

The EU-Mercosur trade agreement: A destructive deal for biodiversity

The European Union (EU) and the Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay) concluded a [trade agreement](#) back in 2019 to exchange more products and services. The process of ratification is due to start soon.

2019 was also the year that the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the renowned global biodiversity organisation, declared an unprecedented decline in nature and an accelerating rate of species [extinction](#). It lists five main reasons for the destruction of natural ecosystems. Our assessment of the EU-Mercosur trade deal reveals that it will aggravate four of them as it lacks enforceable and sanctionable sustainability standards.

"While the IPBES report rang an alarm bell in 2019 concerning the rapidly worsening state of biodiversity, this deal will only exacerbate the phenomenon further."

MEP Saskia Bricmont



The EU-Mercosur trade deal will destroy natural habitats



IPBES listed the direct destruction or clearing of natural habitats to make way for farmland, pastures, roads and residential land as one of the five reasons behind the unprecedented loss in [biodiversity](#).

The EU-Mercosur trade deal will increase exports of products driving deforestation, such as soy, beef and [bioethanol](#), from the Mercosur region to the European Union. Forests will be cleared to make way for farmland and pastures. Should the EU-Mercosur deal be ratified, the increase in beef exports is expected to lead to an additional **25%** of deforestation in the [region](#)⁶. Today, at least **20% of the Brazilian Amazon** and **17% of the entire Amazon Basin** have already been [deforested](#). The deal could propel the region closer to breaching the Amazonian tipping point, which is anywhere between 20-25% according to leading [scientists](#). Beyond this point, the actual Amazon won't be able to sustain itself and the remaining Amazon could consequently be destroyed.

Losing vast areas of forest affects climate [change](#), indigenous [peoples](#) and biodiversity.

The Mercosur region is home to an incredible range of forest biodiversity, such as the Amazon rainforest, the Cerrado (Brazil) and the dry forests of the Chaco (Argentina and Paraguay). According to [studies](#), Brazil is already one of the countries where export-oriented production causes the most species to become extinct. The impact of the EU soy trade, for instance, is a considerable factor in the loss of giant anteater habitats in [Brazil](#).

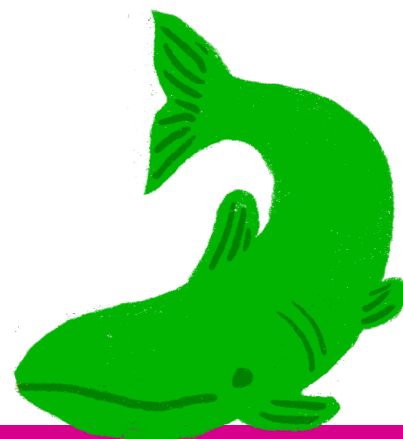
The EU-Mercosur agreement will lead to overexploitation and depletion of fish



IPBES listed the overexploitation and depletion of individual species, such as fish in oceans, as one of the five reasons behind the unprecedented loss in [biodiversity](#).

6. This hypothesis, however, is based on the scenario where the Mercosur region is only partly able to fulfil its entire quota of 96.000 of beef exports. The estimate of a 25% increase of deforestation relates to the land required to raise cattle for the full carcass of the beef. The EU, however, tends to import solely the sirloin of the beef, which accounts for 19.6% of the entire beef and consequently a predicted direct increase of deforestation of 5%.

The EU-Mercosur trade deal will remove tariffs for fish and crustacean imports from the Mercosur region to the [EU](#). Exports have been identified as a significant driver of the collapse of fisheries, and can partly explain why **93 % of the world's fish stock** is fully or [overexploited](#). In Argentina, past experiences have shown the likelihood that this deal will lead to overfishing, further reducing fish [populations](#).



The EU-Mercosur trade deal will increase pesticides pollution

IPBES listed environmental pollution through toxic and harmful substances as one of the five reasons behind the unprecedented loss in [biodiversity](#).

Brazil, along with the US, is the world's largest user of [pesticides](#), of which more than a dozen are considered highly [hazardous](#). In 2020, the UN found that the tremendous use of pesticides in Brazil causes biodiversity loss, in particular of [bees](#). Argentina is also a heavy pesticide user, with **240,000 tons of the herbicide glyphosate** used in 2018, mostly for soya [production](#).

By lowering tariffs for chemical products, the EU-Mercosur agreement will increase the export of EU pesticides and agro-chemicals to the Mercosur region, even those that are prohibited in the [EU](#). In addition, the deal will increase EU imports of agricultural products made in the Mercosur region with large amounts of [pesticide](#). The deal will thus lead to a more intensive use of pesticides and agrochemicals in the Mercosur region, worsening the pollution of the air, water and soil, and further damaging its fragile ecosystems.

More trade means more invasive species



Last but not least, IPBES listed invasive species as one of the five reasons behind the unprecedented loss in [biodiversity](#).

Along with tourism, international trade impacts biodiversity through the introduction of pathogens, pests and invasive species. The EU-Mercosur trade deal will have an indirect effect that is bound to cause a rise in the number of invasive [species](#).

Going ahead with the EU-Mercosur trade agreement will further increase biodiversity loss and, hence, put the EU's high environmental and social goals and values at risk. We must act now to prevent this dangerous trade-off! Join us to defend our commitments to climate, sustainable development and human rights.

Find out more about how the EU-Mercosur trade agreement impacts

[Deforestation](#) | [Animal Welfare](#) | [Human Rights](#) | [Climate and land use](#) | [Food safety](#) | [Pesticides and GMOs](#) | [Public Procurement](#)

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