

Effects of the increase in the use of paper as a substitute for plastic on plantations of timber species

AWARE of the negative impact that plastic waste has on nature, especially because of its poor management, which has led to a large amount of it being dumped, in particular single-use plastics;

RECOGNISING that there has been an increase in the implementation of new laws, voluntary agreements and awareness-raising campaigns focused on reducing the consumption of plastic containers, especially single-use containers;

REALISING that changes in consumer habits may not be sufficient to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics, especially single-use containers, and that this trend points toward the replacement of the materials used to create them;

AWARE that the reduction of plastic containers, in particular single-use containers, is leading to a greater demand for other types of container, such as paper packaging;

FURTHER AWARE that the global boom in the paper industry, with a growing production of paper for packaging, amongst other things, may lead to an increase in forested areas given over to the monoculture of pulpwood species, without adopting or implementing sustainable forestry management practices or certifications;

INDICATING that plantations of pulpwood species mainly contain fast-growing species, listed by the paper industry as softwood lumber (pines, firs, etc.) or hardwood lumber (birch trees, etc.) and that these species are grown in monoculture plantations, with potential negative effects on biodiversity and indigenous ecosystems, particularly when these species are not native to the area;

RECOGNISING that forest stands can be managed for different purposes and that a plantation managed mainly for wood fibre may also be managed to achieve better ecological values; that the risks of unsustainable forest management not only affect monoculture plantations; and that the increase in plantations for wood fibre is not only at the expense of natural ecosystems, since they may be located in areas with other management options, such as agricultural or agro-forestry management; and

ALARMED that the selection of pulpwood species in forest plantations based on commercial criteria rather than on a broader set of criteria linked to sustainable forest management, with some species that are potentially highly invasive, may lead to an increase in monoculture plantations and undermine the ecological benefits of forests;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

CALLS ON the Director General to address national and regional governments in paper-producing areas to ask them to implement the following actions:

- a. ensure that the planting of pulpwood trees is carried out within the framework of sustainable regional planning or land-use programmes, following credible management rules and regulations or certifications, also aimed at improving ecological values and compatible with nature conservation plans in the land used;
- b. encourage paper manufacturing companies to adopt sustainable forest management criteria and credible forest certifications that include regional ecological considerations and that gradually replace the plantations with non-native species with others containing native species, ecologically related to the country's own ecosystems;
- c. also encourage the collaboration between manufacturers, suppliers and retailers in order to guarantee sustainable practices across the entire supply chain;
- d. generate environmental education campaigns specifically aimed at consumers, promoting products that reinforce efficient use of resources through regenerative design, which can include the use of reusable products such as recycled bags and paper, and the reduction in the demand for single-use products;
- e. continue encouraging the use of recycled paper and/or fibre of sustainable origin to cover the new demand for paper packaging; and
- f. allow for progress to be made in research into and the implementation of materials that have a lower impact on the environment than plastic, and into the use of native species that have better ecological benefits and efficiency of materials as part of a more circular bio-economy, in order to safeguard forests now and in the future.