

McManus Family
23 April 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

We support the Inquiry into Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labeling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009.

We thank the Senate Community Affairs Committee for giving us the opportunity to comment on this Bill. The Committee has the opportunity to show leadership on two vitally important things:

- 1 To give us the right to be provided with accurate and truthful information on the ingredients in foods;
- 2 Help save iconic species from extinction.

We write to you as Australians who simply want the choice. The right to choose whether the food products we buy and eat is driving species to extinction. We have the right to know if foods contain palm oil as we do with any other ingredient.

Why is this important? Because the mass production of palm oil is causing massive habitat destruction and driving species such as orangutans and tigers to extinction. The equivalent of 300 soccer fields of rainforest are destroyed every hour in South East Asia to make way for palm oil and that is destroying natural habitat.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has identified palm oil as the major driver of deforestation in Borneo and Sumatra, and the biggest threat to the survival of the Orangutan. In their words, this situation is a 'conservation emergency'

What is so horrific is that we as consumers unknowingly contribute to this destruction. Palm oil is found in around 40% of manufactured food on our supermarket shelves, but is often labeled as vegetable oil. We want the choice to buy products that do not cause such environmental damage.

Correct labeling of palm oil is critical to building a strong market for certified sustainable palm oil that doesn't compromise the last remaining rainforests of South East Asia. The mandatory labeling of palm oil would allow the creation of consumer driven demand for sustainable palm oil and open up many opportunities for manufacturers in Australia as it would allow sustainable palm oil to become more accessible and affordable.

This is not about saying palm oil is bad. It is about saying it should not be produced at the cost of pristine rainforests that are home to iconic species such as the orangutan, tiger, rhino and Asian elephant. It should certainly not be allowed to continue with the unknowing participation of the Australian consumer.

This is about consumer choice and we want it. Please, do not palm us off!

Yours Sincerely

McManus Family

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