

Government policies to limit global deforestation

Westminster Hall Debate

30th April 2025



Background

- Forests are the lungs of our planet, absorbing around [one-third of the global CO2](#) released from burning fossil fuels every year, but we are losing them at an alarming rate.
- Across the world, forests are [collectively home](#) to 80 per cent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity and support the livelihoods of 1.6 billion people.
- But supermarket shelves in the UK still hold many products that fuel illegal international deforestation. Beef, leather, cocoa, palm and soy are known as “forest risk commodities” as they drive [90 per cent of global deforestation](#).

What can the UK do to limit global deforestation?

- The Environment Act 2021 includes provisions to [tackle global illegal deforestation](#) by introducing regulations on imported forest-risk commodities like beef, coffee, soya beans, and palm oil that aims to reduce illegal deforestation.
- By introducing due diligence on forest risk commodities, companies would be required to monitor and take action to ensure their supply chains did not contain products of illegal deforestation.
- This means that these products would be prohibited from being sold in the UK. Businesses would be required to produce an annual report on their efforts to remove illegal deforestation from their supply chains.

Rules to prevent illegal deforestation must go ahead without more delay

- The secondary legislation needed to implement this scheme has been continually delayed since the Environment Act was passed in November 2021, and the current government has not yet set a timeline for when the regulations will be published.
- [The equivalent of 300 football pitches](#) is lost to deforestation every hour for unsustainable palm oil production. This has a hefty toll on climate change and species degradation, with orangutans, elephants, tigers and many other species pushed to the brink of extinction.
- According to a [report by Global Witness](#), forest-risk commodities imported to the U.K. contributed to 13,500 hectares (nearly 33,400 acres) of global deforestation in 2024. Since the Environment Act was passed in 2021, the UK's imports have resulted in more than 39,300 hectares (97,100 acres) of deforestation.
- The UK is at risk of falling behind other jurisdictions as the [EU Deforestation Regulation \(EUDR\)](#) will come into force in December 2025. Ministers must publish the regulations swiftly, ensuring the most ambitious approach is taken within the framework set by the Environment Act.
- Toughening action on business supply chains will support the delivery of COP26 commitments to halt deforestation by 2030, which the UK convened [100 leaders covering 85% of the world's forests](#) to announce.
- The government should therefore act immediately and publish the implementing regulations without further delay.

What do voters think?

- A [recent poll by WWF](#) found that 70 per cent of British people support implementation of the 2021 law that would see the government taking action to prevent the sale of productions linked to illegal deforestation overseas.

Suggested interventions

- When will the government introduce the secondary legislation needed to implement the due diligence scheme for forest risk commodities, that was promised in the Environment Act 2021?
- How does the government aim to meet vital climate targets set out at COP26 to halt and reverse deforestation and land degradation by 2030?