



## Priorities for the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee Submitted by Size of Wales

We are facing a climate and nature crisis. One of the key factors driving the global climate and nature emergency is deforestation and habitat loss. The International Panel on Climate Change is clear that without our forests, we will fail to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Wales needs to play its part by changing what it buys, consumes and invests in, since these choices can drive unethical practices and environmental degradation overseas.

Ensuring supply chains are fair, ethical and sustainable is important for a number of reasons, including Wales' obligation to establish itself as a Globally Responsible Nation in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Wales has a responsibility to consider how its practices impact global habitats, but Wales also has an opportunity to demonstrate global leadership towards driving sustainability across commodity supply chains around the world.

More than 70% of tropical forest loss and land conversion is attributable to the production of just a handful of agricultural commodities and forestry products demanded by consumers. Precious habitats like the Amazon are being burnt to clear land - rainforests are being destroyed to produce just a handful of commodities. Wales imports significant quantities of agricultural and forest commodities, some of which are driving deforestation and habitat destruction overseas. Whether that is commodities for the production of soymeal and palm oil for livestock feed in Wales, palm oil used in everyday supermarket items, beef imported into Wales, cocoa used in Welsh confectionery and desserts, or even rubber used to produce latex or car tyres.

Size of Wales, along with WWF Cymru and RSPB Cymru and Size of Wales have formed a Deforestation Free Nation Partnership. We have commissioned research which is due to be published in October to provide data, for the first time, of Wales' deforestation footprint. The research confirms that

- **An area equivalent to 40% of the size of Wales (823,000 hectares)** was required overseas to grow Welsh imports of cocoa, palm oil, beef, leather, natural rubber, soy, timber, pulp and paper in an average year between 2011-2018.
- Crucially, **30% of the land used to grow Welsh imports of commodities is in countries categorised high or very high risk for social and deforestation issues**. This means commodity supply chains supplying Wales in these countries risk deforestation, conversion of natural ecosystems and/or social issues, such as child, forced labour or abuse of Indigenous People's rights.
- The GHG emissions associated with the conversion of natural ecosystems and changes in land cover for the production of Welsh imports of soy, cocoa, palm and natural rubber total 1.5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> each year. This is equivalent to **4% of Wales' total estimated domestic and imported goods carbon footprint, or 22% of the GHG emissions from transport in Wales**.

The research is clear – if we are serious about tackling climate change and nature loss in Wales, we have to also address our overseas impacts. Wales needs to tackle global footprints in our supply chains, particularly through the food commodities and products we import. Furthermore, whilst the current COVID-19 pandemic cannot be attributed to deforestation, previous disease outbreaks can and this is also one of the growing areas of concern in terms of likely impacts of climate change. The deadly Ebola and Nipah viruses are examples of pathogens that have jumped the species barrier into human populations and are directly linked to tropical deforestation. There is growing evidence that stopping deforestation can prevent pandemics - to reduce the risk of future COVID-19 like pandemics, we must address deforestation.

As part of a green recovery and with swift action, we can reduce deforestation and our emissions and create a more sustainable future for Wales. Wales has already made positive commitments towards becoming a globally responsible nation as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A commitment to eliminating imported deforestation aligns well with these commitments which calls on Wales to be responsible for its consumption, support local supply chains and bring about resilient and prosperous communities and reduce climate change drivers. This includes:

- Introducing mandatory ethical and sustainability requirements for public sector procurement in Wales;
- Ensuring that the Welsh Government's Economic Contract, which aims to strengthen a relationship with business and drive inclusive growth and responsible business behaviour, is strengthened so that signatories to the contract commit to ethical supply chains that protect human rights and the environment.
- Introducing sustainable farming practices via the Sustainable Farming scheme that do not contribute to human rights abuses and environmental degradation overseas. For example, this includes ending the reliance on imported soy and palm oil animal feed that originates from forest risk areas and adopting nature and climate-friendly farming methods such as organic farming, agro-ecology and agroforestry.
- Working with the UK Government to ensure that new trade agreements will guarantee high environmental and human rights standards, particularly around deforestation, accompanied by strict enforcement measures.

We would welcome committee scrutiny in relation to Wales and its global responsibility, climate change and overseas deforestation footprint. This should focus on ethical and sustainable supply chains and trade agreements and sustainable farming practices. This could be undertaken in collaboration with the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee.

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