

The Tide is turning towards palm oil

In a report released recently by the Institute of Public Affairs in Melbourne, Australia called "Palming off livelihoods?: The misguided campaign against palm oil," the IPA analyses the current anti-palm oil campaigns conducted by the likes of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth (FOE) and The Palm Oil Action Group (POA) and finds that poverty and not palm oil is the root cause of deforestation and orang-utan population loss.

This is the first research paper of the IPA's Sustainable Development campaign conceived by the Intellectual Property and Free Trade Unit at the IPA.

Says Tim Wilson: "Misguided campaigns by the Melbourne and Auckland Zoos and activists lack understanding of why forest and orang-utans are being lost. It isn't palm oil it's poverty."

"The evidence is clear that if you want to reduce environmental degradation the best option is poverty reduction by giving people, especially in poor rural communities, a sustainable livelihood".

"Sustainable development is delivered through environmental, social and economically sustainable policy solutions, not cutting off people's livelihoods".

"Millions of people are trapped in poverty in Asia, and they're trying to improve their economic wellbeing, especially in rural communities through farming. Palm oil is grown because it is an efficient, high-yield, in-demand agriculture commodity that poor farmers can grow to lift themselves out of poverty".

"Palm oil is in high demand around the world, including in other poor countries. Reduced consumption in developed countries will only lead to increased availability and consumption in the developing world, but poor farmers will simply get a smaller return".

"If palm oil is blocked other lower yield seeds will simply be substituted, and they'll take up more land to produce less".

"If developed world activists want to attack the cause of deforestation and the loss of orang-utan populations they should attack poverty, not its solution - sustainable development", Wilson said.

"Opposition to palm oil seems to have reached fever pitch in Australia. Celebrity television campaigns, guerilla activists and the predictable environmental lobby seem hell bent on getting palm oil out of our food and off our supermarket shelves. Why?" he asked.

"Palm oil has become one of the world's most popular edible oils in the last 25 years, and its affordability has made it a popular additive in cosmetics and other non-food and fuel products requiring oils and binders."

"Palm oil is primarily a product amenable to development in the humid tropics. Since most countries with a humid, tropical climate are still developing, its production is one of the essential industries to boost GDP and the economic lot of the poor," Wilson pointed out.

Wilson observes: "Critics have gone so far as to demand that its use be boycotted or banned, with limitations placed upon its advertising and marketing. They have taken a particularly aggressive stance against suggestions that its development or use can be sustainable."

"From a broader perspective, this antagonistic approach only risks creating further tension in international trade as countries try and seek conclusions in the WTO to increase access for developing world products into developed markets, like Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the European Union," he wrote.

"And it is a South-South traded product as well. Much of the developing world - India and China in particular - is a major consumer of palm oil. And since palm oil is a cheap and reliable food source, these growing economies are not about to do without them. Oil consumption in the developing world is double that of the developed world and it is increasing at a rate about a third faster, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization. Any ban on palm oil won't stop overall consumption, but will likely increase sales to developing countries who'll take advantage of any price reductions because it is in less demand in rich countries," he argued.

"Policy makers and consumers need to sort through the myths on palm oil, and recognize that a proper analysis of the concerns of activists would reveal that the problems of deforestation are not caused by palm oil, they are caused by poverty. Scrapping palm oil won't stop the poor wanting to lift themselves up. They'll just grow a different commodity instead. The best thing consumers can do is promote consumption of sustainable palm oil, not

banning it all together," proposed Wilson.

In the view of Deforestation Watch, this paper by the IPA coming on the heels of World Growth International's pronouncement that the anti-palm oil campaigns are misguided should be lauded for its clarity of thought and totally objective analysis of the issues. This is a welcome change from the often emotive, antagonistic and inflammatory hype so favored by the likes of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth!

Is the tide finally turning towards palm oil? THE END.

About the Author

[Deforestation Watch](#) was established to drive sustainability mainstream. Striving to be a center of green news, solutions and all things green, we also help corporations looking for green guidance. In a nutshell, we live green through education and pro-active action!

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