

Mr. Stavros Dimas
EU Commissioner for the Environment

Dear Mr. Dimas,

We are an international student organisation named 'Students Without Borders'. As such we are organising several events to point the public's attention towards social, environmental and health issues.

At the moment Students Without Borders, located on the Murdoch University campus in Perth, Western Australia, has joined the Palm Oil Action Group, which is concerned about the oil palm plantation development and the resulting deforestation in Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

The fires burning the rainforest down are a major contributor to global warming. Not only the flora, but also the fauna is affected. Both orang-utan species located there are within 20 years of extinction.

Papua New Guinea harbours the 3rd largest unbroken chain of rainforest in the world and inhabits 7.5% of the Earth's biodiversity. If we don't act this treasure will be lost irrevocably.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the new trend in Europe to introduce palm oil as a biofuel. It cannot be in the European Union's interest to try on the one hand to be number one in reducing the CO₂ emission but on the other hand to be responsible for the rainforests to be destroyed and species to be extinct. It has been reported that it will take up to 840 years for an oil palm plantation to soak up the carbon emitted when rainforest is burnt to plant the crop!

Another concern is that most products containing palm oil are not labelled properly so most people do not know whether the food they buy contains palm oil or not, and they are unaware of the effects palm oil has on the environment.

Therefore we urgently ask you to ensure that the European Union takes a leading role in stopping the destruction of the most precious thing we have in the fight against global warming, and to ensure that proper labelling is introduced into the European market. Everyone has the right to know what exactly they put into their trolley.

Yours Sincerely,