

JOINT LETTER OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE

TOWARDS A FURTHER SIMPLIFICATION of the EU DEFORESTATION REGULATION

The Ministers of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden

Sustainable forest management is fundamental to develop climate-resilient forests, ensure species diversity and enhance bioeconomy with multiple products and services. Thanks to the relentless work in the Member States, the area covered by forests and wooded areas in Europe increased in recent decades. Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 is designed to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and global biodiversity loss by minimising deforestation and forest degradation worldwide.

The Regulation constitutes a milestone in global forest protection by providing a robust legal foundation for EU action against deforestation, while also strengthening international cooperation and including support measures for small producers in third countries.

However, the regulation in its current form does not sufficiently take into account countries with effective forest protection laws and a negligible risk of deforestation. Instead of targeting deforestation where the risk is highest, the regulation imposes disproportionate bureaucratic obligations on countries, where deforestation is demonstrably insignificant.

The Commission placed competitiveness at the heart of its general and economic agenda and engaged in ensuring that European businesses can thrive in the global marketplace and deliver sustainable prosperity for all people in the EU. Thus, given the considerable complexity of the Regulation's provisions, and in order to enable farmers, forest owners, operators, in other words – the entire value chain in the EU market - and competent authorities to meet their obligations, the Commission proposed postponing the date of application of the Regulation until 30 December 2025. This proposal was adopted by the co-legislators in December 2024, accompanied by a statement from the Commission attesting to its commitment to reducing the burden on businesses by eliminating unnecessary administrative burdens. Guidelines for simplifying and reducing the administrative burden were adopted by the European Commission in April 2025.

Nevertheless, the requirements imposed on farmers, forest owners and operators remain onerous and not justified for countries with an insignificant risk of deforestation. They are disproportionate to the objective of the regulation, which is to prevent deforestation where it occurs. Furthermore, they create additional costs both for companies and administrations, thus undermining the overall objective to (i) enhance competitiveness, not just in the bioeconomy sector but also across a range of other sectors, including the livestock sector, and (ii) adapt forests to climate change through active sustainable forest management. Moreover, there will be a concrete risk that increased raw material prices - caused by the complicated EUDR obligations required - will consequently lead

to increasing production costs and prices with the associated risk that our producers are relocating their production outside the European Union.

It should also be further noted that the full traceability within the EU-market required for all commodities by the Regulation will be extremely difficult, if not impossible for some of them.

Excessive and redundant due diligence requirements should be removed in countries where agricultural expansion is not significantly reducing the forest area. In countries which have been designated as being at low risk of deforestation, it should be accepted that existing national systems are sufficiently robust to demonstrate that compliance with EUDR can be properly controlled.

For example, it is essential that requirements be simplified for commodities and products already placed on the Union market as well as for farmers and foresters in countries or regions showing an insignificant risk of deforestation. Furthermore, there is a compelling case to facilitate better integration of existing national forest datasets of Member States with the Commission information system.

In the context of a general desire to simplify EU regulations, we reiterate that many Member States have already expressed the strong need of a more substantial reduction of the administrative burden associated with Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation. Under the any other business point from AT and LU discussed during the May AGRIFISH Council, 18 Member States have supported further simplification.

We therefore urge the European Commission to swiftly include the Deforestation Regulation in its simplification plans in order to ensure coordinated and effective implementation of the EUDR across the EU. Pending the Commission's simplification proposals, it might be advisable to further postpone the date of application of the regulation.

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