

# Food firms push UK government for strengthened deforestation laws

Over 20 food firms have called on the UK government to tighten proposed legislation aimed at combatting supply chain deforestation, in a letter released as the government's consultation on forest protection comes to a close.

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Signatories including McDonald's, Unilever and Tesco want the proposed law, which would ban companies from using produce linked to illegally deforested land, to be applicable to all deforestation, regardless of its legal status. Customer dissatisfaction around commodities linked to illegal deforestation, particularly in the Amazon, has risen, with 81% of respondents to a WWF survey supporting increased transparency around imported product origins.

## Why does this matter?

Corporates are increasingly stepping away from links to deforestation and looking to reinforce standards around transparency in supply chains.

As such, some firms are turning to technology to track commodity sourcing remotely. Most recently, Unilever launched its anti-deforestation pilot

programme which tests the use of anonymised geolocation data from mobile phone signals. Combined with high-resolution satellite imagery, the firm is able to pinpoint where its raw materials are grown and the locations they are transported to. The pilot, running in soya-bean farms in Brazil and palm oil plantations in Sumatra, is designed to allow the cessation of business with farms found to be associated with deforested land.

Similar satellite systems have been adopted by other firms. Mars is using satellite mapping to ensure its palm oil suppliers are compliant with company protocols and has since ended relations with two major and 21 secondary suppliers.

Applying remote sensing technology such as satellites could boost supply chain transparency by allowing firms to monitor operations in geographical regions that have previously been difficult to observe. As satellites are increasingly employed to monitor other environmental issues, such as methane leakage, it's likely we will see more firms looking to use eyes in the sky to track environmental compliance.

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## Lateral thought from Curation

Brazil is one country facing increasing criticism over escalating levels of deforestation in the Amazon rainforest as a result of forest protections being rolled back. Growing calls to halt involvement with environmentally destructive activities like deforestation means Western nations and firms may look to scale back relations with such countries and look to other suppliers.

One beneficiary in this scenario, however, could be China, a country that Brazil is already heavily dependent on. Given Western nations would presumably be uncomfortable seceding influence, perhaps there is a need to find a solution that would provide support to developing nations like Brazil to maintain their biodiversity and improve environmental measures without sacrificing economic growth.

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