



Can cities take action against tropical deforestation?

"Forest Footprint for Cities" is an article published on 17 January 2023 by the World Resources Institute, written by M. Phillips et al. Its importance lies in establishing a link between consumption habits in cities and the impact of this consumption on tropical deforestation and the resulting CO₂ emissions, by developing a tool to assess this consumption for use by public policy-makers and civil society as a whole. "La Fabrique Écologique" takes away three key points from this article:

#1 The importance of restoring tropical forests in the fight against climate imbalance is by no means a negligible factor, since deforestation is solely responsible for 8 to 11% of all global annual greenhouse gas emissions. Since forests absorb CO₂, deforestation releases these stocks into the atmosphere and prevents even larger amounts from being captured. The authors point out that the clearing of tropical forests is mainly due to production of soya, palm oil, wood fibre and beef cattle farming.

#2 Cities have a significant impact on deforestation. The world's urban population continues to grow, as does the need to consume goods derived from deforestation (through the use of cleared land for crops and livestock, and the exploitation of timber from felled trees). The tool, developed as part of the Cities4Forests programme bringing together 45 cities from all over the world to promote the development of forest-management expertise, enables cities to identify the effects of their consumption on deforestation in order to develop appropriate public policies. Using data on annual per capita consumption of the products of deforestation (soya, palm oil, beef, wood fibre, cocoa, coffee, rubber, sugar, oil, gas, etc.), the number of inhabitants, and the number of hectares cleared to produce these goods, cities can determine the impact of their consumption on tropical forests and the resulting carbon emissions.

#3 The tool estimates the impact of cities on tropical deforestation in three ways:

- (1) An estimate of global deforestation per person, assuming identical consumption and impact across the entire world population.
- (2) An estimate of the quantities of goods consumed in a city, and the impact on deforestation of the production of these goods, whatever their origin.
- (3) An estimate based on international trade, taking into account the origin of the goods consumed (e.g. Brazil).

This three-pronged approach enables public policy-makers to identify the direct and indirect impact of any given city on deforestation and CO₂ emissions, and thus to determine the most appropriate efforts to be made at city level to reduce emissions linked to deforestation.

Outlook for France

Since 2018, France has been fighting deforestation linked to its imports by implementing a National Strategy to Combat Imported Deforestation (SNDI), which aims to halt imports of the relevant products. As the instigator of this ground-breaking initiative, France has been pushing forward a similar EU-wide project since 2022. Despite its ambitions, this project only tackles the easily-traced deforestation caused by international trade, and remains highly centralised in its approach.

The opinion of Pauline Bureau, Vice-Chair of "La Fabrique Écologique"

Often overshadowed by energy transition goals, the fight against deforestation is an important strategy for reducing CO₂ emissions, especially since it is a cause that can readily be taken up by local authorities.