



Contribution to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Halting & Reversing Deforestation & Forest Degradation by 2030

The World Federation for Animals (WFA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a roadmap to “halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.” WFA’s input reflects the first Global Stocktake’s recognition of the importance of halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation to meet the Paris Agreement goals, alongside conserving biodiversity. It also echoes the Stocktake’s acknowledgement that increased financial resources, technology transfer, and capacity building, including positive incentives and recognition of non-carbon benefits, are essential to tackling deforestation and forest degradation.

We cannot halt deforestation without tackling the global industrial animal agriculture system, the misaligned trade frameworks supporting it, artificially low commodity prices, and persistently high demand for meat and dairy. This roadmap must address these structural causes rather than treat deforestation solely as a forest governance issue.

Our submission further argues that **efforts to halt and reverse forest degradation cannot succeed without incorporating wildlife protection.** Wild animals perform ecological functions that sustain forest ecosystems, making their well-being crucial to successful forest conservation.

In line with the Roadmap’s objectives, this submission identifies key barriers to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, as well as levers to accelerate action, while showcasing examples of progress.

This submission was prepared by WFA on behalf of its 73 member organisations, with special contributions from Animal Protection Denmark, Eurogroup for Animals, Sinergia Animal, ecoflicx, Mercy for Animals, and World Animal Protection.

CRITICAL BARRIERS TO HALTING & REVERSING DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION

1. Animal agriculture

Agricultural land use is the main cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss worldwide. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) concluded that “agricultural expansion is driving almost 90 percent of global deforestation”. According to the *State of the World's Forests 2022*, over half of that resulted from expansion for cropland, while nearly 40 percent came from expansion for livestock grazing. Together, beef, soy, and palm oil are responsible for **60 percent of tropical deforestation**.

In the Amazon rainforest alone, **cattle ranching and soy production drive 70 percent of deforestation**. Crucially, **more than three-quarters of the world's soy** is fed to animals (not grown for human food). And the climate consequences of this feed-driven deforestation extend far beyond the forest itself. For example, World Animal Protection's *Climate Change and Cruelty* report shows that when deforestation for feed crops is included, the climate impact of chicken production in Brazil more than triples.

2. Growing global demand for meat and dairy, with public finance support

Growing global demand for meat and dairy is a systemic driver of tropical deforestation. Rising consumption of foods produced along forest frontiers, such as beef and soy, has coincided with a sharp decline in global forest cover (World Bank, *Reboot Development*, 2025, Figure 7.3).

This demand is encouraged and sustained by public finance. According to the *UNEP State of Finance for Nature 2026*, agricultural, environmentally harmful subsidies, US\$0.41 trillion annually, drive “unsustainable agricultural practices, overproduction, land conversion and deforestation.” **Subsidy-linked deforestation released an estimated 4.3 billion tonnes of carbon** over 20 years. Yet public and multilateral development banks continue to **pour billions of dollars** into harmful industrial livestock projects, while investing minimally in sustainable food systems.

The damage from these subsidies knows no national borders. For instance, **livestock subsidies in the United States drive deforestation in Brazil** by increasing the demand for soybeans as feedstock.

These subsidies persist not by accident, but by design. The lobby of the agricultural sector has an outsized influence on policymaking in many key jurisdictions, successfully blocking zero-deforestation commitments and delaying regulatory action. In its *Detox Development* report, the World Bank noted that subsidy benefits tend to concentrate among special-interest groups with disproportionate policy influence. At the same time, the costs, including deforestation, are spread across entire nations, regions, and generations, making it difficult to form coalitions for change.

As the *IPBES report on the underlying causes of biodiversity loss* notes, “resources devoted to blocking transformative change, for example, through lobbying by vested interest groups or corruption, overshadow those devoted to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.” Restricting that power is one of the key barriers that needs to be overcome to halt and reverse deforestation.

3. Trade agreements without environmental safeguards

Trade frameworks that have expanded market access without corresponding environmental obligations have created the conditions for countries to drive deforestation in other regions. In fact, [deforestation rates tend to peak after regional trade agreements](#), increasing net deforestation, particularly in developing tropical countries. The World Bank's [Recipe for a Livable Planet](#) confirms that removing trade barriers without environmental conditionality risks inducing deforestation in Latin American and Asian MICs that host rich carbon sinks.

[Civil society groups have raised concerns](#) that the EU–Mercosur Agreement's "rebalancing mechanism", which would allow parties to respond to regulatory changes that cause "trade effects", could create a regulatory chill, putting measures such as the EU Deforestation Regulation and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism at particular risk of challenge.

4. Collapse of wild animal populations

Wildlife loss is not only a consequence of deforestation but also a factor that worsens forest degradation. According to the [2024 Living Planet Index](#), the average size of monitored wildlife populations has declined by 73% since 1970, mainly due to the pressures that cause deforestation, such as land-use change for agricultural expansion. Wild mammals today account for [only about 5 percent of global mammal biomass](#), while humans and domesticated mammals account for roughly 95 percent.

Many forest ecosystems rely on animals for key ecological functions, such as seed dispersal, pollination, predation, and nutrient cycling, which support forest regeneration and resilience. [Research published in Science Advances](#) shows that the loss of large vertebrates greatly reduces tropical forest carbon storage capacity and limits [forest recovery](#), as the largest, most carbon-rich hardwood trees depend on animals for seed dispersal and regeneration. As wildlife vanishes, forests shift toward smaller-seeded, lighter-wooded species with lower carbon stocks, even where total tree cover appears intact. This is a dynamic that current forest governance frameworks, including REDD+, have largely overlooked.

Forest conservation that overlooks wildlife's role [risks ecosystem degradation](#), even when tree cover appears maintained.

LEVERS FOR ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS TO HALT & REVERSE DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION

1. Reform of agricultural subsidies

One of the most powerful levers available is subsidy reform. Agriculturally harmful environmental subsidies are a barrier that, if redirected, can become a major financial lever for transformation. The [World Bank estimates](#) that repurposing harmful subsidies could cover approximately one-third of the total finance needed for agrifood system transformation.

Governments should redirect agricultural subsidies away from industrial livestock, feed-crop monocultures, and other forest-threatening systems. This reform is already required under [Target 18 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), which calls for the elimination or reform of incentives harmful to biodiversity, reducing them by at least \$500 billion per year by 2030.

Subsidy reform would enable governments to implement more sustainable food systems aligned with forest protection and regeneration commitments. This includes support toward agroecology, silvopastoral systems, diversified farming, high-welfare low-emission production systems, and plant-based and alternative proteins, all compatible with forest protection.

2. Support transition to more sustainable animal agriculture practices

The roadmap should encourage sustainable agricultural practices based on organic and other agroecological principles that improve animal welfare, reduce habitat destruction, and support biodiversity. Effective measures include agroforestry and silvo-pastoral practices that integrate trees into farming landscapes, as well as incentives for producing sustainable commodities, such as unprocessed fruits and vegetables. Investment in research and market development for plant-based and alternative protein sources can further lessen pressure on remaining forests.

The FAO's *Halting Deforestation from Agricultural Value Chains* report also recommends paying special attention to smallholder farmers, who produce roughly 35 percent of the world's food but often live in poverty and cannot afford the costs or income disruptions associated with changing their practices. Creating financial and policy frameworks that reward farmers for sustainable food production and that reduce their dependence on dominant commodity buyers can build the political and economic conditions for systemic change.

3. Promote dietary shifts toward plant-rich diets

The IPCC has stated that “a transition towards more plant-based consumption and reduced consumption of animal-based foods, particularly from ruminant animals, could reduce pressure on forests and land used for feed, support the preservation of biodiversity and planetary health.” *Research* shows that a shift to a diet that excludes animal products could reduce land use by 76 percent, GHG emissions by 49 percent, and freshwater withdrawals by 19 percent, among other benefits.

High-income countries bear particular responsibility in decreasing consumer demand for animal-source foods. Countries with high per capita consumption of animal products must transition toward more diversified, plant-rich diets within planetary and social boundaries, as argued by the *Just Transition Paper*. Without tackling demand-side pressures, forest-risk commodity production will continue to expand, particularly in tropical producer countries.

Recommended measures to promote dietary shifts include aligning public procurement with sustainability standards, adopting ‘default plant-based’ meal options in public institutions, ensuring that environmental and health costs borne by society are reflected in food prices, revising national dietary guidelines to reflect planetary boundaries, and reducing VAT on fruits, vegetables, and legumes to make sustainable choices more affordable.

4. Contingent trade agreements

Well-designed trade policy can also become a lever for forest protection. Contingent trade agreements (CTAs) link market access to environmental outcomes by making tariffs conditional on the conservation of a critical resource, for example, forests. If forest cover is maintained, goods can be exported tariff-free; if monitoring reveals a decline, tariffs are imposed. *Research confirms* that including environmental provisions in regional trade agreements limits deforestation, and *recent economic modelling* suggests CTAs could be a potent tool for protecting tropical forests associated with globally traded commodities.

5. Wildlife in forest protection

Habitats need their full range of animals to perform ecological functions properly: seed dispersal, predation, pollination, and nutrient cycling are prerequisites for long-term forest ecosystem integrity. **Forest elephants**, for example, facilitate the growth of large, high wood-density trees that store more carbon. Their loss is estimated to cause a 6–9% decline in forest carbon stocks. These ecological functions also carry direct economic value. **Research** shows that flying foxes in Australia are responsible for more than 91 million new trees, contributing AUD \$271–955 million per year to the eucalypt timber industry. On the other hand, **predators like wolves** have been found to boost carbon storage in forests by preying on moose populations. By averting moose overgrazing, studies estimate that wolves have a carbon-offsetting effect equivalent to removing 6 to 20 million cars from the road annually. Across tiger-range countries in Asia, **forests with tigers consistently store more carbon than forests without them**.

The Roadmap should therefore embed wildlife protection into forest governance, through stronger anti-poaching and anti-trafficking laws, robust enforcement of CITES regulations, and enhanced cross-border cooperation. Wildlife corridors connecting fragmented forest patches are essential for durable forest recovery, and where forests span borders, transboundary conservation agreements are needed to prevent protection in one country being undermined by clearance in another. Further, payment for ecosystem services provided by animals and biodiversity credits linked to wildlife health offer promising tools for capturing the value of these ecological functions within forest finance frameworks.

EXPERIENCES & LESSONS ON FOREST CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Brazil: supply chain intervention and political will

Brazil's deforestation rate declined over 80% between 2004 and 2014, **a decline attributed** to a combination of government policies, such as stronger law enforcement, supply-chain interventions, including private commitments on soy and cattle production, and changes in market conditions.

The Soy Moratorium, under which traders agreed not to purchase soy grown on deforested lands in the Brazilian Amazon after July 2006, saw the share of soybean expansion at the expense of the Amazon forest **fall from 30 percent in the two years before the agreement to just 1 percent by 2014**. However, this experience also illustrates the importance of geographic comprehensiveness: soy production in the Amazon may have 'leaked' to neighbouring Cerrado, suggesting that zero-deforestation commitments must consider how they **shape agricultural changes elsewhere**.

Agroecological transitions

Countries that have supported transitions from intensive, feed-dependent livestock systems toward extensive, high-welfare, agroecological production (e.g., silvopastoral systems in Latin America, agroecology pilots in the EU and East Africa) demonstrate that diversified farming can reduce feed demand, lower pressure on forest frontiers, and enhance ecosystem resilience. World Animal Protection's research (see "**Climate Change and Cruelty**" and "**Subsidising Factory Farm Harm**") shows that high-welfare, low-input systems can dramatically reduce the land footprint and forest-risk commodity demand linked to industrial animal agriculture.

Demand-side policy reducing forest-risk commodity consumption

Experiences from [Germany](#) and [Singapore](#) show that public procurement standards, dietary guidelines aligned with sustainability, and fiscal incentives can shift consumption away from high-emission animal products. These policies significantly reduce demand for feed crops linked to deforestation, supporting producer-country efforts to protect forests.

Mandatory traceability: EU and UK frameworks

[The EU Deforestation Regulation](#) (EUDR) and [the UK Environment Act](#)'s Schedule 17 due diligence measures reflect the growing recognition that mandatory traceability, particularly for soy used in animal feed, is essential. [Feed supply chain visibility](#) enables enforcement and empowers consumers and procurers to avoid high-risk commodities.

However, both frameworks also show how fragile legislative ambition is without prompt implementation. The EUDR, initially scheduled for December 2024, has been delayed twice and will now only apply to large operators from December 2026, following ongoing pressure from agricultural and trade interests. The UK's Schedule 17, which mandates businesses with a turnover above £50 million to establish due diligence systems for deforestation-linked commodities, including beef and soy, has yet to see its implementing regulations introduced. In both cases, the gap between legislative ambition and implementation reflects the political capture that this submission identifies as a critical barrier.

Costa Rica & India: integrating wildlife into forest conservation

Country experiences show that integrating wildlife protection into forest conservation yields stronger ecological and carbon outcomes than tree-cover approaches alone. In Costa Rica, wildlife corridors in fragmented agricultural landscapes provided critical habitat and connectivity for seed-dispersing forest birds; these birds used the corridors three to five times more than expected and dispersed seeds over 600 metres, [supporting forest regeneration](#) across deforested areas.

India's Project Tiger shows that protecting wildlife habitat is itself a mechanism for halting deforestation and securing forest carbon. Launched in 1973, the programme has grown from nine to 53 tiger reserves covering over 75,000 square kilometres, combining anti-poaching enforcement, regulated extraction of forest products, and community livelihood programmes. India's tiger population increased from about 1,827 in 1973 to around 3,167 by 2022. [Research found](#) that Project Tiger prevented over 5,800 hectares of forest loss between 2007 and 2020, corresponding to avoided emissions of roughly 1.1 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, valued at USD 92.5 million in ecosystem services from avoided social costs.

HOW CAN FOREST CONSERVATION & RESTORATION REFLECT THE DIVERSE REALITIES OF COUNTRIES AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND IPLCs RIGHTS?

Differentiated responsibilities between producer and consumer countries: Countries with historically high consumption of animal-source foods and high imports of forest-risk commodities must take the lead on dietary transitions, reducing demand for feed crops, and repurposing harmful agricultural subsidies. This approach recognises differentiated responsibilities and avoids placing disproportionate burdens on producer countries.

Recognising the role of wildlife in forest conservation: Forest conservation must recognise the role of wildlife populations and animal health in sustaining ecosystem functioning. Protecting wild animals from exploitation, trafficking and habitat encroachment strengthens both human wellbeing and forest resilience. Countries with large wildlife populations have shown that integrating anti-poaching, habitat connectivity and community wildlife stewardship delivers better forest outcomes. Restoration programmes that exclude wildlife planning risk reforesting ecologically impoverished landscapes.

Avoiding monoculture solutions: Restoration programmes must prioritise biodiverse, wildlife-supporting ecosystems over monoculture plantations. Monocultures offer limited ecological value, can undermine local livelihoods, and do not replicate the full ecological functions of native forests. The diversity of forest types – from tropical rainforest to dryland woodlands, from primary forest to agroforestry landscapes – must be reflected in differentiated approaches to conservation, restoration, and management.

IPLC rights, land tenure, and traditional ecological knowledge: Forest governance must centre the rights, land tenure security, and traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, who have repeatedly demonstrated superior conservation outcomes. Evidence from Latin America, the Congo Basin, and Papua New Guinea shows that community-managed forests can outperform state-managed areas on key ecological indicators. The Maya Biosphere Reserve (Guatemala) is an example of how community-led management delivers effective results, in this case, **near-zero deforestation**, while neighbouring protected areas experienced significantly higher forest loss.

Corporate responsibility and well-implemented certification: Corporations sourcing forest-risk commodities must be held accountable for the forest footprint of their supply chains. Well-implemented certification schemes – designed with rigorous third-party verification, geographic comprehensiveness, and meaningful additionality requirements – can serve as effective accountability tools when properly enforced. Mandatory due diligence legislation, as seen in the EU Deforestation Regulation and UK Environment Act, offers a more robust foundation than voluntary commitments alone.