

Cocoa beans exported from Cote d'Ivoire to EU originate from deforested land in Liberia

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The authors of an investigation have revealed that companies that source cocoa from Cote d'Ivoire are responsible for the destruction of forests in Liberia. The traceability mechanisms used by these companies are flawed and do not comply with the new anti-deforestation regulation published on June 9, 2023, in the Official Journal of the European Union. This was highlighted in the field investigation presented by the Initiatives for Community Development and Forest Conservation (IDEF) representative Bakary Traoré at a major event held in Brussels. The investigators suggest that these mechanisms should be replaced by the robust and transparent national traceability system in place in Cote d'Ivoire.

A national traceability system is being set up in Cote d'Ivoire to geolocate all plots of land and register producers, with a map of producers including a barcode system that can track their sales. According to Bakary Traoré, the Executive Director of the Ivorian NGO (IDEF) and the report's main author, this is an important step that needs to be expedited. Bakary points out that the current traceability systems were set up by the chocolate companies and are controlled by them, making them non-transparent and flawed. To comply with new European regulations, traders in raw materials will have to change their approach.

The demand for cocoa beans is booming around the world and these beans have to pass through a complex market made up of a variety of parties acting as intermediaries between small, poorly paid cocoa farmers and retailers. This market has long been impenetrable, destroying thousands of hectares of forest to make way for cocoa plantations. However, the European Union has taken a decisive step with the adoption of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in June 2023 for products linked to deforestation and forest degradation.

The EUDR makes it illegal to import and market cocoa beans harvested on plots of land deforested to create plantations after 2020, effective from December 2024.