

ISG meeting on the Communication on stepping up EU Action against Deforestation and Forest Degradation

29 January 2019

Participation

ENV, DEVCO, AGRI, SG, TRADE, JRC, CLIMA, GROW, ECHO, EEAS, ENER and RTD

Context

The meeting was chaired by ENV. Each core DG shortly presented the sections that they had drafted and on which elements they focused. The drafting of the Communication has been divided as follows: Introduction, context and scope by all core DGs, Priority 1 by DEVCO, Priorities 2, 3 and 5 by ENV, Priority 4 by AGRI¹. All sections were drafted with inputs from the respective associated DGs.

ENV explained that the next steps would be to simplify and streamline the text, make the format more coherent and prioritize the actions. Each DG was invited to give initial feedback on the first draft. ENV informed that the open public consultation (OPC) would still be open until 25 February. 229 replies have been received as of 1 February. Analysis of the inputs received will be done by a contractor in February.

Key suggestions

Format:

- It was agreed to put all actions in an Annex to the Communication (similar to the Plastic Strategy).² They would be described more in detail in the text of the Communication.
- A SWD may be needed.
- The FLEGT Work Plan 2018-2022 may be added as a separate SWD or in other form to the Communication.
- The areas currently covered under Priority 5 (Mainstreaming) will be incorporated under other priorities in the future versions of the Communication.

Substance:

- It was suggested to make the actions more concise and remove any vague commitments. It is important to clarify the added value of the proposed action compared to already existing work.

¹ There are 5 priority areas within which to step up EU action against deforestation and forest degradation including (1) Supply side interventions, (2) Promoting deforestation-free supply chains and EU demand for sustainable agricultural and forest commodities, (3) Current finance flows in the land use sector, (4) International cooperation, and (5) Mainstreaming.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1516265440535&uri=COM:2018:28:FIN>

- Several DGs expressed concerns with the concept of Forest Risk Commodities, since the problem is geographic and not of a specific crop. Alternative wording may be used.
- Some DGs felt that it is too early to consider a regulatory approach to due diligence.
- It was proposed to present a stronger focus on human rights and have actions in this regard
- A clearer picture of the causes and effects of deforestation and forest degradation in different countries should be included
- The role of the private sector should also be clarified and other large consumers, such as China should be highlighted. A new section on all actors involved may be added.
- The role of urban areas, ecosystem services and outermost regions may be addressed in the narrative as well as a number of other specific areas on which all participating DGs will be sending inputs to the core DGs in the next days

Objective and scope:

- The objective should use more up to date information, as the 2013 study on EU consumption used even older data.
- There were questions on the scope and whether the main focus should be on the EU consumption or rather on halting deforestation in general, which would have an impact on the types of actions we focus on. It appears that we are very close to the agreement that the focus should be on EU consumption.

Next steps and timeline

Services to send their feedback by 5 February.

Revised draft to be circulated by 14 February to the ISG.

Next Deforestation ISG meeting on 19 February, to discuss the revised draft and for a first assessment by the contractor of the results of the public consultation.

Final Deforestation ISG meeting on 13 March.

Launch of the ISC on the 27 March.

Adoption of the Communication planned for end April 2019.