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African Forest Forum
AFF

AFF – HLG Monthly Monitoring of EU Forest Value Chains

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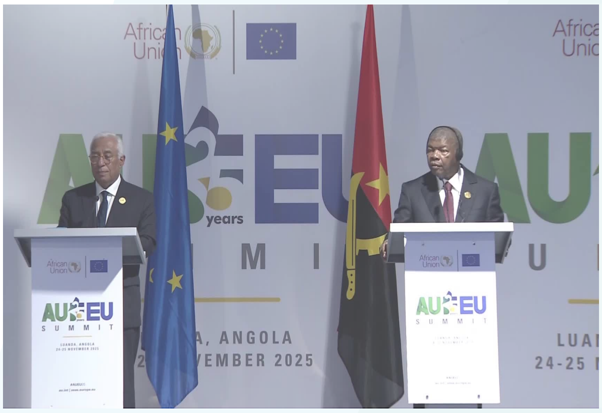
This monthly newsletter produced by the HLG on Forestry & Biomaterials, with support from SAPPI, for the members of the AFF, aims to stimulate joint thinking on the research and development of a climate-neutral bioeconomy.

The High-Level Group on EU Policy Innovation: Forestry and Biomaterials (HLG-FB) is one of the independent public-private think tanks which operate as an advisory body for the European Union institutions. A partnership involving the HLG-FB and the African Forest Forum (AFF) is evolving.

The AFF is an association of individuals who share the quest for, and commitment to the sustainable management, use and conservation of the forest and tree resources of Africa for socio-economic wellbeing of its peoples and for the stability and improvement of its environment.

SAPPI, a leading company in woodfibre-based renewable materials in Africa, is dedicated to advancing the bioeconomy and promoting sustainable forest management. With a focus on innovation and sustainability, SAPPI is committed to foster a thriving, biobased circular economy by prioritising responsible processes.

This partnership aims to provide a framework of cooperation and understanding and to facilitate collaboration between the Parties to further their shared goals and objectives regarding African forestry and its support to socio-economic wellbeing of Africa's peoples and for the stability and improvement of the environment.



AU-EU Summit, Angola, November 2025.
Photo credit : European Union

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Additional details regarding our initiatives to the advancement of a sustainable bioeconomy can be accessed through the following websites: https://www.sappi.com & https://www.highlevelgroup.eu/forestry-biomaterials

EUROPEAN DEFORESTATION FREE REGULATION (EUDR)

European Commission considers adding palm derived goods to EUDR Product scope

Following the consultation outcome concerning the extension of the EUDR product scope, the European Commission is preparing a further revision of the regulation, including now a wide range of palm-derived products to the list. These are of especial relevance to Africa.

In particular, the accompanying annex to the draft delegated act appears to confirm the exclusion of leather goods and soluble coffee, while adding palm oil derivatives, especially several oleochemicals, currently used in the production of food emulsifiers, cosmetics, detergents and soaps. Noteworthy, palm-derived chemicals used in the production of human and veterinary medicines and waste palm oil derivatives used as feedstock for biofuels will be exempted from EUDR requirements.

Soybeans intended for sowing, while previously been considered among EUDR covered goods, are now excluded from the annex due to their negligible trade volumes and potential conflict with the objectives of the forthcoming EU protein strategy.

In light of the recent addition of these products, the Commission is considering applying the regulation – exclusively for the latest added item - from 30th December 2027.

The new amendments are now expected to be formally introduced through the final delegated act adopted by the Commission. The European Parliament and the Council will then have two months to raise objections before the amendments can enter into force.

While the amendments proposed by the EU institutions represent a step forward in adapting the regulation to market developments and recognising the potential benefits of bio-based products, including biofuels, further changes to the initiative may increase uncertainty for businesses.

The forthcoming scrutiny period, during which the European Parliament and the Council will have two months to raise objections, may further delay regulatory clarity for companies preparing for implementation. Until the final delegated act is adopted, the status of newly added or excluded products will remain uncertain.

European Commission publishes amending file for EUDR's implementation

On Monday 4th May, following the anticipated April 2026 review of the EUDR, the European Commission published a revision document concerning the simplification and amendment of the **EU Deforestation Regulation** (EUDR), together with an **updated guidance document and FAQs aimed**

at supporting its feasible application by December 2026. The recently adopted measures should significantly reduce the administrative burden for companies and the annual compliance costs – by around 75% compared to the previous estimates. Planned trade facilitation tools, including repositories of legislation of producing countries and certification schemes for commodities under the EUDR, have also been introduced to facilitate risk assessment and due diligence.

These measures should benefit African stakeholders being of relevance to both **third-country exporters** and **European companies,** giving relief from considerable onerous responsibilities and associated costs for producers, its wider implications for trade flows, and supply chain governance. This is especially beneficial for African stakeholders.

The updated version of the FAQs and EUDR Supply Chain Infographics will similarly benefit African stakeholders ia by clarifying obligations applicable to the downstream supply chains and the specific regime for small and micro enterprises, in particular related to e-commerce and geolocation identification. A EUDR Supply Chain Infographics has also been updated to the EC website to provide a user-friendly practical example illustrating the various supply chain scenarios.

The reopening of the regulation has impacted the product scope. The draft delegated act, now open for revision, has added new products to the list of EUDR covered goods, while others have been excluded from the scope of the regulation. These include the following some of which are of particular relevance to Africa:

Added: Frozen cattle tongues; Soluble coffee, including extracts, essences and concentrates of coffee; Palm oil derivatives which form part of the oleochemicals supply chain
Excluded: Hides, skins and leathers; Woody products derived from bamboo, rattan, raffia and similar materials; Retreated rubber tread; Products and components qualified as second hand, used and waste; Samples of products for testing, analysis and examination; Packaging materials and containers, including those made of wood; Marketing and information materials, such as manuals and leaflets, accompanying another product

The draft Delegated Act is open for public feedback until 1st June 2026, with this bringing some continuing uncertainties for companies and other stakeholders. It seems imperative for African stakeholders to avail themselves of this opportunity on relevant issues affecting their activities.

In order to promote a more user friendly platform, amendments have also been proposed to the Council through a **draft implementing act on the Information System,** covering the possibility to upload a simplified declaration form for micro and small primary operators, an automated application interface, a contingency plan for unplanned unavailability and a voluntary grouping feature. Implementation of this system would potentially benefit African stakeholders.

Companies raising concerns on EUDR implementation

Anticipating the **April 2026 review of the EUDR** growing concerns had previously been raised by both **third-country exporters** and **European companies** regarding the regulation's practical implementation and its wider implications for trade flows and supply chain governance. The substantial and onerous administrative and operational burdens for companies to comply with EUDR requirements remain a key challenge ia especially for Africa, notably in relation to traceability, data disclosure and the segregation of supply chains.

In this context ongoing discussions surrounding the review of the regulation have included possible corrective measures aimed at introducing greater flexibility in implementation. One of the most discussed solutions concerns the reintroduction of the **"negligible risk" category**, which could guarantee administrative and financial flexibilities in cases of low or close to zero deforestation degree in some countries. Furthermore, methods to take into account natural erosion of ecosystems are being considered, such as those for circumstances not directly attributable to industrial deforestation, including situations akin to **force majeure.**

The April review of the regulation is thus far contributing to an increased uncertainty among all stakeholders and especially those among **large companies operating in forest-risk commodity supply chains**, including those engaged in the trade and sale of wood-based products. These actors are expected to remain subject to heightened scrutiny under the EUDR, given the scale and complexity of their sourcing structures. Many European firms, however, have confirmed their preparedness to adapt to the new regulatory framework, provided that the forthcoming review does not reopen the core architecture of the regulation in a manner that generates further legal uncertainty. **Supply chain diversification** remains a central issue in the implementation debate, as firms may seek to reorient sourcing strategies in order to mitigate compliance costs and reduce exposure to jurisdictions or commodities associated with higher regulatory complexity. From this perspective the EUDR may not only reshape market access conditions for third-country exporters, but also alter sourcing incentives and competitive dynamics within the EU internal market. The potential for related impacts on African stakeholders seems considerable and needs monitoring with subsequent actions if needed.

CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING DIRECTIVE (CSRD) and CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY DUE DILIGENCE DIRECTIVE (CSDDD)

The EU Due Diligence Navigator to boost CSDDD and CSRD's implementation

In March 2026, the European Commission launched the **EU Due Diligence Navigator for Partner Countries,** an instrument elaborated to support stakeholders from third countries in preparing for the implementation of the **CSDDD and CSRD.** The initiative, part of the broader **Team Europe Initiative on Sustainability in Global Value Chains,** reflects the EU's expanding regulatory approach to responsible business conduct beyond its borders, as well as improved efforts to support partner countries compliance with EU rules. The instrument is supposedly aimed at facilitating the understanding of the evolving EU due diligence framework including CSDDD compliance, based on international standards such as the **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** and the **OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**. Its relevance for African stakeholders is fairly obvious and practical usage should be tested by them.

Council approves CSRD and CSDDD simplification proposal by the European Parliament

In February the Council of the European Union officially endorsed measures aimed at simplifying the EU's CSRD) as well as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD/CS3D) frameworks. The deal reshapes both, significantly narrowing their scope and limiting the "trickle-down" effect of information requests on small firms. These changes should again benefit African stakeholders. Overall, the package significantly reduces the number of companies in scope, with estimates indicating roughly 85% fewer companies under the CSRD and around 70% fewer under the CSDDD compared to earlier expectations.

CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM (CBAM)

EU institutions discuss potential extension of CBAM downstream products and temporary suspension of CBAM obligations

Proposals concerning the extension of the CBAM are currently being discussed among the EU institutions. Based on an initiative of the European Parliament, the file aims to revise the scope of the regulation and its emergency-response provisions.

In particular, the European Parliament is discussing a potential expansion of the list of carbon-intensive downstream products, with the addition of approximately 100 product categories to the existing 177. To determine which downstream products should fall within the mechanism, negotiators have proposed lowering the applicable embedded-emissions threshold from 150 to 50 kilotonnes of CO_2 equivalent. This change would enable a broader range of carbon-intensive products to be included within the future CBAM framework. The Council has also proposed reviewing the list of products covered by CBAM annually.

Furthermore, a potential replacement of Article 27a, which would allow the temporary suspension of CBAM obligations in the event of serious and exceptional disruption to the EU internal market, is being examined. Instead of maintaining this emergency brake, Parliament's negotiators are proposing the establishment of a compensation mechanism under which CBAM revenues could be redirected to support sectors significantly affected by market disruption.

Negotiators are also considering simplified reporting requirements for imports originating in least developed countries. Taken together, these measures would aim to limit disproportionate administrative burdens while preserving the environmental objectives of the mechanism.

Expected amendments are now foreseen to be discussed by the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety on 6 July.

European Commission updates FAQs ahead of full implementation

Following the publication of updated FAQs in May, the European Commission has provided new clarifications on the definitive implementation of CBAM. The document seeks now to clarify and provide further guidance to operators falling within the scope of the mechanisms by addressing potential exemptions, custom procedures and collection of verified data.

According to the file, while rules do not change for companies remaining below the threshold of 50 tonnes of net mas in annual imports, operators exceeding this threshold, along with importers of electricity and hydrogen, must comply with the full CBAM requirements before obtaining the status of authorised CBAM declarant. Similarly emissions data must be carefully collected and verified. In order to streamline these operations, from September 2026, the European Commission is expected to make available a list of accredited CBAM verifiers responsible for certifying actual emissions data for covered products, encompassing fertilisers, hydrogen, electricity, cement, aluminium, iron and steel. Much of this should impact various African stakeholders including those involved in forestry with much uncertainty continuing. Where actual emissions cannot be verified default values published by the Commission will continue to apply.

Further information on exemptions, special customs procedures, transit, outwards processing and temporary admissions, CBAM certifications and CBAM debt are available at this website: *https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/013fa763-5dce-4726-a204-69fec04d5ce2_en?filename=CBAM_Questions%20and%20Answers.pdf*

CBAM reference price for Q1 2026 published by the European Commission

Three months ago the European Commission officially published the first reference price under the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), set at **€75.36 per tonne of CO_2 equivalent for the first quarter of 2026.** As foreseen by the regulation, the price was calculated as the average auction clearing price of allowances under the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) over the same period, thereby ensuring alignment between the carbon costs borne by domestic producers and those applied to imported goods.

This development marks a significant step in the transition from the reporting phase to the definitive implementation phase of CBAM, which formally began in **January 2026**. From **February 2027**, companies will be in fact required to purchase certificates covering the emissions embedded in goods imported during 2026. During this period, certificate prices will be determined on a quarterly basis, with subsequent reference prices scheduled for publication throughout 2026. From 2027 onwards, the pricing methodology will shift to a weekly calculation based on the volume-weighted average of EU ETS auction prices, and all transactions will be conducted through a centralised EU platform currently under development.

However, the introduction of a concrete carbon price for imports comes against a backdrop of declining EU carbon prices in the first quarter of 2026, reflecting growing political pressure from several EU Member States to moderate the stringency of the EU ETS in order to support industrial competitiveness. This trend may therefore be reversed in the coming months, paving the way to further amendments to the established price mechanisms.

European Commission amends CBAM regulation, adding a temporary suspension clause for goods under certain circumstances

In January 2026 the European Commission, DG TAXUD, informed and clarified for CBAM compliers of the introduction of a new safeguard clause under the mechanism, as amended in December 2025, seeking to prevent significant price distortions in the EU internal market. The new clause allows for the temporary suspension of certain goods from CBAM in case of "serious and unforeseen circumstances" related to price impacts. However, the clause has not been yet adopted by the co-legislators, as it will only be applied if needed for specific cases.

Against this backdrop, Article27 a represents a cornerstone in CBAM application, as to date no goods have been removed from Annex I, while it enhances the EU Commission' s ability to respond to the growing concerns over the impact of CBAM on specific sectors, notably fertilizers.

The Commission has notably recognised that the introduction of this additional article may further increase uncertainty around CBAM, following the extension of the list of covered goods in December 2025. CBAM continues to be of considerable importance for Africa and stakeholders must continue to closely monitor as well as use the opportunities still available to interact with the EU to obtain favourable final results.

PACKAGING AND PACKAGING WASTE REGULATION (PPWR)

EC issues guidance for the implementation of the PPWR

With the date of application of **Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste (PPWR)** approaching, the European Commission has launched a guidance document aimed at clarifying key interpretative issues. Stakeholders have requested greater clarity on a number of practical aspects of the regulation, and in light of the novel and technically complex nature of several PPWR provisions, the guidance has been issued to address key challenges for which a degree of legal ambiguity or interpretative discretion remains. For additional questions not covered by the guidance, the Commission is expected to develop a **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** document, which will be updated on a regular basis as implementation progresses. The guidance seeks to clarify a number of interpretative questions raised by stakeholders, particularly in relation to **restrictions on single-use packaging, reuse targets, extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes and**

deposit return systems, while also specifying the categories of economic operators and products falling within the scope of the regulation.

Notwithstanding the guidance's release, the Commission promised to continue its refinement process through **secondary legislation** in order to ensure the consistent application of EPR obligations and labelling rules across the entire Union.

PPWR Product list amended by the European Commission

In February, the European Commission formally adopted the first delegated act amending the product list of the PPWR regulation. The amendment, concerning wrapping plastic and straps used to secure goods on pallets during transports, has now officially excluded the items from the EU's 100% reuse requirement. According to the Commission's declarations, the decision does not conflict with the 2030 targets requiring that the overall 40% of transport and sales packaging to be reusable, but it rather aims at ensuring competitiveness and operational feasibility of EU industries while advancing a circular economy.

EU Packaging Regulation published in the Official Journal of the European Union

The PPWR has been officially published in the Official Journal of the European Union, setting forth harmonised rules for all Member States. The regulation seeks to mitigate the environmental impact of packaging while fostering reuse, recycling, and efficient resource utilisation. The PPWR entered into force on 11th February 2025, and will become applicable as of 12th August 2026.

FOREST MONITORING LAW

European Parliament rejection of the Forest Monitoring Law amid continuing political polarization

Environmental advocates and green lawmakers have condemned the ongoing stalemate in the European Parliament on approval of the Forest Monitoring Law as a **setback for forest protection** and the EU's climate and biodiversity goals. Proponents have argued that the law can be an essential instrument to **standardise forest data collection and improve transparency**, forming the basis for more coherent EU forest policy. While relevant for the EU the spin-off from such legislation can be very helpful for emulation benefitting African forestry.

BIOECONOMY

EC advances EU Bioeconomy initiative introducing three new projects aimed at boosting its implementation

The implementation of the EU Bioeconomy agenda is gaining momentum in the region. On 10 June 2026, three complementary initiatives were launched by the European Commission to accelerate the deployment of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and address persistent barriers to market access and investment for new products.

In detail, the first initiative, the Bio-based Europe Alliance (BEA), is intended to support the commercial scale up of bio-based materials products and technology, while the Bioeconomy Investment Deployment Group (BIDG) will focus on improving access to finance and mobilising private and public capitals. Furthermore, the establishment of the Expert Group on Bioeconomy will support the implementation at Member State level and contribute to greater policy coordination.

As part of this broader effort, the Commission has also opened a call for expressions of interest to join the Bio-based Europe Alliance, seeking to address persistent gaps across bio-based value chains.

The newly established network aims to respond to stakeholders' challenges by connecting producers of bio-based materials, products and technologies with major European buyers, aiming to create more predictable demand and establish the market conditions necessary to unlock investment and support large-scale production. The Alliance has also set the objective of mobilising €10 billion in corporate offtake commitments by 2030.

The formal launch is now scheduled to take place on 20 and 21 October 2026 during the Global Bioeconomy Summit in Dublin.

Please find here the link to submit applications to the Bio-based Europe Alliance: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/document/1eecffa2-e14a-4533-b45a-366eeb22c3a1_en

EC's Directorate General for Agriculture launches Mission Soil Investment Forum in June

On 30th June 2026, the EC's DG Agriculture and Rural Development 's "Mission Soil Investment Forum" began in Brussels, with the possibility to participate online, bringing together investors, policymakers, financial institutions, researchers and relevant stakeholders. The discussion will focus on the mobilisation of resources for soil health and on accelerating the transition towards healthy soils in Europe. Its outcomes should contain important items for Africa.

Main objectives are expected to be: The strengthening through the discussions the promotion of soil health investment opportunities, the co-designing innovative investment mechanisms and building strategic partnerships able to support the implementation of the Mission Soil agenda. The role of finance in soil restoration and sustainable land management will also be further highlighted. Furthermore, identification of potential bottlenecks hindering the implementation of projects promoting healthier soils will be discussed, along with examples of good practices to scale up bioeconomy.

Please find the registration link here: **https://mission-soil-platform.ec.europa.eu/news-events/events/mission-soil-investment-forum**

The Commission is currently reaching out to bioeconomy organisations in Africa in view of the forthcoming Global Summit on Bioeconomy in Dublin. The importance of the bioeconomy in Africa seemingly makes this opportunity one which Africa should definitely use.

Council supports new EU Bioeconomy Strategy and calls for the scaling up of bio-based innovation from research to industrial deployment.

Following the launch of the new EU Bioeconomy Strategy by the European Commission, the Council of the European Union has reasserted its commitment to concretely support the scaling-up of bio-based innovation from research to industrial deployment. The conclusions remain strictly aligned with the EU's long-term vision of establishing a competitive, sustainable and resilient bioeconomy by 2040.

Through this renewed political commitment, the Council has once again highlighted the importance of expanding the uptake of bio-based and circular alternatives to fossil-based materials, while ensuring coherence with existing EU legislation and encouraging Member States to align their national strategies with the evolving EU framework. At the same time, the institution has emphasised the importance of renewable biological resources, such as plants, animals, and microorganisms, for the domestic production of food, energy, and industrial goods within the EU.

The need to accelerate innovation and investment in sustainable bio-based solutions was also particularly emphasised. This included calls for streamlined regulatory procedures, faster approval mechanisms and enhanced financial support to facilitate the transition from laboratory-scale innovation to market-ready applications. To this end, particular attention has been given to the development of "lead markets" for bio-based materials and technologies. While sectors such as bio-based plastics, chemicals, construction materials, and fertilisers have already been identified as strategic sectors in the past, the Council has now encouraged a broader sectoral approach, extending to areas such as textiles, paper, footwear, and components of the blue bioeconomy, including the use of marine biomass such as algae.

At the same time, according to the Council statements, the long-term viability of the bioeconomy will be closely linked to the sustainable management of biomass resources. Therefore, despite EU's current large reserve of biomass, the Council drew the attention on the need to ensure that biomass is efficiently used across value chains, with particular attention on the use of secondary biomass, including by-products, residues and bio-waste. The approach aims to reconcile economic development with environmental protection, avoiding resource overexploitation while maximising circularity.

European Commission published the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy: Background

In November 2025, the European Commission adopted a new "**Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy"**, positioning the bioeconomy as a central driver of a cleaner, more resilient and competitive European economy. In this the Commission highlighted the bioeconomy's significant economic footprint and its pivotal role in European growth. The Commission stressed that much of the sector's potential remains untapped, now outlining three main pillars: (i) scaling up innovation and investment, (ii) creating lead markets for bio-based materials and technologies and (iii)ensuring a sustainable supply of biomass.

To translate bio-based innovations into commercial reality, the Commission pledges to simplify regulatory procedures, accelerate approvals for new technologies, while directing existing EU funding toward bio-based solutions. A proposed Bioeconomy Investment Deployment Group is expected to help develop a pipeline of bankable projects and mobilise private capital. To stimulate demand, the strategy also identifies promising markets such as bio-based plastics, fibres, chemicals, construction materials, biorefineries, advanced fermentation and permanent biogenic carbon storage. It also proposes a *Bio-based Europe Alliance*, through which EU companies would collectively commit to purchasing €10 billion worth of bio-based solutions by 2030.

Sustainability safeguards remain a central theme. The Commission emphasises the need to ensure responsible sourcing of biomass, maintain Europe's self-sufficiency, and reinforce environmental protections for forests, soils, water and ecosystems. Circularity—including greater use of agricultural residues, organic waste and by-products—will be prioritised. New initiatives will reward farmers and foresters who protect soils, preserve carbon sinks and manage biomass sustainably.

Internationally, the strategy positions Europe to become a global leader in bio-based technologies and materials by strengthening partnerships and reducing exposure to geopolitical risks linked to concentrated resource markets. The promotion of the bioeconomy has become of paramount importance to Africa where the role of South Africa has been one of special importance especially since it held the G20 Presidency in 2025 and used this position to ia promote the African bioeconomy. The EU-African partnership should play a major role.

Global Bioeconomy Summit for October- GBS2026.

The incoming Irish Council Presidency has announced trade that in October it will hold a Global Bioeconomy Summit in Dublin which will help boost yet further the importance given to the bioeconomy in the EU and its activities. The GBS2026 is themed "Bioeconomy for Socio-Economic transformation and Climate Action" and expected to have up to 1,000 delegates. Scheduled to be a relatively high powered event the Summit the event will be of much interest to African stakeholders with forestry being among those for which it will be especially relevant. This newsletter will continue to give updates on the event as it develops with greater clarity and detail.

The newly established Bio-based Europe Alliance aims to mobilise €10 billion in corporate offtake commitments by 2030. Applications to join the latter are now open ahead of its formal launch in Dublin on 20–21 October 2026. This should be of considerable importance for Africa and EU- African relations not only as regards trade but also giving knowledge which can be downloaded in Africa after being made relevant for the local conditions.

BIOTECH ACT

Consultation on Biotech Act II remains open until 13th July 2026

Following the submission of the public consultation outcome to the European Commission the institution has now opened a second round of feedback to further improve the directive proposal and address potential bottleneck to its implementation in advance.
These have been extended until mid-July given their importance and companies have called to submit their opinion, comments and concerns to the Commission at a decisive stage for an important proposal that could help refine EU's approach to biotechnologies.

Companies are now thus called to submit their opinion, comments and concerns to the Commission at a decisive stage for an important proposal that could help refine EU's approach to biotechnologies.

In early May 2025, the European Commission decided to focus on a series of measures to create an enabling environment to accelerate the transition of biotech products from laboratory to factory and to the market. These measures could help modernise entire parts of our economy, from farming and forestry to energy and health, while maintaining the highest safety standards for the protection of the population and the environment.

The initiative is part of the broader Strategy for European Life Sciences, which looks at how the EU can support the green and digital transitions and develop high-value technologies. Several other EU policy initiatives are also particularly relevant for the sector. These include the future EU bioeconomy strategy and action plan, the European Innovation Act, the EU start-up and scale-up strategy and the European strategy for AI in science, plus initiatives that have already been adopted or are ongoing, such as the European industrial strategy, the Union of skills, the Savings and investments union, the EU Economic security strategy and the Energy Efficiency Directive.

Find here the link to submit your feedback on the proposal: **https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14627-Biotech-Act_en**

These moves are already of considerable for Africa ranging from their impact on African-EU economic relations to giving examples for Africa to emulate ia in the context of a strengthened EU-Africa partnership but the newly announced Bio-based Europe Alliance, the Global Bioeconomy Summit in Dublin and Bio360 Africa 2026 which South Africa will host in Johannesburg to promote the bioeconomy in Africa in June (17-18 June 2026) all give new opportunities for them to be further explored to grow the bioeconomy in Africa especially in the context of the EU-African partnership.

CONTINUING NEW ATTENTION TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF MINING FOR AFRICAN FORESTRY

In the current geo-political context there is a global scramble for so-called strategic or critical minerals has implications for African forests, usually negative, which is now being increasingly recognised. Africa has been recognised as a key location of such minerals and poorly managed mining activities can have extensive damage to the environment ia driving deforestation and forestry activities. The need for Africa to pay greater attention to this matter has largely continued especially in some of the new agreements being concluded and maybe Africa can use its relationship with the EU in particular to mobilise relevant actions. Mining driven deforestation actions in very recent times have recently been found to have resulted in thousands of hectares of deforestation in Africa.

The damage is not only through the mining but recent studies have now identified other severe causes of damage to African forests related to the new mining-related activities to ia focus especially on related infrastructure spread, towns and farming. The ripple impact of mining, also linked to other sectors, is particularly severe for indirect continuing deforestation and can spread up to 20km away .In the DRC, a key global forest region but also of great new global relevance as a location for strategic minerals importance such as copper, as many recent new international agreements between it and other countries illustrate, every hectare of ground in a loss of 34 hectares of forested areas nearby.

STRENGTHENING AFRICAN COLLABORATION ON STRENGTHENING AFRICAN FORESTS

The Great Green Wall (GGWI) is a flagship project of the African Union (AU) to combat desertification and land degradation in Africa using the planting of trees as the main vehicle, in many cases this being re-forestation and land restoration. Initially focussed on the Sahel region it has expanded in other areas of Africa. It is encouraging that in relation to the GGWI and also outside directly being linked to it including other new similar African initiatives, there has been expanded intra-African cooperation.

A recent example has been that the government of Ethiopia is working towards planting at least eight million trees in Zimbabwe next year under the continental-wide Green Legacy Initiative (GLI) launched by Ethiopia in 2019. Since that time Ethiopia has embarked on a massive tree-planting exercise, resulting in the planting of 47 billion trees.

By 2030, the Great Green Wall aims to: (i) Restore 100 million hectares of degraded land, roughly the size of Egypt;(ii) Remove 250 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere;(iii)Create 10 million green jobs across Africa;(iv) Improve food security and livelihoods for millions of people living in the Sahel;(v) Thus far more than 20 African countries are taking part in the initiative, supported by international organisations, development banks and environmental groups as well as individual countries outside Africa; (vi) The project intends to restore its goal by 2030 and this requires scaling up the restoration rate significantly are being increasingly but forests can contribute significantly as their contributions to preserving most forms of vegetation and healthy soils are increasingly realised not least of all in the past few months. The Great Green Wall is now considered one of the world's largest eco-restoration projects, tackled on an international scale as it is it also underlines the importance of both international as well as multi-stakeholder involvement with forests being a key contributor.