



Brasilia, 04 September 2022

Letter from the Peoples of the Cerrado to the European Union

Dear Members of the Council, Commission and Parliament of the European Union,

We, the Peoples of the Brazilian Cerrado and the organizations that represent and support them, address all the institutions of the European Union which are negotiating the proposal for a Regulation on Deforestation- and Conversion-Free Products.

First, allow us to present where we live: The Cerrado is a Brazilian biome that covers a territory equivalent to the combined areas of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium, where more than 25 million people live. It encompasses more than 27 natural types of vegetation, most of which are grasslands and savannas. It is an [extremely biodiverse](#) biome recognized as a planetary hotspot, which includes more than [5% of the world's biodiversity](#), with more than [12,000 species](#) of native plants and a high level of endemism. The Cerrado has important contributions to regional and global climate balance due to its [carbon stocks](#). The headwaters of [8 of the 12 main basins in Brazil](#) are located in the Cerrado, which makes the biome a key region for the national water availability through its rivers and aquifers. As the oldest biome in the country, Cerrado has clear intrinsic value; but in addition, it also has an important role in supporting other ecosystems in Brazil and Latin America, such as the Amazon, the Pantanal and the Chaco, hosting the transition areas between biomes that are rich in sociobiodiversity and fundamental for environmental balance across the continent.

In this critical biome for the local and global environment, we, the peoples of the Cerrado, live and act decisively in the protection of this native vegetation. We are traditional communities, including native peoples, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, geraizeiros, vazanteiros, babassu coconut breakers; and we are also family farmers and many other groups that, with our livelihoods and identification with our territories, have become the protagonists in the conservation of native vegetation and the production of local, healthy and quality food for human consumption. Despite this, [more than half of the native vegetation of our biome has already been destroyed](#).

Our livelihoods have been increasingly affected by the intense expansion of agricultural crops [exported and consumed by the industry and population of the European Union](#). This expansion of agricultural areas over native vegetation meets the growing demand for exports and contributes to the high profitability of deforestation and conversion of native vegetation, which generates [environmental degradation and also causes social impacts](#) through land-grabbing, disrespect for traditional territories and weakening traditional food production systems. A symbolic example of this process is soy, which is the product imported by the European Union with the [largest deforestation and conversion footprint](#); that is the product that induces deforestation and conversion in its production areas the most. [Almost 15% of the soy imported by the European Union](#) is produced in the Cerrado, which concentrates

[65% of the soy associated with deforestation](#) and conversion. In this sense, what happens in our territories is directly influenced by the decisions taken in Brussels.

We recognize the efforts of the European Union to develop rules that protect the socio-biodiversity of our planet, decouple European consumption from environmental destruction and, consequently, make deforestation and conversion less profitable and attractive in international trade flows. We also recognize that such rules have the potential to make important contributions to local and global food security, the preservation of natural ecosystems and the protection of human rights and traditional territories. However, to achieve this objective and to ensure that legislation is really effective in containing deforestation and conversion induced by international trade, it is important to point to critical elements that must be present in the aforementioned regulation. Are they:

1. **Inclusion of natural ecosystems** → [74% of the Cerrado biome](#) would remain unprotected under FAO's strict definition of forest ecosystems (in a biome with [less than 3% of its surface under strict protection](#)). A legislation that would protect only forests, would leave most of the Cerrado remnants unprotected, and consequently would further increase the pressure of soy expansion and destruction on these remnants and on the traditional populations that live in them and on them. Furthermore, the diversity of Cerrado vegetation types and its high spatial variability make it difficult to apply this definition, based on height and vegetation cover thresholds. This would lead to [difficulties in implementing the regulation](#) and could give rise to gaps in its compliance, increasing even more the pressure on traditional peoples and communities, in view of the growing expansion of soy and its deforestation and conversion footprint in the territories. **Therefore, including savanna ecosystems and rural areas within the scope of regulation is crucial to avoid massive collateral impacts on environments and populations, and to ensure the effectiveness of the European proposal, in addition to making legislation more robust, easier to implement and with less costly monitoring systems.**
2. **Transparency to the origin** → We reinforce the importance of demanding traceability to the origin of production units¹, with their limits properly georeferenced. This level of transparency is a great ally of traditional communities to ensure respect for their territories, and also for all protected areas, as well as an opportunity to guarantee legality in production chains. **Therefore, tracing back to origin is a way to encourage respect for local communities and protect their traditional territories.**
3. **Respect for human rights** → It is important to recognize that society and environment are two sides of the same coin. To achieve sustainability and environmental conservation, it is necessary to nurture and support the local communities that depend on and care for these ecosystems. We, the Peoples of the Cerrado, are extremely linked to our territories, and we offer a different way from the large commodity plantations, based on a relationship of proximity with the territory and interdependence between all living beings, producing healthy food, without pesticides and respecting the rivers. **Therefore, protecting the human rights of local communities, through the protection of the right to life, culture,**

¹ We emphasize that this traceability aims to ensure that local producers are free from deforestation. This is different from and unrelated to keeping the grains' identity and/or physically segregating agricultural production at any stage of the export process.

forms of social organization and territory, is to protect the native vegetation that surrounds them. In this sense, it deserves attention that respect for human rights is also materialized by the free, prior and informed consultation of communities, as established by ILO Convention 169.

Based on the above, we hope that you, dear members of the Council, Commission and Parliament of the European Union, will support us in our struggle to care for the people who protect the fauna and flora of our collective home the Earth. May international trade be the catalyst for transformations towards fairer, healthier and deforestation- and conversion-free food production!

Yours sincerely,

Rede Cerrado (Cerrado Network)

We are a 30-year-old network that includes more than 300 civil society and community-based organizations throughout the entire biome. Our mission is to maintain and ensure the protection of the Cerrado's native vegetation and its Traditional Peoples and Communities.

#TogetherForCerrado

Signatories

1. Alternativa para Pequena Agricultura no Tocantins
2. Amigos da Terra - Amazônia Brasileira
3. Araras ECOS
4. Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil (APIB)
5. Articulação Pacari
6. Articulação Rosalino de Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais do Norte de Minas
7. Associação Alternativa Terrazul
8. Associação Amanu
9. Associação Amigos do Parque Nacional da Chapada dos Veadeiros
10. Associação Ayrumã
11. Associação Brasileira de Reforma Agrária (ABRA)
12. Associação Central das Comunidades Tradicionais Veredeiras (ACEVER)
13. Associação Climate Smart Institute
14. Associação Comunitária dos Artesãos e Pequenos Produtores de Mateiros
15. Associação das Artesãs de Sagarana Tecelagem das Veredas
16. Associação de Advogados/as de Trabalhadores/as Rurais (AATR)
17. Associação de Guias e prestadores de serviços em ecoturismo na Chapada dos Veadeiros
18. Associação de Mulheres Ribeirinhas de Porto Esperança
19. Associação de Mulheres Agricultoras do Assentamento Bom Sucesso Flores de Goiás
20. Associação de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais de Lago do Junco e Lago dos Rodrigues
21. Associação de Produtores Orgânicos de Mato Grosso do Sul (APOMS)
22. Associação de Preservação do Meio Ambiente e da Vida (APREMAVI)

23. Associação de Promoção do Desenvolvimento Solidário e Sustentável (Agência 10envolvimento)
24. Associação dos Agricultores Familiares do Muiraquitã
25. Associação dos artesãos de Turmalina
26. Associação dos/as Retireiros e Retireiras do Araguaia
27. Associação dos Usuários da Sub Bacia do Rio dos Cochos (ASSUSBAC)
28. Associação Ecológica Alto Paraíso
29. Associação em Áreas de Assentamento no Estado do Maranhão (ASSEMA)
30. Associação Mineira de Defesa do Ambiente
31. Associação Onça D'água
32. Associação para a Gestão Socioambiental do Triângulo Mineiro (ANGÁ)
33. Associação Quilombola do Mumbuca
34. Associação Quilombola do Prata
35. Associação Rede Contra Fogo
36. Associação SOS Rio Piracanjuba
37. Associação Stella4Praias
38. Associação Xaraéis
39. Associação Xavante Warã
40. Associação Wyty-Cate das Comunidades Timbira do Tocantins e Maranhão
41. ActionAid
42. Brigada Comunitária de Terra Ronca
43. CAV
44. Central Veredas
45. Centro de Agricultura Alternativa do Norte de Minas
46. Centro de Pesquisa em Agricultura Sintrópica
47. Centro de Produção, Pesquisa e Capacitação do Cerrado (CEPPEC)
48. Centro de Trabalho Indigenista
49. Centro Internacional de Água e Transdisciplinaridade (CIRAT)
50. Centro UnB Cerrado
51. Centro de Referência em Tecnologias Sociais do Sertão (CRESERTÃO)
52. Cerrado de Pé
53. Cidade da Fraternidade
54. Coalização Não Fracking Brasil (COESUS)
55. Coletivo Decolonial
56. Copabase
57. Coperfruto
58. Cooperfan
59. Cooperativa Central do Cerrado
60. Cooperativa dos Pequenos Produtores Agroextrativistas de Lago do Junco
61. Cooperativa dos Pequenos Produtores e Extrativistas do Vale do Peruaçu
62. Cooperativa dos Agricultores Familiares e Agroextrativistas Grande Sertão Veredas
63. Coordenação de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas (CONAQ)
64. Ecologia e Ação (ECOIA)
65. Engajamundo
66. FASE
67. Fazenda-Escola Bona Espero

68. Fazenda Malunga
69. Friends of Humanity
70. Fundação Arayara
71. Fundação Athos Bulcão
72. Fundação Mais Cerrado
73. Greenpeace Brasil
74. Instituto Aldeias
75. Instituto Amada Terra
76. Instituto de Avaliação Pesquisa Programas e Projetos Socioambientais
77. Instituto de Desenvolvimento Econonômico e Socioambiental – IDESA
78. Instituto de Manejo e Certificação Florestal e Agrícola (IMAFLORA)
79. Instituto Bioregional do Cerrado (IBC)
80. Instituto Brasil Central
81. Instituto Brasil Orgânico
82. Instituto Brasil Solidariedade
83. Instituto Biotropicos
84. Instituto Cerrados
85. Instituto Conexões Sustentáveis (CONEXSUS)
86. Instituto Cultural e Ambiental Rosa e Sertão
87. Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas (IPÊ)
88. Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena (IEPÉ)
89. Instituto de Referência Negra Peregum
90. Instituto Internacional Arayara
91. Instituto Internacional de Educação do Brasil
92. Instituto Mãos da Terra (IMATERRA)
93. Instituto Pândavas
94. Instituto Pantanal Sul
95. Instituto Plantadores de Água
96. Instituto Pouso Alto
97. Instituto Rede Terra
98. Instituto Samaúma
99. Instituto Sociedade, População e Natureza
100. Laboratório de Filme Etnográfico
101. Macaúba Desenvolvimento Local
102. Mater Natura - Instituto de Estudos Ambientais
103. Mobilização dos Povos Indígenas do Cerrado (MOPIC)
104. Nature Invest
105. NOSSAS
106. Núcleo de Agroecologia Saberes da Terra
107. Núcleo do Pequi e Outros Frutos do Cerrado
108. Observatório de Conflitos Socioambientais do Matopiba
109. Observatório do Carvão Mineral
110. Observatório do Clima
111. Observatório do Código Florestal
112. Observatório do Petróleo e Gás
113. Ordem Inicial do Cruzeiro Divino Distrito Federal
114. Oreades Núcleo de Geoprocessamento
115. Organização De Desenvolvimento Sustentável

116. Plataforma Cipó
117. Pequi – Pesquisa e Conservação do Cerrado
118. Projeto Hospitais Saudáveis (PHS)
119. Projeto Equipe Meri Ore (PEMO)
120. Projeto Saúde e Alegria
121. Rede de Cooperação da Amazônia
122. Rede Pouso Alto Agroecologia
123. Rede de Integração Verde
124. Rede de Sementes do Cerrado
125. Reserva Particular do Patrimônio Natural Cachoeirinha
126. Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental (SPVS)
127. SOS Pantanal
128. Uma Gotinha no Oceano
129. União Planetária
130. Vivências no Cerrado
131. WWF Brasil
132. 350.org