

# Food firms' plans for 1.5C climate target fall short, say campaigners

**Major producers of soya and beef accused of failing to deliver on pledges to stop deforestation**



Cattle graze near a burnt area of the Amazon rainforest near Novo Progresso, Para state, Brazil. Photograph: João Laet/AFP/Getty

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The world's largest food companies, whose products have been linked to the widespread destruction of rainforests, have failed to come up with an adequate strategy to align their business practices with the 1.5C climate target, according to campaigners.

The leading producers of soya beans, palm oil, cocoa and cattle **published their roadmap to align with 1.5C** earlier this week, promising to develop and publish commodity-specific, time-bound targets on stopping deforestation which will be backed by science and checked each year. The companies include the Brazilian

beef firm JBS, the American agricultural firm Cargill and the Singaporean food processing firm Wilmar International.

Land use change is the second biggest driver of global heating behind burning fossil fuels and the biggest cause of biodiversity loss, while halting the destruction of rainforests is a key part of tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. To comply with 1.5C, all land use conversion must stop by 2030 with significant progress made by the middle of the decade, **according to scientists**.

While campaigners acknowledge some progress has been made, especially with palm oil, they argue the companies have largely failed to deliver on the ambition they promised on soya and beef.

The disagreement between campaigners and companies is about the date by which firms should stop deforestation. Cristiane Mazzetti, a senior forest campaigner at Greenpeace Brazil, said some of the companies had previously promised to rid deforestation from their supply chains by 2020 and had failed.

“We cannot afford any more greenwashing or reckless behaviour from these companies who profit from the destruction of ecosystems and come up with more delays and inadequate plans to halt and reverse the destruction they drive that will continue to fry the planet,” she said.

Malaysia and Indonesia, home to most of the world’s palm oil sector, have had success at reducing deforestation in recent years, in part because of better regulation.

Nico Muzi, managing director of the environmental group Madre Brava, said the plan announced at Cop27 did amount to some progress but said the commitment fell short of what was needed, especially in the meat sector. “There are two flagrant omissions: a cutoff date to stop soy-driven deforestation now, and the exclusion of conversion by cattle and soy expansion of the largest savanna region in South America, Brazil’s Cerrado,” she said.

André Vasconcelos, of Global Canopy, said the plan was encouraging as the companies involved represented more than 60% of Brazilian soy exports, 50% of Brazilian beef and 45% of Indonesia’s palm oil exports in 2020, although

some of the main producers were missing. But he added that the companies needed to go further for the plan to be credible.

“Tackling deforestation is integral to staying under 1.5C,” he said. “Traders need to go further, faster. The roadmap needs a proactive stance towards avoiding future deforestation and conversion, including a concrete commitment not to invest in further infrastructural development in key deforestation frontiers. There needs to be a commitment to a common cutoff date across commodities that includes all types of ecosystems.”

Jack Hurd, the executive director of the Tropical Forest Alliance helping oversee the roadmap through the World Economic Forum, said he disagreed that not enough progress had been made and said he was particularly pleased with movement in the cattle industry.

“These companies often deal in one or more of the commodities. It is important to remember that. We are working across several sectors. The main plus is the oil palm sector. It has done very well and laid a clear path to 1.5C.

“Our view is that the soy sector has room to grow. The cattle sector has some plans that are aligned with 1.5C. The science says that deforestation and all land use change has to end by 2030, with significant reductions by 2025. In our view, they have made a big step in priority biomes,” he said.

Wilmar International, a major palm oil supplier, emphasised the success of this sector in reducing deforestation, and added: “Each commodity sector has varying commitments and indicators – some more comprehensive and progressive than others. The criticism drawn thus far has incorrectly and unfairly consolidated all the commodity sectors towards the lowest commitment.”

Cargill and JBS did not respond to a request for comment.