The European Commission’s Multi-Stakeholder Platform on Protecting and Restoring the World’s Forests was established in 2020, following the publication of the communication on EU action to protect global forests in July 2019, as a forum for discussion and consultation; the TFA is registered as a participant. Recent meetings have focused in particular on the Deforestation Regulation.

This is a summary of key points made at its most recent meeting, on 30 January. A longer report, and all presentations, are available [here](#). (The presentation file called ‘3.b) Supply Chains Infographics’ is particularly worth looking at, using examples of how timber, palm oil, cocoa and soybean supply chains will be affected by the Deforestation Regulation.)
The morning sessions were devoted to the Regulation, with a detailed presentation of how the Commission expected it to work, and a lengthy set of questions. Key issues raised and discussed included:

- Entry into force is expected to be May/June 2023, which means that full implementation will start from about December 2024.
- The deforestation threshold date of end 2020 is in line with the SDGs (SDG 15.2).
- Clarification that the full due diligence requirements apply not just to importers and EU producers of the commodities, but also to what were informally called ‘downstream operators’, i.e. companies that buy listed commodities (e.g. cocoa beans) from other operators, transform them into other listed products (e.g. chocolate) and place them on the EU market. But their obligations are easier to fulfil as they can reference the information included in the due diligence statements filed by the original importer/producer. SME downstream operators are exempted from the due diligence requirements.
- The rubber supply chain seems likely to be particularly challenging, with 6 million smallholders and less experience with traceability mechanisms than others.
- Products certified under mass balance systems will not be compliant, unless the required information (zero-deforestation and legality) is present for the non-certified portion. Products can be mixed as long as the necessary information is available for all of them.
- The Information System for due diligence statements will be an essential part of implementation, facilitating compliance by operators and cooperation between competent authorities (see separate presentation). This should be operational by the time of implementation; pilots will begin in late 2023.
- The Commission is open to the idea of producing guidelines for ‘operators and traders, for competent authorities, on certain definitions’ and to ‘facilitate the sharing of existing knowledge via a structured process, including through establishing informal focus groups on the Platform’. Three focus group topics were suggested – traceability, due diligence obligations and smallholder inclusion – but the Commission also invited platform members to suggest others.
- Whether financial institutions need to be given due diligence obligations will be reviewed two years after entry into force; if the conclusion is that they should be, this could be done either through amending the Regulation or through other EU legislation.
- The Commission is well aware of the need to build partnerships with producer countries; the Cocoa Dialogue and the Forest Partnerships were cited as examples. The Commission was due to meet producer-country ambassadors the following day, and would be organising information sessions for EU delegations and workshops in producer countries.
- The Commission was also in contact with key consumer countries, including the US and China.

The afternoon sessions featured a series of presentations on:

- The Commission’s Sustainable Cocoa Initiative and Cocoa Talks series.
- Germany’s contribution to international cooperation on forests.
- Ongoing and planned programmes and projects in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- France cooperation to fight against deforestation.
- International forest policy and programmes of the Netherlands.

And examples of early adoption of the kind of measures necessary to fulfil the Regulation:

- Round Table on Responsible Soy Association.
- Traceability of natural rubber (GIZ project).
- Tony’s Chocolonely Bean Tracker traceability system.