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Press Release

European Parliament approves resolution supporting sustainable palm oil

ESPOAG welcomes the report on “Palm oil and deforestation of rainforests” in which the European Parliament recognizes the complexity of the topic and calls for a global convergence of the existing sector progress.

Parliament particularly highlight the positive contributions sustainable production of palm oil can deliver to the economic development of the producing countries, offering viable economic opportunities to farmers.

Forty percent of palm oil production comes from smallholder farmers. As the report notes: the sustainability criteria must enable smallholders to be included, maintaining access to the global trading system to share in the profits. International cooperation and local action to support the smallholders towards sustainable production must be strengthened.

The Parliament notes deforestation has many drivers, including palm oil, but recognizes the efforts already made by the food manufacturing sector and the need to reinforce the existing solutions and agreements. The Parliament recognises the great potential for responsibly and sustainably produced palm oil.

The Parliament calls notably on the European Commission to increase traceability of agricultural commodities, including palm oil and to develop minimum standards which enable smallholders to be included. A holistic approach is proposed including the request for close cooperation with other significant consumers such as China, India, and the producing countries.

The Parliament notes several tools at the disposition of the Commission including trade, trade agreements, and development cooperation. They request to develop an action plan including information campaigns for European consumers.

The Commission will now need to scrutinize the proposed policy options and identify which elements it will take up in its actions. ESPOAG notes that development cooperation, in particular, must support implementation of the sustainability provisions in trade agreements as acknowledged in COM(2016) 740, “Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development,” in line with the Trade4All strategy.

ESPOAG notes that the proposed actions are overarching and are relevant to many stakeholders. Real results to increase the uptake of sustainable palm oil will only be possible through multilateral dialogue and cooperation involving all stakeholders. ESPOAG calls upon the Commission to start up and facilitate this dialogue. A constructive basis for this could be the current Commission study on policy options to prevent deforestation.

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ESPOAG, the European Sustainable Palm Oil Advocacy Group, represents major food sectors at European level that source a large range of raw materials. ESPOAG supports the EU objective to stop deforestation by 2030, at the latest, and the promotion of this objective at international level. The sectors ESPOAG represents recognize the important role they play in acting as a responsible steward of forests and natural habitat. Throughout our memberships, companies are taking a proactive role in tackling deforestation through improved traceability and supplier engagement.