

NATIONAL DECLARATION

Austrian market stakeholders urge soy traders operating in Brazil to implementing immediately their commitment to zero deforestation and conversion at landscape level in the Cerrado

Vienna, October 27th, 2020

It is with profound concern that we follow the increasing deforestation rates in Brazil. Beside the critical acceleration of natural habitats loss and fires in the Amazon, the situation in the Cerrado is equally alarming. In fact, the level of destruction has been proportionally even higher. **Cerrado, which is half of the Amazon size has already lost over 50% of its original vegetation.** The Cerrado is the oldest and most biodiverse savanna on the planet. Unfortunately, it has been one of the most threatened landscapes in the world due to uncontrolled agribusiness expansion. The destruction of this unique biome is directly linked to the soy expansion and the real estate speculation associated with this critical supply chain¹. Soy represents more than 80% of the Cerrado's crop lands, and responds for the destruction of about 100,000 hectares, per year (average of recent years).

Further Cerrado destruction will compromise the future of agriculture itself through the ongoing collapse of essential environmental services such as water supply² as well as the extinction of species, loss of unique habitats, greenhouse gas emissions and social conflicts³. As repeatedly informed by the Brazil's Minister of Agriculture⁴, deforestation is not necessary. There is sufficient suitable and already opened land to expand the agricultural production in the country without causing any new deforestation/conversion⁵.

The current developments in Brazil and specially the destruction rate in Cerrado indicate that a market zero conversion voluntary solution must be implemented urgently.

We wish to continue to keep business relationships with, source from and invest in Brazil and help ensure that protecting the Amazon can be economically productive for all. As Austrian businesses and market stakeholders with interests in Brazil, we have welcomed and wish to see a continuation of **soy traders' steps in 2019 towards a commitment to eliminate Cerrado conversion** – which was developed collaboratively by the GTC (Cerrado Soy Working Group). The **GTC Agreement is considered to be one of the most meaningful deliverables of the 2020 global commitments on zero deforestation.** Regrettably, in February 2020, we got surprised by the withdrawal from traders of this widely presented commitment and solution to clean up the Brazilian soy chain from deforestation and conversion.

It is time for action! Soy is one of the major drivers of deforestation and conversion in South America and accounts for 47% of the EU's imported deforestation/conversion from agricultural and livestock commodities; and natural habitat conversion caused by soy expansion is strongly associated with social injustice and violence⁶.

We urge traders operating in Brazil to implement a Cerrado conversion 2020 cut-off date together with an accountable monitoring, verification and report system⁷. This is a condition we require to keep the commercial relationships with the Brazilian traders and our other soy-consuming suppliers.

Signatories:



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¹ <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/03/brazils-key-deforestation-drivers-pasture-cropland-land-speculation/>

² https://www.wwf.org.br/natureza_brasileira/areas_prioritarias/cerrado/manifestodocerrado/cerrado_conversion_zero/

³ https://favaretoufabr.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/2019_favareto_hold-the-line-greenpeace-report.pdf

⁴ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2020/01/nao-precisamos-desmatar-para-comer-basta-aumentar-a-produtividade-diz-tereza-cristina.shtml>

⁵ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335433977_Soy_expansion_in_Brazil's_Cerrado

⁶ <https://www.climatefocus.com/sites/default/files/20191209%20GIZ-%20Soy%20supply%20chain%20consolidated%20study%20clean%20v.7.0.pdf>

⁷ Based on the Accountability Framework principles and criteria.