

For What It's Earth

Global ESG Headlines from Step toe

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Legislation

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has notified its draft extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations for packaging to the EU and WTO. It has confirmed that the legislation will be brought before the UK Parliament later in 2024, thereby bringing DEFRA closer to meeting its commitment to introduce packaging EPR from the start of 2025. The draft legislation requires reporting that would be used to charge certain producers for managing packaging waste.



Regulation

The European Parliament has approved the EU Forced Labour Regulation (FLR), which will prohibit the placing and making available on the EU market, or exporting therefrom, products made with forced labor. The FLR will be enforced by national authorities and the EU Commission, who will investigate suspicious goods, supply chains, and manufacturers. Unlike the similar US legislation enacted in 2021, it is not focused on China's Xinjiang region, but applies irrespective of where the goods were produced. Products found to be made with forced labor would be banned from the EU market. The law still requires approval from the Council of the EU, and would be implemented within three years from its entry into force.



Supply Chain

A US labor official urges companies to exit China's Xinjiang region due to concerns about forced labor and human rights abuses against Uyghur Muslims. US Deputy Undersecretary for International Labor Affairs, Thea Lee, asserts that businesses operating in the region are indirectly supporting these violations and should relocate their operation to avoid complicity. This call comes amidst ongoing global scrutiny of China's treatment of ethnic minorities, with mounting pressure on corporations to ensure ethical supply chains and adhere to human rights standards.



Standards

The IFRS Foundation's International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) has announced its intention to launch new projects researching corporate disclosure on risks and opportunities in key sustainability-related areas in response to market feedback. The new areas include nature (e.g., biodiversity, ecosystems and ecosystem services) and human capital. The initiative will inform the ISSB's work on future sustainability reporting standard setting.



Statement

The European Commission and the EU consumer authorities have initiated action against 20 airlines over misleading greenwashing practices, particularly claims about offsetting CO2 emissions through additional fees for climate projects or sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). This follows complaints by the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) about deceptive climate-related claims.

“The fact that European consumer protection authorities are calling on airlines to get their act together shows there’s a wind of change. Greenwashing is no longer acceptable, and the fact that aviation is one of the most highly polluting sectors makes it even more intolerable.”

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens, April 30, 2024