

Dear Sustainable Commodities Team,

I write to you from Amazon Watch, a U.S.-based organization that has worked for 25 years in partnership with Indigenous peoples to protect the Amazon rainforest and the climate.

At Amazon Watch we welcome the UK government's consultation on a possible future law to tackle its global deforestation footprint. Keeping climate-critical forests standing is vital to avoid climate breakdown, to safeguard biodiversity and to prevent the unleashing of new diseases that can cause future pandemics.

We strongly support efforts to end the UK's complicity in global forest destruction through its supply chains and financing, both due to the climate and biodiversity impacts of deforestation, as well as to the human rights abuses inherent in the primary causes of deforestation.

For a law like this to be effective, it should:

- **Commit the UK to fully deforestation-free supply chains and finance.** I have concerns that the current proposal is only focused on illegal deforestation as defined by other countries. Only half of tropical deforestation would be covered by this definition and the current proposal would still allow UK businesses to financially reward, incentivise or profit from forest destruction, if it is legal in the country where it occurs. Indeed, in Brazil, where Amazon Watch works, current president Jair Bolsonaro is actively working to - and in some cases succeeding - roll-back hard-won laws and forest enforcement systems. Instead, the UK government should adopt a single deforestation-free standard which would make it easier for businesses and communities to understand and uphold.
- **Not hinder those leading the fight to keep forests standing.** The law should recognise the need for free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities. This is vital to end the violence against forest defenders. The law should address all forest-related human rights harms. A forthcoming Amazon Watch report will details how industrial actors operating in the Amazon regularly violate Indigenous peoples' rights.
- **Not let finance off the hook.** Global Witness' investigation Money to Burn has shown that billions of pounds are flowing into companies involved in deforestation, and UK finance is one of the worst offenders. Financial institutions should be covered under the law. Amazon Watch has [documented](#) the financial relationships of several UK-based financial institutions in financing the companies involved in deforestation in the Amazon.
- **Cover businesses of all sizes.** Businesses large and small can drive deforestation!
- **Has meaningful penalties and sanctions** which are strong enough to deter bad business practices and ensure justice for affected communities. This should include options for criminal and civil legal action.

I fully support [the points outlined here \(PDF\)](#) to end the UK's complicity in the destruction of our forests.

Sincerely,

Moira Birss



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