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Swedish NGOs: Increased forest harvests is not the way forward for EU

Today, Swedish NGOs write an open letter to the EU Environmental Council to express their concern regarding the proposed LULUCF regulation which they imply risk having detrimental and long-term effects on both climate and biodiversity. The proposal, which favors an active forestry and supports the EU forest sink to decrease, is strongly lobbied by Swedish and Finnish Forest Industries and the NGOs warn the EU decision-makers not to be misled by production interests.

Sweden promotes itself as a leader when it comes to sustainable forestry and bioeconomy. The Swedish and Finnish Forest Industries are strong lobbyists and use the climate as a pretext to increase their forest harvest, production and economic rates, according to the NGOs. By endorsing a so called bioeconomy, natural forests are systematically clear-cut and replaced by even-aged tree plantations, poor of species, to acquire alleged sustainable wood products and bioenergy.

“The planetary boundaries for climate and biodiversity are already exceeded and catastrophic consequences are ahead if stringent climate mitigation measures are not urgently taken. Sweden can be used as a world-wide example of how harmful clear-cutting methods are used to destroy natural forests in the name of sustainability. Not only that, these harvest methods also increase the emissions of greenhouse gases and reduce the carbon sink, and that is something the LULUCF regulation definitely not should not favor,” said Ahmed Al-Qassam, President of PUSH Sweden.

The NGOs urge the Environmental Council to introduce clear incentives to stop deforestation as well as to ensure policy coherence in relation to the Habitat and Bird Directive, especially when it comes to afforestation, reforestation and restoration of degraded forest lands. Increased harvesting which reduces the forest carbon sink needs to be discouraged and an economic effect needs to follow to give incentives to climate friendly forest use and standing forests.

“We hope that the Environmental Ministers of the EU will make sure that they will not be misled by production-orientated claims from the Forest Industries. Climate change and loss of biodiversity are major global challenges. It is very important that the EU does not legitimize a more intensive forestry. We need functional ecosystems to mitigate to climate change,” said Viktor Säfve, co-founder of the Swedish NGO Protect the Forest.

The following Swedish NGOs have signed the open letter to the EU Environment Council: Protect the Forest, Friends of the Earth Sweden, Naturarvet, PUSH Sweden and Climate Action Sweden (Klimataktion).

The open letter can be found here: <https://naturarvet.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NGO-open-letter-to-EU.pdf>

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