

**SUBJECT: AB 1979 – The California Deforestation-free Procurement Act - **SUPPORT****

Dear Honorable Members of the California Legislature:

I am proud to support Assembly Bill 1979 and would like to thank Assemblymember Ash Kalra for introducing this important legislation. The bill requires state contracts comprised of forest-risk commodities, entered or renewed on or after January 1, 2025, to certify that their operations and their supply chains are not contributing to tropical deforestation and have in place a “forest” policy - a set of policies and procedures that contractors maintain in order to prevent tropical deforestation and intact forest degradation, as well as violations of Indigenous and traditional communities’ rights to free, prior, and informed consent within proximity of a business entity’s sphere of operations.

Tropical forests cover roughly seven percent of the Earth’s surface but harbor close to 50 percent of all species on Earth; an estimated 18 million acres of forest, an area 1/5 the size of California, is lost every year due to human activities. Tropical deforestation is the third leading driver of global CO2 emissions.

The main driver of tropical deforestation is industrial-scale production of agricultural commodities known as “forest-risk commodities,” including palm oil, soy, cattle, rubber, paper/pulp and timber. Products containing these commodities are widely consumed – making virtually all consumers inadvertently contributing to global tropical forest destruction.

Tropical deforestation in many countries is closely associated with violations of the land rights of Indigenous Peoples, exploitation of workers, forced labor and child labor, criminality and violence against land defenders, and illegal wildlife trafficking. Illegal and forced acquisition and conversion of forest lands run afoul of internationally recognized customary and statutory rights of Indigenous Peoples in the affected areas.

Many animal and plant species are lost to or on the edge of extinction due to tropical deforestation. Biologists believe if these trends are allowed to continue there will be a major mass extinction in tropical forests and the biodiverse ecosystem they hold.

California is the fifth largest economy in the world and its purchasing power has significant market force. An outspoken leader in addressing the climate crisis, California plans to reduce the state’s GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. Additionally, the New York Declaration on Forests, to which California is a signatory, has set a goal to end all deforestation by 2030.

Hundreds of major consumer brands, commodity traders, and national and subnational governments have shown support for ending tropical deforestation and have adopted company-level policies committing them to zero deforestation in their supply chains. Recently, Aramark, a provider of food service, facilities, and uniform services for both public and private clients, has adopted a commitment to end deforestation in its supply chains by 2025.

AB 1979 will not only curb California’s contribution to deforestation but will send a signal to the world that deforestation must be tackled by all jurisdictions, not just by those governments in tropical regions. I respectfully urge your aye vote on AB 1979.

Sincerely,