



Contact: Shefali Sharma, IATP Europe, +49 177 146 9613

ssharma@iatp.org

Adrian Bebb, Friends of the Earth, +49 1609 490 1163

adrian.bebb@foeeurope.org

Perrine Fournier, Fern, +32 485 725 302

perrine@fern.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

340+ ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON THE EU TO IMMEDIATELY HALT TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRAZIL

BRUSSELS—In [an open letter](#) published today, over 340 civil society organizations are demanding that the European Union immediately halt free trade agreement negotiations with the Mercosur bloc (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) on the grounds of deteriorating human rights and environmental conditions in Brazil. The letter is addressed to presidents of the EU institutions ahead of the ministerial-level meeting next week in Brussels where EU and Mercosur foreign ministers aim to finalize the negotiations.

"Signing a trade deal with Brazil's current government goes against all the human rights and environmental principles that the European Union upholds. This is a pivotal time for European leadership to demonstrate that it stands by its principles and will not negotiate trade deals that undermine the Paris Climate Agreement and human rights," said [Shefali Sharma](#), Director of the [Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy](#) Europe.

Since Jair Bolsonaro became Brazil's president on January 1, 2019, his government has [dismantled environmental protections](#), [tolerated incursions](#) by armed invaders on Indigenous Peoples' lands, and overseen [a dramatic rise](#) of deforestation rates in the Amazon, undermining years of progress.

"We observe a worsening human rights and environmental situation in Brazil, including attacks on people defending their territories or natural resources and deaths of community leaders, peasants and activists. European civil society is urging the EU to use its trade leverage to stop human rights violations and deforestation in Brazil and support Brazilian civil society and environmental defenders instead," said Adrian Bebb, trade expert at [Friends of the Earth Europe](#).

The EU serves as a huge market for Brazilian soy and beef, the production of which drives deforestation and human rights abuses in Brazil on a vast scale. The EU is also Brazil's second largest trading partner, and taken together, its Member States are Brazil's largest source of [foreign direct investment](#).

Supporters of the deal are hoping to finalize negotiations before the Argentine presidential elections and the renewing of the European Commission, both of which will happen in November 2019.

"The recent European elections proved that citizens support a greener agenda. The Juncker administration, therefore, doesn't have the democratic legitimacy to finalize a trade deal that will exacerbate deforestation and therefore, have a disastrous effect on people and the climate," said Perrine Fournier, trade and forest campaigner at [Fern NGO](#).

Large-scale [beef production](#) is the biggest cause of global deforestation, and forests in Brazil have been

destroyed on a vast scale to make way for cattle. In 2017, 42 percent of [EU beef imports](#) came from [Brazilian transnational corporations](#) that have been heavily subsidized by the Brazilian government. The world's largest meat processor, JBS, [emitted more greenhouse gases](#) in 2016 than the [Netherlands](#). A [2013 study](#) for the European Commission also found that soy expansion was responsible for nearly half of the deforestation embedded in products imported into the EU. Brazil is South America's largest soy producer, and—until recently—the EU was [its biggest market](#).

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Based in Minneapolis with offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems.