

EAZA Position Paper on the Proposed Regulation on Food Information to Consumers



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The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) represents 322 members from 36 countries who together employ approximately 20,000 people. The activities of our association focus on the conservation of wildlife through breeding programmes, projects and campaigns focused on preserving species in the wild and through awareness raising among the 140 million citizens which visit our members' institutions on an annual basis.

EAZA is very concerned about the increasing use of palm oil in food & beauty products and for the production of biofuels. The majority of palm oil production takes place in Southeast Asia, where the conversion of tropical forest to monoculture oil palm plantations leads to declines in already threatened species, such as the orangutan.¹ In addition, the destruction of tropical forests also leads to increased atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases through the release of carbon from felled forests, thereby further accelerating the effects of climate change.

We consider that the proposal for an EU Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers, which is currently being discussed in Council, could contribute to raising awareness about this issue to consumers. EU citizens are currently seldom aware of the presence of palm oil in the products which they purchase. EAZA believes that the clear labelling of the presence of palm oil in food products would better inform EU citizens of the potential environmental, social and ethical impacts of their purchases.

Currently there is no mandatory requirement in the EU for manufacturers to label palm oil (manufactured from the fruit of oil palm) or palm kernel oil (manufactured from the seeds of oil palm) on food products. Palm oil is generally labelled using the generic term 'vegetable oil' and is therefore a hidden ingredient of a wide variety of food products commonly found on EU supermarket shelves.

Taking into account the disastrous effects of unsustainable palm oil production to the natural habitat of endangered species, EAZA is calling upon the Council to maintain the European Parliament's amendment to the EU Food Labelling Regulation: Amendment 263: "*Oil" together with either the adjective "animal" (or the indication of their specific animal origin) or, as appropriate, an indication of their specific vegetable origin. In cases where certain vegetable oils cannot be guaranteed not to be present, the use of "May contain..." is required*".

¹ <http://www.unep.org/grasp/docs/2007Jan-LastStand-of-Orangutan-report.pdf>

The mandatory labeling of the use of palm oil can make a key contribution to sensibilising EU citizens about the environmental and ethical impacts of the purchases they make. In addition, we feel that citizens have the right to know what is in their products, enabling them to make informed choices.

We hope that our position is of interest to you and will receive your support. We remain at your disposal for any additional information you would like to obtain or for any questions you may have.

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About EAZA:

- The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) represents 322 members from 36 countries, 300 of which maintain public collections of animals. More than 280 institutions of the total EAZA membership are located within the European Union. EAZA member institutions receive approximately 140 million visitors a year and house more than 250,000 animals, excluding fish and invertebrates. EAZA member institutions employ 20,000 staff members, 5,000 of which are seasonal;
- EAZA has a significant social role in educating European citizens about animals, their conservation, and overarching threat processes such as climate change, habitat loss and how consumer behaviour interacts with these global challenges. Zoos and aquariums have been demonstrated to host a far more representative and inclusive visitor social spectrum than either museums or science centres;
- EAZA has adopted the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (2005) which articulates the modern role of zoos and aquariums and their commitment to conservation;
- EAZA institutions in the European Union comply with Council Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos;
- For more information about our association, please visit: www.eaza.net. More information about our work on apes, as well as the threats currently faced by species such as the orang-utan can be found on our Ape Campaign website: www.apecampaign.org.