

To

Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans,  
Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis,  
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and  
Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius



**November 13, 2021**

**Subject: Trade pressures undermining legislation against deforestation and forest degradation**

Dear Vice-Presidents, dear Commissioners,

We are reading with great alarm reports of an important weakening of the Commission proposal on deforestation and forest degradation, ahead of its publication next Wednesday.

We are especially worried about trade arguments being used to water down this extremely important piece of legislation. Stopping *all* imported deforestation is needed, and means covering all key commodities most often linked to deforestation, and tackling both legal and illegal deforestation.

Despite the urgency of saving the world's forests, some governments are actively destroying the legal frameworks that underpins the concepts of "legal" and "illegal" deforestation in their countries. Brazil under President Bolsonaro comes to mind.

Preventing forest degradation is also key. Degradation has clear and devastating effects on the ability of forests to protect biodiversity and store carbon. There are international definitions of forest degradation, and if those are insufficient, the EU must lead the world in proposing better ones.

No earlier than last week, we heard Commissioner Dombrovskis telling COP26 delegates that trade policy had to "do more to help us achieve our global climate targets". This message has also been repeated many times by trade officials in front of the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament. The gap between this message and the alleged behaviour of DG Trade on the deforestation legislation is appalling.

The world's forests are at a tipping point, and losing them would lead us head first into catastrophic environmental collapse. Our trade policy must support, not undermine the policy aim of ending the EU's contribution to the loss of forests worldwide

We call on the College to support an ambitious proposal, which we look forward to working on in the months to come.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Cavazzini MEP  
Delara Burkhardt MEP