

Press release

EU Parliament ENVI Committee vote shows deforestation is taken seriously, but some new rules would be hard to implement

Brussels, July 12th, 2022

The European Parliament's ENVI Committee vote today is a good sign that the EU is taking the threat represented by deforestation and illegal logging seriously. But some definitions in the proposed text go against international agreements and the experience of the European paper industry in fighting deforestation.

Sustainable forest management is an essential principle of how the European pulp and paper industry sources its 'virgin' raw materials. Not using more than nature can offer ensures that forests can continue to fulfil, all at the same time, environmental, social, and also economic functions. Worrying trends in global deforestation, generally driven by commodities other than wood, negatively impacts the image of forest products, including paper. This is why the pulp and paper industry fully supports proportionate and effective measures against deforestation worldwide.

Since even before the adoption of the EU Timber Regulation in 2010, the European paper industry has decades of experience in applying due diligence for the sourcing of wood, in compliance with both international and EU legislation against illegal logging. But the definition of deforestation proposed by the ENVI Committee is not aligned with FAO guidelines on which this experience is based, an alignment previously recognised as important by both the European Commission and the Council. There is a risk that the definition proposed would be hard to apply at international level.

Another definition proposed by the ENVI Committee, that of forest degradation, risks putting operators under legal uncertainty, as it could be interpreted in various different ways. The proposed concept of degradation is difficult to measure and could potentially include any kind of human intervention on forests. This includes the ones that are necessary to help forests adapt to the challenges of climate change. A focus on the degradation of primary forests and the change of other wooded land to plantation forests would be easier to implement and would have the advantage of efficiently targeting forest degradation at the source. The deforestation definition as voted by ENVI today would also create inconsistencies within the EU legal framework itself. Under the LULUCF regulation, covering CO₂ removals and emissions from land, plantation forests are considered as forest land, while under the ENVI proposal, this would not be the case.

The role of third-party certification schemes should also be acknowledged. Market-based forest certification has historically played a key role in ensuring and promoting sustainable forest management, and fighting illegal logging.

Finally, the ENVI Committee has addressed the consistency of applying deforestation rules across products and particularly the inclusion of printed products, a long-standing demand of Cepi. It is one of the most positive signs emerging from the vote. If confirmed in the Plenary vote and negotiations with Council, this would finally close one of the loopholes of the EU Timber Regulation and prevent a risk of legal circumvention by importing printed books and other products on paper made from illegally logged wood.

Quote

"Sustainable forest management is an essential principle, well-known to the four million people who work in forest and in our forest-based industries. We hope that their knowledge and best practices will be better integrated into the final text of the EU deforestation regulation."

Jori Ringman, Director General – Cepi (Confederation of the European Paper Industries)

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For more information on Industry commitments, please consult

[Cepi's Sustainable Product Pledge](#),

[Cepi's Pledge to support the 3 billion trees initiative](#).

[The 4evergreen cross-industry alliance](#).

About Cepi:

Cepi is the European association representing the paper industry. We offer a wide range of renewable and recyclable wood-based fibre solutions to EU citizens: from packaging to textile, hygiene and tissue products, printing and graphic papers as well as speciality papers, but also bio-chemicals for food and pharmaceuticals, bio-composites and bioenergy. We are a responsible industry: 85% of our raw materials are sourced in Europe and certified as sustainable, 92% of the water we use is returned in good condition to the environment. We are the world champion in recycling at the rate of 71.4%. At the forefront of the decarbonisation and industrial transformation of our economy, we embrace digitalisation and bring 21 billion value addition to the European economy and €4.5 billion investments annually. Through its 18 national associations, Cepi gathers 490 companies operating 885 mills across Europe and directly employing more than 179,000 people.

More information about our sustainability performance [here](#).