

EU's Environment Committee recognises role of forests in fighting climate change but fails on bioenergy

(Brussels), July 11, 2017 - The European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee today voted to increase removals of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by forests from 2030 onwards, recognising the important role that EU forests will play in reaching the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global temperatures to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

The Committee's report marks the end of months of intense negotiations in the European Parliament to determine how EU nations account for emissions from their land and forest sectors – the so called LULUCF Regulation. The report will now go before plenary in the Autumn, after which the European Parliament will have a mandate to negotiate with the European Commission and European Council on the final text.

A glaring failure in today's proposal however, is that key changes to the European Commission text mean that the increased harvesting of forests for bioenergy - which [recent research shows has already led to a reduction of the carbon sink of EU forests](#) - will not be properly accounted for.

This is because the proposal changes the period for the forest management reference level from 1990-2009 to 2000-2012, which is three years after the renewable energy directive came into force. This means that the emissions caused by the increased use of bioenergy for this period will not be accounted for.

"The renewable energy directive (RED) is relying on lame duck accounting rules from the LULUCF Regulation to make the case that bioenergy is mitigating climate change. This charade has to end. The RED needs more robust sustainability criteria to ensure bioenergy is only incentivized when it truly leads to significant emission reductions," said Linde Zuidema, Fern's bioenergy campaigner.

"The Environment Committee's report has made some overall improvements to the European Commission's draft Regulation, which had no ambition to increase removals by forests of carbon dioxide. Now the EU needs a plan for how to achieve this" said Hanna Aho, forest and climate campaigner at Fern.

Fern also welcomes the Committee's recognition that the Regulation must be in line with biodiversity legislation and that wetlands are important stores of carbon. The proposal that EU Members should account for their emissions from their wetlands from 2026 should be a deterrent against their further degradation.

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