

THE EU'S ROLE IN COMBATING IMPORTED DEFORESTATION

In recent months, a raft of major forest fires (in the Amazon, Africa, California, Australia) have reminded the world, its leaders and its governments of the fragility of forests and the urgent need to preserve them better. As the world's second largest carbon sink after the oceans, forest biomes play a major role in regulating the climate, maintaining biodiversity and ensuring

water and soil quality. They are an essential resource for many people. At a time when the Covid-19 crisis is raging and questions are surfacing about the link between environmental degradation and the emergence of new diseases, the ESEC is examining how the European Union (EU) and its Member States can step up the fight against "imported" deforestation,

which is endemic to world trade. After analysing the origins and consequences of the phenomenon, the opinion identifies the existing mechanisms, points out their limitations and formulates various recommendations to avoid, reduce and ultimately compensate for imported deforestation.

THE ESEC'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The ESEC believes that any policy to combat imported deforestation must take into account the development needs of producer countries, particularly in the South. It therefore strives to recognise the needs of local populations in its recommendations in order to respond fairly and sustainably to the challenge of imported deforestation.

POINT 1: IMPROVING THE COHERENCE OF EUROPEAN POLICIES THAT HELP COMBAT IMPORTED DEFORESTATION

- In 2020, adopt an EU Action Plan to combat imported deforestation under the responsibility of the European Council, with monitoring and coordination entrusted to the Vice-President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal, under the supervision and oversight of the European Parliament; increase the proportion of the EU budget dedicated to climate action over 2021-2027 based on a timetable and quantified targets, including one dedicated to the fight against deforestation in Europe and worldwide;
- Better inform and educate European consumers about deforestation issues by improving environmental product labelling and establishing an EU deforestation monitoring centre and an early warning mechanism;
- Increase the proportion of the Horizon Europe programme dedicated to research into alternatives to imported deforestation, enabling a transition to more sustainable land use practices and supply chains.

POINT 2: ACCELERATING THE REFORM OF ECONOMIC SECTORS THAT STRONGLY CONTRIBUTE TO DEFORESTATION

- As part of the ongoing review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), establish an EU Protein Plan in 2022, with the goal of reducing soya imports to achieve agricultural sovereignty for the EU, in particular by strongly supporting legume crops, disbursing "payments for environmental services" to farmers for grassland areas or forage legumes, and making aid for investments in animal feed chains conditional on the non-use of imported soya;
- Organise the gradual phase-out of conventional agrofuels and their total elimination by 2030 at the latest as part of a review of the EU RED II directive, by putting an end to the existing tax exemption mechanisms for these first generation fuels by 2022 at the latest, eliminating CAP subsidies for the areas used to produce them, and reallocating these resources to research on advanced biofuels;
- Identify, assess and reform subsidies that are detrimental to biodiversity at the national and international level;

- Promote a rapid reform of the WTO in order to render enforceable the sustainable development criteria included in the EU's international trade agreements, and strengthen these criteria by ensuring that stakeholders comply with the highest standards of international law governing human rights, decent work, environmental protection and the fight against global warming;
- Improve the quality and credibility of "zero imported deforestation" labels by encouraging the harmonisation of tools and the extension of existing certifications, employing land-use mapping with remote sensing, assisting producers in their implementation, and strengthening controls throughout the supply chain.

POINT 3: STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR THIRD-COUNTRY PRODUCERS AND LOCAL ACTORS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DEFORESTATION

- Have the EU and its Member States put forward a proposal for a Global Forest Pact in multilateral forums and bilateral dialogues involving all stakeholders;
- Reform the EU Emissions Trading System and introduce an EU carbon border adjustment mechanism for forest-risk sectors;
- Strengthen EU cooperation toward create a global network of protected areas targeting intact primary forests by encouraging the continuation and development of protective legislation in partner countries and strengthening the appropriate financial instruments;
- Support the implementation of sustainable forest management, agroforestry and agro-ecology policies in partner countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, by helping local producers develop sustainable paths, and enabling countries to directly process the raw materials they produce in order to derive added value from them;
- In conjunction with local populations, support afforestation and the reforestation of deforested areas, particularly in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and emerging countries.



Jean-Luc Bennahmias

is a former Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014) and a member of the Human Rights League.

He is a qualified member of the ESEC's European and International Affairs Section.

Contact:

jean-luc.bennahmias@lecese.fr
01 44 43 64 28



Jacques Pasquier

is a farmer in the Vienne department of France. He is a member of the ESEC's European and International Affairs Section and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Section, where he represents the Confédération Paysanne.

Contact:

jacques.pasquier@lecese.fr
01 44 43 64 28