

To whom it may concern,

My name is Emily Dunstan and I would like to contribute to the collection of submissions in favour of the bill "Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling - Palm Oil) Bill 2009". I have both a personal and professional interest in this issue and believe it is vital to have palm oil labelling as mandatory.

As a teacher within the environmental education sector, I work with thousands of students each year. Many of these students want to make a difference to the global environment and live more sustainably. Recently, I have become very aware of the devastation occurring within forest ecosystems, as a result of the demand for palm oil. The most common cause of deforestation and fragmentation in Indonesia is related to palm oil development. The United Nations has already warned that Orangutans could be extinct within a generation, if actions are not taken quickly to protect their precious habitat.

As an Australian citizen, I demand the right to choose products that do not contain palm oil. By having that choice, the Australian public can drive a market for properly certified sustainable palm oil, because they can demand it of the manufacturers. However without accurate labelling on products the Australian public is powerless to make an informed choice. Even if we wish to protect species, like Orangutans, and their habitats, we face the barrier of not knowing which products are using palm oil in the first place. As a consumer, I believe I have a right to know what it is I am purchasing and using. I have the right to choose. I am informed that palm oil is found in about 40% of the food products on our shelves, yet I am unable to identify which products. If this ingredient were dangerous to human health, the companies would be legally obliged to inform us. This ingredient is directly threatening many of the world's most biodiverse areas, yet companies are permitted to keep us in the dark.

I believe we have a duty to care for the Earth's ecosystems and inhabitants and to live more sustainable lifestyles. The children I teach do not want the extinction of animals like Orangutans on their heads. I also do not want to be responsible for the demise of an entire ecosystem. By making it mandatory for manufacturers to label palm oil in their products, perhaps those companies involved will see that many Australians are unhappy with the deforestation occurring as a result of unsustainable palm oil production. I, along with over 100,000 other Australian citizens, want the choice (www.zoo.org.au/palmoil).

I would be happy to speak at a Senate Committee hearing in Canberra in favour of the mandatory labelling of palm oil.

I remain hopeful that the Senate Committee will realise the benefits to come from mandatory labelling of palm oil and see that we, as members of the Australian public, should have the right to an informed choice. Please do not palm us off.

Kind regards,

Emily Dunstan