

## Why saving our forests should be a global priority

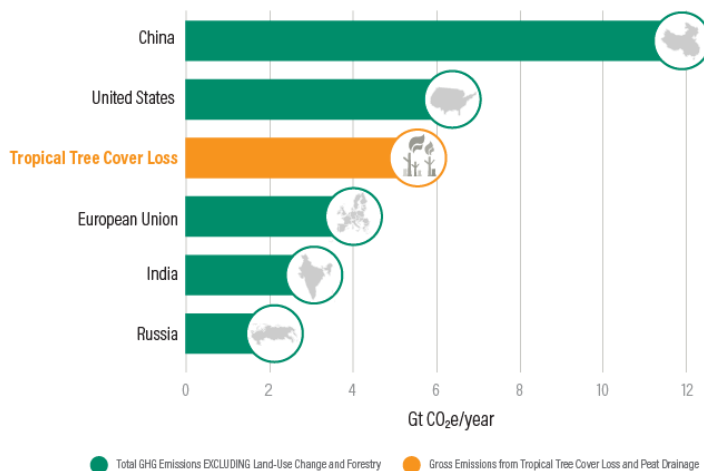
March 21, 2019

Forests are critical to the fight against climate change. As someone who cares passionately about the future of our planet, I have been cheering on the growing global movement of students in their school strikes for climate. They are demanding a different future, showing they are determined and unstoppable in mobilizing



for climate action. Our forests are critical to the fight against climate change, as well as to the protection of biodiversity and the ability to feed our global population. But the efforts to halt deforestation have not proved anywhere near as effective as had been hoped. International Day of Forests on 21 March is an opportunity to galvanize more collective action. The truth is, deforestation continues apace. An

If Tropical Deforestation were a Country, it Would Rank Third in CO<sub>2</sub>e Emissions



Source: Seymour & Busch, 2016.



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estimated 18 million acres of forest, an area roughly equivalent to a country the size of Panama, are lost every year. This deforestation is responsible for more than 20% of the planet's carbon emissions. And the biggest culprit continues to be commodity agriculture.

We are nearing the original 2020 date that was set by the Consumer Goods Forum to eliminate deforestation from supply chains. Collectively, we are going to fall short of achieving this. Nevertheless, I refuse to dwell on the negatives. Progress has been made. Much has been learnt about the underlying issues. We know that supply chain companies cannot succeed in bending the curve of forest loss in isolation. Indeed, it is clearer than ever that only collective action across sectors can address deforestation. Here's my

three-point perspective.

### 1. Let's celebrate progress

Together, the supply chain movement has achieved a lot. Where market signals are strong, big advances have been made in traceability and transparency, and certification is playing a useful role. This, in turn, has encouraged the big producers and traders to demonstrate their sustainability credentials. Several of the world's most respected consumer brands, including Unilever and Nestlé, now have a good story to tell. And all the while, more pressure is being placed on the wider market to follow suit.

## **2. Let's acknowledge limitations**

At the same time, we have discovered the limitations of individual supply chain approaches. Many of the world's biggest brands, traders and producers may be onside. Together, they may wield awesome buying power. But even so, their collective might has not been strong enough to steer the world away from deforestation. Consider, for example, that Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification still only encompasses 19% of global palm oil supplies, which is roughly equivalent to the total exports to Europe and the US combined. Similarly, market forces have not been able to solve the complex knot of issues around governance, transparent land rights and the rule of law. Nor has the voice of big business been sufficient to resolve critical issues for the smallholders or speculators who, as new data shows in Indonesia, are now behind most of the deforestation. So yes, commitments, actions and market signals have a big impact, but are nowhere near as influential as everyone initially hoped.

## **3. Let's accelerate collective action and catalyze change**

Going forward, we do need companies to accelerate action to clean up their own supply chains. But we also need them to reach out to other partners in the landscapes where commodities are grown. A great example is the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, a public-private partnership which brings together 31 companies, including Mondelēz, Mars and Cargill; the governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire; the World Cocoa Foundation; and IDH the Sustainable Trade Initiative. They are reaching out way beyond the supply chain, to transform the broader cocoa forest landscape, covering forest protection and restoration, sustainable cocoa production and farmer livelihoods. Another example of a more transformative initiative is SoS Cerrado. This brings together some of the world's largest retailers and manufacturers, including Tesco, Marks & Spencer, McDonald's, Ahold Delhaize, METRO AG and Walmart, to call for no further deforestation in the Cerrado biome of Brazil. Again, it reaches beyond individual supply chains, encouraging sustainable land management practices and seeking to support farmers. Across the world, there is scope for many similar approaches at jurisdictional or landscape scale, especially in those regions that account for a large proportion of commodity production.

**Inspirational times for transformational change Working together** – as a coalition of parties who care about sustainable production, livelihoods and our forests - is the only way we can deliver more transformative change on the ground. I know we can forge new models for success, and the Tropical Forest Alliance is going to double down to accelerate jurisdictional approaches in the run up to 2020 and beyond. Of course, there are other levers beyond Western supply chain action. For example, key players in emerging economies (China, for example, which accounts for 62% of the world's soy imports and a third of all pulp imports) are eager to demonstrate positive momentum ahead of the 2020 UN Biodiversity Summit. We also aim to catalyze more green finance mechanisms, especially as funds finally start to flow under REDD+ schemes. Overall, we need to work together to build new positive forest narratives, highlighting the role that sustainable land management plays in underpinning healthy food systems and healthy communities. The potential for collective action is significant, and the time is now. It will be neither fast nor easy, but let's be steadfast in a shared commitment to bend the curve on deforestation. Let's take all the lessons we have learned from individual action over the last 10 years and renew our efforts to support communities and tropical forest governments to take the necessary steps that only they can take. If you represent an organization that is in any way implicated or involved with forest risk commodities, let's work together to end deforestation. To quote Greta Thunberg: "No one is too small to make a difference".

SOURCE:- <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/03/saving-forests-global-imperative-tropical-deforestation/>