

Press release

11 April 2012

UK Government and Business partnership to tackle deforestation

On a visit to South East Asia, Prime Minister David Cameron today announced new measures to tackle illegal deforestation worldwide in partnership with the Government of Indonesia and the business community.

The UK will work with businesses to source and produce sustainable timber and palm oil and tackle the wasteful and inefficient practices that are driving deforestation.

Leading companies like Unilever and Kingfisher, which owns B&Q, are already transforming their business practices to help save tropical rainforests, protect the livelihoods of the poorest and safeguard precious habitats.

The UK will also work with British trade associations and companies to set out a roadmap for the UK to achieve 100% use of sustainable palm oil nationwide. This will include tackling the wasteful and inefficient practices that are driving deforestation across the world.

The UK Government will work with Indonesia and at risk African countries, such as Liberia and Ghana, to set up projects to protect them from deforestation. Our shared expertise and knowledge will help tens of millions of poor people protect their livelihoods and protect up to 39 million hectares of forest across Africa and Asia over the next 25 years.

Illegal logging, unsustainable forestry and agriculture is destroying 13 million hectares a year, an area seven times the size of Wales and affects nine out of ten of the poorest people in the world (1.2 billion people) who rely on forests for their livelihoods. It contributes to 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions – more than global transport emissions. Action by governments and business is urgently needed to tackle this threat.

Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, said:

“Deforestation deprives some of the world's very poorest people of their livelihoods as well as having a major impact on the environment. This will have a clear effect on Britain. The Coalition Government wants to pursue an ambitious approach to tackling both global poverty and illegal logging and today we're setting out how we will work with the private sector and other governments to make a real difference.

“I am delighted leading companies such as Kingfisher and Unilever are transforming their practices. More companies need to follow their example, and take urgent action to address the impacts of their operations on forests and livelihoods.”

Environment Minister Richard Benyon said:

“Over half of the world’s wildlife lives in forests so tackling deforestation is crucial for their survival. Unsustainable cultivation of palm oil is one of the factors that leads to deforestation and the UK can play a role in reversing this. We are talking to UK trade associations to agree how businesses can move to using only sustainable palm oil by 2015. This could make a real difference to the forests which are home to endangered species such as orang-utans and Sumatran tigers.”

Britain will also increase the supply of legally-felled timber from Indonesia by helping small enterprises access the international timber market, worth over US \$1 billion every year.

Ian Cheshire, Group CEO Kingfisher plc, said:

“We were delighted that last year the Government supported EU legislation to ban the import and possession of illegal timber.”

“UK plc can and should play a role in helping to protect the world’s forests. At Kingfisher, we have a long heritage in responsible procurement that supports sustainable forestry. B&Q was a founder member of the Forest Stewardship Council and last year reached a long standing goal of sourcing 100% of our timber from proven, well managed sources – it is the only retailer in the UK which can make this claim.”

“But this still isn’t enough. The only long term solution includes reforestation. That’s why we are exploring projects in the UK, Europe and in countries like Indonesia which would see us actively involved in reforestation. Our ambition is that we will create more forest than we use in our products.”

The UK-based multinational, Unilever, continues to be a leader in the industry and today has reached another milestone.

Paul Polman, Unilever CEO, said:

“Unilever is one of the world’s largest users of Palm Oil. It buys around 1.5 million tonnes a year – the majority from Indonesian growers. In 2011 more than 60% of Unilever’s purchases globally came from plantations certified as sustainable by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. This means that all of the palm oil that we use in our products in Indonesia now comes from sustainable sources. The company is committed to working with its suppliers and with the RSPO to make the Indonesian Palm sector prosperous, productive and completely sustainable.“

The UK aims to use the UK’s International Climate Fund to work with the private sector, governments and international partners to leverage investment from business to tackle issues surrounding deforestation.

Notes to editors

1. The UK Government will be working bilaterally with up to ten countries to combat illegal logging and deforestation, and has announced:
 - £60m of funding for the next four years will increase our support to up to ten countries in Africa and Asia, drawing on achievements to date in countries like Indonesia.

- £10m of the funding will be channelled to facilitate legal trade in timber in Indonesia, helping small Indonesian enterprises access international markets for timber products, worth over US\$1 billion annually.
2. The UK Government has been working with 15 trade associations which use palm oil, from cleaning products and food manufacturing, to chemicals, retail and oil refining.
 3. The UK's funding comes from the Government's International Climate Fund (ICF) managed by the Department for International Development, the Department for Energy and Climate Change, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It has been set up to help developing countries tackle climate change and reduce poverty.
 4. The ICF will invest £2.9 billion of climate finance from within existing aid commitments from 2011 to 2015. This will:
 - Help millions of poor farmers to adapt to a changing climate
 - Help protect millions of poor people from droughts, floods and other extreme weather events
 - Help millions of poor people secure access to clean energy
 - Help poor countries develop in ways that avoid or reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions
 - Work with the private sector to invest in low carbon development - securing private investment to complement public money spent
 - Help to protect the world's forests and the livelihoods of 1.2 billion people who depend on them, as well as biodiversity and ecosystems.
 - Build a global partnership between developed and developing countries to tackle illegal logging

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