

## **Submission re: Inquiry into Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009**

The Bill will amend product information standards to provide for the accurate labelling of palm oil in food. The principal issues for consideration by the Committee are:

- 1. The rights of consumers to be provided with accurate and truthful information to enable them to make an informed choice about the food products they are eating and purchasing;*
- 2. That allowing palm oil to be listed as "vegetable oil" on food packaging is misleading to consumers;*
- 3. That palm oil is considered high in saturated fats and consumers should be made aware if it is used in foods they are eating for health reasons;*
- 4. That the impact of palm oil production on wildlife, specifically Orang-utan's in South East Asia is significant unless it is done sustainably;*
- 5. That sustainable palm oil can be produced with low impact on the environment and wildlife and with better labour laws on plantations; and*
- 6. That manufacturers should be encouraged to use sustainable palm oil in their production process and can subsequently use the status of "Certified Sustainable Palm Oil" as a business benefit.*

I, David Frahm, strongly support the mandatory labelling of palm oil on all relevant packaging for both personal and professional, as well as what I believe are ethical reasons.

As a concerned citizen of the planet and a consumer, I have the right to decide where and how I spend my money.

Firstly, labelling directly affects my health. I am currently recovering from cancer treatment and firmly believe it is vital to my ongoing recovery and long-term health that I purchase and use products that I know exactly what is contained within.

This is underlined, where if ~40-50% of my food (not to mention non-food products) contains palm oil and I am consuming ~10kg every year (Source: The Palm Oil Action Group), respectively both very significant values, then this certainly signals a critical need for food packaging to be clearly labelled as containing the actual ingredient, not a generic reference or term (in this case 'vegetable oil').

Secondly, I have numerous environmental concerns. (I am an environmentalist/ecologist in training, currently undertaking a Bachelor of Science in Biodiversity and Conservation undergraduate degree

at Flinders University, Adelaide). For starters, the alleged rate of deforestation is really incomprehensible. With deforestation comes habitat loss, which is not simply limited to orang-utan's; there is the priceless and irreplaceable loss of biodiversity for all manner of animal and plant species. With deforestation comes a substantial increase in greenhouse gas emissions (methane from peat, CO<sub>2</sub> from burning trees/plants) leading to (further) global warming, exacerbating climate change.

Malaysia, Indonesia and Borneo form part of the world's 25 biodiversity hotspots. This means they form part of 'the richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on Earth.' (Source: Conservation International).

However, though these countries produce ~85% of the world's palm oil (Source: The Palm Oil Action Group) the issues are obviously not just restricted to these countries. Note that world palm oil production virtually tripled between 1995 to 2008 (Source: Oil World).

In saying that, I understand that palm oil can be (*is being*) produced sustainably and I encourage manufacturers to engage and promote “Certified Sustainable Palm Oil” practice(s), whilst implementing better labour laws for workers on plantations.

Thirdly, any industry that adversely impacts on local and/or indigenous communities must certainly be addressed. After all, it is their habitat that is being destroyed too, their very survival being severely challenged.

I believe that each principal issue in the terms of reference of the bill stands up alone but the strength for an amendment is in their collectiveness. Therefore, I want accurate labelling to be implemented immediately.

With pivotal factors pertaining to my health, our environment and wider social issues, the Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009 must be passed.

Name: David Frahm