



EU Forest

MANIFESTO

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Photos

Front and back page: Thailand.

Page 4: Cameroon. Photo Indra van Gisbergen

Page 11: Laos. Photo Anthony Guegen

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a world without forests.

They are the basis of life itself. They create soil, maintain the water cycle and are a vast source of nutrients. They make the weather and protect us from hurricanes, droughts and floods. They build and cool the atmosphere, and feed, cure and shelter more creatures than we can count.

They are a home to 300 million people and provide livelihoods for one fifth of humanity. Spending even a short time in a forest can improve people's moods, cardiovascular health and reduce blood pressure and stress. They inspire our children, offering the starting point of many of our most cherished fairy tales, folklores and myths.

Healthy forests can also boost economies, providing timber and everything from fruits and nuts to vegetables, fish, medicine and game.

Yet the threats against them are multiplying – 2017 was the second highest year for tropical tree loss on record. Forests are also being degraded – overharvested for short-term gains like paper and power generation. They are also being destroyed so that the EU can import palm oil, soy, cocoa and other commodities. Between 1990 and 2008, the EU consumed 36 per cent of all exported crops and livestock that were produced on deforested land.

It therefore has the power and responsibility to make a real difference.

The outgoing European Parliament and Commission has begun to turn the tide on single-use plastics and worked hard to maintain the political momentum to protect and restore forests. We are counting on the next European Parliament to build on this momentum and put policies in place that will finally protect and restore our forests for generations to come.

Fern calls on political groups, candidates for the European elections and EU leaders to support forests and forest peoples in their manifestos.

This briefing outlines the areas to focus on.



CLIMATE AND ENERGY

To limit warming to 1.5 Celsius, we will need to make steep and swift emissions reductions AND remove carbon dioxide (CO₂) already in the atmosphere.

This is a job forests have been doing for more than 300 million years – and they are ready to do more! Extensive ecosystem restoration could remove roughly 330 Gigatonnes (GT) CO₂ before the end of the century.¹ This is a figure so huge it is hard to conceive but it's roughly equivalent to the amount of carbon released by 550,000,000,000 cars in a year.

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But we can't just restore forests, we also need to reduce demand for timber and timber products.

Burning wood to generate electricity can be up to 50 per cent more carbon-intensive than coal-fired generation. Despite this, burning wood for electricity continues to be subsidised across the EU.

Recommendations

- **Set a target in the 2050 Decarbonisation Strategy to restore EU forests so they benefit the climate, biodiversity and communities.**
- **Ensure forest management respects EU biodiversity legislation, including the Birds and Habitats Directive**
- **End subsidies for bioenergy and use them instead to incentivise energy efficiency, solar and wind.**

1 <https://www.sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Climate/SEI-WP-2016-08-Negative-emissions.pdf>

SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Banks drive deforestation through loans to agribusiness companies. A Fern investigation found that 23 companies alleged to be involved in land grabbing had received nearly US\$ 50 billion in loans. EU-based banks such as HSBC, BNP Paribas (France), Standard Chartered (UK), Rabobank (Netherlands) and Crédit Agricole (France) provided nearly two fifths of the loans.

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To stop deforestation and respect human rights, financial regulators need to adopt strong regulations, and impose social, environmental and governance standards on financial institutions' clients.

Greater scrutiny of public development banks is also needed – mainly Development Finance Institutions (DFIs). Fern found an alarming lack of accountability about where DFI money is going. Where evidence was available, DFIs had financed projects with serious environmental and human rights impacts.

Recommendations

- **Impose social, environmental and governance standards on banks.**
- **Ensure that all DFIs avoid deforestation and respect community customary land rights.**

TRADE

The EU has made strong commitments to mitigate climate change, stop deforestation and respect human rights. Despite this, the EU is currently negotiating trade agreements with Mercosur countries (especially Brazil and Paraguay), Indonesia and Malaysia that do not contain sufficient provisions or enforcement mechanisms to protect forests and forest peoples' rights.

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Recommendations

- Ensure trade agreements are developed with the genuine participation of those affected, providing sufficient space for them to raise their concerns.
- Ensure trade negotiations start with a human rights impact assessment and are in full compliance (going beyond written or verbal support) with the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Voluntary Guidelines for responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT).
- Ensure trade or investment treaty commitments to environmental sustainability and human rights are subject to rigorous and enforceable compliance mechanisms.

ILLEGAL LOGGING

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As one of the largest consumers of timber, the EU took the lead in global efforts to address illegal logging and its associated trade by launching the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan in 2003. The Action Plan includes a set of complementary measures to tackle illegal logging and related trade and improve forest governance in producer countries. Since then, illegal tropical timber imports in the EU have reduced by 60 per cent.

In addition to addressing illegal logging, FLEGT has helped improve governance in some of the world's most difficult environments, giving local civil society organisations the space to raise their concerns – in some countries for the first time.² FLEGT has also brought greater scrutiny and transparency to the forest sector, improved government accountability, and enabled the effective engagement of a range of stakeholders.

Recommendations

- **Strengthen the FLEGT Action Plan, including by maintaining support to civil society to be part of Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs). This will ensure just and robust governance reforms that clarify land tenure rights and increase community-based forest management.**

FOOD AND FARMING

Soy ranks as the second largest agricultural driver of deforestation after cattle production. The EU imports 35 million tonnes of soy beans for animal feed annually, mainly from Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, where illegal deforestation due to conversion of forests to agriculture continues.³ These imports are driven by low to zero import tariffs on soy products and measures supporting animal production in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

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Recommendations

- **Turn the CAP into a Food and Farm Policy which makes agricultural support conditional on farmers using legally and ecologically sourced feedstocks, reducing nitrogen surplus, increasing animal health and welfare and using resources efficiently.**
- **Promote locally-sourced, vegetable-based diets and move away from our dietary dependence on meat.**

CONSUMPTION responsible supply chains

Between 1990 and 2008, the EU consumed 36 per cent of traded crops and livestock that were associated with deforestation,⁴ much of it illegal. In 2012 alone, the EU imported €6 billion of soybeans, palm oil, beef and leather which were grown or reared on land illegally cleared of tropical forests – illegally deforesting the equivalent of one football pitch every two minutes.⁵

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While many companies have made commitments to stop deforesting and respect human rights, a systematic analysis of 250 companies, 150 financial institutions and 50 national and subnational jurisdictions revealed that most companies will not meet the EU's 2020 deforestation target. Some of these companies agree with recent independent studies⁶ that they cannot achieve this goal on their own.

Recommendations

- **Propose an EU Action Plan to Protect Forests and Respect Rights which prohibits the import of agricultural commodities cultivated on forest land that was illegally converted to agriculture.⁷ Such legislation should be based on international human rights law, and respect customary rights as set out in the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure.⁸**

4 <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/pdf/1.%20Report%20analysis%20of%20impact.pdf>

5 <http://www.fern.org/stolengoods>

6 Most recently the latest report Forest 500 at <http://forest500.org/>

7 For more detail see pg 15=32 of Fern's report Catching it All (2015): <https://fern.org/catchingitall>

8 http://www.fern.org/sites/fern.org/files/Developing%20EU%20measures_0.pdf



Our future depends on forests and
their fate lies in your hands!



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