

Brussels, 8 January 2024

Dear Commission President von der Leyen,

Dear Commissioner Simson,

Dear Commissioner Hoekstra,

Subject: Last Opportunity to Phase Out Soy Biofuels

The time to phase out soy biofuels is now.

The European Federation for Transport and Environment, in coalition with the 29 undersigned organisations, is calling on the European Commission to immediately phase out soy-based biofuels from counting towards EU renewable energy targets in the upcoming revision of the Delegated Regulation for high Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC) risk feedstocks.

The Commission must recognise that EU renewable energy targets should no longer allow the use of soybean oil in biofuel feedstocks due to the devastating impacts its cultivation has on the climate, as well as the local biodiversity and human living conditions in countries where it is produced and exported to EU Member States.

Ensuring soybean oil joins palm oil in being classified as a high ILUC risk feedstock in the Delegated Regulation, which supplements the Renewable Energy Directive (EU) 2023/2413, will be the last chance for this Commission to firmly shut the door on one of the world's most environmentally damaging biofuel feedstocks before the upcoming European Parliament elections in June 2024.

Importantly, both soy and palm oil have already been identified as significant drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and are covered under the recently adopted EU Deforestation Regulation. It is crucial for the Commission to ensure policy consistency and alignment, **preventing the RED from acting as a loophole** that enables feedstocks covered by the EUDR to be promoted in biofuels.

We would also like to remind the European Commission of the European Parliament's demand for an immediate phase out of both soybean oil and palm oil during the RED negotiations, and urge the Commission to take heed of these demands. Several EU Member States have already started this phase out on their own accord, with France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium already phasing out the consumption of both feedstocks as of 2023.

This Commission, which has been a world leader in the green transition, must not take a step back in its climate ambitions now. It must take this opportunity to phase out soy biofuels and do so immediately, not in 2030.

Crop biofuels are a cure that's worse than the disease.

All biofuels made from crops should be phased out from EU renewable energy targets, as using land for biofuel production is counterproductive in climate terms. Soy-based biodiesel is one of the worst offenders, and has been proven to emit up to **twice as much CO₂** as the fossil fuel diesel it is used to replace, when taking into account the indirect deforestation caused by the demand for soybean oil.

The disproportionate environmental damage caused by both soy and palm biofuels cannot be ignored by EU policy. Currently, soy and palm biofuels constitute only one third of the EU biodiesel feedstock volume, yet they contribute **two thirds of biodiesel CO₂ emissions in the EU**, as of 2022.

Despite these shocking facts, soy biodiesel has rapidly grown in the EU in recent years. Between 2015 and 2022, the consumption of soy biodiesel in the European Union experienced **a fivefold increase**, underscoring the need for a critical examination of its environmental and social implications.

Environmental obligations over trade deals.

While we are aware of the current WTO case against the European Commission regarding palm biofuels and the trade pressure coming from soy producing countries, it remains crucial that the scientific data highlighting the urgent need for the immediate phase-out of both soy and palm biofuels should guide the decision-making process. Phasing-out high ILUC risk feedstocks is compatible with WTO rules, on the basis of environmental protection. Ultimately, trade disputes and negotiations should not deter the EU from making essential climate decisions and aligning with its international commitments. The EU made the right decision when it classified palm oil as a high ILUC risk feedstock in 2019, despite immense trade pressure from palm producing countries. It now has the power to do the same for soy biofuels.

The European Union must lead by example in fostering ambitious pathways to decarbonise the transport sector, promote truly renewable energy, and safeguard human rights and biodiversity. Incentivizing the use of soy biofuels contradicts these aspirations and should no longer be endorsed.

As the highest level representatives of the Commission, we urge you to ensure the inclusion of soybean oil as a high ILUC risk biofuel in the Delegated Regulation and to phase out both soy and palm biofuels immediately, not in 2030.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to an environmentally and socially responsible approach to biofuel feedstocks in the upcoming revision of the Delegated Regulation on high ILUC risk feedstocks.

Signed by the following organisations:



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