

**SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION

SUBMISSION NUMBER: 468

SUBMITTER

Chantal Kelly

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Written Submission - Food Standards Amendment (Truth in Labelling - Palm Oil) Bill 2010

I am writing as I am very concerned about the use of palm oil because of the serious environmental consequences associated with new palm oil plantations in Indonesia and Malaysia where primary rainforest is being cleared destroying the habitat of highly endangered species, especially orangutans.

Not only this, the peat swamps on which the forest grows is usually drained, thereby releasing methane into the atmosphere, and then burnt, releasing carbon. Indonesia is the world's third largest carbon emitter because of these fires. Papua New Guinea ecosystems and communities are also threatened by oil palm plantation development.

My understanding of the requirements of palm plantations is that palm is not reliant upon highly fertile soil, and is able to be grown easily on degraded land and therefore is more sustainably farmed on existing land clearances and other degraded sites – not primary rainforest.

I would also draw your attention to the Heart Foundation's concerns about the health consequences of palm oil which is high in saturated fat.

My biggest concern, however, is that often I do not know if I am consuming palm oil because it may be labelled only as vegetable oil. Regulatory Objectives of the Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) state that regulations must provide for

(a) the protection of public health and safety; and

(b) the provision of adequate information relating to food to enable consumers to make informed choices;

and that, in developing food regulatory measures and variations of food regulatory measures, FSANZ must also have regard to the following:

- The promotion of fair trading in food.

Currently, with regard to palm oil, I feel these objectives are not being met. I believe palm oil should be labelled as such because, in direct relation to the above points:

- It is high in saturated fat, therefore I want to know if I am consuming it, thereby protecting my own health and safety.

- I am not able to make an informed choice about consuming a product containing palm oil if it is only labelled as vegetable oil - therefore the information on the label is inadequate
- Social advocacy groups in Indonesia report that human rights abuses are being perpetrated by oil palm plantation developers, and palm oil processing mills are highly polluting, damaging ecosystems and the wellbeing of people who live in the area. The fair trading of this commodity starts with landowners; therefore, by not requiring palm oil labelling FSANZ robs consumers of the choice to avoid a substance which is not 'fair trade', and fails to meet its own objectives.

Please urgently address the issue of palm oil labelling. I would appreciate an explanation as to why FSANZ is not meeting its own objectives in the above cases.

Yours in good faith,

Chantal Kelly – concerned and misled consumer, and nature and animal lover.