

28th Meeting of the “Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Protecting and Restoring the World’s Forests” with a focus on Deforestation and Forest Degradation

HYBRID meeting

20 June 2024

FIRST SESSION

(All members, including EU Member States’ representatives)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda and previous meeting minutes were adopted.

2. EUDR implementation

a. Updates on implementation tasks (COM)

COM provided updates on implementation workstreams for the EUDR. The third iteration of the **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)** has been prepared and is undergoing internal review. It contains >40 new FAQs, as well as clarifications/details added to existing FAQs and will be published in the coming weeks. The process builds on input from Member States’ Competent Authorities (MS CAs) and private stakeholders, with further editions in 2024 anticipated. The official **Guidance** to assist CAs and operators in implementing the EUDR provides clarification on 11 topics. It is undergoing internal Commission procedures and will be published as soon as possible.

COM reported that the contractor for the **benchmarking system** (relevant to EUDR Article 29) is helping the COM to develop a robust and objective methodology, and updates will be announced in due course. The benchmarking will enable COM to focus support activities on producer countries where there is the greatest need and will facilitate targeted enforcement actions by CAs. Any country/part thereof that may be designated ‘high risk’ will be contacted beforehand to engage bilaterally.

Regarding the **Review** of the EUDR, the study assessing other wooded land (OWL) is ongoing and the contractors have conducted targeted stakeholder consultations. The impact assessment will address all aspects under the EUDR’s Review clause (Article 34, (1) and (2)): OWL, other ecosystems, commodity and product scope, and financial institutions. A full open public consultation will start later in 2024.

The **Information System (IS)** has undergone major developments including production of an Application Programming Interface (API) to facilitate data upload and management, for which company conformance testing is underway. Dedicated user training will be provided from October and registration will open in November. The IS launch has been brought forward to 2 December 2024 to allow additional time to upload due diligence statements (DDS) in advance of EUDR entry into application.

National, regional and global capacity building programmes are underway under the **Team Europe Initiative (TEI)** launched at COP28 in December 2023. TEI MS are increasingly mobilising funding, and other MS are interested in joining the initiative. The TEI steering committee is being established, and TEI Hub support capacities are being scaled up with projects established in six countries and three more anticipated. The first TEI Hub event took place recently in Brussels, focussing on developing workable and scalable solutions for traceability systems in the coffee sector. Future discussions will focus on, *inter alia*, how to increase smallholder digital literacy, mobilise private sector stakeholder collaboration, enhance financial access for smallholders and cooperatives, and support local solutions, partnerships and innovation in producer countries.

COM additionally reported on its recent mission to China and workshop held in Beijing on 4 June 2024 on EUDR and Chinese initiatives on removing deforestation from global supply chains. A similar workshop is planned to take place shortly in Washington, United States (US).

Q&A:

COM took note of strong calls from stakeholders to publish the Guidance and third edition of the

FAQs as soon as possible, to ensure sufficient time for companies to prepare and stressed that the draft new elements of FAQs and guidance documents address virtually all issues raised during the meeting, and once again confirmed that as soon as these documents are approved internally they will be publicly available. Regarding the Review process, COM noted that stakeholders not selected for targeted consultation will nevertheless have an opportunity to comment during the forthcoming online public consultation. In response to stakeholder concerns that national data laws in certain third countries (e.g. China and Indonesia) may hinder exact geolocation provision, COM noted that there can be no exceptions to EUDR geolocation requirements and that it is already in direct contacts with the authorities of countries where there are some questions raised on this specific issue.

3. Other updates

a. Deforestation footprint of the EU, the US and China (Trase)

Trase presented an analysis of the global deforestation footprints of the EU, US, and China 2019-2021. The analysis indicates that China's footprint is dominated by cattle products and soy, predominantly from Brazil and Indonesia, while for the EU, imports of cocoa, oil palm and coffee are major contributors, and for the US, imports of cattle products and cocoa are prominent. The analysis may underestimate the deforestation footprint of certain commodities, particularly rubber and timber, due to differences in alignment of available datasets with EUDR definitions. Trase demonstrated how the data can be used to highlight deforestation exposure at subnational level and how it can support a risk based approach to targeting enforcement checks.

b. Mapping supply chains in the cocoa sector (Mars)

Mars uses various products under EUDR scope and the representative reported working closely with upstream suppliers to ensure the necessary data will be available for risk assessments. Mars is also collaborating with retailers to streamline the sharing of DDS details downstream. They have undertaken an exercise to understand at which point they are operators or traders in specific supply chains. EU imports of cocoa were reported to have been deforestation-free since early 2023, for which they emphasised the importance of accurately mapping all farms using polygons. Mars called for greater clarity around the necessary information required for proof of legality.

c. Initiatives on deforestation-free supply chains in Ethiopia (Ethiopia)

The representative from Ethiopia emphasised the importance of coffee in their national economy, with over 85% of exports sourced from 5 million smallholders. Ethiopia supports the EUDR and has launched a National Action Plan to strengthen sustainable management of forests and facilitate compliance. It focuses on activities such as awareness raising and collection of geolocations for a farm registry. Ethiopia has identified a small number of coffee plots that may not be EUDR compliant and have developed protocols to exclude these from the EU market. COM explained its support programs for Ethiopia under the TEI and its technical facility, with a large scale project involving bilateral funding.

d. Harvesting practices in Canada (Canadian NGO coalition)

The representative of Canadian environmental groups noted support for the EUDR, in particular its focus on primary forests, which is important in the Canadian context. He claimed that in Canada the official national statistics focus on forest extent and fail to capture the changing quality of forests. Presenting concerns around the sustainability of Canada's logging industry, he reported an annual clear-cutting of over 500 000 hectares, including primary and old-growth forest. Harvesting and regeneration practices were reported to be simplifying the forest structure, reducing tree species diversity and changing the age-class distribution of standing trees. Such logging practices have a negative impact on climate and biodiversity.

e. Initiatives on deforestation-free supply chains in Brazil (Brazilian Climate Observatory)

The representative from the Brazilian Climate Observatory noted civil society organisations' support for the EUDR and robust traceability requirements back to the farm or plot of land. This was seen as critical to addressing deforestation, conversion, and other illegalities and social issues. Their presentation highlighted the numerous available forest monitoring and traceability tools to support EUDR compliance, noting the rapid development of tools and innovation following adoption of the EUDR. Large scale public traceability systems for soy, beef and coffee in Brazil are already available. They called upon governments of producer countries to use this opportunity to enhance capacity and supply chain traceability.

4. Information System

a. Demo of the Information System (COM)

COM demonstrated the **Information System (IS)** and its existing features from the perspective of an operator wishing to place a relevant product on the market. This included key functionalities such as how to: create and submit a DDS; duplicate a DDS; amend an available DDS; add one or more referenced DDS to a new DDS; retrieve DDS information (such as reference number and status); and retract an existing DDS (cancel or withdraw). COM demonstrated a new feature when submitting a DDS, enabling operators to decide whether or not the geolocation information should be visible to any downstream operators/traders when referencing the DDS.

COM reported that conformance testing of the API for Economic Operators (EO) had begun, following publication of the API technical specifications in May. Informative videos will be published in July/August followed by distribution of user instructions in September, with training to begin in October. COM reiterated that the IS will be robust and functioning well. Refactoring to ensure smoother functionalities and cybersecurity, data protection and stress testing will be carried out in the coming weeks.

In response to stakeholder queries, COM confirmed that:

- The DD number is required only for products in scope; a DDS could cover multiple commodities or products on which the due diligence has been conducted.
- The API for EO conformance testing is open-ended, it can still be done after the IS launch.
- User instructions, support materials and short training videos will be published online, with user training provided in Brussels and online; webinars, half-day training sessions and shorter sessions are envisaged. MS will also be trained as trainers to facilitate training at the national level.
- In cases where the geolocation information is not visible in an upstream DDS, downstream operators may contact the supplier directly, if they so wish. Ascertaining that due diligence was properly carried out may not necessarily imply having to systematically check every single due diligence statement submitted upstream. .
- Bulk upload of reference numbers and validation numbers will be possible via file uploads.
- Several questions posed will be addressed in the upcoming FAQs and guidance.

5. AOB

The next Deforestation Platform meeting will be on **24 September 2024**. Stakeholders were encouraged to send queries in writing. Presentations and the meeting Summary Record will be available on the [Register of Commission Expert Groups](#).

SECOND SESSION (Member States' representatives only)

5. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

a. Demo of the Information System (COM)

COM demonstrated key IS functionalities available to the CAs. COM took note of MS suggestions and informed of additional aspects that will be discussed further and addressed in the IS implementing act.

b. Roundtable

MS reported ongoing preparations for EUDR implementation including collaborating with customs and other national authorities, stakeholder awareness raising activities, working with COM to develop solutions to implementation challenges, and hiring and training additional staff. MS reported development of national legislation to implement the EUDR. One MS encouraged use of criminal as well as administrative sanctions on operators in breach of the EUDR (as required by the EU Environmental Crime Directive). **MS echoed calls from industry to publish the Guidance and FAQs as soon as possible.**

COM informed that the Guidance and FAQs will most probably be published first in English, then translated into other languages. The EUDR Committee will convene in Autumn 2024, and MS will be informed of the details nearer the time. COM further noted that nine MS have yet to designate EUDR CAs, and five have

yet to respond regarding designation of MS representatives for the EUDR Committee.
<p>c. Information points (COM)</p> <p>1) LIFE call for applications</p> <p>The call for applications for LIFE Projects for addressing ad hoc Legislative and Policy priorities (<u>LIFE-2024-PLP</u>) closes on 19 September 2024. The call, which is relevant to EUDR Article 15.1, aims to support MS in raising awareness, capacity building and sector-specific training of stakeholders, particularly SMEs.</p> <p>2) DG TRADE investigation into birch plywood sanctions circumvention</p> <p>COM announced the findings of an investigation into circumvention of anti-dumping measures imposed on imports of birch plywood of Russian origin entering the EU via Türkiye or Kazakhstan, which was initiated in August 2023 by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/1649. The investigation's results, published in <u>Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1287 of 13 May 2024</u>, concluded that there was no economic justification for the observed changes in trade patterns except for the purposes of sanctions circumvention. Implementing Regulation 2024/1287, which entered into force on 15 May 2024, therefore extends anti-dumping measures on imports of birch plywood from the Russian Federation to imports from Kazakhstan and Türkiye. MS should take note of this when enforcing the EUTR and EUDR.</p>
<p>AOB</p> <p>MS are encouraged to attend the Deforestation Platform meeting on 24 September 2024 in person.</p>

List of participants

EU Member State	Competent Authority
AT	Federal Forest Office
AT	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management
BE	Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety & Environment
BG	Food Safety Agency
BG	Executive Forest Agency
CY	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
CZ	Forest Management Institute (UHUL)
DE	BMUV – Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection
DE	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
DK	Environmental Protection Agency
DK	Ministry of Environment
EE	Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture
EE	Tax and Customs Board
ES	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge
FI	Finnish Food Authority

FI	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
FR	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty
FR	Ministry of Ecological Transition
HU	National Food Chain Safety Office
IE	Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine
IT	Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests
LT	Ministry of Environment
LT	Ministry of Agriculture
LV	State Forest Service
LV	Ministry of Agriculture
NL	Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority
NL	Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
PT	ICNF (Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas), I.P.
SE	Swedish Forest Agency
SI	Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union
SI	Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection
SK	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

Stakeholder Organisation
Alliance for the Preservation of Forests
Amfori
Bioenergy Europe
CAOBISCO
CDP Europe
CEI-Bois
CEPF
CEPI
ClientEarth
COCERAL / Cefetra Group BV

Conservation International Europe
COPA-COGECA
COTANCE
Donau Soy
Earthsight
EEB/Deutsche Umwelthilfe
European Cocoa Association (ECA)
European Coffee Federation
EuroCommerce
European Furniture Industries Confederation – EFIC
Environment Investigation Agency (EIA) UK
EOS European Organisation of the Sawmill Industry
European Timber Trade Federation – ETTF
European Panel Federation – EPF
European Parquet Federation - FEP
European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers' Association – ETRMA
Eustafor
FAO
Federation of European Publishers
FEDIOL
FEFAC
Fern
FoodDrinkEurope
Forest Peoples Programme
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
Global Canopy – Trase
Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber
Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef
Global Witness

Greenpeace European Unit
IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative
iEthanol, the European Industrial Ethanol Association
ISEAL
ITC
IUCN
Mighty Earth
National Wildlife Federation (NWF)
OPTA Europe – Organic Processing and Trade Association
PEFC International
Rainforest Alliance
Round Table on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)
Stichting Solidaridad
Sustainable Leather Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
The World Bank
Thünen Institute
TRAFFIC
Tropenbos International
Tropical Forest Alliance
World Resources Institute
WWF – European Policy Office

Third Country
Argentina – Mission of Argentina to the European Union
Australia – Mission of Australia to the European Union
Bolivia – Embassy of Bolivia in Belgium
Brazil – Mission of Brazil to the European Union
Canada – Mission of Canada to the European Union

Cameroon – Conseil Interprofessionnel du Cacao et du Café
Colombia – Mission to the European Union
Costa Rica – Ministry of Foreign Trade
Côte d'Ivoire – Embassy of Côte d'Ivoire to the European Union
Dominican Republic – Mission of the Dominican Republic to the European Union
Ethiopia – Embassy of Ethiopia
French Guiana – Bureau de représentation des Régions ultrapériphériques françaises auprès de l'UE
Ghana – Embassy of Ghana in Brussels
Guatemala – Embassy of Guatemala to the European Union
Indonesia – Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Brussels
Japan – Mission of Japan to the European Union
Malaysia – Ministry of Plantation and Commodities (KPK)
New Zealand – Permanent Mission to the European Union
Norway – Norwegian Environment Agency
Paraguay – Permanent Mission of the Republic of Paraguay to the European Union
Peru – Mission of Peru to the European Union
Philippines – Embassy of the Philippines and Mission to the European Union
Singapore – Mission and Embassy of the Republic of Singapore
Sri Lanka – Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and Mission to the EU
Switzerland – Federal Office for the Environment (FEON)
Thailand – Office of Agricultural Affairs
Türkiye – Ministry of Trade
United States – US Mission to the European Union
Uruguay – Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries