FOOD STANDARDS AMENDMENT (TRUTH IN LABELLING – PALM OIL) BILL 2010

Rachelle Baker
(...)

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To the Community Affairs Legislation Committee,

I am writing to you today regarding the proposal to amend product information standards for the accurate labelling of palm oil in food products. This is an issue of great importance, not only to myself but to a growing number of people around the world who want a change in the current, seemingly dishonest, labelling of food by the corporate world.

There are a number of areas the current production of palm oil covers which makes it an incredibly complex issue. First and foremost is the issue of health. Palm oil is high in saturated fat which, according to the National Heart Foundation, increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. That in itself should be enough to ensure accurate food labelling. The National Heart Foundation recommends that people with a family history of heart disease and stoke avoid unhealthy saturated fats in their diets. This is currently not possible as palm oil is not accurately labelled. With our health system currently under so much pressure, why put more pressure on it from people who could have looked after their health better, at the glance of an ingredient list. The current standard of labelling palm oil as vegetable oil is incredibly misleading to the consumer, who are your constituents. Consumers currently have no choice to avoid food containing palm oil. We must rely on companies to label palm oil as an ingredient. However, they are not legally required to do so, and getting a truthful response from companies whose primary concern is profit, is no easy feat.

Another area of great concern is the current production of palm oil's effect upon the environment, the destruction of rain forest and possible extinction of animal species such as the orang-utan. Under current conditions, it is likely that the orang-utan will become extinct in the wild within the next 5-10 years. This is a travesty. As a species, humans have destroyed so much of the Earth and caused the extinction of so many species. In this day and age, there is no excuse. Profit should never trump life. The entire world, from consumers to governments, seem to be under the thumb of the corporation. How on earth have we allowed it to come to this? Consumers have the power to vote with their wallets, but only if they have all the information. If companies were required by law to label palm oil truthfully, this would have a knock on effect of encouraging manufacturers to produce palm oil sustainably, thereby reducing the impact of the environment and allow species such as the orang-utan to survive.

Thank you for your time.