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European Commission study shows path to end agricultural deforestation – now it must act

Brussels – 19 March 2018: A [study](#) published on March 16 by the European Commission offers a long-awaited blueprint for ending the European Union’s central role in agricultural deforestation – clearing forests for soy, palm oil, cocoa and other agricultural products.

“European consumers don’t want to be complicit in the illegal deforestation of the world’s last remaining forests. The EU currently ensures that the fish we eat and the timber we buy is legal, so why not the ingredients that are integral to our daily consumption habits?” said Nicole Polsterer, Fern’s consumption campaigner.

The study, which outlines options to end deforestation, has been in process since 2015. The European Commission requested it to find ways to meet the EU’s commitment to halt deforestation by 2020.

“At the same time as conducting this important study, the Commission is doing everything it can to finalise a trade deal with Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) which could have a devastating impact on forests. This begs the question of where its priorities lie. Will it uphold its 2020 deforestation commitments, as the study proposes, or undermine them with a new trade deal?” Polsterer asked.

The document offers three possible options:

- Publish a new EU Communication on deforestation without requiring any new measures
- Introduce new, non-legislative actions as part of an Action Plan
- Place mandatory due diligence on companies importing and consuming forest risk commodities

“These options are also not mutually exclusive. A Communication could set out the actions needed to improve sourcing of commodities, and this could be accompanied by an Action Plan requiring companies to meet mandatory due diligence requirements. This would send a strong signal to the market that commodities tainted with deforestation and human rights abuses are unacceptable,” Polsterer said.

Member States are already taking actions to reduce deforestation that they cause. In 2017, France adopted a ground-breaking Vigilance Law “[Loi de Devoir de Vigilance](#)” requiring French companies to establish a risk assessment, report and act on environmental and social damage within their supply chains, including subcontractors and suppliers all over the world. In addition, EU Member States

such as Germany, the Netherlands, and France are members of the [Amsterdam Declaration group](#), which has called on the EU to adopt an Action Plan on Deforestation and Forest Degradation.

“EU policy makers must look towards France and adopt similar measures for the whole of the EU. We call on the most ambitious Member States to continue to push the Commission to act. This is crucial if the EU is to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and comply with the Paris Agreement goal to keep global warming below 2 degrees,” Polsterer said.

ENDS

To read more about how the EU tackles other commodities read our discussion paper - [What can be learned from EU regulation of other sectors?](#)

To read more about what NGOs are asking for read Fern’s [Recommendations for an EU Action Plan to Protect Forests and Respect Rights](#)