

**Question for written answer E-003756/2023  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Mathilde Androuët (ID)**

**Subject:** What steps will the Commission take to tackle greenwashing linked to the use of palm oil substitutes?

In 2022, Parliament and the Member States reached a deal on a new law on deforestation<sup>1</sup>. EU imports are responsible for 10 % of global deforestation. The Commission also proposed a regulation to reduce the damage to forests for which the EU is responsible<sup>2</sup>, but also common criteria to tackle greenwashing and misleading environmental claims<sup>3</sup>. In this context, particular attention has been paid to imported products containing palm oil. It is considered to be one of the main causes of deforestation, although this is now contradicted by some environmental studies<sup>4</sup>. Many brands<sup>5</sup> make a point of saying that they do not use palm oil in their products in order to substantiate their 'environmental responsibility'. However, it is replaced by other oils<sup>6</sup> that are higher in saturated fat and come from crops that are less sustainable and thus need more land, leading to even more deforestation<sup>7</sup>. This practice is therefore similar to greenwashing and deliberately misleads consumers<sup>8</sup>.

What measures does the Commission suggest to tackle this type of greenwashing and raise awareness of this practice?

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<sup>1</sup> 'Deal on new law to ensure products causing deforestation are not sold in the EU', European Parliament website, 6 December 2022.

<sup>2</sup> 'Proposal for a regulation on deforestation-free products', European Commission website, 17 November 2021.

<sup>3</sup> 'Consumer protection: enabling sustainable choices and putting an end to greenwashing', European Commission website, Permanent Representation in France, 22 March 2023.

<sup>4</sup> 'Reforestation through oil palm in Indonesia: a study confirms', For Free Choice Institute website, 5 October 2020.

<sup>5</sup> 'Palm Oil Free List', Ethical Consumer website, 6 December 2023.

<sup>6</sup> '8 things to know about palm oil', WWF website, <https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/8-things-know-about-palm-oil>.

<sup>7</sup> 'The Chain: deforestation driven by oil palm falls to a four-year low', Chain Reaction Research website, 7 March 2022.

<sup>8</sup> 'The big free-from deception: palm oil-free foods higher in saturates and less sustainable, finds study', Food Navigator Europe website, 3 July 2019.