

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE VALUE CHAIN

The worldwide trade in soy products has a huge negative impact on nature, above all in South America. IUCN NL aims to support the sustainable production and trade of soy, and with that in mind is bringing together major chain players. We are calling for European legislation and cooperation in order to guarantee nature and human rights in the value chain, and to ensure active support to farmers and civil society organisations in producing countries.

TOWARDS 100% CONVERSION-FREE RESPONSIBLE SOY

The Netherlands is a major importer of soy, for use in animal feed. A proportion of production is consumed and processed nationally, but the majority is re-exported. IUCN NL's objective is a situation in which all soy consumed, processed and traded in the Netherlands is produced responsibly. In other words, without negative impact on nature or people.

MORE THAN LOCAL LEGISLATION

In 2019, we examined how much forest could be legally felled in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, to create space for soy production and livestock farming. The outcome was 110 million hectares, an area 26 times the size of the Netherlands. This figure reflects that local laws are still allowing too much room for deforestation, not even including the conversion of wetlands and grasslands. To preserve the level of biodiversity in these countries, we want to see a number of mandatory minimum criteria for production controlled by among others, good-quality sustainability standards.

RAISE THE BAR FOR SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

But what is a good-quality standard for assuring sustainability? For IUCN NL, strict criteria are essential for the preservation of biodiversity, the environment and human rights. We are also calling for strict control on compliance with those criteria.

We examined the sustainability standards employed by the animal feed sector according to those aspects. The conclusion of our study is that in order to halt biodiversity loss, the animal feed sector needs to introduce a more ambitious standard in its guidelines. There must also be greater transparency and governance on compliance.

“To have a positive impact, we must make the European soy chain more nature and people friendly, with European legislation and with support for farmers and other stakeholders in the producing countries. Not only must we demand that they operate more sustainably; we must also reward their efforts, in particular in areas at risk of serious loss of nature.”

Heleen van den Hombergh, expert responsible value chains at IUCN NL



Soy beans (Photo: Shutterstock)

Example of our work

Dutch Soy Platform

Much of the soy intended for consumption in the Netherlands is already RTRS certified. However, a great deal more can and must be done in relation to the import and export of soy products. To bring about these changes, IUCN NL founded the Dutch Soy Platform in 2019. This multistakeholder platform brings together representatives of government, business and civil society to bring about a transition to 100% conversion-free, responsibly produced soy in the entire Dutch value chain and beyond, and achieve more positive impact on risk landscapes. In collaboration with other national soy platforms in Europe, the Dutch Soy Platform is hoping to establish conversion-free, responsible soy products across the entire European market and in soy producing countries.

INSIGHT INTO THE EUROPEAN SOY TRADE

In 2019, together with IDH, we initiated the European Soy Monitor, an annually recurring study that offers an insight into the European soy trade. The monitor for 2020 shows that in 2018 just 38% of the soy trade complied with the FEFCO guidelines for European animal feed companies and that just 19% of the European soy trade was verified conversion free according to the sustainability standards for deforestation-free soy, including RTRS, ProTerra and Donau Soja.

Against the background of those figures, IUCN NL is calling for Dutch and European governments, supermarkets, animal feed companies and financial institutions to raise the bar when it comes to taking decisions on purchasing, credits, investment, policy and legislation and regulations. The application of minimum criteria and solid sustainability standards should no longer be a matter of choice for soy and other raw materials. We are also calling for improved efficiency and less pressure on scarce natural resources by encouraging more soy and other vegetable proteins for human consumption.

BRINGING THE STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER AND PROVIDING CONSULTANCY SERVICES

IUCN NL is calling for 100% responsible, conversion-free soy in the Netherlands and Europe. We are working to achieve that aim by bringing parties together, and by policy advice. We are encouraging solid sustainability standards in the soy chain and in areas that risk losing nature to soy production, despite their importance for worldwide biodiversity.

Do you want to know more about how IUCN NL is encouraging responsible soy? Visit our [website](#) for detailed information and more example projects or contact our expert [Heleen van den Hombergh](#).