



## Press Release

Vienna/Brussels, 12.02.2026

### **Recent EU Proposal on Soybean Oil classification threatens Sustainable European Protein Production**

**Donau Soja expresses serious concern over the European Commission's recent proposal to classify soybean oil as a raw material with a high risk of indirect land-use change (iLUC) under the Renewable Energy Directive (RED). If adopted, this classification would mean that soybean oil could no longer be counted towards renewable fuel targets from 2030 onwards – irrespective of its origin. Aurélie Tournan, General Manager of Donau Soja, stated:** *"A blanket high-risk classification for soya would seriously jeopardise the positive development of European soya production. European soya is grown in a deforestation-free context and is fully aligned with EU sustainability objectives."*

Europe remains highly dependent on imported protein, particularly in the soya sector – a structural vulnerability in our food and feed system. At a time when geopolitical volatility and fragile global supply chains expose this weakness, strengthening domestic protein production is a strategic necessity. Over the past twelve years, Donau Soja and its members have built robust, transparent and deforestation-free European value chains, demonstrating that sustainable soya production in Europe is not only possible, but economically viable.

As an organisation committed to developing a transparent, deforestation-free European soya sector and strengthening resilient regional value chains, Donau Soja emphasises that policy measures must recognise the fundamental differences between European production systems and high-risk regions. European soybean cultivation takes place largely in deforestation-free areas and contributes to the EU's strategic goals of competitiveness, food security and strategic autonomy.

#### **Misaligned with the Commission's own analysis**

The Commission's underlying report of 20 January 2026 explicitly refers to soya from South America, where direct and indirect land-use change remains a documented risk. European soybean cultivation, by contrast, is not addressed in the report, yet it plays a key role in supporting crop diversification, soil health, and regional economic development. A blanket high-iLUC classification would run counter all European commission plans to increase European protein production. The European Protein Strategy was adopted to strengthen Europe's capacity to produce more of its own protein crops. Reducing this dependency remains a central policy objective and underscores the importance of further expanding sustainable European soya production.

"This proposal would undermine European soya production at a time when the EU urgently seeks to strengthen its self-sufficiency and strategic autonomy. European farmers are producing sustainable soya – now we need policies that help the value chain of European soya remain competitive" said Aurélie Tournan.

## **Negative impacts on European protein cultivation and competitiveness**

While Donau Soja fully supports the objective of combating land-use change associated with soya production globally, the proposed measure would likely have the opposite effect. Instead of reducing global land-use pressure, it would shift soybean cultivation and processing away from Europe and increase dependency on imports of processed goods like soymeal from regions with higher deforestation risk.

Driven by some regional developments, Europe has started to expand successfully its soya production capacity. European oil mills have invested in additional processing capacity, which is only economically viable if the resulting soybean oil can be supplied to the renewable energy market. Some European oil mills sell up to 80% of their soybean oil into this outlet. If this market were to be removed, the processing of European soybeans would come under severe economic pressure and could even cease. This would also mean a lack of buyers for European soybeans from farmers, resulting in a sharp decline in cultivation – undermining the EU’s efforts to strengthen its own protein production.

A generalised classification would therefore risk causing significant reputational damage to European farmers and the wider livestock sector, despite operating under strict sustainability standards.

## **Contradicting EU sustainability objectives**

A decline in European soya production would inevitably increase the EU’s dependence on imported protein feed. This would increase direct and indirect land-use change in third countries, contradicting the environmental objectives of the RED as well as the EU’s broader goals on climate protection, sustainability, resilience and protein autonomy.

This decision could have far-reaching consequences for European animal producers and potentially irreversible impacts on EU food security.

## **Need for Differentiation by origin to avoid unintended consequences**

Donau Soja therefore urges the European Commission to introduce an origin-based differentiation for soybean under the RED. While excluding soybean oil from beans from regions with demonstrated high-iLUC risk may be justified, soybean oil derived from European-grown soybeans should remain eligible. Regarding imports, a clear differentiation between sustainable and non-sustainable imports is necessary to safeguard the utilisation and long-term economic viability of Europe’s processing capacities. Such a differentiated approach would avoid unintended negative effects on EU soya self-sufficiency, maintain the competitiveness of European producers and processors, and prevent the externalisation of land-use impacts to other parts of the world. In line with this, policies must support the competitiveness of the European soya value chain, ensuring that sustainable production continues to grow within Europe rather than being replaced by imports from regions with weaker environmental safeguards.

Aligned with Donau Soja’s vision of a transparent, sustainable, and deforestation-free European protein system, a balanced policy framework is essential to ensure that climate action does not unintentionally weaken Europe’s own sustainable agricultural production.

This statement is based on the European Commission’s report [COM/2018/757 final](#) on the development of plant proteins in the European Union, the European Parliament’s

[Report A9-0281/2023 on the European Protein Strategy \(2023/2015\(INI\)\)](#) and the European Commission's proposal [COM \(2026\) 36 final](#).

## **About Donau Soja**

Donau Soja is a non-profit, independent association who supports its partners and members in progressing change to address social, environmental, and economic challenges in soya, legumes and protein production and consumption. This will increase efficiency, fairness and sustainability in European food and feed protein value chains.

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