

Opinion: Fenna Swart and Maarten Visschers

Pact against deforestation, but clear-cutting continues

https://www.telegraaf.nl/watuzegt/683670640/pact-tegen-ontbossing-maar-kaalkap-gaat-door?utm_source=t.co&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=twitter

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At the Climate Summit in Glasgow it was agreed to end deforestation by 2030. A positive step, according to Fenna Swart and Maarten Visschers. "But it also means our leaders are giving themselves another ten years or so to continue deforestation and biomass production."

The Glasgow leaders' statement on forests and land use is in principle a positive step forward. However, it is doubtful whether anyone in the forestry industry is aware of this. Hundreds of countries pledge to end deforestation by 2030. You could also say that our leaders are giving themselves another ten years to quietly continue deforestation and biomass production.

Silent

The way in which we deal with our forests characterizes the social and political discussion about climate and sustainability, which is being conducted at the cutting edge. But despite all the talk about protecting and restoring forests in the EU and the sudden statement about ending deforestation before 2030, forest clearing is likely to continue to increase. After all, Glasgow is silent about biomass, just like about its increased CO2 emissions (higher than coal), its disastrous effects on forests and the billions in support from the EU Member States for this.

Power generation is the most polluting sector. It is responsible for about three quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions. Heavy polluters such as China, India and South Africa will have to do much more, but achieving a CO2-free energy mix is not an option on the same path. Also because of the undiminished obsession with biomass in the US, UK and EU. This is at the expense of European and Dutch citizens, who, without being asked, contribute to forest destruction at a global level and air pollution.

Revolution

The citizen is not without a chance. In the Netherlands, for example, there has been a striking paradigm shift with regard to biomass in recent years. Where two years ago biomass combustion was widely seen as the solution to achieving the Climate Goals, it is now regarded as a problem that we must get rid of as quickly as possible. In the Netherlands, this revolution was largely caused by pressure from society and science. The political parties, both left and right, but also and especially the green parties together with the large nature organizations, left the biomass dossier behind for a long time, partly because of their commitment to a sustainability covenant on biomass.

Followed with great interest

The critical attitude in the Netherlands is followed with great interest abroad. Not only from the surrounding EU member states, but also from Japan, England, Australia and America. Because until a few years ago biomass proved to be a lucrative business for the energy and

forestry industry, large entrepreneurs and multinationals are now shrinking. Fear of major reputational damage by angry citizens, as happened to Vattenfall, but the billions of subsidies are also at stake.

Against this background, the question is no longer whether biomass will be removed from the renewable energy list, but when.”

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