

Article – Sustainable forestry: Parliament’s work to fight deforestation



Parliament has voted on a number of reports calling on the European Commission to do more to [promote sustainable forest management within the EU](#) and to [protect forests abroad](#) by removing products which contribute to [deforestation from EU supply chains](#). This comes ahead of the presentation of the Commission’s forest strategy due in early 2021.

Parliament’s reports highlight the link between 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](#).

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.

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.

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 subject to major human impacts in recent times).