

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: February 20, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Sharon M. Tso* Council File No: 19-0002-S186
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No.: 20-01-0054

SUBJECT: Resolution (Koretz - Ryu - Blumenfield) Labeling of Products Sourced from the Amazon Rainforest

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Koretz - Ryu - Blumenfield) to include in the City's 2019-2020 Federal and State Legislative Program SUPPORT and/or SPONSORSHIP of legislation that would require "clear labeling" of products sourced from the Amazon Rainforest, or any other rainforest, in order to mitigate the effects of deforestation.

SUMMARY:

Resolution (Koretz - Ryu - Blumenfield), introduced on November 15, 2019, states that the Amazon Rainforest is being deforested at record rates to allow for cattle ranching. According to the Resolution, this activity has led to an 80% increase in forest fires since 2018; thereby straining the Earth's ability to store carbon and produce oxygen.

The Resolution also states that members of the European Union (EU) have condemned the destruction of the Amazon Rainforest and may consider a ban on beef imports from Brazil due to their connection to Amazon deforestation.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization issued a statement entitled, "Livestock, a Major Threat to Environment," stating that animal agriculture is responsible for approximately 65% of all nitrous oxide emissions. According to the statement, these emissions have a drastic effect on global temperatures.

The Resolution also states that in 2017, The Global Environment Change Journal identified rising demand for soybean production as a key driver of rainforest deforestation. Farmers in South America have engaged in large-scale deforestation to establish cropland for soybean cultivation.

Indigenous people working to protect the Amazon Rainforest from deforestation have been threatened by proponents of cattle ranching and soybean production. Therefore, the Resolution urges the public and private sectors to divest from agricultural industries that engage in deforestation.

In addition, the Resolution requests that the City support legislation that would require “clear labeling” of products sourced from the Amazon Rainforest, or any other rainforest, in order to mitigate the effects of deforestation.

BACKGROUND:

A recent report from Brazil’s National Institute for Space Research (INPE) reveals that 3,769 square miles of Amazon Rainforest were lost to deforestation in 2019. Based on INPE’s estimates, this marks the highest rate of deforestation since 2008. This figure also represents a 30% increase over the 2018’s recorded rate of deforestation.

A related study found that 20% of the Amazon Rainforest is now emitting more carbon dioxide than it absorbs. For many years, the Amazon Rainforest had been known as a “carbon sink” in which trees would absorb significant levels of carbon from the atmosphere; thereby stabilizing carbon impacts. However, the current rate of deforestation is significantly altering this condition.

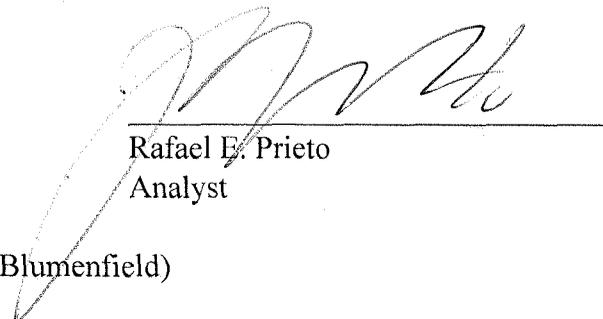
As previously noted, cattle ranching and soybean cultivation are leading causes of deforestation in the Amazon Rainforest. In order to mitigate the effects of deforestation, reducing customer demand for products derived from the Amazon Rainforest is considered vital.

A way to reduce customer demand for beef, soybean and related products from the Amazon Rainforest is to implement product labeling or “clear labeling” initiatives. “Clear labeling” initiatives would identify products sourced from the Amazon Rainforest; thereby allowing customers to make informed choices about these products and their effect on the environment.

Currently, the EU is considering implementing a “clear labeling” initiative to combat Amazon Rainforest deforestation.

Support for “clear labeling” legislation to mitigate deforestation is consistent with the City’s support for environmental sustainability initiatives and efforts. In April 2019, the City Council approved *The Green New Deal for Los Angeles* which seeks to implement various activities in order to mitigate the growing effects of climate change and protect front-line communities (CF# 19-0156).

In addition, in July 2019, the City Council approved the formation of a Climate Emergency Commission and an Office of Climate Emergency Mobilization (CF# 18-0054) to bring greater focus to climate-oriented challenges.



Rafael E. Prieto
Analyst

Attachment(s): Resolution (Koretz - Ryu - Blumenfield)

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must first have been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, according to the New York Times, the Amazon's rainforest is now burning at record rates, with an 80% increase of forest fires since 2018, straining the Earth's ability to store carbon and produce oxygen; and

WHEREAS, members of the European Union have condemned the destruction of the Amazon rainforest by cattle farmers and called for an urgent review of the possibility of banning Brazilian beef imports for their connection to environmental damage; and

WHEREAS, according to the Center for International Policy's Mighty Earth Campaign, soy products have a related effect of global deforestation, as 75% of the world's soy is used as feed for raising livestock including chicken and fish across the globe; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, the Global Environment Change Journal described the rising global demand for soybean production as an underlying driver of global deforestation, as pressure mounted for farmers across South America to partake in large-scale forest-clearing to establish more cropland for soy cultivation; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization issued a statement entitled, "Livestock, a Major Threat to Environment," stating that animal agriculture is responsible for approximately 65% of all human-related nitrous oxide emissions, which causes heat to be trapped at an estimated rate 296 times stronger than carbon dioxide, and is guiding our global temperature towards a climate tipping point of no return; and

WHEREAS, the horrific murders of Indigenous Peoples working to protect the Amazon from deforestation have been committed with impunity and continue to increase; and

WHEREAS, one of these "Guardians of the Forest," Paulo Paulino Guajajara, a 26-year-old Indigenous Guajajara leader was ambushed and killed allegedly by illegal loggers in the Arariboia Indigenous Reserve, one of Brazil's most threatened Indigenous territories; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous wisdom is essential to our understand of and continued protection for the Amazon rainforest; and

WHEREAS, Senator Kevin De Leon's SB 100, which was signed into law on September 10, 2018, seeks to eliminate electricity-related greenhouse-gas emissions by 2045 and cut them by half by 2026, making California the world's largest economy with a zero-emissions goal; and

WHEREAS, on July 3, 2019, the City Council approved legislation creating the world's first Office of Climate Emergency Mobilization in order to address the climate crisis at the speed of what is scientifically necessary, not the speed of what is deemed possible; and

WHEREAS, the entire State of California is an endorser of the New York Declaration on Forests, which ensures a commitment from companies to end deforestation by 2030; and

WHEREAS, many multinational corporations that distribute beef and soy products in Los Angeles are not signatories to the New York Declaration on Forests; and

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