

Submission to Community Affairs Legislation Committee

By Dr Catherine Pye

Inquiry into Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling – Palm Oil) Bill 2009

I urge the committee to insist on mandatory labelling of palm oil in food products.

I understand there are vast areas of palm oil plantation and I am concerned that more rainforest is being cut down to put in more plantations of palm oil.

I want to have the choice to avoid palm oil and not support such an unsustainable and environmentally damaging practice.

Palm oil is high in saturated fats and as a doctor I advise people to use products with vegetable oil and that are low in fat. If palm oil is classified as a vegetable oil and is high in saturated fat then this is misleading and potentially dangerous for those with diabetes and heart disease.

I support the issues below. I am also concerned that the use of palm oil will lead to the extinction of the orang-utan and I believe we should not allow a species to become extinct.

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.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Catherine Pye