



## Amsterdam Declarations Partnership

Towards deforestation-free  
sustainable commodities

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# “Finding Common Ground”

## Summary of the European Soya Initiatives meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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The aim of the AD Partnership is deforestation-free, sustainable commodities. This soya meeting was organised as a follow-up of the meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018 hosted by the Government of Denmark, then chair of the AD Partnership. The meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> March was hosted by the government of the Netherlands with the purpose of enhancing coherence, mutual understanding and co-operation. To facilitate discussion a background document was prepared. The current document provides a very concise overview of the meeting with views shared by participants. The document does not provide a comprehensive overview of the discussions.

## 1. Implementation

### 1.1 Key terminology

Each European Soya Initiative has a different starting point and country context and may define its commitment differently. Coherence in terminology is important to enhance mutual understanding, work towards a level playing field and avoid misinterpretation.

Participants agreed to the terminology provided by the Accountability Framework Initiative<sup>1</sup>, which is similar to key terminology used by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Food & Agriculture Organisation. It was also noted to align with the work of the Soft Commodities Forum of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (SCF), and the Consumer Goods Forum work on soya. The members of SCF have recently committed to a common framework for reporting and monitoring progress on transparent and traceable supply chains for soya in Brazil’s Cerrado region (1<sup>st</sup> report June 2019).

Some participants also stated that it is not very useful to discuss the definitions and differences between responsible or sustainable but rather work to implement a commitment along the lines presented in the next paragraph.

### 1.2 Defining a commitment

Participants discussed key principles for defining a commitment that could also be seen as a stepwise approach and agreed to the following:

1. *Assess your footprint:* For stakeholders it is important to know the actual soya (carbon) footprint & deforestation risk in order to be able to formulate and manage a commitment (company, sector or country).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://accountability-framework.org/>



2. *Ensuring our soya is compliant with the FEAC Soy Sourcing Guidelines<sup>2</sup>*: The FEAC guidelines have been developed to contribute to mainstream transition towards responsible soya. This is regarded as a minimum for responsible soya and includes standards that allow for legal deforestation. Most of the schemes benchmarked don't relate to deforestation-free commitments, but some do.
3. *Ensuring our soya is deforestation & conversion-free and sustainable (with a target date)*: In the case of soya the loss of natural ecosystems (which are also high conservation value areas and high carbon stock areas) should be avoided. Therefore, buy soya according to standards ensuring no deforestation and sustainability, or assurance through other models. Participants noted that regarding soya production there is not much difference between becoming deforestation-free and conversion-free. The aim and challenges are similar and it is more cost-effective to focus on conversion-free (instead of using concepts such as HCVA or HCSA). A consistent market signal towards 'conversion-free' soya from all European soya initiatives was considered important.

*Two definitions by the Accountability Framework Initiative.*

*Conversion-free (Accountability Framework, synonym: no-conversion)*: Commodity production, sourcing, or financial investments that do not cause or contribute to conversion of natural ecosystems.

*Natural ecosystems (Accountability Framework)*: An ecosystem that substantially resembles – in terms of species composition, structure, and ecological function – one that is or would be found in a given area in the absence of major human impacts. This includes human-managed ecosystems where much of the natural species composition, structure, and ecological function are present.

The following certification standards related to soya have cut-off dates for deforestation and have adopted the HCVA concept: (1) Bunge Pro S (2016); (2) Cargill Triple S (2008); (3) CEFETRA-CRS (2009; 2006 for the Amazon); (4) ISCC (2008); (5) ProTerra (2008); (6) Rainforest Alliance (2005); (7) RTRS (2009; 2008 for the Amazon). Benchmarking studies (such as the one presented by IUCN in the meeting) show additional requirements regarding the standards may include elements such as means of verification, third party audits, complaints mechanism, transparency, the supply chain model etc. The initiative or individual company could (also) have a specific non-GM commitment.

Overall, demand for sustainable soya throughout Europe still has to grow significantly (as also shown by the European Soya Barometer presented). For example, Italy, Spain and Portugal are major importers but show limited awareness and demand (although Italy is a major buyer of Proterra soya). More awareness raising is needed in those countries.

## 2. Enhanced collaboration on monitoring and reporting

The preparation of the European Soya Barometer report by IDH, IUCN and Profundo showed how difficult it is to get appropriate data. Participants agreed that enhanced collaboration on data collection and sharing is important to enhance monitoring and reporting. Trade statistics (e.g. EUROSTAT) are not enough and do not cover intra-European trade properly. At the moment national reporting systems differ as experienced with the EU protein strategy (Commission prepared a protein balance sheet). It is important to measure both direct import of soya beans and meal as well as

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fefac.eu/file.pdf?FileID=65744&CacheMode=Fresh>



processing and embedded soya in end products. This is also crucial information for a stakeholder to assess its soya footprint (see previous paragraph).

To address this challenge there are some key stakeholders that could start with measuring their footprint and exposure: (a) the big end users that run the highest visible risk by their consumer-orientation (who do care but are now aware yet); (b) the feed sector (main users but only cover industrial feed use); and the (c) the traders (few with a crucial role in the supply chain. See also their SCF commitment). Most importantly it was felt that we should not wait for the perfect methodology but start the process and improve over time.

Soya production, deforestation risks and trade can be assessed by using TRASE.org Measuring soya import and trade (direct and embedded) is however complex, can touch upon confidentiality concerns, and there are various methodological and time lapse issues. Further work is needed to gain more insight in this challenge and how we can address them. Participants thought that ADP governments could help national initiatives to become more tailor-made on country level regarding monitoring and reporting. The ADP Support Unit will contact some of the main stakeholders to see how insight in the monitoring issues can be enhanced.

### 3. Impact

The Brazilian soya moratorium needs to be maintained. More stakeholders could join the Cerrado Manifesto Statement of Support (calls for halting deforestation in the Brazilian Cerrado). The EU imports(ed) much soya from the Northern region of Brazil where the deforestation-risk is highest. Even though more soya is consumed domestically or exported to China the EU import may be relevant enough to influence processes of land speculation and expansion.

All participants also agreed that buying solely credits from appropriate standards alone will not lead to deforestation-free, sustainable production. In order to enhance impact additional measures in the supply chain and on landscape level are needed. Buying certificates from standards targeting specific producer regions with a high deforestation risk (example Lidl in Maranhão) shows the sustainability concerns by European buyers to producers in risk regions and enhances certification. In addition, jurisdictional approaches to enhance sustainability on landscape level should be promoted with a strong pro-active role of state authorities and their governors.

How to measure and report on impact on the ground i.e. deforestation and sustainability issues associated with soya production?

### 3. Engaging with other demand-side initiatives

In general, participants felt it was more important to enhance their own performance and improve exchange between on-going European national initiatives than to do outreach beyond Europe. Engaging Italy, Spain and Portugal is important.

Engagement and exchange with China was considered more appropriate for the ADP governments and the traders involved (e.g. COFCO). If the South America-China Sustainable Soya Working Group comes together and there are minutes they can be shared.