



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, 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 operates as 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.

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.

Arising from these shared goals, the AFF team comprising the Executive Secretary, Labode POPOOLA and the Technical Advisor, Godwin KOWERO were invited to Brussels, Belgium to interact with key stakeholders at the EU and other organizations. The trip, held during 12 to 17 May, 2024 comprised meetings with the following Directorates-General of the European Commission:

1. Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
2. Directorate-General for Environment
3. Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
4. Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA)
5. Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development

On 14 May, 2024 a lunch debate involving over 20 Ambassadors and diplomats from African countries, and the Director General of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, previously occupying the Presidency of the Council (of Ministers) in the EU, and the management of one of Africa's leading forestry and bioeconomic companies, SAPPI, was held at which a presentation was made by the AFF on emerging issues in African Forestry and the increasing relevance of the sector in the economies countries in the continent. Additionally, the AFF met with the leadership of the European Forest Institute.

As a first token of this cooperation, AFF members will receive in future a regular newsletter from the HLG on Forestry and Biomaterials, with the purpose to stimulate joint thinking about the research and development of a climate neutral bioeconomy.

WITH THE SUPPORT FROM SAPPI

*EUROPEAN UNION REGULATION ON DEFORESTATION-FREE PRODUCTS
(EUDR) - LATEST DEVELOPMENTS*

Calls for a two-year delay to EUDR implementation amid concerns from EPP and White House

On June 27, 2024, Peter [Liese](#), the environmental lead of the European People's Party (EPP), the largest political group in the European Parliament, formally requested a two-year delay on the market restrictions imposed by the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). This appeal aligns with growing international concern, particularly from the [Biden administration](#), about the economic impact of the regulation.

Liese expressed optimism that the European Commission would consider the postponement, especially after recent warnings from the U.S. about the significant challenges faced by exporters in complying with the EUDR. These concerns were articulated in a letter sent on May 30th by U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, and Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack to Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič. The letter highlighted the difficulties for U.S. exporters in meeting the regulation's requirements on time.

Liese criticized the EUDR as a "bureaucratic monster" in its current form and emphasized the EPP's intent to revisit other Green Deal legislations, such as CO2 emissions standards for cars, advocating for more technologically neutral approaches.

The request for postponement comes amidst broader concerns from EU and U.S. stakeholders. The European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC) and other EU trade groups, such as FEDIOL, have voiced apprehensions over the regulation's impact on supply chains. During the FEFAC Annual Public Meeting on May 31st, FEFAC President Pedro Cordero noted that European feed companies have not yet secured soybean meal offers for January 2025, highlighting significant supply chain disruptions and market uncertainty linked to the EUDR.

As the enforcement of the EUDR is set to begin by the end of 2024, questions persist about the technical readiness of the regulation's information system, which is critical for submitting and processing due diligence statements. Both EU and U.S. officials continue to call for a delay to address these unresolved issues.

U.S. stance on EUDR criticised by American companies, who now call for stronger support

Despite the Biden administration's criticism of the EUDR and its call for a delay, [U.S. companies](#) are now advocating for stronger enforcement of the measures outlined in the EU regulation.

A group of stakeholders has recently argued that if the Biden administration is committed to a global zero-deforestation agenda, it should actively support the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and enhance efforts to help U.S. soy farmers and cattle ranchers comply. Instead, the U.S. has called for a delay, echoing the concerns of a small group of less ethical producers while ignoring the thousands of companies and investors backing the EUDR.

The delegation pointed out that U.S. exports of soy and cattle to the EU carry minimal deforestation risk, contrary to the claims made by U.S. officials in their recent letter to the EU. In fact, American producers, particularly in soy and cattle, stand to benefit from the EUDR due to their low deforestation footprint. The call for postponement not only undermines these advantages but also penalises companies that have already invested in due diligence to comply with the regulation.

They concluded that the U.S. should be a leading supporter of the EUDR, given its capability to produce regulated commodities without contributing to deforestation, positioning American exports favourably in the European market.

EU Deforestation Regulation set to impact Uganda's cocoa sector

The European Union's Deforestation Regulation is set to significantly affect [Uganda's cocoa industry](#), which was introduced by the British in 1901 and fully developed by the 1960s.

The sector is largely made up of smallholder farmers, with around 15,000 households relying on cocoa as a crucial source of income. Gustav Gonget, Managing Director and Founder of Equator Chocolate, noted that Uganda's specialty cocoa, once fermented to high standards, enjoys global recognition and high demand.

Despite this, many farmers are struggling with unfair pricing and financial limitations, which impede their ability to invest in improving yield and quality. The EUDR's demands are adding to these challenges, compounded by the lack of a dedicated cocoa policy in Uganda. Pamela Anyoti Peronaci, FAO Technical Advisor on Climate-Resilient Cocoa Value Chain Development, pointed out that this policy void results in inefficient resource allocation and inconsistent support for farmers.

To address this, the FAO is assisting the Ugandan Agriculture Ministry in creating a strategy and policy framework for the cocoa sector. Richard Mwesigwa, Programme Director at aBi Development, underscores the need for financial support mechanisms, including government subsidies, access to capital, and partnerships with financial institutions, to help farmers comply with EUDR requirements.

Additionally, the EU is supporting various initiatives, such as CoCoDEV, aBi Development, and the EU-EAC Market Access Upgrade Programme, to help Uganda's cocoa sector meet international standards and market demands.

Smallholder cocoa farmers confront EUDR challenges in addition to EDF dam problem

In Cameroon, [smallholder cocoa farmers](#) are grappling with unemployment and the additional challenges posed by the EUDR.

Farmers, who are already dealing with displacement due to a major dam project, were largely unaware of the EUDR until recently. Bonny Mfoulou of Green Development Advocate (GDA) describes their frustration, likening their predicament to being "pigs in a fence." Électricité de France (EDF) Cameroon, responsible for the dam project, has encouraged farmers to expand cocoa cultivation, despite much of the available land being forested.

Conflicting guidance from EDF, which offers support for new farms, and the EU's restrictions on forested areas, is causing significant confusion.

Farmers are now uncertain about how to proceed and worry that the lack of viable alternatives might compel them to continue deforestation.

With cocoa crucial to rural livelihoods and youth employment in Cameroon, the EUDR's restrictions could severely limit future prospects. Cocoa farming, which depends on forest shade, supports around half a million Cameroonian households and is the country's second most important export.

EU Deforestation Regulation could drive 'Greenflation' for European consumers

The European Union Deforestation Regulation is anticipated to [cost EU consumers](#) up to USD \$1.5 billion, as new sustainability rules impact global commodity supply chains, according to a recent [GlobalData](#) study.

GlobalData estimates that compliance costs for companies involved in the supply chains of oil palm products (such as crude palm oil and palm kernel oil) and rubber could exceed \$1.5 billion. Analysts expect that while some of these costs may be absorbed by companies, a significant portion is likely to be passed on to EU consumers through higher prices for food, beverages, and other products.

The study examines additional challenges faced by farmers, companies, and manufacturers dealing with the regulated commodities. It also explores the regulation's potential effects on global supply chains, EU consumer markets, and future competitiveness with China.

Food and drink categories expected to be most affected include coffee, chocolate, soy-based meat alternatives, and palm oil products, as well as personal care items such as shampoo. The study found that operational costs for coffee suppliers will rise due to the requirement for GPS-based tracking and traceability, increasing expenses for each grower.

Furthermore, the study highlights that the EUDR's additional administrative burdens will result in significant costs for smallholder farmers, with governments in producer countries likely needing to provide support. This is already evident among cocoa farmers in West Africa and coffee farmers in Southeast Asia. The EUDR will affect agricultural practices in regions such as South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia, encouraging shifts towards agroforestry to avoid deforestation classifications by the EU.

GlobalData also notes that increased regulatory demands might drive some suppliers in what the EU terms 'third countries' to seek trade opportunities in markets with fewer regulatory requirements.

Forest Stewardship Council introduces FSC aligned certification and reporting for EUDR: Facilitating compliance with latest regulation

On the 9th of July, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) launched the [FSC Aligned for EUDR](#), a new solution aimed at facilitating compliance with the EUDR. This initiative seeks to simplify the complex

process of meeting EUDR requirements for businesses involved in trading forest-based products within Europe.

FSC Aligned for EUDR comprises two primary components:

- FSC Aligned *Certification* for EUDR: Starting July 1, 2024, this additional module integrates FSC's stringent standards with specific EUDR expectations concerning risk assessment, due diligence, and supply chain transparency.
- FSC Aligned *Reporting for EUDR*: Scheduled for launch on August 30, 2024, this automated system will assist companies in compiling necessary due diligence reports and statements, improving traceability and data management across intricate supply chains.

The Chief System Integrity Officer leading FSC's EUDR efforts, Marc Jessel, noted that "the EU consumes a substantial portion of products linked to deforestation, thus as the December 2024 deadline approaches, we are committed to aiding businesses in efficiently meeting these new requirements".

FSC has also initiated an Early Adopters Onboarding Programme, currently supporting over 20 companies in implementing FSC Aligned Certification for EUDR.

[PEFC introduces new module standard to aid compliance with EU Deforestation-Free Regulation](#)

Following a similar initiative to the FSC, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), a leading global alliance of national forest certification systems, launched a [new PEFC EUDR](#) due diligence system on 20 July 2024.

PEFC has developed a new module standard to assist organisations in demonstrating compliance with the European Union's Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR). This standard outlines the steps that PEFC chain of custody certified organisations can follow to implement a Due Diligence System, ensuring adherence to EUDR requirements through the PEFC framework.

Applicable to products made from forest and tree-based materials, the standard can be voluntarily adopted by any organisation globally that holds or seeks a PEFC-recognised chain of custody certificate. It is intended for operators and traders who place or make available such materials or products on the European Union market or export them from the EU.

Additionally, the standard can be used by organisations outside the EU whose products will eventually be placed on, or exported from, the EU market through direct or indirect customers.

[Indonesia and EU work to align forest data ahead of EUDR compliance deadline](#)

The [Indonesian government](#) and the European Union are working to reconcile differences in their forest and supply chain data as the crucial deadline approaches, which could impact Indonesia's ability to export commodities to the EU.

Earlier this year, discrepancies were identified between Indonesia's forest maps—based on its own monitoring system, SIMONTANA—and those used by the EU for the EUDR, derived from the Forest Observatory platform. These differences, particularly regarding the classification of land types,

could complicate compliance for Indonesian producers and potentially lead to their categorisation as high-risk exporters.

The EUDR mandates that commodities imported into the EU must be proven to be deforestation-free, requiring detailed evidence including geolocation data. While the concept of allowing EU buyers to trace commodities back to the farm where they were grown is significant, Indonesian companies face several challenges in meeting these requirements, such as bureaucratic hurdles, overlapping land claims, and a lack of documentation for palm oil transactions. The lack of traceability to the plantation level is particularly problematic for farms managed by independent smallholders, who produce up to 40% of Indonesia's palm oil. In response, the Indonesian government is developing a traceability dashboard, set to launch in September, which will compile and synchronise supply chain data for key commodities.

Despite these efforts, the Indonesian government remains concerned that being labelled a high-risk country under the EUDR could severely hinder its exports to the EU.

Fairtrade urges EU to address EUDR issues for small producers

[Fairtrade International](#) has called on the EU to address concerns that its new anti-deforestation law might disadvantage small producers.

Fairtrade is concerned that small-scale farmers could be excluded from the EU market due to difficulties in managing and submitting the required data, rather than because they engage in deforestation. The organisation is advocating for increased financial support and clarification from the European Commission to help these producers meet compliance requirements.

It is also urging the EU to develop a framework that supports smallholders and provides market incentives to offset compliance costs. Traders have already noted price increases for EU delivery contracts as they stock up on goods such as coffee and cocoa.

Fairtrade has updated its Cocoa and Coffee Standards to align with the EUDR and is collaborating with Satelligence to assist African co-operatives in gathering and verifying geolocation data on farms, thereby improving deforestation monitoring and compliance reporting.

More about the regulation and potential issues

The EUDR, which mandates strict due diligence requirements to curb deforestation, will start being applied from December 30, 2024, for large and medium enterprises, and from June 30, 2025, for micro and small enterprises. It specifically targets a list of commodities outlined in Articles 38(2) EUDR, including cattle, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber, soya, and wood, and demands comprehensive traceability from the point of origin to processing and distribution. Operators are required, under Article 3, to ensure that commodities exported are:

- deforestation-free;
- produced in accordance with the relevant legislation of the country of production;
- covered by a due diligence statement.

Pursuant to Articles 3, 4, and 8 of the Regulation, due diligence statements must be submitted to the designated authorities via the information system delineated in Article 33 before placing products on the market. This electronically transmitted due diligence statement must include the details specified in Annex II and affirm that the operator has conducted due diligence, identifying no or negligible risk.

Expected developments

In response to these challenges, the Commission has planned updates to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQ) document, a non-binding working file released by the Commission, aimed at supporting National authorities and economic operators on the text, context, and purpose of the EUDR, to achieve its uniform application across the European Union.

An additional document, the Guidance on EUDR, is set to be published by the mid of July to further explain various aspects of the regulation, *inter alia*:

- clarifications on placing and making available on the EU market;
- legality;
- risk assessment;
- product scope; and
- the role of third-party verification schemes.

A reassessment of the risk categorization of countries based on deforestation metrics is also anticipated, aiming to mitigate the negative impacts on smallholder producers in developing regions. This decision is a response to concerns raised by developing countries about the negative implications of being classified as "high risk," which can lead to operational reductions or a preference for larger producers with advanced technological capabilities.

The European Wood Policy Platform (WoodPoP) advances wood-based circular bioeconomy in Europe

The European Wood Policy Platform (WoodPoP) continues its efforts to promote a wood-based circular bioeconomy across Europe.

On 19 July, the WoodPoP secretariat participated in the "WOOD for GLOBE: Leading Pathways to Carbon Neutrality and Resilience" event. This high-level dialogue reviewed progress on implementing the sustainable wood pathways identified in the Ministerial Call on Sustainable Wood, launched in 2022 at the XV World Forestry Congress in Seoul, Republic of Korea. It also explored emerging partnerships and needs in relation to Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement.

In a previous meeting held in May 2024, WoodPoP convened to advance the development and dissemination of actions promoting sustainable forest use while ensuring protection at the EU level. Participants underscored the need for creating a supportive environment for a resilient European wood sector that harmonises economic growth with environmental and social equity.

The [next meeting](#) is scheduled for 11 September, supported by Innovation Norway, to explore the innovative use of wood in Norway's industry and to discuss further advancements.

The WoodPoP initiative was established following a proposal by Finland and Austria during the Forest Fund's Wood Initiative. The platform aims to accelerate policy dialogue focused on wood, bringing together high-level experts from politics, administration, business, and research to address current and future challenges related to the material and energy use of wood and to stimulate innovative, cross-sector developments in line with bioeconomy and circular economy principles.

GREEN DEAL, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND PHASE OF THE EU'S CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM (CBAM) IS POISED TO BEGIN.

CBAM's Second Transitional Phase started in July 2024

The [second transitional phase](#) of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) started on July 1, 2024. During this phase, EU importers of products are required to collect and disclose the actual embedded emissions data (instead of default values) of their imports from global (non-EU based) manufacturers.

The transition to a CBAM based system commenced on October 1, 2023, with EU importers of specific products such as steel, aluminium, cement, fertilizer, hydrogen, and electricity mandated to report their embedded carbon emissions. The initial quarterly reports were due by January 31, 2024, though compliance was low, with only a minority of companies meeting this initial deadline.

To ensure compliance in this new stage, EU importers must now perform detailed screenings of the emissions data received from non-EU manufacturers. This involves verifying that the data accurately reflects the actual emissions as per CBAM's GHG accounting principles and requesting necessary documentation, such as calculation templates and supporting evidence.

To improve the accuracy of carbon accounting, importers are advised to:

- Cross-verify the data against multiple sources to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- Conduct audits to assess the data quality and identify any discrepancies.
- Validate the accuracy of the calculations and measurements used.

The EU Launched a Carbon Market Diplomacy Task Force

At the beginning of 2024, the EU unveiled its ambitious climate targets for 2040, committing to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 90% compared to 1990 levels. Alongside this, the EU introduced its Industrial Carbon Management Strategy, focusing on improvements in CO2 transportation and storage facilities, as well as fostering international cooperation for effective decarbonization.

In April 2024, the EU announced the formation of a [carbon market diplomacy task force](#). This initiative aims to enhance international carbon markets by boosting diplomatic efforts to help other countries establish similar schemes. EU climate policy chief Wopke Hoekstra highlighted the importance of supporting nations in implementing carbon pricing mechanisms similar to the EU ETS to combat climate change effectively.

The task force will work to harmonize existing carbon pricing systems and facilitate connections among them, addressing challenges faced by regions like China, California, and Britain, which already operate carbon markets.

The EU carbon market diplomacy task force will play a crucial role in global climate efforts by bridging differences between existing carbon pricing systems and fostering international collaboration. This initiative, announced alongside the 2040 climate goals, underscores the EU's commitment to achieving a 90% net reduction in CO₂ emissions and leading global efforts in carbon pricing strategies. The task force and the EU's climate goals will be key topics of discussion in the newly elected European Parliament this summer.

European Commission further updated CBAM FAQ in August 2024

The Commission continues its work on drafting and [updating FAQs](#) to address the most pressing questions from operators. The last update on 8 August 2024 concerns twelve FAQs noteworthy for operators and their obligation to provide the necessary data for completing CBAM reports.

The FAQ highlights the importance of transparent and smooth collaboration between the EU operator and their non-EU supplier. The Commission has published a Guide and specific templates to ensure accurate determination of emissions embedded in CBAM goods.

The CBAM declarant is responsible for compiling the quarterly report, which, until 30 June 2024, could be done using default values provided by the Commission. However, from 1 July 2024, declarants must report actual emissions for each CBAM good imported into the EU. Therefore, if the declarant is unable to obtain real emissions data from the supplier and chooses to use default values (beyond the quantitative limit, for complex goods, of up to 20% of the total embedded emissions considering the entire production chain) for emission calculations, the CBAM report submitted will be considered incorrect or incomplete.

Thus, the CBAM declarant must make every effort, with the utmost diligence, to obtain the necessary data from the supplier. FAQ No. 74 adds that if the declarant fails to acquire real data in any way, they may provide evidence of their efforts, including supporting documentation, on the CBAM Transitional Register portal in the “comments” section. In such cases, the National Competent Authorities, which are also responsible for imposing penalties, may take into account the efforts made, including repeated ones. It is advisable to follow the principles of utmost diligence to accurately assess whether one's efforts can be considered adequate.

Germany, Austria and Netherlands released the first CBAM reporting rules following EC clarifications

As mentioned above, [National Competent Authorities](#) are responsible for assessing whether companies have made adequate efforts to obtain actual emissions data and for enforcing any applicable penalties.

On August 2, 2024, German Emissions Trading Authority (DEHSt), which handles CBAM for importers in Germany, confirmed the process shared by the EU Commission. However, actual emissions data only needs to be reported for goods imported from 1 August 2024, according to the Implementing Regulation.

If default values are used for imports thereafter, DEHSt will make use of its discretionary powers when:

- Proof is added that all possible efforts have been undertaken to report actual emissions or
- Justification is given that all reasonable efforts have been made and that further steps to determine actual data would have required a disproportionate effort and
- There are no further inconsistencies in the report

In Austria, the finance authorities shared their approach to CBAM on 30 July 2024. They also require actual emissions data from suppliers for reports from Q3 onwards. However, the Office for National Emissions Trading (AnEH), which oversees CBAM in Austria, will not impose penalties if suppliers fail to provide the data after two attempts by the reporting business.

Similarly, the Dutch Emissions Authority (NEA), which oversees CBAM in the Netherlands, is also offering some flexibility. Default values can be used if importers have made efforts to get the actual data. If this data isn't available, businesses should explain what they did and why they couldn't get the information.

South Africa heads BRICS appeal for review of CBAM

A South African trade minister recently voiced opposition to the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) during an [August BRICS meeting](#) in Russia.

The CBAM, which imposes tariffs on goods with higher carbon emissions than those produced within the EU, has raised concerns in South Africa, which argues that the measure breaches WTO rules.

At the Moscow meeting, it was noted that BRICS countries share a common view on the need to reassess the CBAM. The unilateral implementation of such measures, it was argued, could unfairly disadvantage developing nations and should not proceed without proper dialogue.

PACKAGING & PACKAGING WASTE REGULATION (PPWR) DEVELOPMENTS

European Parliament approved a revised version of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)

On April 24, 2024, the plenary session of the European Parliament cast votes to advance the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) toward its final stages of legislative enactment. This [regulation](#), designed to be directly applicable across all EU member states, aims to preemptively reduce waste generation through stringent reuse requirements, restrictions on market practices, obligations for deposit-return schemes, and additional regulatory measures.

Following disagreements on recycled content origins and plastic materials' focus, the decisive vote on April 24 sets the stage for the new Parliament and Council, elected in June 2024, to give their

final endorsement in late 2024. Thus, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is expected to be implemented by 2026.

Under this new regulatory framework, companies involved in manufacturing and distribution will be compelled to:

- Undertake significant modifications to their packaging solutions, product designs, and logistical operations to accommodate mandated reuse systems and enhance sustainability.
- Specifically, entities providing takeaway food and beverages must enable consumers to use their own containers and establish dedicated collection systems for single-use plastic (SUP) bottles and metal beverage containers.
- Augment the recycled material content within their plastic packaging configurations.
- Implement reduction strategies by eliminating superfluous packaging elements, minimizing void space within packaging, reducing material thickness, and incorporating refill options.

To facilitate this transition, the adoption of prevention and eco-design strategies—already mandatory in several jurisdictions—will serve as an effective methodology to fulfil and exceed these regulatory demands, thereby fostering a more sustainable industrial ecosystem.

What will be banned starting January 2030? - Background of the proposed PPWR Regulation

The PPWR, pivotal for the forestry value chain, especially for entities manufacturing paper-based packaging, prescribes substantial reductions in packaging materials by the years 2030, 2035, and 2044. The regulation prohibits the use of detrimental chemicals such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and bisphenol A (BPA) in food packaging and advocates for the utilization of sustainable materials sourced from responsibly managed forests, with a strong emphasis on the recyclability and reusability of packaging.

Commencing in January 2030, prohibitions will include:

- Single-use plastic packaging for unprocessed fresh fruits and vegetables, and for consumables in bars and restaurants.
- Single-use items such as condiments, sauces, sugar, and cream.
- Small-scale hotel products like shampoo and shower gel.
- Plastic wrap for suitcases at airports.

However, exemptions apply to milk cartons, disposable compostable plastic packaging, and packaging for fruits and vegetables weighing less than one and a half kilograms, necessary to prevent food deterioration.

The regulation sets packaging reduction goals of 5% by 2030, 10% by 2035, and 15% by 2040, with MEPs advocating for a 20% reduction in plastic packaging by 2040. It also mandates a maximum empty space ratio of 50% in various packaging types to minimize waste, and stipulates that manufacturers and importers ensure minimized packaging weight and volume, except where protected packaging designs are already established.

Additionally, the MEPs call on EU member states to ensure that 90% of materials used in packaging are collected separately by 2029, reinforcing the regulation's role in promoting environmental sustainability and a circular economy within the EU packaging sector.

Syntegon to Showcase Eco-Friendly Packaging Solutions at FACHPACK 2024

European companies are gearing up to comply with the new PPWR regulation, introducing a variety of products to meet its standards.

Among them, the [German company Syntegon](#) is set to unveil its latest sustainable packaging innovations at FACHPACK 2024 in Nuremberg, Germany, from September 24th to 26th. Syntegon will showcase a range of machines and software designed to help food manufacturers transition to environmentally friendly packaging processes in line with the EU's upcoming Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR).

Key products include the VFFS SVX Agile, which produces recyclable mono-material pouches, the Kliklok ACE carton erector for glue-free trays, and a horizontal packaging line for bars that uses paper instead of plastic. Syntegon's new offerings aim to meet sustainability requirements without compromising performance.

Horizon (Europe and IA) in Africa

Horizon Europe Research Call: Sustainable Food Packaging and Agricultural Production

In June 2024, Horizon Europe launched a call for research proposals aimed at developing and producing [sustainable food packaging](#) and agricultural solutions. This call seeks innovative approaches to eliminate fossil-carbon-based plastics from the food supply chain, aligning with the EU's goals for a circular, resource-efficient, and climate-neutral economy.

Proposals should focus on creating nature-inspired alternatives to fossil-carbon plastics and associated production methods. These alternatives must be circular, safe, and sustainable by design, with capabilities for reusability, recyclability, and complete biodegradability. They should address various uses of plastics in the food system, such as agricultural mulch and food packaging, and make use of bio-based sources and materials including:

- Polymers derived from natural sources (e.g., cellulose, chitin, lignin, keratin)
- Natural polymers (e.g., microbial, fungal, and plant materials)
- Synthetic polymers from bio-based sources

Although this call is primarily for EU countries, entities from third countries can apply under Annex II, which allows legal entities from non-candidate countries to join consortia that include the required number of EU or associated country partners.

The submission deadline is 16 October 2024.

New Horizon Europe tender targets EU-Africa Partnership on Food Security and Soil Restoration

In May 2024, a [new horizon tender](#) was launched to undertake studies on EU-Africa Partnership on Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture. This initiative specifically supports the international dimension of the Mission ‘A Soil Deal for Europe,’ aiming to meet its objectives, notably objective 4 “the reduction of soil pollution and enhancement of restoration efforts”.

Activities under this tender will also align with broader EU-Africa cooperation goals, including the African Union’s strategies on soil health, food, and nutrition security, as well as global commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the areas of sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

The significance of this endeavour is underscored by the IPBES report on land degradation and restoration, which assesses the substantial economic costs associated with land and soil degradation, including the escalating costs of inaction. With Africa facing widespread soil degradation, inefficient land use, rapid population growth, and increased urbanization, the pressures on land resources are intensifying. These challenges are leading to reduced land availability and quality per farmer, exacerbated by climate change and biodiversity loss, resulting in increasingly unsustainable farming practices and ecosystem management.

Given that soil health is crucial for both climate change adaptation and mitigation, there is a pressing need for holistic, system-based approaches to tackle the diverse and context-specific challenges related to soil health at both national and regional levels. Furthermore, an evidence-driven analytical framework is urgently required to effectively prioritize soil health issues and plan interventions, ensuring the alignment of partners and investments across regions and countries.

Proposed activities are:

- Developing an Africa-wide soil health dashboard that scales up from the EU's EUSO Soil Health Dashboard. This involves leveraging existing data sources like the Africa Soil Information System (AfSIS) and incorporating insights from EU-funded projects such as Soils 4 Africa.
- Strategically collecting new data to address soil knowledge gaps, which will enhance the dashboard’s accuracy and functionality through stakeholder engagement.
- Identifying local and regional thresholds for critical soil health descriptors and creating roadmaps to elucidate soil health trends in response to policy measures.
- Assisting African nations in formulating national soil health strategies for improved management of soil resources in agriculture and environmental contexts, involving at least eight countries. Ensuring that proposals demonstrate a path toward the open access, longevity, sustainability, and interoperability of knowledge and outputs, in collaboration with the EU Soil Observatory (EUSO) and SoilWISE.

Proposals may also extend to leveraging international expertise, notably from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and should incorporate a long-term sustainability plan for the soil health dashboard in Africa.

The deadline for submissions is set for October 8, 2024.

Background of Horizon Europe

[Horizon Europe](#) is the EU's main funding program for research and innovation, boasting a budget of €95.5 billion for the period 2021-2027. It aims to address climate change, support the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and enhance EU competitiveness and economic growth. The program fosters collaboration and amplifies the impact of research and innovation in shaping, supporting, and implementing EU policies while addressing global challenges. It plays a crucial role in generating and spreading excellent knowledge and technologies.

Moreover, Horizon Europe is instrumental in creating jobs, engaging the EU's full talent spectrum, promoting economic expansion, bolstering industrial competitiveness, and maximizing the impact of investments under a revitalized European Research Area.

Distinctive features of Horizon Europe that set it apart from its predecessor, Horizon 2020, include:

- European Innovation Council (EIC): The EIC supports high-risk innovations with breakthrough potential and disruptive nature, primarily targeting SMEs with 70% of its budget.
- Missions: Horizon Europe introduces missions aiming to achieve bold, inspiring, and quantifiable objectives within specific timelines, encompassing five primary mission areas.
- Open Science Policy: The program enforces mandatory open access to research publications and applies open science principles across all activities.
- Revamped Partnerships: Horizon Europe fosters more strategic and ambitious partnerships with industry to support EU policy goals, emphasizing objective-driven collaboration.