Amsterdam Declarations Partnership

- Soya -

Date: 20 June 2018

The Amsterdam Declarations towards deforestation-free and sustainable commodities were launched in 2015. Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom signed these declarations. Soya is one of the focus commodities.

Relevant private sector related alliances and organisations

- FEFAC – European Feed Manufacturers' Federation with the FEFAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines.
- FEDIOL – European Vegetable Oil and Protein meal Industry Federation.
- IDH – Sustainable Trade Initiative (incl. soya).
- CGF – Consumer Goods Forum with the Sustainable Soy Sourcing Guidelines.
- Certification schemes: Round Table for Responsible Soy (RTRS), ProTerra and International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC).

Monitoring of progress

The proxy indicator chosen to measure deforestation-free soya is "volume of certified commodity trade with Europe and signatory countries." EUROSTAT and ITC (UN-COMTRADE) are the primary sources for obtaining trade data of EU28 and Norway. Information on volume of certified soya imported is not registered through customs data and has to be provided by the private sector, sustainability standards or other third party monitoring. At the moment, such aggregated information is not available. The TRASE initiative provides information on soya production and trade. Other relevant third party monitoring initiatives on in-country deforestation include FAOSTAT and Global Forest Watch.

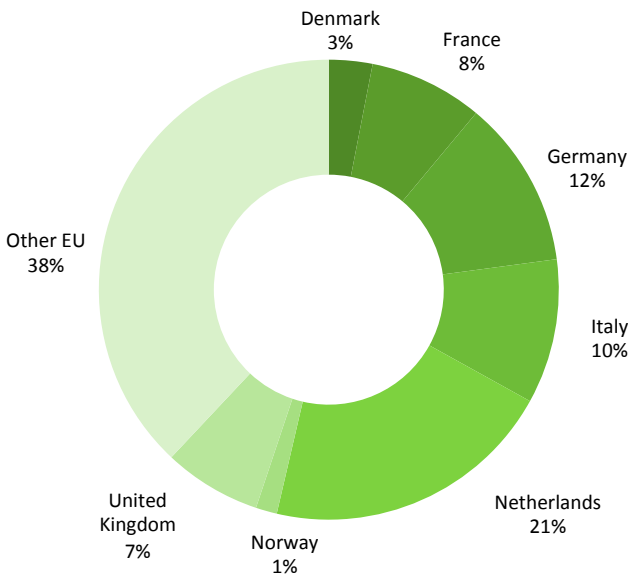
In addition, non-governmental organisations and national initiatives produce valuable reports such as the WWF Soya Score Card, the IISD State of Sustainability Markets, and the Dutch Soya Barometer.

Status of soy production and European import

Only a small amount of soya is consumed directly (tofu, yoghurt). The majority of the soya is used as feed for cattle, pork, poultry and farmed fish (salmon). Soya is produced in many countries including Brazil (33 million ha harvested in 2016), United States of America (33 million ha), Argentina (19.5 million ha), Paraguay (3.4 million ha), Bolivia (1.3 million ha), Ukraine (1.8 million ha) and Uruguay (1.1 million ha). Also Europe harvested soya from 4.3 million ha.

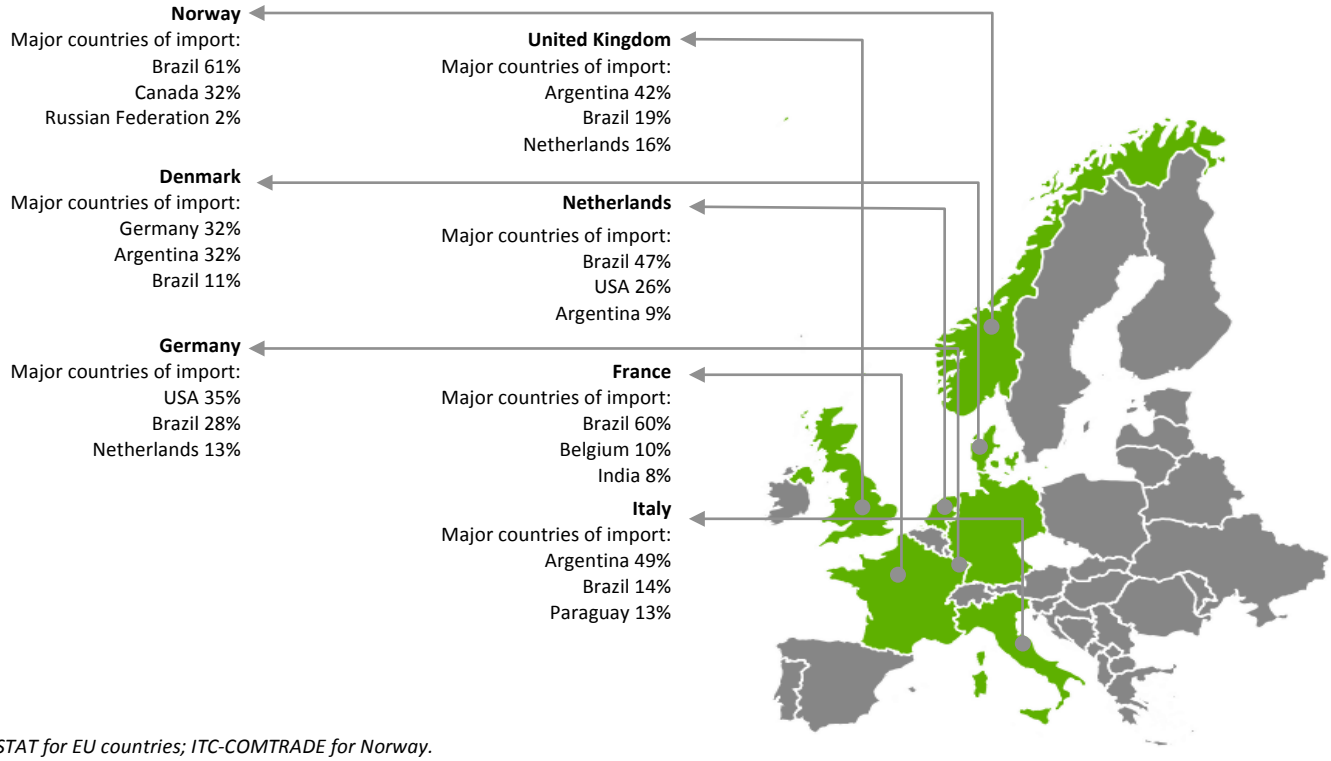
For the year 2017/2018 the global soya production is estimated at 348 million metric tons. In 2017, the EU imported 33,2 million metric tons of soya of which the AD signatory countries imported 62%. Soya was mainly imported from Brazil and Argentina. In those countries, soya is mainly produced in the Brazilian Cerrado and the Argentinian Pampas. Further expansion is expected to include the Greater Chaco region.

Share European soya import per ADP country (2017)



Source: EUROSTAT for EU countries; ITC-COMTRADE for Norway.

Soya imports of ADP countries (2017)



Source: EUROSTAT for EU countries; ITC-COMTRADE for Norway.

Towards deforestation-free, sustainable soya

With a growing world population and consumption of meat the use of soya as animal feed is expected to grow significantly. The deforestation aspect of commodity trade is considered important because it is associated with a negative carbon balance (climate change) if expansion occurs over native woodland savannahs and primary forests. Soya expansion is associated with deforestation, illegality, social conflicts, and biodiversity loss. In the producer countries Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay soya is still expanding in their woodland savannah areas and is associated with (legal and illegal) deforestation and various social issues (e.g. spraying of pesticides).

The AD-Partnership assumes that increased demand for certified soya production - with a cut-off date on deforestation - can help to prevent further deforestation and enhance sustainability. RTRS, ProTerra and ISCC are considered the relevant certification standards because they have a cut-off date on deforestation. However, depending on the country context, certification does not equal no deforestation at landscape scale as deforestation may occur for other reasons. Unsustainable soya may also be sold to less concerned countries or consumed domestically.

In order to address wider deforestation and other sustainability issues, multi-stakeholder (jurisdictional) initiatives on landscape scale and spatial planning are crucial. For example, RTRS identified High Conservation Value Areas (HCVA) and defined zoning areas for Brazil and Paraguay to guide responsible soy expansion.

At the moment, there are no reliable figures on the certified volume of soya per signatory country (e.g. the sum of RTRS, Proterra and ISCC). According to RTRS, Dutch companies have the largest share in buying RTRS credits (66% of credits). ProTerra probably has a large market share in Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, France and Germany.

In 2015, five Norwegian feed & food companies committed to buy only deforestation-free soya as per certification standard (ProTerra), effective immediately. In 2010, the Dutch industry defined a commitment on sustainable soya. Currently the volume of soya imported and consumed by the Dutch domestic market is from a sustainable source (RTRS certified) whereas soya (processed and) exported meets the requirements of the FEFAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines. The German 'Forum on more Sustainable Protein Feed' aims to reach 100% sustainable soya and published a position paper in 2017. The UK just launched its Sustainable Soy Working Group.

In order to address wider deforestation, multi-stakeholder initiatives on landscape scale and spatial planning are crucial. A successful example is the Soy Moratorium for the Amazon in Brazil, which excludes trade of soya produced on land deforested after 2006. Recently a similar Cerrado Manifesto was presented which is a.o. supported by multinational companies.

Both FEFAC as well as CGF presented Soy Sourcing Guidelines. FEFAC allows legal deforestation. The CGF pledged to help achieve zero net deforestation, which means they prohibit production in High Conservation Value and High Carbon Stock areas with a conversion cut-off date not later than May 2009.