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One step forward, two steps back for EU on climate and forests

30th May 2017, Brussels Today, the European Parliament took one step forward and two steps back for the climate and forests.

On a positive front, the Environment Committee voted to strengthen the EU's climate target for the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) - which covers the agriculture, waste, buildings and transport sectors - by reducing the amount of 'LULUCF offsets' they had access to by 90 million tons of CO₂.

Concretely, this means that the climate will be spared 90 million tons of CO₂, almost equivalent to the annual carbon emissions of Belgium.

The Environment Committee was also adamant that the Commission should first check the quality of offsets produced by the forestry sector before they could be used. This is wise given that, in a simultaneous vote, two other parliamentary committees (the Agriculture Committee (AGRI) and the Industry, Research and Energy Committee (ITRE)) took the highly retrograde step of voting in favour of dishonest carbon accounting rules.

If these rules are applied, it will mean that any emissions resulting from more harvesting of trees will not be accounted for.

[Analysis done by the European Commission has warned](#) that due to a foreseen increase in harvesting, EU forests will sequester 100 million tons less CO₂ in 2030 than today. This is the equivalent in climate terms of keeping an extra 100 million cars on the road.

"These rules, if applied, would blow a hole in efforts to honestly account for the emissions from bioenergy. Emissions from burning wood are currently not counted because it is assumed the emissions are measured when the tree is chopped down. Where is the European Parliament proposing that we account for these emissions?" asks Hanna Aho, bioenergy campaigner at Fern.

Furthermore, any credits produced by the forestry sector will be nothing better than 'hot air' since it will be impossible to guarantee their credibility. The [EU's LULUCF rules have long suffered from](#) a reputation for being suspect - and the European Commission was trying to break from this when they proposed new rules.

"To respect the Paris Agreement's target of keeping warming to well below 2 degrees, we need to protect and restore forests and use wood wisely, not incentivise their destruction at any cost.



The rules proposed by the AGRI and ITRE committees set a bad example for global land use accounting rules, undermining global attempts to curb deforestation, which alone is responsible for 10% of global emissions” says Hannah Mowat, forest and climate campaigner at Fern.

The final position of the European Parliament will be decided by the Environment Committee, who will vote on their report on the 22nd June.

Fern urges the Parliament to adopt responsible and credible rules for land use and forestry and set a good global example ahead of international negotiations on this matter.

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Background: In July 2016, the European Commission released their proposal for a Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation. This Regulation is now being discussed by the European Parliament, where Norbert Lins is the lead rapporteur for the Environment Committee – his report will be voted in committee on the 22nd June. Three further committees have chosen to issue an opinion on the Regulation: the Development Committee, the Agriculture Committee and Industry, Research and Energy Committee, all of which have now been voted on. The Regulation is also being discussed in the European Council, and Ministers are expected to negotiate over the Council’s final position on the 19th June, at which point negotiations between the three EU bodies will begin (formally known as codecision or the ordinary legislative procedure).

About Fern: Fern is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) created in 1995 to keep track of the European Union’s involvement in forests and forest peoples’ rights and coordinate NGO activities at the European level. We seek a world in which environmental, social and economic justice is fully integrated at all levels and people have a voice in decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods. Climate is of paramount importance to our work as climate change is already having a devastating effect on forests and the people who depend on them.