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Press release | 19.04.2023

European Parliament approves regulation protecting forests

Deforestation

Today, Members of the European Parliament have approved the Deforestation regulation reducing the risks of deforestation and forest degradation. It requires companies to ensure that their products sold in the EU are deforestation-free. The new rules are necessary to tackle deforestation worldwide. It is a major step forward in the fight against environmental destruction caused by EU consumption. The approved text improves the initial Commission proposal by widening the scope to additional products and commodities, including rubber, charcoal and printed paper products, something the Greens/EFA group was instrumental in pushing for. It also sets deadlines for further improvements over the coming few years.

Heidi Hautala MEP, Shadow rapporteur for the Deforestation Regulation in the International Trade Committee and Member of the Human Rights Committee, comments:

"This regulation marks a major step forward in the fight against global deforestation. It is essential given that the EU is one of the main importers of agricultural commodities resulting from deforestation. However, several elements from the Parliament's position are not reflected in the final outcome, such as the enlargement of the scope to other ecosystems and financial institutions. We also wanted more ambitious provisions on human rights. We look forward to upcoming reviews in which the Commission will deal with some of these points.

"As well as tackling deforestation, the regulation must be a tool to achieve positive change on the ground, in particular for indigenous peoples and local communities. The European Parliament managed to strengthen the requirement on the Commission to develop a framework of partnerships with producer countries to address the root causes of deforestation. This is fundamental in avoiding that the requirements for products such as coffee and cocoa have a detrimental impact on smallholders."

More:
Forests worldwide are threatened by deforestation and the consequences of climate change. They are our lungs and life-support system, sustaining most terrestrial biodiversity and acting as major carbon sinks. Forests also play a crucial role in providing clean air, regulating the water cycle and preventing soil erosion.

Around 80% of deforestation is currently driven by the expansion of agricultural land. The EU is one of the main importers of the resulting agricultural commodities, the second biggest importer globally after

China, and a recent study found that the European Union is responsible for 16% of deforestation associated with international trade.

Deforestation also often leads to human rights violations against local and indigenous populations and contributes to massive biodiversity loss. About 10% of the world's forests, an area larger than the European Union, have been lost through deforestation between 1990 and 2020.

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