Australians want companies to end deforestation

Australia is home to globally significant forests and bushland found nowhere else on Earth. Yet Australia is also a recognised global deforestation hotspot. Across the continent, forest and bushland is being bulldozed and chainsawed to make way for agriculture, mining or to turn trees into wood and fibre, with dire consequences for the climate, nature and people.

Australian laws and regulations have so far failed to stop deforestation. Corporate action to screen out deforestation from supply chains remains sluggish, as shown by recent Wilderness Society analysis.[1]

This summary report presents new research conducted in August 2024 by market research company Fiftyfive5, part of Accenture Song, for The Wilderness Society.[2]

This research is the first of its kind in Australia.

Survey: attitudes to deforestation & corporate deforestation-free practice

This research shows Australians:

- Want companies to take action to protect forests by addressing their responsibility and clean up their act.
- Don't want companies to sell products that come from the destruction of Australia's forests.
- Expect that retailers, in particular supermarkets like Coles and Woolworths, clean up their supply chains and do more to help protect iconic Australian animals.



IMAGE CREDIT: WILDERNESS SOCIETY

1 | https://www.wilderness.org.au/deforestationuncovered
2 | See methodology *(page 3)*

Widespread concern about the state of nature and deforestation in Australia

The research reveals that a majority of Australians are very concerned about the threats facing forests – **82% of Australians see deforestation as an issue that needs addressing.**

Australians want companies to help protect forests

The research shows most people think companies have a role to play in ending deforestation.

A whopping **86% of people agree that Australian companies should help protect Australian forests.**

There is overwhelming support for companies to address their own deforestation footprint.

84% of people believe Australian companies have a responsibility to ensure they are not contributing to deforestation in Australia.

Australians don't believe that companies are currently meeting the challenge of deforestation

Corporate sustainability claims are met with scepticism from the public.

Two thirds of Australians find it hard to trust the claims companies make about operating in an environmentally responsible way (72%). This highlights how important it is that corporations steer clear of greenwashing when making claims about their sustainability efforts.[1]

It also shows that making broad commitments to do something in the future isn't enough to gain consumer trust. Companies need to go further and demonstrate their progress in a transparent way to earn and keep the public's trust.

Australians don't want products that come from deforestation

For the first time, **research reveals that about 7 in 10 Australians (68%) believe retailers should not be selling products that come from the destruction of Australia's forests.**

Shoppers expect Coles and Woolworths to take action for forests

The research shows Australians have strong expectations that Coles and Woolworths take practical steps to clean up their supply chains. **Over two thirds of Australians expect Coles and Woolworths to make sure the products they sell don't come from Australian forest destruction (68%).**

Supermarkets have work to do

62% of people think Coles and Woolworths should be doing more to address deforestation in Australia. A higher proportion of women aged 18-54 (69%), as well as families (64%) share this opinion.



IMAGE CREDIT: CASSIE LAFFERTY

1 | The ACCC provides useful guidelines on sustainability claims and greenwashing.

7 in 10 Australians

think Coles and Woolworths should be doing more to help protect iconic animals like koalas and swift parrots from extinction.

7 in 10 Australians

believe supermarkets should be doing more to influence their producers and suppliers to implement deforestation-free practices.



IMAGE CREDIT: WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Trust hangs in the balance

By taking genuine action on deforestation, supermarkets can reduce negative impacts on forests and wildlife. They can also reduce their exposure to deforestation and associated risks. It's als an opportunity to increase Australians' trust in retailers, particularly for Coles and Woolworths.

Australians' trust in Coles and Woolworths would decline by a staggering 30% each if shoppers found out that they are selling products that are connected to Australian deforestation.

62% of Australians

would trust Coles and Woolworths more if they declared and demonstrated that they no longer sold products that come from deforested lands.

61% of Australians

would prefer to buy from a supermarket with a commitment to help protect Australian forests. This is even higher for women aged 35 to 54 years old (67%).

Methodology

The research described in this report was conducted by Fiftyfive5, part of Accenture Song, for the Wilderness Society in August 2024. It consisted of a 10-minute online quantitative survey measuring the attitudes and beliefs of Australians related to deforestation and deforestation-free practices. The research used a sample of n=1,015 Australians. The sample was nationally representative of the Australian population, aged 18-75 sampled and weighted to ABS proportions.

Wilderness Society