

Mr Frans Timmermans
Executive Vice-President for the EU Green Deal
European Commission

Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
European Commission

By electronic mail

10 March 2021

Re: EU policies should not rely on certification schemes

Dear Vice-President, dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you to urge you not to rely on voluntary certification schemes or related labels in advancing the political aims of the European Green Deal or in enforcing European legislation.

In relation to this, I would like to draw your attention to a new in-depth analysis of certification schemes for forest and ecosystem risk commodities conducted by Greenpeace International.

The analysis, [Destruction: Certified](#), reviewed several certification schemes, showing inconsistencies in their standards, serious governance flaws, a lack of transparency and other issues that undermine their credibility as informative to consumers, as a method to gauge compliance with legislation or as triggers of market change. In other words, **the certification of land-based commodities simply does not live up to its claims and does not deliver the protection that it promises or is required by law.**

The analysis also shows that far too many companies certified under these schemes sell products like palm oil, wood, soy and meat, which continue to be linked to forest and ecosystem destruction, land disputes and human rights abuses. It also shows that, despite the various flaws identified, corporations keep promoting certification as a way to prove their commitment to ending deforestation and other ecosystem destruction.

Voluntary certification schemes have not only failed to tackle these issues but might even have contributed to them. By improving the image of some forest and ecosystem risk commodities, certification schemes can greenwash unsustainable products, thereby stimulating their consumption and increasing environmental destruction. In some cases, governments and policy makers have promoted private certification schemes rather than introducing much-needed public policies and regulations.

The evidence in our analysis leads us to conclude that certification schemes cannot be accepted as a way to demonstrate compliance with legal requirements related to the protection of forests, ecosystems and human rights, considering all the limitations of certification schemes and their issues with regard to effectiveness and credibility.

Based on these findings on the limitations of certification schemes, Greenpeace urges you to:

- Introduce [ambitious new legislation to ensure that forest and ecosystem risk commodities](#) (and derived products) placed on the EU market are free from forest and other ecosystem destruction and from human rights violations, and to ensure that operators are responsible for meeting these requirements using due diligence procedures, rather than by relying on certification schemes.
- Ensure that the Fitness Check of the **EU Timber Regulation** will maintain the limited role that certificates currently play under this law, meaning that operators **may** take certification schemes into account in the risk assessment mitigation procedures – provided that they meet certain criteria related to their adequacy, transparency and effectiveness – without prejudice to the operators' responsibility for complying with the law.
- Stop relying further on voluntary certification schemes to show compliance with legal requirements such as those of the **Renewable Energy Directive** for bioenergy.

I invite you to have a look at [the full analysis](#) for further details and remain at your disposal for any inquiries you might have.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Stoczkiewicz', written in a cursive style.

Magda Stoczkiewicz
Programme Director, Greenpeace European Unit