

An EU legal framework to halt and reverse EU-driven global deforestation

EU consumption plays a significant part in global deforestation, which continues unabated and contributes considerably to climate change and biodiversity loss. During the October II session, Parliament is due to vote on a legislative-initiative report calling on the Commission to take regulatory action on this matter, and propose an EU legal framework based on mandatory due diligence for companies placing products on the EU market.

Background

Over the past three decades, the world has lost [1.78 million km²](#) of forest, roughly the size of Libya. Deforestation continues, mainly driven by [agricultural expansion](#) for the production of a number of key commodities. Soy, beef and palm oil are responsible for about [80 %](#) of tropical deforestation worldwide. The EU is responsible for [7-10 %](#) of global consumption of crops and livestock products that are associated with deforestation in their countries of origin. It is also among the major importers of commodities linked to deforestation, including palm oil (17 % of global demand), soy (15 %), rubber (25%), beef (41 %), maize (30 %), cocoa (80 %) and coffee (60 %). Emissions from agriculture, land use and land-use change, mostly due to deforestation, are the [second biggest](#) cause of climate change after fossil fuel burning. [Research](#) shows that deforestation emissions represent a sixth of the carbon footprint of the average EU diet.

The EU committed to protecting the world's forests under several international agreements and initiatives, including United Nations (UN) [Sustainable Development Goal 15](#), the [New York Declaration on Forests](#), the UN Convention on Biological Diversity ([Aichi biodiversity](#) targets 5 and 7) and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change. A number of EU policy instruments address, directly and indirectly, deforestation and forest degradation. EU regulatory measures, however, are limited to illegal logging ([EU Timber Regulation](#), part of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade - FLEGT - Action Plan), as well as biofuels and bioenergy sources (Renewable Energy Directive, revised in [2018](#)). Under the [European Green Deal](#), the European Commission has pledged to present, in 2021, a legislative proposal and other measures to avoid or minimise the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market.

European Parliament's legislative initiative

On 1 October 2020, in line with Parliament's resolutions on the [European Green Deal](#), [COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and the [EU's role in protecting the world's forests](#), Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted for the first time a [legislative-initiative report](#) with recommendations to the Commission ([Rule 47](#) of the Rules of Procedure) on this subject, accompanied by an EPRS [European Added Value Assessment](#). The report calls on the Commission to propose an EU legal framework based on mandatory requirements for due diligence, reporting, disclosure and third-party involvement for companies placing forest and ecosystem-risk commodities and derived products on the EU market. Penalties should be imposed in case of non-compliance with these duties, and access to justice and remedy be ensured for victims of such breaches. The future framework should guarantee not only the legality, but also the sustainability of the harvesting, production, extraction and processing of the commodities in the country of origin, and include the protection of human rights, in particular land tenure, land and labour rights, with a special view to the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. It should also cover high-carbon stock and biodiversity-rich ecosystems other than forests. The report calls for binding definitions of what constitutes deforestation and forest degradation.

Legislative-initiative report: [2020/2006\(INL\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Delara Burkhardt (S&D, Germany); Associated Committee: INTA; Rapporteur: Karin Karlsbro (Renew Europe, Sweden).

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