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NEW RESEARCH SHOWS RISK OF INCLUDING LAND USE AND FORESTS IN EU'S EMISSIONS TARGET

Brussels (16 June 2015) – Two days before the European Union closes its consultation on the role that land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) should play in EU climate effort, new research[1] reveals that including this sector in emissions reductions plans would cause havoc in the EU's climate and energy package and undermine the EU's climate target by more than 10 per cent, in effect meaning the EU's target would not be at least 40 per cent, as it pledged, but 36 per cent.[2] This would go against the EU's commitment in its international climate pledges that LULUCF would be treated with 'environmental integrity'. To avoid this, the report recommends that the EU creates a LULUCF pillar and that changes are made to accounting rules.

The EU has pledged to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2030, and is currently concluding its consultation on how to integrate emissions from farmlands, wetlands and forests – otherwise known as LULUCF. But research commissioned by Fern and the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), and carried out by the respected Öko-Institut using the standard international accounting methodology shows that even the smallest changes in the rules used to account for LULUCF will have a significant impact on the EU's efforts to reach its 2030 climate target.

The lead author of the study, Hannes Böttcher said: *"The EU has not been clear over all the rules that will be used. Many assumptions need to be made, for example on how much wood we plan to harvest from EU forests. The research shows that small assumption and rule changes have large impacts on the emission reduction target, so it is important to have this information to make a well-informed response to the consultation."*

Including LULUCF in the ESD reduces effort in that instrument by up to 65 per cent

Until now, the EU had actively decided to keep LULUCF separate, conceding that the sector had too many inherent differences from other sectors to deal with them in the same instrument. The decision of including the sector in the 2030 greenhouse gas mitigation framework could be a chance to ensure LULUCF is part of the fight against climate change. However, this all comes down to how it is integrated. One of the options the EU is considering is to integrate LULUCF with an existing instrument: the EU's Effort Sharing Decision (ESD), where the transport, building, waste and other

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[1] Link will become live once the embargo is lifted
[2] This data was produced by taking existing data for projected LULUCF emissions in the EU, applying accounting rules agreed by the EU and calculating this as a percentage of total effort needed to reach the EU's at least 40 per cent goal by 2030.

diffuse emissions are accounted for, which could reduce effort needed to reach the ESD target by up to 65 per cent.

To reduce this risk, Fern and IFOAM are calling for LULUCF not to be merged with the ESD and treated separately with its own rules and target with no links to the other instruments. This is what the EU is describing as a LULUCF pillar. This would at least reduce the risk of other sectors' efforts being lowered. But more safeguards are needed also for this option to ensure that the EU's target would be at least 40 per cent, as it has promised.

Fern's Forest and Climate campaigner, Hannah Mowat says *"A LULUCF pillar would mean the EU could strive for the best in the land sector, incentivising ecosystem restoration, forest conservation and agro-ecology, while maintaining pressure on the energy, transport, waste, agriculture and other industrial sectors. This would also make sense at an international level."*

Land Use pillar with agriculture and LULUCF reduces effort of that sector by up to 98 per cent

Fern and IFOAM are also concerned that if agriculture and LULUCF form a Land Use pillar, as suggested in Option 2 of the consultation, this could mean it no longer has a numerical emission reduction target. This interpretation would be coherent with the EU's position in the international climate negotiations, stoking fears that the EU is giving this option serious consideration. Even if it did adopt a 30 per cent reduction target, research released today estimates that LULUCF would dilute an agriculture target by up to 98 per cent.

"Agriculture makes up 10 per cent of emissions in the EU so it should not be a free rider in the fight against climate change. If it is put in a Land Use pillar with LULUCF, that risk is enormous", said Eric Gall, IFOAM EU Policy Manager. *"Agriculture could be part of the solution to climate change provided it has a target and does its share of the emissions reduction effort, like other sectors."*

Bioenergy risks

The research also makes plain that the EU foresees unprecedented logging in the EU, due in part to the EU's renewable energy target that has led to a sharp rise in projected bioenergy use.

Fern's bioenergy campaigner Linde Zuidema says *"Bioenergy is promoted as a carbon neutral energy but the figures in our report show it clearly isn't, with a massively declining forest sink projected for 2030. The report also shows how easy it is to omit emissions from bioenergy. In addition to honest accounting for the emissions from bioenergy, further policies are needed to limit the use of bioenergy."*

ENDS
1. Report is available at: www.fern.org/LULUCF2030

2. Fern and other expert NGOs argued last year that LULUCF should be dealt with separately from fossil fuels in the EU's 2030 climate and energy package and that there is no scientific basis for linking these sectors together because whilst fossil fuel emissions are to all extents and purposes permanent, LULUCF removals are temporary. Industrial and terrestrial emissions are not comparable under any circumstances.