am disappointed.

PLEASE, help Australian consumers have the knowledge to make the choice - all you have to do is make palm oil labeling mandatory.

Thank you,

Lindi Robertson