

Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee re: Inquiry into Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009

Good day, Committee members,

I am writing to register my opinion that palm oil and products which contain it should be labelled so that the person who buys or consumes the product/s can be aware of the place of origin of the palm oil contained in the product/s.

In particular, if the palm oil is derived from plantations on land which was cleared for the plantation, and, before clearing, provided habitat for orangutangs, this fact should be clearly legible.

This piecemeal approach is not how I would approach Truth in Labelling in an ideal world (run by reasonable people such as myself!). I would prefer that all the information about all products was readily available to people who wish to know it.

I would also prefer that the welfare of the orangutangs, and other species, and humans, was considered before the implementation of changes in land use, and use of other vital resources (water, air and so on) which were likely to be detrimental to the species affected.

I disagree with the premise that the global habitat for all species, including humans, should be seen as a collection of resources available for exploitation by whoever thinks t/s/he/y can make a profit out of doing so.

So, in the case of palm oil plantations on land which previously supported forest which provided habitat for orangutangs, the land, air and water are the resources being exploited. The orangutangs, and many other species of plant and animal, including humans who live in or depend on the intact forest, are disadvantaged, in some cases terminally.

If / when the palm oil ceases to be sufficiently profitable, the forest will not recover for some time, if ever. Almost certainly there will be irretrievable species loss. We may not know until it is too late, what we have lost.

I believe that consumers are entitled to withhold their dollars from companies which participate in what I consider to be large scale environmental vandalism. The way consumers can make and implement that choice is for the information to be truthfully on the product label.

Thank you

Jane O'Grady