Trade Hub

Examining the impact of soy production and trade on different aspects of biodiversity

The globalisation of trade means there is often a large disconnect between producers and consumers. Increasing demand for agricultural commodities is a major driver of global deforestation and associated biodiversity loss. New land for agriculture has historically come from the conversion of intact, tropical forests, with the majority of tropical deforestation being driven by international demand for just a few commodities.

The Trade Hub project aims to examine how we can make trade more sustainable, by protecting the natural environment as well as supporting human development. At SEI York, we focus on the biodiversity impacts of soy production, which is heavily concentrated in South America and is primarily used by importing countries as feed for livestock. Soy is also one of the main internationally traded commodities causing widespread tropical deforestation.

Deforestation is often used to represent biodiversity loss, yet biodiversity is multidimensional and no single indicator can capture all of its aspects. Our current work aims to assess the risk of soy production to different biodiversity metrics by using high-resolution data and subnational trade models to examine how they vary across landscapes and consumers, and to determine whether deforestation acts as an adequate proxy for risks to biodiversity.