

Senedd Cymru  
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Masnach a Materion  
Gwledig  
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd  
ETRA - 36  
Ymateb gan: Grŵp Asiantaeth Dramor  
Cymru

Welsh Parliament  
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs  
Committee  
Priorities for the Sixth Senedd.  
Evidence from: Wales Overseas Agency  
Group

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## Wales Overseas Agencies Group: Priorities for the Economy, Trade & Rural Affairs Committee – August 2021

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Organisation: WOAG

### 1. Introduction

1.1 The Wales Overseas Agencies Group (WOAG) is an alliance of international development agencies in Wales that are committed to using their expertise and knowledge to support Wales in becoming a globally responsible nation. We strongly believe that there is much more Wales could deliver in terms of international development, and that supporting a society of active global citizens here in Wales has significant benefits for both Welsh communities and partners overseas.

### 2. Committee's strategic priorities should be over the next six months

2.1 Wales has ground breaking legislation in the form of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 commits Wales to becoming a *Globally Responsible Nation*.

2.2 WOAG members are concerned that a drive for inward investment to create jobs and prosperity here in Wales will ignore fundamental issues such as the human rights track record of inward investors and how we can push for ethical employment in global supply chains as well as those here in Wales. We have some way to go to build understanding of what global responsibility looks like under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. It is not just about tokenistic gestures but systematically ensuring that actions taken here in Wales do not harm the planet or people anywhere and have positive impacts where possible.

2.3 For example, Welsh Government's focus on cyber-security poses concerns as this sector is heavily linked to the arms trade. Similarly, Welsh Government support for the compound

semi-conductor sector needs to consider potential impacts of conflict minerals on human rights. We understand that Welsh Government must be open for business but it must make clear that it wants to work with others who share their values and commitments.

2.4 Climate change poses the greatest threat to future generations. The world's poorest people are the first hit and worst affected by climate change. People living in lower income countries are 20 times more likely to be affected by climate-related disasters – such as floods, droughts, and hurricanes – than those of us living in the industrialised world. Wales needs to play its part by changing what it buys, consumes and invests in, since these choices can drive unethical practices and environmental degradation overseas.

2.5 One of the key factors driving the global climate and nature emergency is deforestation of precious habitats such as the Amazon rainforest and habitat loss. The International Panel on Climate Change is clear that without our forests, we will fail to limit global warming to 1.5°C. More than 50% of global forest loss and land conversion is attributable to the production of just a handful of agricultural commodities consumed here in Wales<sup>1</sup> such as the production of soymeal and palm oil for livestock feed in Wales, palm oil used in everyday items served in our schools and hospitals, beef imported into Wales, cocoa used in many Welsh treats and desserts, or even rubber used to produce latex or car tyres.

2.6 It is essential that we use all available policy levers available to address our Global Responsibility to drive action to tackle both territorial greenhouse gas emissions and emissions related to goods and service consumed in Wales. This includes:

- introducing mandatory ethical and sustainability requirements for public sector procurement;
- monitoring our consumptions emissions and setting targets to reduce this in Wales' carbon budgets and low carbon delivery plans
- ensuring that the Welsh Government's Economic Contract, which aims to strengthen a relationship with business and drive inclusive growth and responsible business behaviour, is strengthened so that signatories to the contract commit to ethical supply chains that protect human rights and the environment.
- introducing sustainable farming practices that do not contribute to human rights abuses and environmental degradation overseas. For example, this includes ending the reliance on imported soy animal feed that originates from forest risk areas and adopting nature and climate-friendly farming methods such as organic farming, agro-ecology and agroforestry.

2.7 Without such action we risk pushing the responsibility for our consumption emissions to

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<sup>1</sup> Research commissioned by RSPB Cymru, Size of Wales and WWF Cymru confirms that an area equivalent to 40% of the size of Wales (823,000 hectares) was required overseas to grow Welsh imports of cocoa, palm oil, beef, leather, natural rubber, soy, timber, pulp and paper in an average year between 2011-2018. Crucially, 30% of the land used to grow Welsh imports of commodities is in countries categorised high or very high risk for social and deforestation issues. This means commodity supply chains supplying Wales in these countries risk deforestation, conversion of natural ecosystems and/or social issues, such as child or forced labour.

other countries which does not represent sustainable economic development.

2.8 Welsh Government has prioritised the Social Partnerships and Procurement Bill as part of the legislative programme for year one of the Senedd term. More needs to be done to better understand Wales' performance as a globally responsible nation and how this could be improved through the Procurement Bill. This could be undertaken in collaboration with the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee.

**2.9 We would like the Committee to look at the global impact of Welsh Government supply chains and public procurement, farming practices, grants and investments including but not limited to:**

- **ethical screening systems used**
- **human rights due diligence**
- **fair work**
- **overseas deforestation**
- **consumption emissions of greenhouse gases**