



Seeing the Wood for the Trees

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris brings government representatives together from over 190 countries. **Richard Gillies**, Group Sustainability & Communications Director of international home improvement company Kingfisher, explains why timber should be on the agenda

“**H**elp me, help you.” That’s what I think our forests would be screaming, if they could, at our political leaders as they convene in Paris to secure a climate deal.

The emission reduction plans submitted so far won’t keep global temperatures

below two degrees but forests could bridge the shortfall. Indeed nature could provide up to 30 per cent of the climate solution.

Political representatives need to know that fixing forests is a shrewd way to

secure climate success because it can be done quicker and more cheaply than any other solution currently available.

Speaking as someone who has spent much of their career within big business, I understand how dependent a successful >



outcome relies on being able to demonstrate affordability and progress – that’s as true for sustainability as anything else.

With [40 per cent of Kingfisher’s products](#) containing paper or wood, and a commitment from us to understand where all that comes from, we’ve already been on a timber journey for more than two decades. In the process we’ve learned a lot – not only about the impact timber has on our business, but about the wider financial, social and environmental contribution forests make.

There’s an intrinsic link between reducing global emissions and forests, which is why to secure a climate deal that keeps us below two degrees, Kingfisher is advocating a three step process to **FIX** forests:

Fight to stop all trade in illegally sourced timber by seizing the opportunity to FIX the EU timber regulation (EUTR) during its review

We need consistent implementation across all Member States to ensure there is a level playing field and we want more products included within its scope.

We believe in the EUTR’s potential but currently, rather than working as an equaliser, the uneven administrative and financial burden of compliance among Member States has accentuated unfair market distortion and competition.

Remaining governments worldwide should embrace the spirit of the EUTR and implement regulatory tools and governance to end the illegal timber market. Failure to fix

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the trade of illegal timber is hurting both businesses and forests.

Incentivise producer nations to avoid further deforesting and encourage sustainable forestry management

Finance Ministers must provide the right sticks and carrots to make deforestation an obsolete business model. We also call on companies that have committed to avoid deforestation to prove their success with credible standards, such as those set by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Deforestation already accounts for around 12 per cent of annual global emissions.

Failure to address deforestation is releasing previously sequestered carbon back into the atmosphere and increasing the cost to deliver our emission reduction goals.

X-tra capacity

We’re seeing a global population explosion and significant growth in

the middle class. People need more food, energy and products. It’s more than the commodities forest areas can supply, adding to the pressure for trees to be cut down. Avoiding deforestation simply won’t be enough. Our ambition at Kingfisher is to create more forests than we use. We call on world leaders to commit to forest restoration and secure global net reforestation.

More than two billion hectares of deforested and degraded land worldwide is believed to have restoration potential. Restoring 150 million hectares has been calculated to reduce our emissions gap by at least 11 per cent and worth \$85 billion a year to our global economy. Failure to support restoration is a failure to recognise the growing global demand on forests.

Already there’s an agreed draft text, which is the starting point for forestry negotiations, at the Conference of the Parties in Paris. Couple this with the high return on investment from prioritising the protection and restoration of our forests and we might yet see the wood for the trees. ■



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Richard joined Kingfisher in October 2013 and is responsible for corporate and government affairs, external communications and ‘Net Positive’ – the Group’s quest to become a restorative business. Richard joined Kingfisher from British retail brand, Marks & Spencer, where he spent 29 years.

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