

## **Comment: Communication on stepping up EU action against deforestation and forest degradation**

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As a scientist and current resident of the European Union, I welcome the European Commission's renewed focus on deforestation and forest degradation driven by, among other factors, agricultural expansion and the international trade of commodities. Europe has often been at the forefront of global efforts towards climate action and sustainability, and I implore the Commission to take even further strong steps against deforestation and forest degradation across the world.

The roadmap detailing proposed EU actions against deforestation and forest degradation is a positive step in this direction, but needs further strengthening in thought, words and action to truly address the complex issues around forest loss driven by agricultural expansion, biomass trade and other allied factors.

In this background, I urge the Commission to take further steps in the following directions:

- Pursue sub-national collaborations at different jurisdictional levels (regional, state, municipality) to strengthen regulatory mechanisms existing at those levels, incentivizing the development of sustainable production systems and monitoring the flow of commodities across jurisdictional borders, which would ultimately flow to the EU for consumption.
- Initiate fiscal transfers (internally within the EU) and development funding (flowing to non-EU countries) to major exporters of Forest Risk Commodities (FRCs) which are contingent on the successful execution of agreed-upon targets of halting deforestation and forest degradation.
- Encourage citizen science tools to spur responsible environmental decision-making, thus empowering citizens with the knowledge and information to evaluate their consumption of FRCs.
  - o Enabling citizens with earth observation and information delivery systems has the potential to lead to the development of a renewed environmental consciousness with multiple positive feedbacks.
  - o Operationalizing campaigns like 'Know Your Beef' or 'Know Your Coffee' can have significant impacts on increasing citizens' knowledge and participation on the geography and socio-economics of production, and the costs (environmental costs, land use costs) involved in bringing these commodities from farm to plate.

I hope the European Commission will give serious thought to these proposals, and include them in the current Roadmap as well as future Action Plans, policies and regulations. These actions have the potential to contribute substantially towards promoting sustainable production and consumption practices.