



Protecting and restoring the world's forests: stepping up EU action to halt deforestation and forest degradation

Forests are indispensable...

Forests cover **30%** of the Earth's land area and host **80%** of its biodiversity. They provide subsistence and income to about **25%** of the world's population.

Forests provide important ecosystem services to society, such as clean air, water flow regulation, carbon sequestration, soil protection from water and wind erosion, habitats for animals and plants, restoration of degraded land, and resilience to disasters and to climate change. Through these functions, they can mitigate the risk of regional conflicts, reduce migration flows, and increase the output of agricultural activities and the well-being of local communities.

90% of respondents to the open public consultation consider the protection of forests to be indispensable for future generations.

...but seriously under threat

The world's forests are in serious danger through deforestation and forest degradation with a forest area of 1.3 million square kilometres lost between 1990 and 2016; this is the equivalent of approximately 800 football fields of forest lost every hour.

Approximately **80%** of global deforestation is caused by the expansion of land used for agriculture. Urban expansion, infrastructure development and mining are also factors driving deforestation.

... with serious consequences for people and the planet

Emissions from land-use and land-use change, mostly due to deforestation, are the second biggest cause of climate change after burning fossil fuels. They account for nearly **12%** of all greenhouse gas emissions, and action in this area is important to fight climate change.

While most commodities associated with deforestation and forest degradation are consumed at local or regional level, the EU is an importer of products such as palm oil, meat, soy, cocoa, maize, timber, rubber, including in the form of processed products or services. When looking at deforestation embodied in total final consumption, the EU consumption represents around **10%** of the global share.

Stepping up EU action to protect and restore the world's forests

The threats to the world's forests are one of the biggest sustainability challenges of our time. In order to ensure human health and well-being and put our societies on a sustainable development path, we must step up our action and work with partners from all around the globe to protect and regenerate the world's forests.

We need to protect existing forests, especially the world's primary forests, to manage forests sustainably and to restore forests in a sustainable and responsible way. Primary forests act as valuable carbon sinks, and are characterised by their great age, unique ecological features and the established protection they provide to biodiversity; they must be protected and cannot be easily replaced. Newly planted forests can also help to mitigate climate change, alleviate pressure on primary forests, and create economic opportunities for people and communities. Forests have the potential to create 13 million jobs worldwide by 2030.

Five priorities and key actions:

Reduce the EU consumption footprint on land

- Create a new Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Deforestation and Forest Degradation to provide a forum of exchange with and among stakeholders;
- Assess standards and certification schemes that promote “ deforestation-free” products;
- Assess additional regulatory and non-regulatory measures to minimise EU consumption linked to deforestation

Work in partnership with producing countries

- Develop national frameworks on sustainable forest management;
- Implement sustainable forest-based value chains and promote sustainable bio-economy;
- Develop incentive mechanisms for small hold farmers to maintain and enhance ecosystems.
- Sustainably increase world forest cover

Strengthen international cooperation

- Promote trade agreements that include forest conservation provisions
- Encourage trade in agricultural and forest-based products not causing deforestation or forest degradation;
- Increase efforts in key international fora

Redirect finance to support more sustainable land-use practices

- Assess mechanisms to boost sustainable finance for forests
- Increase funding to producer countries for conservation and sustainable restoration;
- Explore better company reporting on impacts of activities on deforestation and forest degradation.

Support better availability and quality of information on forests and supply chains

- Establish an EU Observatory on Deforestation and Forest Degradation to monitor changes in the world's forest cover and give public bodies, consumers and businesses better access to data about supply chains
- Explore strengthened use of the Copernicus satellite system for forest monitoring.