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NATIONAL DECLARATION

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

Basel, October 2020

It is with profound concern that we follow the increasing deforestation rates in Brazil. The Amazon is facing records of a decade in natural habitats loss and fires. The situation in the Cerrado is also alarming, the level of destruction has been proportionally even higher than in the Amazon – **Cerrado is half of the Amazon size and have already lost over 50% of its original vegetation. The current developments in Brazil seems to be out of control, and a market zero conversion voluntary solution must be implemented urgently**; recent high-level scientific papers have been showing that agricultural production associated with illegal activities are spread throughout the country^{1,2}, and illegal deforestation responded for 99% of the total native vegetation conversion in 2019³.

The Cerrado is the oldest and most biodiverse savanna on the planet, however 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 chain⁴. 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).

We were informed in 2019, by soy traders' representatives, that they were ready to implement a commitment to eliminate Cerrado conversion – which was developed collaboratively by the GTC (Cerrado Soy Working Group). Regrettably, in February 2020, we got surprised by the withdrawal from traders of such a widely presented commitment. A solution to clean up the Brazilian soy chain from deforestation and conversion.

We must be clear that a Cerrado conversion cut-off date is strongly demanded by the international market, and the GTC Agreement has been considered one of the most meaningful deliverables of the 2020 global commitments on zero deforestation. We are certain that traders operating in Brazil will take the seriousness to reaffirm and implement a commitment so thoroughly developed over years of hard work, and with more than a hundred meetings and calls carried out in Brazil and abroad.

Further Cerrado destruction will compromise the future of agriculture itself through the ongoing collapse of essential environmental services such as water supply⁵ as well as the extinction of species, loss of unique habitats, greenhouse gas emissions and social conflicts⁶. As repeatedly informed by the Brazil's Minister of Agriculture⁷, 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/conversion⁸.

¹ http://resources.trase.earth/documents/issuebriefs/TraselIssueBrief4_EN.pdf

² <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6501/246>

³ <https://www.dw.com/pt-br/relat%C3%B3rio-aponta-que-99-do-desmatamento-no-brasil-em-2019-foi-ilegal/a-53561239>

⁴ <https://news.mongabay.com/2019/03/brazils-key-deforestation-drivers-pasture-cropland-land-speculation/>

⁵ https://www.wwf.org.br/natureza_brasileira/areas_prioritarias/cerrado/manifetodocerrado/cerrado_conversion_zero/

⁶ https://favaretoufabr.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/2019_favareto_hold-the-line-greenpeace-report.pdf

⁷ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2020/01/nao-precisamos-desmatar-para-comer-basta-aumentar-a-produtividade-diz-tereza-cristina.shtml>

⁸ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335433977_Soy_expansion_in_Brazil's_Cerrado

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 violence⁹.

Thanks to Swiss Soy Network, Switzerland is importing only certified responsible soy (not coming directly from newly deforested areas) with already applicable cut-off dates (e.g. Proterra has a 2008 cut-off date). Unfortunately, this commitment did not prevent certain traders to continue operating in deforested areas of Cerrado in parallel of the trade of certified soy.

Therefore the Soya Network is **urging traders operating in Brazil to implement a Cerrado conversion 2020 cut-off date together with an accountable monitoring, verification and report system¹⁰ for all of their business operations. This is a condition we strongly require to keep the commercial relationship with the Brazilian traders and the other soy-consuming suppliers.**

Soy Network Switzerland

The collaboration of 30 key stakeholders from the Swiss agriculture and food industries is successful. Since its founding ten years ago, the members have increased the import share of responsibly produced soy to 99%. Responsible means: Old-growth forests and important ecosystems are protected, social aspects are taken into account and GMO-free soy production is increased. This is guaranteed by the standards ProTerra, RTRS, Donau / Europe Soja, ISCC PLUS and Bio Suisse.



⁹ <https://www.climatefocus.com/sites/default/files/20191209%20%20GIZ-%20Soy%20supply%20chain%20consolidated%20study%20clean%20v.7.0.pdf>

¹⁰ Based on the Accountability Framework principles and criteria.