



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Assessment of Deforestation-Free Soy Certification Schemes and Evaluation Towards the Goals of the New York Declaration on Forests and the Amsterdam Declaration

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Abstract

The deforestation-free production of agricultural commodities has moved into the focus of civil society since the connection between industrial agriculture and the loss of tropical forests has reached public awareness. Despite the large number of available standards for responsible production and web-platforms providing overviews for existing standards, no platform is offering an assessment tool which allows the user to cluster certification schemes according to relevant criteria, like the standards' requirements for forest conversion, or to verify their compliance with political targets. We analysed a selection of standards for soy, compliant with the sourcing guidelines of the European Feed Manufacturers' Federation (FEFAC), regarding their actual understanding of allowed deforestation. The analysis shows that FEFAC compliant standards are quite diverse regarding deforestation requirements. 6 out of 13 standards allow deforestation in line with the respective national laws of the producing countries. This implicitly means that primary forests can be converted for agricultural production, as for example allowed to a certain extent under the Brazilian Forest Code. 7 out of 13 standards define own no-deforestation requirements with cut-off dates ranging between 2004 and 2016. 4 out of these 7 standards define no-conversion requirements for additional sensitive ecosystems, like wetlands and High Conservation Value Areas.

We found that the FEFAC guidelines as they currently are, are not sufficient regarding the targets of the New York Declaration on Forests and the Amsterdam Declaration: eliminating deforestation from supply chains until 2020 with focus on primary forests and, as mentioned in the Amsterdam Declaration, High Conservation Value Areas. In order to guarantee FEFAC members that their usage of FEFAC compliant standards is in line with these political targets, FEFAC needs to adjust its guidelines in a way comparable to deforestation requirements of the Sustainable Soy Sourcing Guidelines of The Consumer Goods Forum. We found that the voluntary Deforestation Resolution of The Consumer Goods Forum from 2010, has strongly influenced the targets of the Amsterdam Declaration. The following standards for sustainable soy are in line with the above mentioned policy targets or go beyond: ISCC EU/PLUS, ProTerra and Round Table Responsible Soy.

Keywords: Amsterdam declaration, certification schemes, deforestation, FEFAC, soy