

10th February, 2011

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling - Palm Oil) Bill 2010

I am writing to you in regards to this bill because I am very passionate about animals, and have been taking an interest in the effects of palm oil on the environment for a few years now. I am a 15-year-old student and I definitely encourage this bill to be passed, as it is destroying critically endangered animals' habitats, and contributing to something so many people are trying to stop: Global warming.

Palm Oil plantations are a terrible threat not just to the environment, but to humankind. Unless one made a conscious effort not to buy any products containing palm oil, it would be almost impossible to avoid purchasing something from a supermarket that didn't have palm oil listed as an ingredient, firstly because so many foods contain it, as it is the cheapest type of oil in the world, and secondly because it is quite often hidden under the name of 'vegetable oil'. This oil is predominantly saturated fat, and increases the risk of heart disease. There are alternative oils that can be used in place of palm oil, such as canola, olive and soy oils that are a lot lower in the amount of saturated fat they contain. Statistics show that canola oil contains 7% saturated fat, whereas palm oil contains 49%. Lard is nowhere near as readily available as it used to be, yet that contains 7% less saturated fat than palm oil, so how does it make sense that we are able to hide it in so many popular foods that are bought on a regular basis? Therefore, I thoroughly support the passing of this bill, because it will make it a lot easier for people to avoid buying Palm Oil products who are already aware of the effects of palm oil, and in turn reduce the demand for Palm Oil.

Palm Oil may be the cheapest oil worldwide, but putting money before human life and the life of the planet is the most selfish and unjustifiable act I can think of. Every time a plantation is built, not only rainforest is destroyed, but significant animal life is too. Every hour, anywhere up to 300 football fields worth of rainforest is mercilessly destroyed. This is a phenomenal amount of damage. In addition there's the death toll to add onto this as well. There are many species that live inside these rainforests that are so frequently ruined, such as the Sun Bear, Sumatran Tiger, Sumatran Rhino, Clouded Leopard, Tree Kangaroo, Queen Alexandra Birdwing and, of course, the closest relative to our kind, the orangutan. These orangutans could be extinct within the next 20 years if we do not begin to take action through the passing of this bill in the very near future. In the beginnings of a palm oil plantation, the area that is to be built upon is logged and then an uncontrolled fire takes

place, which clears the land and kills numerous animals. In 1997-1998, 8,000 orangutans were massacred as a result of this kind of process. Are we to sit here and ignore the facts? Are we to ignore the problem that has been presented to us? We must do something about this destruction as soon as we can, before it is too late for this valued ape.

Global warming is a predicament that is mentioned in one way or another almost every day. In light of this, deforestation contributes to one fifth of the greenhouse emissions globally. It is accountable for more greenhouse gases than all the modes of transport in the world. This is due to the burning of rainforest, and also to other causes, such as the draining of swamps that contain large amounts of the greenhouse gas, methane, in the soil. As the soil dries, the methane is released into the atmosphere, adding to global warming. These swamps are drained to make more space for the plantations. Methane affects the climate 23 times more than carbon dioxide. Every single day, more deforestation continues and more greenhouse gases are emitted into the atmosphere. Every single day we don't do something about it is a day wasted.

For some people, the impact of this impending possible disaster (of losing so many of our beautiful animals in the wild) won't register until it happens. But for those people who do understand the future damage this could do, they need to be spreading awareness and starting to do something to try and prevent this potential tragedy. This bill could be the beginning of change in Australia, change in the way we think of our world and environment, change in how we treat it. I would be truly grateful to the government if this bill was passed.

Yours sincerely,

Stephanie Hosler