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Food Safety and Quality Control in the Palm Oil Supply Chain: Lead to Meet Consumer Expectations*

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With 80 per cent palm oil supply going into the food chain, the issue of food safety and quality control in the supply chain has become a highly debated topic among consumer groups. Codes of Practice has been established and premises can be certified to meet the requirements of food safety, quality, sustainability and complying with other food safety standards. We are living in an era of digital technology and information is shared with lightning speed. Consumers are well informed about what is food safety, the food safety laws, rights and ethics. Palm oil is practically present as an ingredient in almost every food item we and our families consume. As producers we have a moral and ethical responsibility to ensure every step in the supply chain is managed well with proper quality control, avoid contaminants and it is safe for human consumption. The palm oil industry and its leadership should take a hard look at the way our Malaysian palm oil industry and its supply chain has evolved and get ready to meet the expectations of our consumers sustainably in the future.

Keywords: Supply chain, chlorine, 3-MCPD esters, glycidyl esters, MOSH and MOAH.

With about 80 per cent of palm oil going into the food chain, producers must continuously pay attention to food safety and improve the quality of palm oil processing in the supply chain. Malaysia being the second largest exporter of oils and fats globally, it is important for Malaysian producers to constantly evaluate their supply chain to ensure every step is managed well until our palm oil ends up with the consumer. This is a collective effort from upstream to downstream, transporters and the regulators have a role to play in ensuring palm oil-based products are produced to the highest quality standards and safe for human consumption.

A recent report by consumer food watchdog in Hong Kong reported that cancer causing substances were found in 60 different

type of biscuits (South China Morning Post, 18 Oct. 2021). Three substances, 3-MCPD (3-Monochloropropanediol) esters, acrylamide and glycidyl esters (GE) were found in these biscuits. Although it is uncertain if substances like acrylamide could come from palm oil but the fact that 3-MCPD esters and GE were detected, it is a concern for all palm oil producers.

Recent demands by several multinational corporations (MNCs) for palm oil producers to have our palm oil produced to be free from mineral oil contamination is another concern. Two main substances, mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons (MOSH) and mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons (MOAH) has found its way into edible oils which was first detected in sunflower oil in Ukraine (Biedermann & Grob,