



**For more information, please contact:**

Mark Olden, Press adviser  
[mark@fern.org](mailto:mark@fern.org)  
tel: +44 7973 884 718

## **COMMISSION RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF FORESTS IN 2050 LOW CARBON STRATEGY**

**Brussels, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018** - The European Commission today underlined the crucial, positive role forests and land should play in fighting climate change, as it called for the European Union (EU) to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The Commission also recognised the multiple risks to the climate with scaling up forest-based bioenergy, taking on board growing evidence that bioenergy can have a negative impact on the climate.

Fern welcomes the recent addition of a scenario that is compatible with 1.5 degrees, and that looks to increase the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> taken up by land by 66 per cent from today's levels. However, it is critical to examine more closely how the EU plans to achieve this. Recent research shows that the biggest wins come from [restoring existing forests](#), something which the Commission has chosen not to include.

Despite recognising the risks with bioenergy, all of its scenarios foresee a significant increase in bioenergy use, with increases of 80 per cent in some scenarios. This is in stark contrast to the most ambitious scenario laid out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which sees biomass use decreasing by [16 per cent by 2050 compared](#) to 2010 levels.

"Bioenergy is the Achilles heel of the long-term strategy because the EU is relying on forests to produce bioenergy leaving it with no way to meet global goals to remove carbon dioxide.

Strengthening forests is better than burning them, not only for the climate, but for the plants and creatures that call nature their home.

The EU's climate vision needs to promise European landscapes that we actually want to live in," said Kelsey Perlman, Forest and Climate campaigner at Fern.

The [recent Special Report on 1.5 degrees](#) made clear the need for net negative emissions from around 2060, and outlined that forests could play a key role in achieving it, something which the EU is unlikely to do if it still requires so much forests and land for energy.

While the Commission states that bioenergy from whole trees will not increase from today's levels, Fern is sceptical that this is realistic, unless very strong sustainability criteria are included, [something which the EU failed to deliver earlier this year](#). The current experience under the Renewable Energy Directive (RED), is that targets to increase renewable energy have led to [increased harvesting of forests](#).

All of the scenarios foresee more than a doubling of wood for energy from forest residues, which will undoubtedly continue to put pressure on forests. The Commission Staff Working Document admits that this is a significant factor for why most of their scenarios foresee the forest carbon sink (the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> being sequestered by forests) almost halving between today and 2050. This is masked in their Communication by the fact that CO<sub>2</sub> removals from afforestation will increase. While increasing forest cover through new forests can, [if done sustainably](#), be a good tool in the fight against climate change, this overlooks the far bigger gains in the EU which come from restoring existing forests, and reducing the pressure on them.

“We have already seen that when you increase bioenergy targets, you also ramp up global deforestation. In addition to curbing overall bioenergy targets, the EU must come up with a regulation to ensure that the commodities it imports into the EU do not drive deforestation,” said Hannah Mowat, Fern’s campaigns coordinator.

The EU recently announced that it will release a Communication on “Stepping up EU Action against Deforestation and Forest Degradation” in Spring 2019, and Fern is calling on the it to ensure that a new Regulation is included as part of a suite of actions that are needed to tackle the EU’s impact on global deforestation.

ENDS

Fern is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) created in 1995 to make the EU work for forests and people. Our work centres on forests and forest peoples’ rights and the issues that affect them such as EU consumption, trade, investment and climate change. All of our work is done in close collaboration with social and environmental organisations and movements across the world.