

AFR100 PULSE

HARNESSING AFRICA'S FLR SPIRIT

EUROPEAN UNION DEFORESTATION-FREE SUPPLY CHAINS AND AFR100 IMPLEMENTATION

INFORMATION NOTE, DECEMBER 2023

We support the



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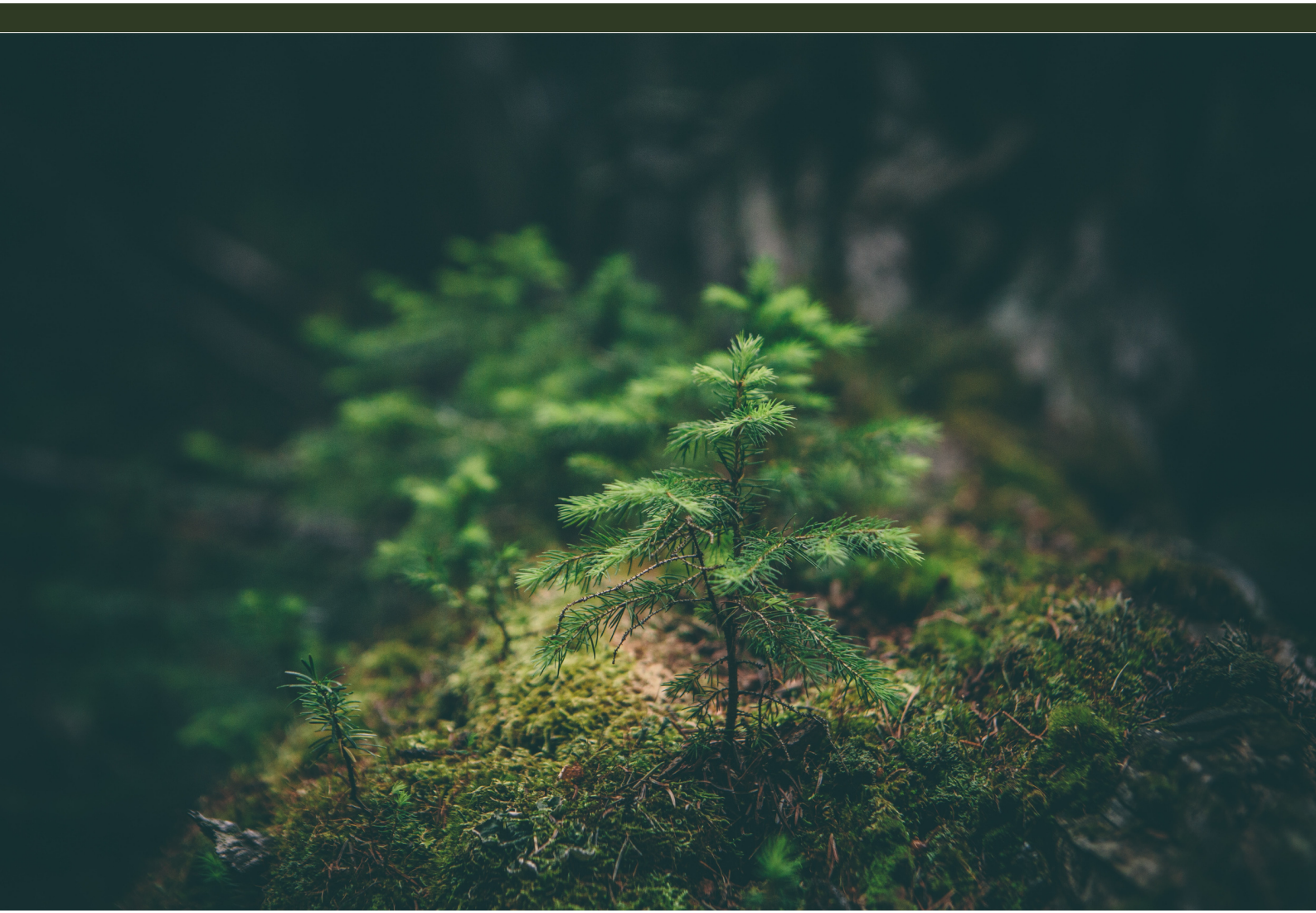
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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to reduce deforestation and land degradation, the European Union (EU) has decided to enforce a regulation on tropical products such as cocoa, coffee, timber, oil palm, soybean and beef, the cut off date being 31 december 2020. This means that cocoa and the other commodities will be considered to be deforestation-free, if they are not produced in an area which was a forest before 31 december 2020 (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/eu-deforestation-regulation-accelerator-cocoa-adeline-dontenville>). For the AFR100 initiative this is a very good opportunity which will put more value to the restoration efforts made by the large private sector, smallholder farmers and women and youth entrepreneurs involved in the restoration of degraded forests and lands involving these strategic products.

ii

Currently, there are 33 countries, members of the AFR100 initiative with 31 countries joining the initiative before 2020. Only Zambia and Somalia have joined the AFR100 initiative in 2020 and 2022 respectively. These thirty-three countries have committed to restore 129.5 million hectares of degraded forests and lands by 2030.

The main argument of this information note is that AFR100 products, that is, products coming from restored degraded forests and lands satisfy the new EU policy decision. However, it would be very important to geolocalize all areas pledged by AFR100 countries to facilitate the traceability of the products and to build the capacity of stakeholders on sustainable harvesting and to make sure that areas restored using the AFR100 approach will never be deforested afterwards.

2. DIRECT AND INDIRECT CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION

Deforestation, forests and land degradation are very alarming in Africa. According to FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2020), from 2010 to 2020, Africa had the highest net rate of forest loss in the world estimated at 3.94 million hectares per year. As much as 65% of productive land in Africa is degraded, while desertification affects 45% of Africa's land area (FAO, 2021 cited by Quail and Diakhité, 2021). Estimates suggest that Africa has 660 million hectares of degraded land of which 132 million hectares are degraded cropland (FAO, 2021 cited by Quail and Diakhité, 2021). Direct and indirect causes explain the increase in the rate of deforestation in Africa. The direct causes are the unsustainable conversion of forests into agricultural land for subsistence or commercial purposes, the search for fuelwood for cooking food, production of charcoal, uncontrolled exploitation of certain forest species by timber companies, urbanization, the construction of road infrastructure, forest fires and mining. The indirect causes are public policies (example the impact of subsidies on the conversion of forests into agricultural land), market fluctuations (example the impact of the increase in the international price of groundnuts on the nationally cultivated areas) and demographic changes. Degradation of forests and lands causes a major decline in biodiversity and ecosystem services (Wurz, Annemarie et al., 2022). It is very important to note that the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the AFR100 initiative combat each the effects of deforestation and forest and land degradation (Ndoye and Meseret, 2022).

3. THE AFR100 APPROACH

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) provides several benefits: Environmental, Social, Economic and Livelihood benefits and AFR100 accelerates FLR on the ground. Thus AFR100 increases the environmental, social, economic and livelihood benefits of restored degraded forests and lands. These benefits are: a) Increase in forest cover and carbon sequestration to combat climate change; b) Increase in biological diversity; soil fertility; ecosystems and ecological functions of the forests; air and water quality; c) Increase in employment opportunities for rural communities by providing green jobs to women, youth and marginalized groups; d) Increase in rural incomes; e) improvement in food security and nutrition; f) Healthy diets; g) Reduction in gender inequality and more autonomy for women; h) Reduction in the discrimination against marginalized groups. This implies that under the AFR100 initiative natural resource conservation and human well-being are taken into consideration **simultaneously** (Ndoye and Meseret, 2022).

FLR under the AFR100 initiative takes place in deforested and degraded forests and lands. This implies that under the AFR100 initiative, primary or secondary forests are never cleared for any alternative usage. According to the AFR100 Voluntary Guidelines (AFR100, 2017), a guiding principle of FLR is the protection of natural ecosystems to enhance resilience (avoid further degradation or conversion of natural forest cover). Formulated differently, fertile lands and forests are never destroyed or converted to other alternative uses under the AFR100 principles. This is very important to note to avoid false interpretation and misunderstanding. This provides an opportunity to differentiate AFR100 products with those obtained from clearing primary, secondary forests or very old fallow areas. Furthermore, it creates an interesting opportunity for the certification of AFR100 products, which will allow for example to differentiate cocoa or timber produced from the restoration of degraded forests and lands and cocoa, timber produced from exploiting standing forests.



4. COLLABORATION BETWEEN AUDA-NEPAD AND ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS FOR THE CERTIFICATION OF AFR100 PRODUCTS

Accredited institutions in certification through a partnership with AUDA-NEPAD/AFR100 Secretariat need to provide an opportunity to develop robust standards and tools to obtain traceable and deforestation-free AFR100 products that will meet the requirements of the EU markets and other market niches interested in sustainable and deforestation-free agricultural and multi-strata agroforestry products.

This will require to track the products from the restored degraded forests and lands to enable the private sector, consumers and other stakeholders to make sure that the AFR100 products meet the EU requirements.

In this new certification of AFR100 products, tracking is done from the areas committed by African governments which are already degraded forests and lands. The following relationship can be highlighted: **Degraded forests and lands-Restoration activities-AFR100 Products-Value chain development including Value Addition through processing -Consumers**. This implies that in this new certification, the AFR100 products are part of the restoration process.

Conceptually and from a strategic point of view, for the certification of AFR100 products, before placing any AFR100 products in the regional (AFCFTA) and international markets (including the EU market), the following information will need to be provided, among others:

- a) Traceability of the AFR100 products: This implies that all areas pledged by AFR100 countries should be **geolocalized** to identify all areas of production and the type of products produced. In theory, this should not be difficult because the coordinates of all areas committed under AFR100 could normally be identified. This is one activity that the AFR100 monitoring platform should carry out in collaboration with the governments of AFR100 countries and key monitoring partners of the AFR100 initiative (WRI, IUCN, FAO, GIZ, Conservation International, The World Bank, CIFOR-ICRAF...).
- b) Sustainability standard: The traceability will allow to easily show that the AFR100 products are deforestation-free, implying that the products have not been produced in areas where there were standing forests prior to production.
- c) Sustainable harvesting and management standard: The AFR100 products should be harvested sustainably and more importantly the **area already restored should not go back to a state of deforestation and degradation**. This could be a very good value addition of the certification of AFR100 products. In particular, the certification of AFR100 products will allow AFR100 countries to comply fully with the new European Union (EU) regulation on sustainable cocoa, coffee and other products that need to meet the interests of the European markets and consumers.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF EU DEFORESTATION-FREE SUPPLY CHAINS FOR AFR100 IMPLEMENTATION

The certification of AFR100 products will be a win-win business model between AFR100 countries, AUDA-NEPAD/AFR100 Secretariat, accredited institutions in certification and EU customers. AFR100 countries interested, under the guidance/arbitrage of the accredited institution for the certification of AFR100 products and AUDA-NEPAD/AFR100 Secretariat could sign contracts with the EU countries and agree on prices and quantities to be delivered at an agreed time³. These contractual arrangements will have several benefits such as poverty reduction, improvement in food security and nutrition, reduction in gender inequality, reduction in rural to urban migration of youth, decrease in illegal migration and use of vessels to illegally migrate to Europe. For that reason, the EU needs to be invited at African Union sessions to allow EU representatives to have strategic discussions with governments of AFR100 countries.

6. CONCLUSION

The EU decision to provide market outlets to deforestation-free supply chains is a very good opportunity for the AFR100 initiative and AFR100 member countries if it is exploited strategically to increase forest cover and carbon sequestration, reduce poverty, provide green jobs for women and youth, reduce rural to urban migration and illegal migration to Europe.



7. REFERENCE

AFR100 (2017). Voluntary Guidelines for Forest Landscape Restoration Under AFR100, August. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/eu-deforestation-regulation-accelerator-cocoa-adeline-dontenville>

Ndoye, Ousseynou and Meseret Shiferaw (2022). Forest landscape restoration in the AFR100 initiative : Reconciling natural resource conservation and human well-being. Information note, November.

[3] This is called forward contracting.

