European Parliament

Sustainable forestry: Parliament's work to fight deforestation

▶ **Video**
https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/europe-needs-healthy-forests-to-fight-climate-change_N01-AFPS-201012-FORE_ev

Protecting and sustainably managing forests is critical to fighting the climate crisis. Find out what measures the European Parliament is calling for.

Parliament has long been pushing for the promotion of sustainable forest management within the EU and the protection of forests abroad.

In September 2022, Parliament set out its position on the European Commission's proposal to curb forest degradation by removing products which contribute to deforestation from EU supply chains. MEPs want more ambitious legislation that also helps indigenous people and smallholders in other countries to come into line with the new EU standards.

Parliament also responded to the new EU forest strategy for 2030, presented by the Commission in July 2021, which links the sustainable management of forests and reducing deforestation with achieving the objectives of the EU's Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy aims to increase the quantity and quality of EU forests and promote their role as carbon sinks.

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Parliament's report underlines the diversity of the EU's forests and the need to achieve sustainable management in close cooperation with forest owners. Apart from helping to mitigate climate change, forests also have an economic and social function, so their various roles need to be harmonised.

Why are forests important?

Forests have significant social, economic and environmental value. They account for 43% of the EU's land area and contain 80% of its terrestrial biodiversity. Healthy forests are crucial for fighting climate change as they capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. EU forests absorb the equivalent of 8.9% of total EU greenhouse gas emissions each year, and as carbon sinks, they are crucial to achieving the EU's goals of carbon neutrality. Therefore, it is vital to protect them and the communities that rely on them.

What are the causes of deforestation?

Deforestation is occurring at an alarming rate across the world, leading to the release of greenhouse gases and loss of biodiversity. It is estimated that over half of the tropical forests worldwide have been destroyed since the 1960s.

There is a clear link between reducing forest cover and the international demand for commodities whose extraction or production contributes to global deforestation and degradation. The EU is a substantial importer of these commodities, and therefore has the capacity to address deforestation through its trade policy.

Illegal logging exacerbates the problem and despite EU measures such as the Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade, this is still a major cause of deforestation in the EU and around the world.

Climate change and loss of biodiversity bring about more intense droughts, floods and fires that also contribute to deforestation, further exacerbating climate change. The scale of the 2019 Amazon forest fires highlighted the need for an international response.

Find out more about the causes of deforestation

What are the solutions to deforestation?

Sustainable forest management balances the economic and social impacts of forestry with the need to improve forest health and increase adaptability to changing climate conditions. Forests represent a promising green economic sector, with the potential to create an additional 10 to 16 million sustainable forest jobs worldwide.

Using satellites for better early warning detection of natural disasters such as drought and wildfires can help mitigate risks and improve the protection of forests.

How can the EU support sustainable forestry and protect forests?

In the EU, over 60% of productive forests are already certified as sustainably managed. The forestry industry supports 500,000 people directly and 2.6 million indirectly.

The Parliament recognises that sustainable forest management can help mitigate climate change while supporting a crucial economic sector, and MEPs are calling for more funding from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for sustainable forestry.

MEPs call for strengthening the overall climate benefits from forests and the forest-based value chain, namely CO_2 absorption and carbon storage in wood-based products. Parliament also emphasises the need to increase funding for research into the substitution of fossil fuels and fossil-fuel materials. Forests and the entire forest-based value chain are fundamental to further develop of the circular bio-economy, which delivers important climate change mitigation and adaptation services.

Parliament wants better measures against illegal logging and more checks at EU borders to prevent access to unsustainably produced wood and other products that contribute to forest loss. Members also want to ensure that the impact of trade agreements on the state of forests and biodiversity is systematically evaluated.

MEPs have called for sustainable forestry to be promoted globally and for EU satellites (Copernicus and Galileo) to be used to help monitor deforestation and forest fires outside the EU. They also call for proper funding for research and innovation to make forests more climate-resistant.

Parliament wants binding targets to protect and restore forest ecosystems, especially primary forests (those that have not been been affected by people's actions in recent times).

This article was originally published in 2020. It has been updated to reflect the latest developments in the EU's fight again deforestation.

Press releases
Legislation with binding measures needed to stop EU-driven global deforestation (22 October 2020)
High-quality management of EU forests and woodlands (8 October 2010)
Binding legislation needed to stop EU-driven global deforestation, say MEPs (1 October 2020)
Green Deal: measures to step up the fight against global deforestation (16 September 2020)

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More on forestry and the fight against deforestation

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