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By e-mail

Dear Ruth,

Implementation of the legal regime on the use of forest risk commodities in commercial activity

Thank you for your letter of 10 November concerning Schedule 17 of the Environment Act 2021. We apologise for the delay in providing this response.

The implementation of the forest risk commodities regime outlined in Schedule 17 is an important mechanism for improving progress in tackling illegal deforestation in supply chains. We note in this context that both the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (EIP23) and the Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 (EIP25) recognise the need to tackle overseas deforestation, and that the commitment to “halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation globally by 2030” is part of the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forests and Land Use, agreed at COP26.

As you will be aware, the Secretary of State has statutory discretion regarding the timeframes for implementing the regime. However, we note your concern regarding the long-standing lack of progress in doing so.

We highlighted the ongoing absence of implementing legislation in our 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 EIP progress reports. In these reports we encouraged government to bring forward this legislation, recommending for example in our 2022/2023 report that “Government should publish the secondary legislation needed for implementation of the scheme for due diligence on forest risk commodities.”

We have built on this message in our 2024/2025 progress report, highlighting also the Environmental Audit Committee’s recommendations to government in its report ‘*The UK’s contribution to tackling global deforestation*’,¹ and identifying further opportunities for government to improve the environmental sustainability of resource extraction. We have also noted the limited consideration of impacts driven by resource extraction from the marine

¹ [The UK’s contribution to tackling global deforestation - Environmental Audit Committee](#) – see for example the recommendation at paragraph 77 regarding the publication of implementing legislation.

environment and the ongoing environmental impacts of land use change subsequent to deforestation.

We have made an initial assessment of EIP25 and note (notwithstanding its recognition of the need to ensure that consumption of forest risk commodities is not driving deforestation overseas) that it does not repeat the EIP23's express commitment to operationalise the forest risk commodities regime through secondary legislation.

Taking the points discussed above into account, we will continue to urge government to take the necessary steps to operationalise the forest risk commodities regime as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G Stacey', written in a cursive style.

Dame Glenys Stacey
Chair, Office for Environmental Protection