

Beyond the Canopy: the Hidden Shifts of the EUDR



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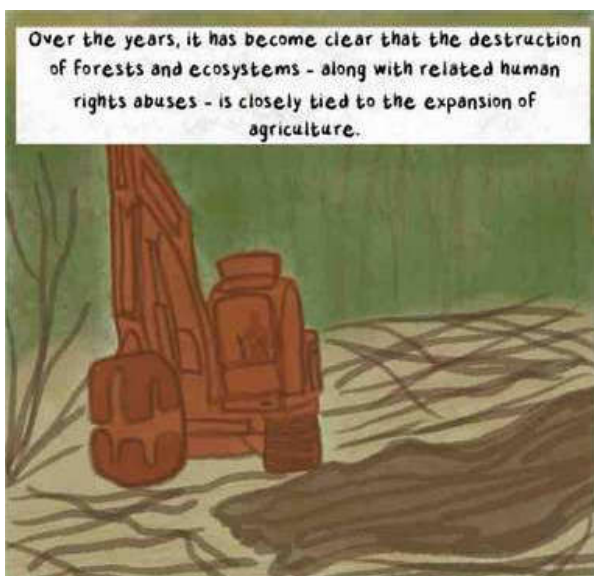
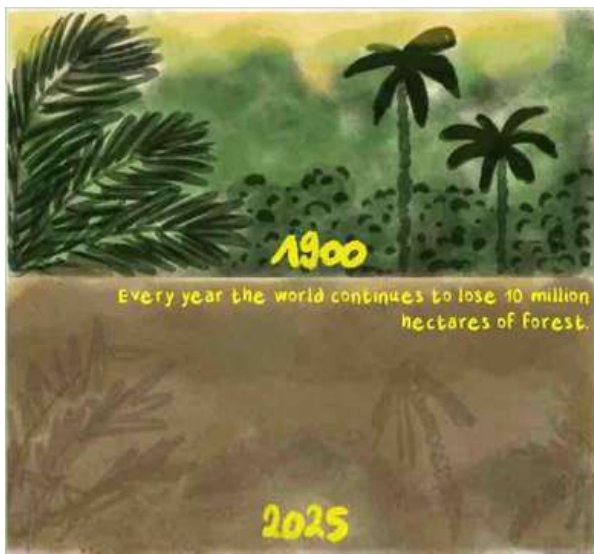
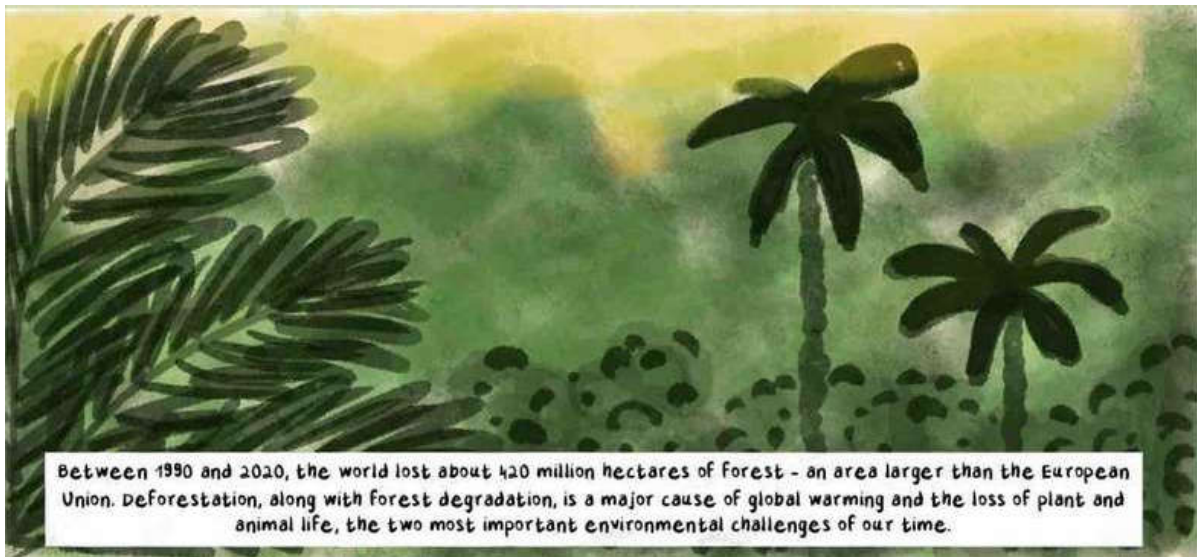
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The EUDR has been celebrated as a significant milestone in the efforts by the European Union to combat deforestation and biodiversity loss.



In recent years, the European Union came to a crucial realisation: as one of the biggest consumers of products causing deforestation, it needed to take responsibility to help stop this destruction.

We have to do something about forests worldwide!



The same year, a new law was adopted to address the release of greenhouse gases, deforestation and the loss of biological diversity associated with EU consumption.

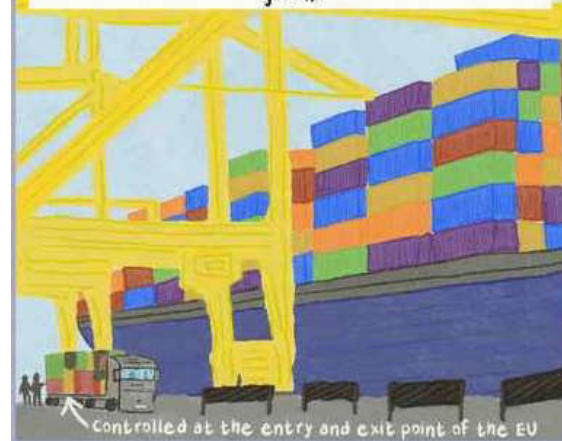
This law would ensure that when seven key products are imported or exported to the EU, they are not connected to deforestation or forest degradation in other regions.

To make this happen, every player* in the supply chain must prove that the product is deforestation-free and produced in compliance with local laws.

*Producers, traders, wholesalers, supermarkets, etc.



A key part of the law is the tracing of the products all the way back to the exact plot of land where it was grown.



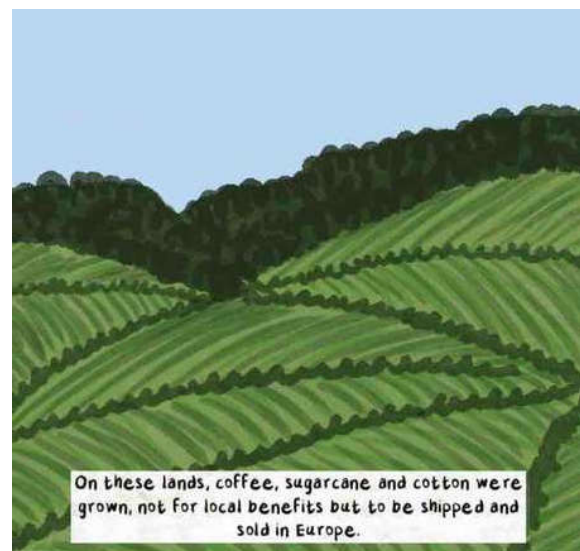
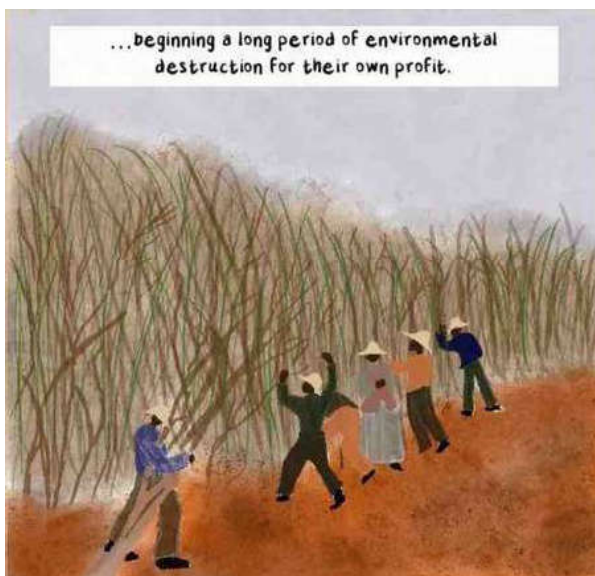
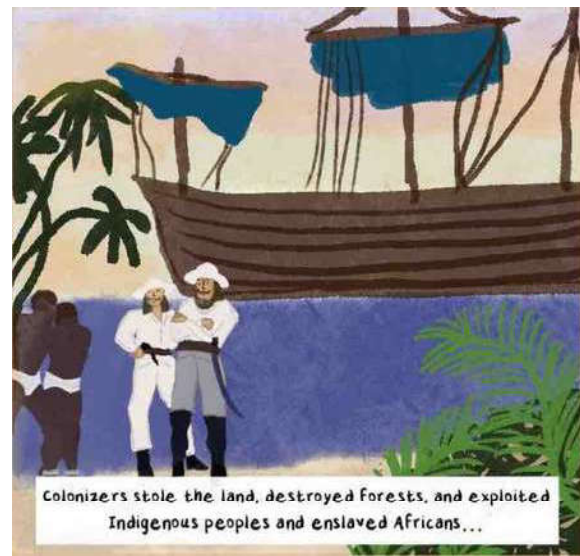
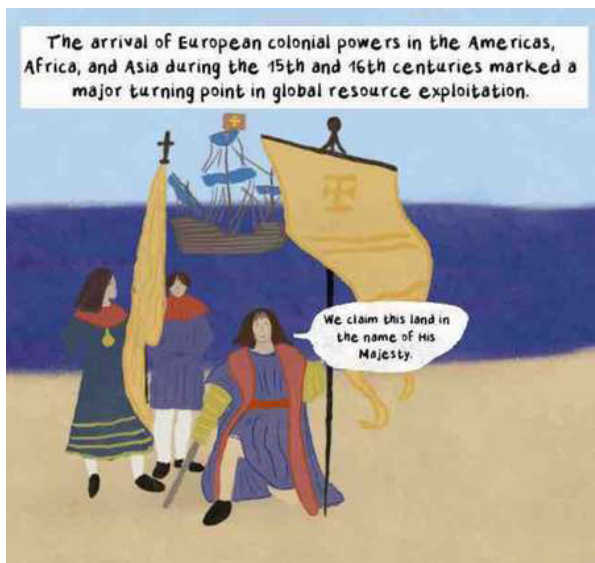
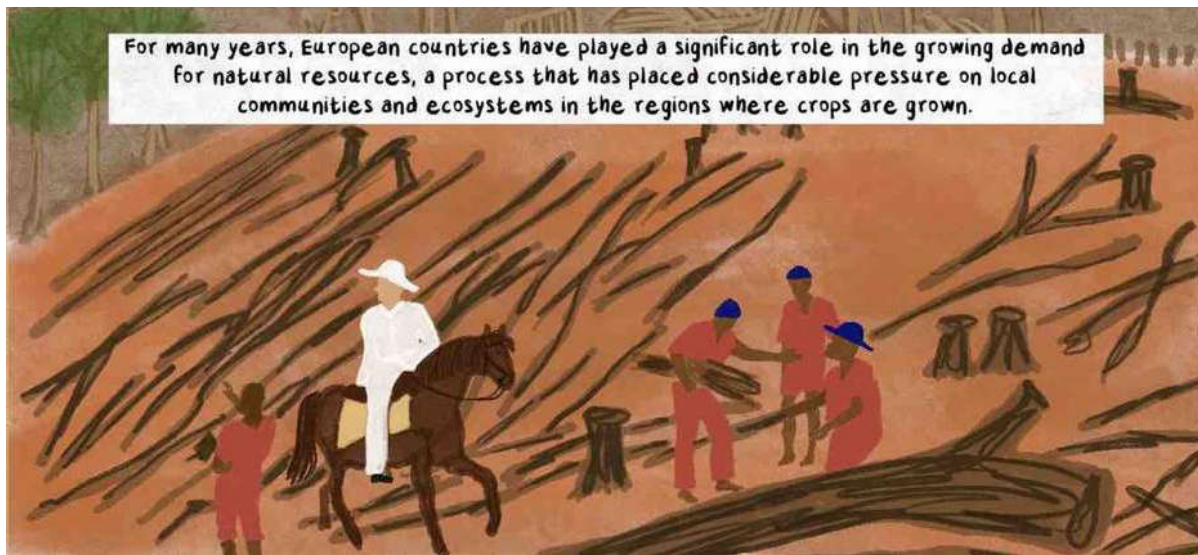
In less than a year and half of negotiations...

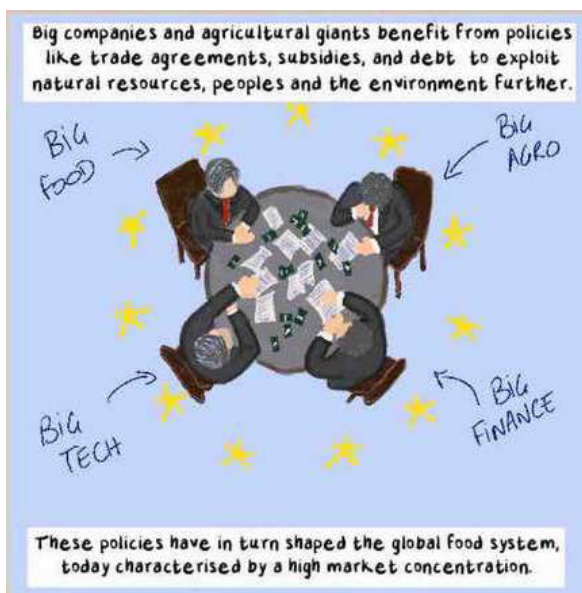
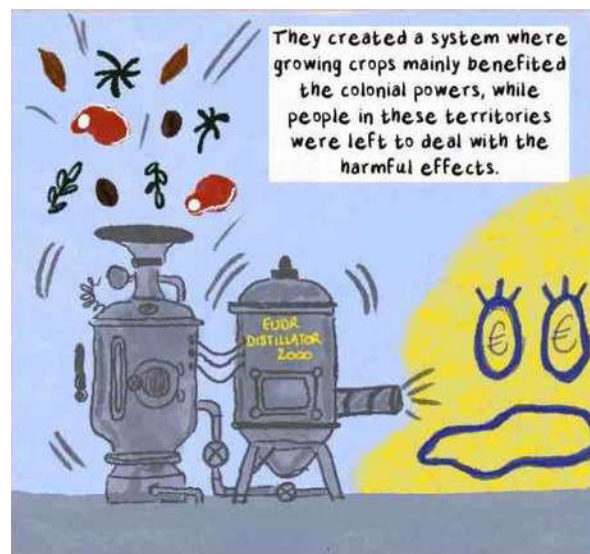
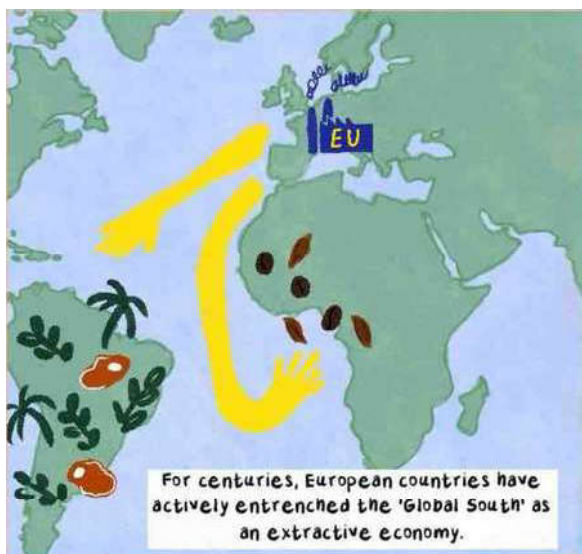


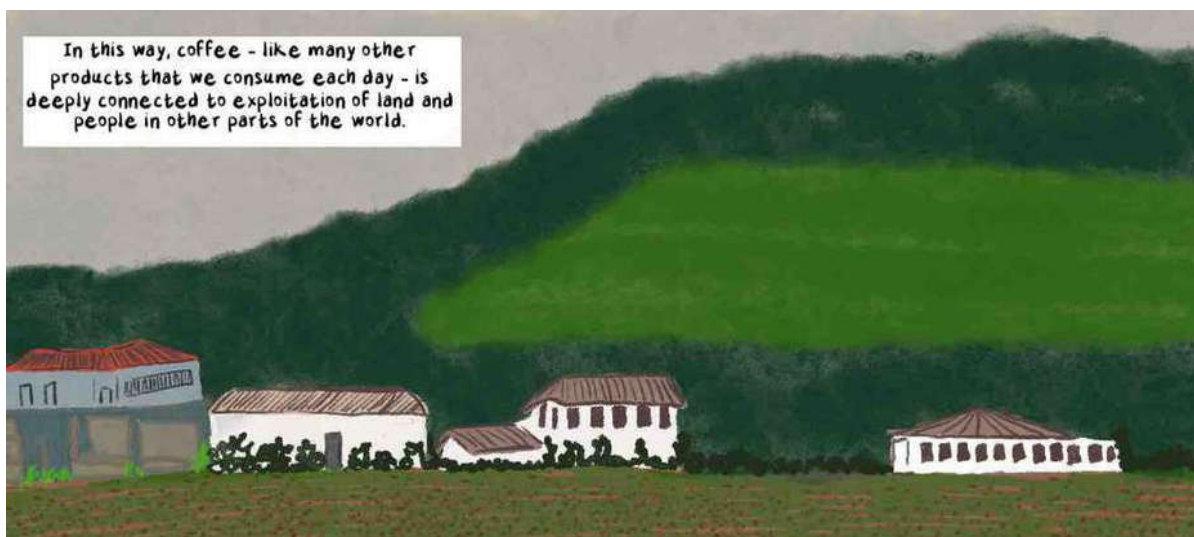
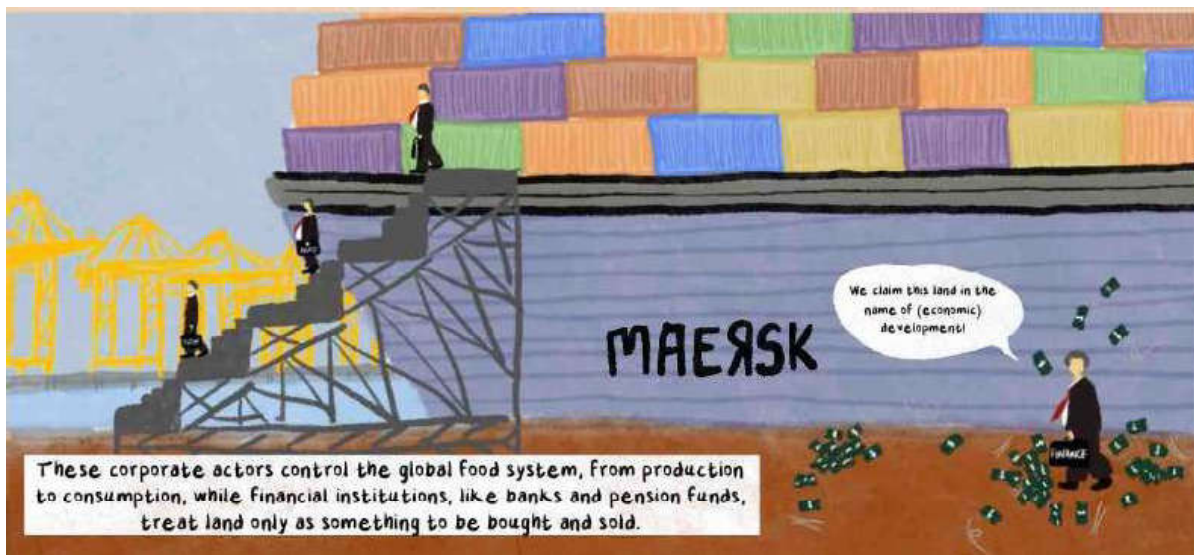
... the new EU deforestation law (EUDR) was adopted by the European Union...



... without major opposition.







Deforestation in this sense is mostly a symptom of deep-rooted inequities in the global economy.







NOTÍCIAS

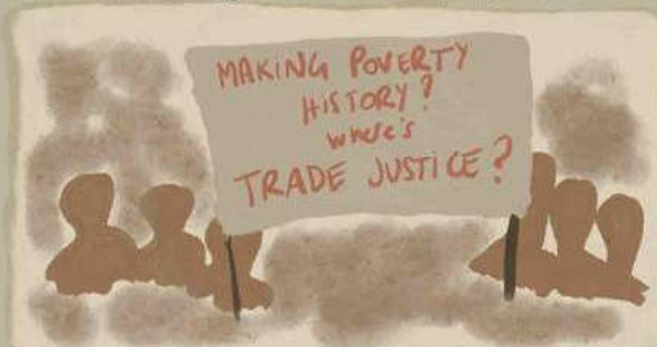


YOUR
LOCAL
NEWS!



From Rainforest to Plantation: How Global Demand Is Rewriting Local Landscapes

Global commodity production is reshaping entire territories, affecting not only the environment but also the daily lives of local communities.



Climate, Culture, and Control: How Supply Chains Are Redrawing Rural Life

Many local families struggle to keep their land as big companies buy up huge areas for plantations, forcing communities to move or work in poor conditions.



'We Feed the World, But We Can't Feed Ourselves': Farmers Speak Out on Global Trade Injustice

Despite producing valuable crops, most farmers see very little profit. Middlemen and exporters take most of the money, leaving workers with low wages



'The Forest Is Our Home': Communities Resist Corporate Expansion

Karipuna Indigenous Group Takes Legal Action Against Brazilian Government Over Invasion of Ancestral Lands

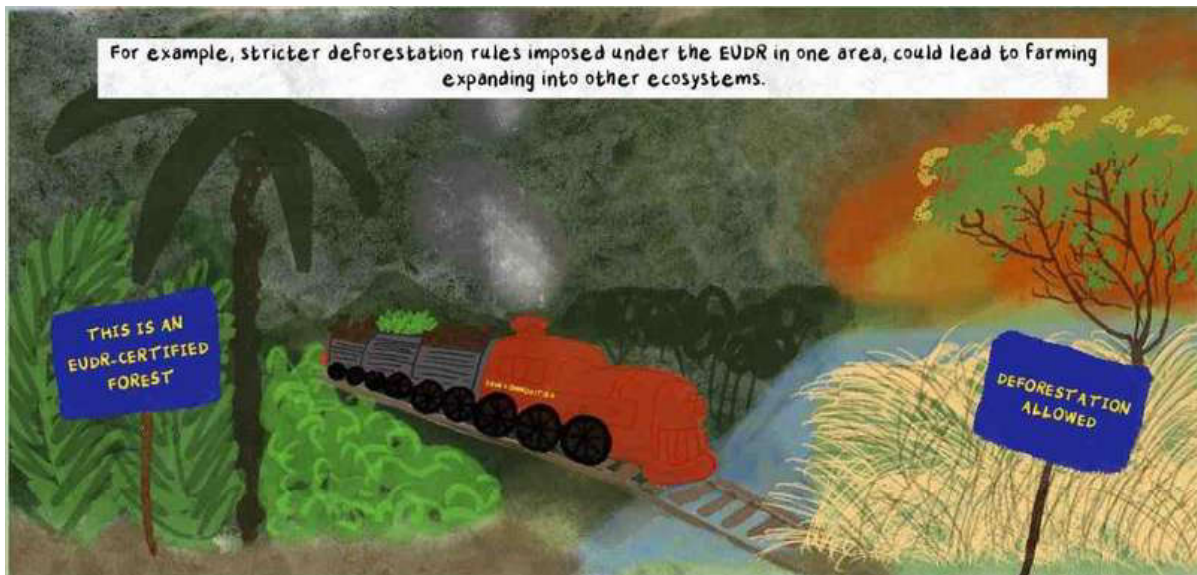
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Global food systems didn't just happen overnight. They were built over centuries through a complex network of trade and logistics that span across borders. Because of this, when a measure like the EUDR is introduced, it can cause changes in where and how things are produced, transported, and consumed.



Some of these changes are already happening, with effects on forests, local communities, and both local and global food systems.

For example, stricter deforestation rules imposed under the EUDR in one area, could lead to farming expanding into other ecosystems.



That is because the EUDR defines forests narrowly, leaving out important areas like wetlands, savannahs, and grasslands. This could cause deforestation to move into these areas, clearing more land than before.



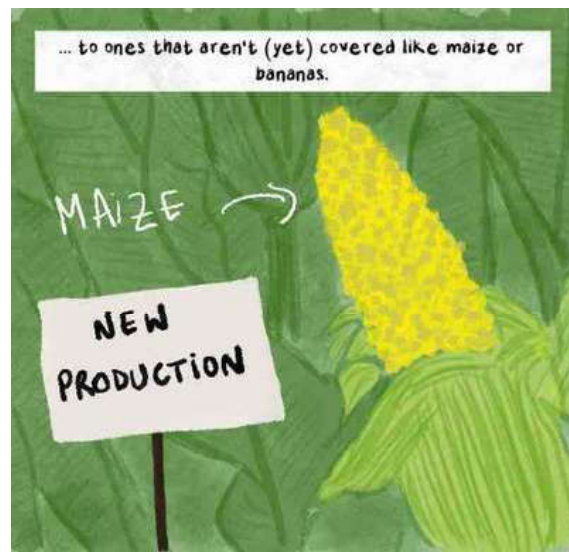
Similarly, the law only covers seven products (or commodities) that have been identified as the main drivers of deforestation linked to EU consumption.



But since the law only focuses on a few products, producers might decide to switch from growing crops like coffee and soy...



... to ones that aren't (yet) covered like maize or bananas.



So, these new rules are supposed to stop deforestation... but that means the problem could just move somewhere else?

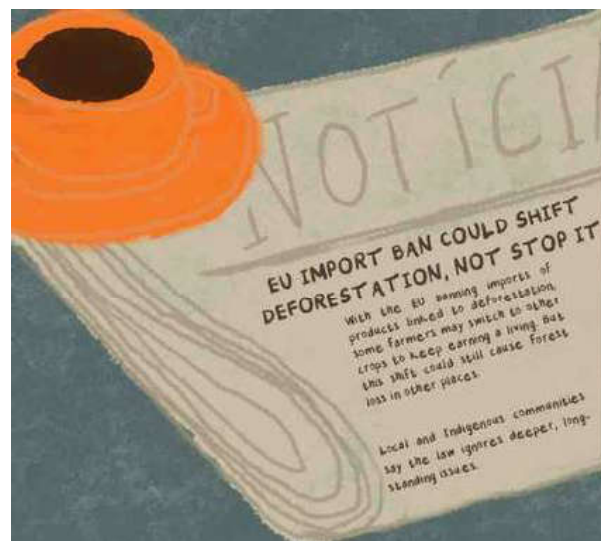
Yes, that is what the experiences of peasants and communities in Brazil suggest... the problem just keeps coming back in another form, like playing whack-a-mole.

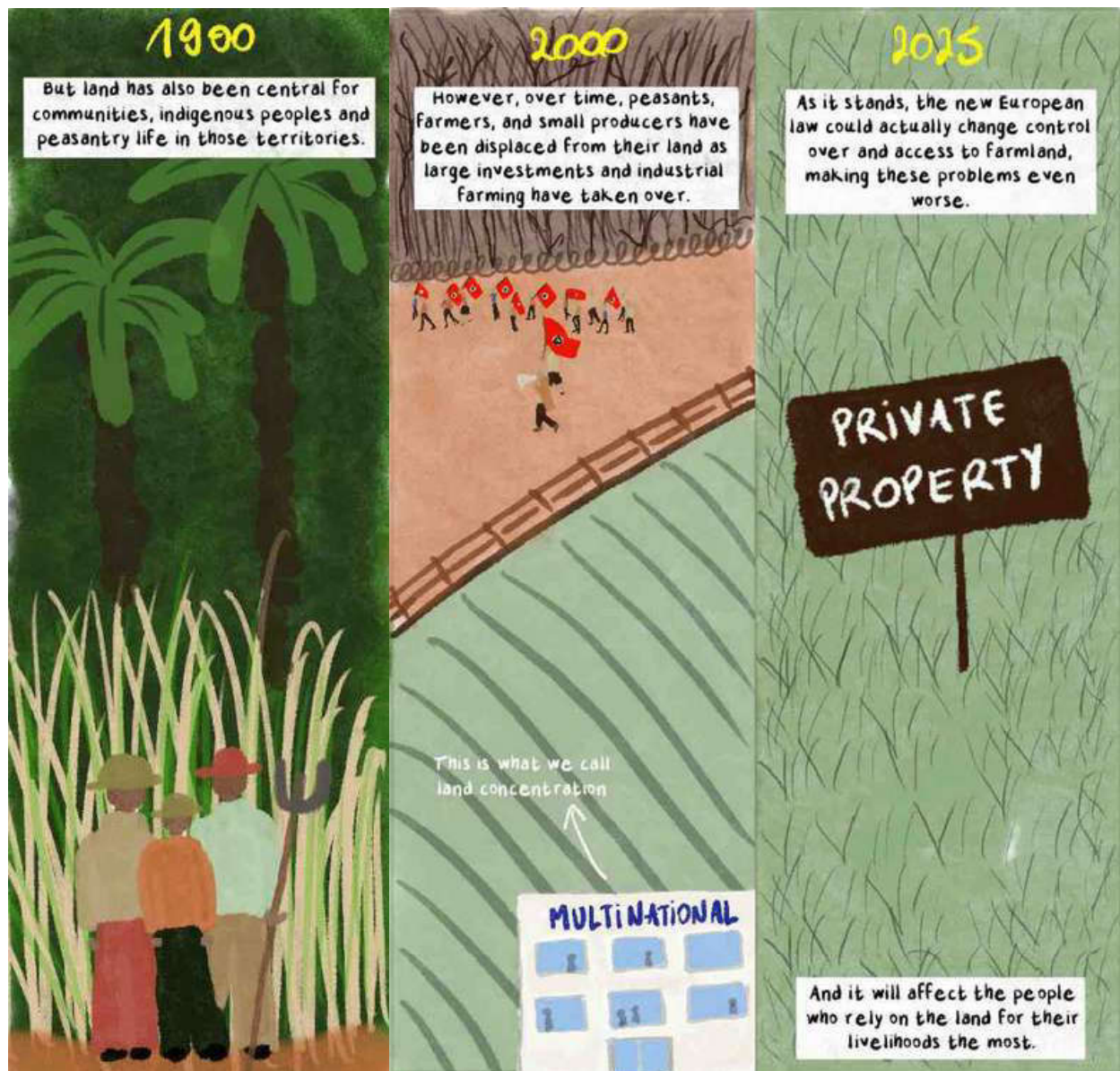


EU IMPORT BAN COULD SHIFT DEFORESTATION, NOT STOP IT

With the EU banning imports of products linked to deforestation, some farmers may switch to other crops to keep earning a living. But this shift could still cause forest loss in other places.

Local and Indigenous communities say the law ignores deeper, long-standing issues.



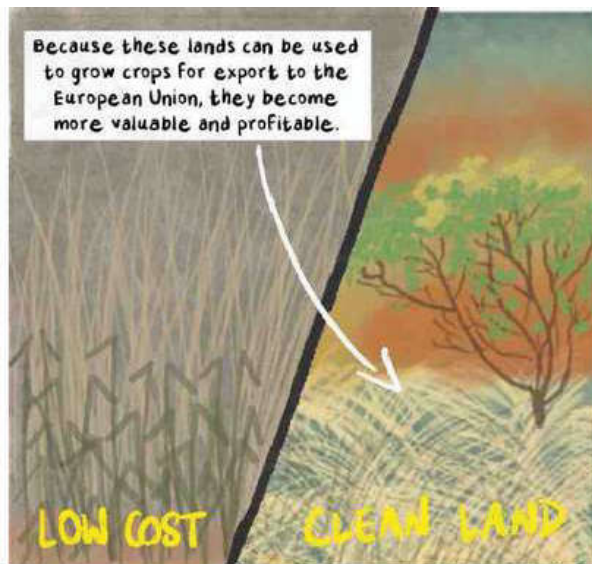


For example, the law could make land that has already been deforested more expensive.



These are called 'clean lands,' and these lands can be used for cultivating crops to be exported to the European Union

Because these lands can be used to grow crops for export to the European Union, they become more valuable and profitable.



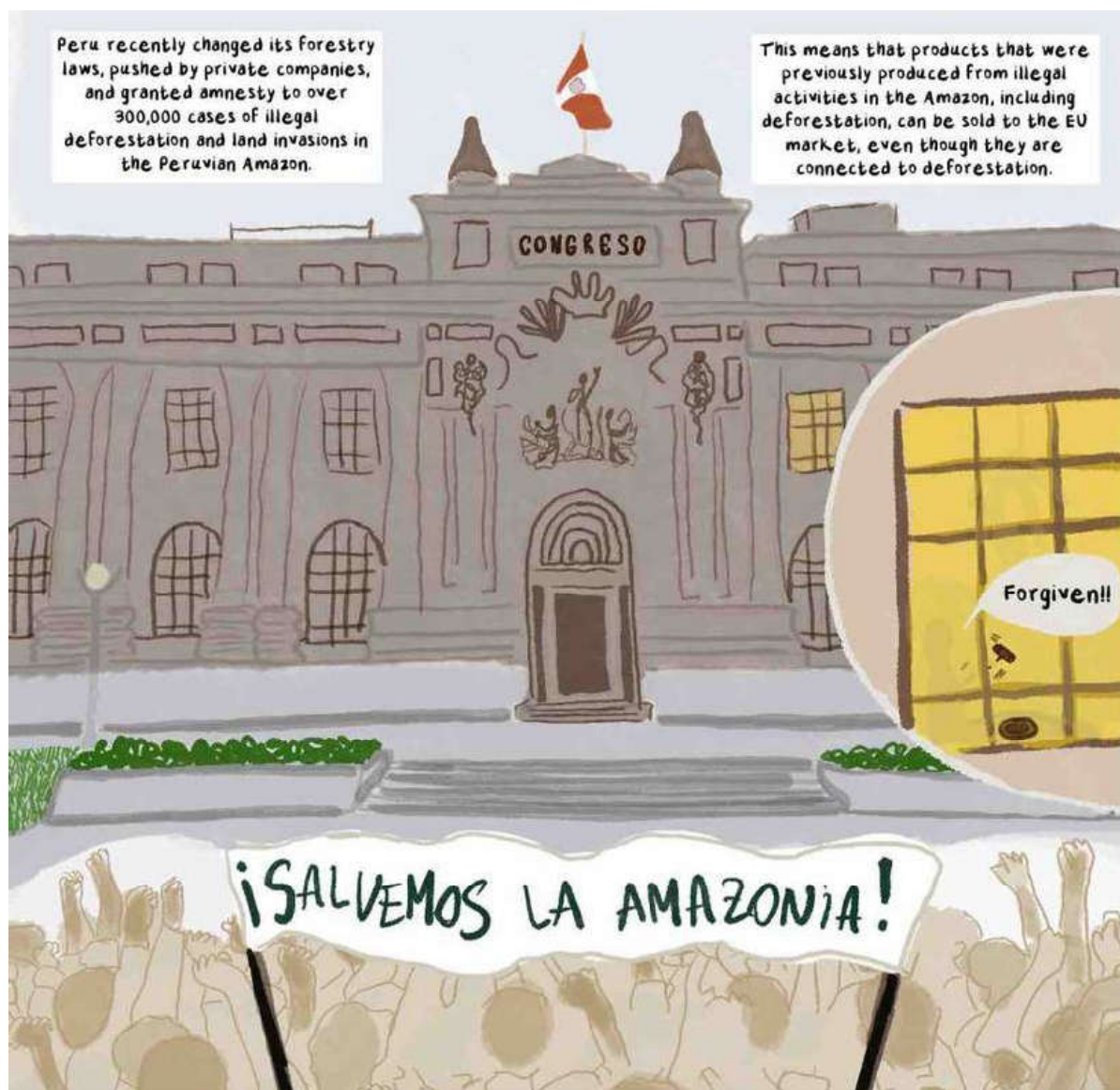
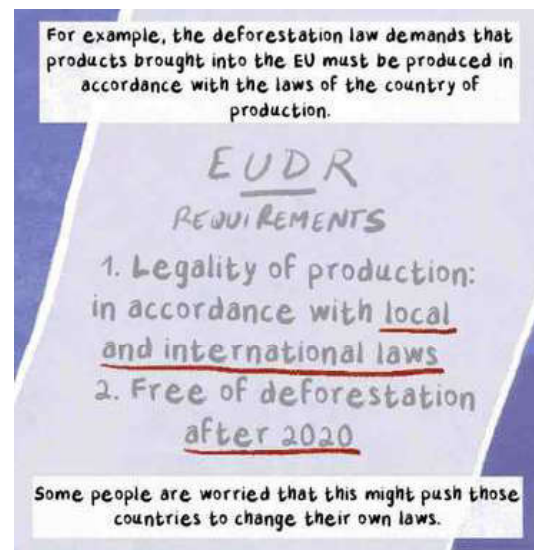
As these lands become more valuable, big agri-food companies may pressure small farmers, especially ethnic minorities and poor farmers, forcing them to sell their land to large agribusinesses.

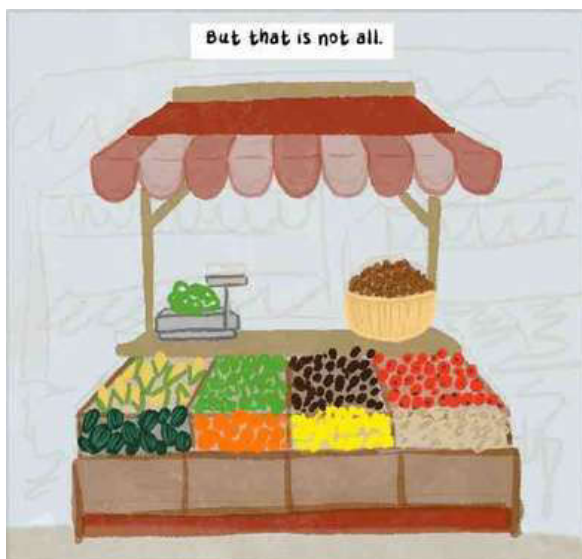
When small farmers and local communities are pushed out, they must find new ways to survive.

Some may relocate to forested areas, unintentionally driving new deforestation...

...while others might decide to move to urban areas for new opportunities, placing them in precarious conditions.







The EUDR could also affect how food is grown and produced in other territories, which may impact food security there too.

"Food security (is) a situation that exists when

- ALL PEOPLE, AT ALL TIMES have
- PHYSICAL, SOCIAL & ECONOMIC ACCESS to
- SUFFICIENT, SAFE AND NUTRITIOUS food that meets their
- DIETARY NEEDS and
- FOOD PREFERENCES

For an active and healthy life."

WHY?

DEFORESTATION CHAIN 101
Food security and sovereignty

Because the EU combats deforestation by banning certain products from entering if they are linked to deforestation or produced illegally

But to produce these products, land in other countries is needed

If that land is used for EU-export crops, it may not be available for growing local food.



It could also reduce the variety of food and the nutrients available locally, impacting the availability and accessibility of locally produced food... making food insecurity worse.

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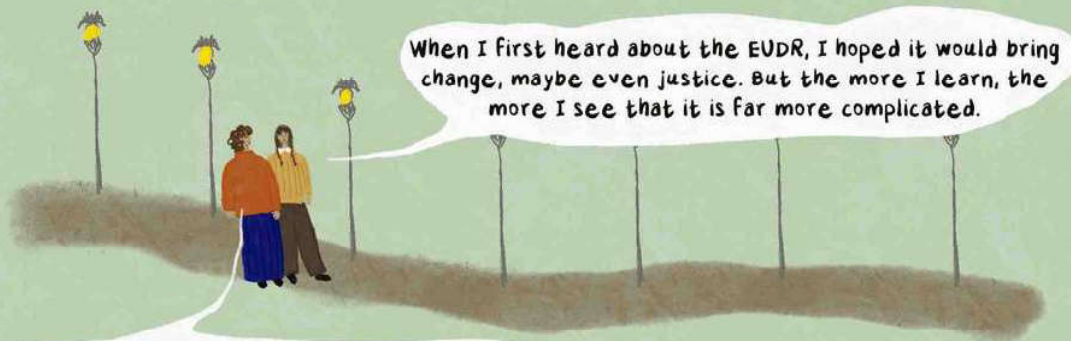
For an active and healthy life."

Switching from growing local food to crops for the EU can lead to more harmful land use changes because focusing on just one crop often means using more land and pesticides.



EPILOGUE

What lies ahead?



Yes, it is way more complex than I expected.
So... how can the negative impacts of the EUDR be reduced?

If you are asking how to reduce deforestation linked to EU consumption without creating new problems, then the first step is involving people in the production regions and creating space for real dialogue about the environmental and social realities we face.



Across countries local and territorial organisations have developed unique forms of resistance to the structural effects of deforestation and the broader impacts of large-scale monoculture production and its negative consequences.



For example, indigenous and afro-descendent communities in the Tapajos region in Brazil have developed community protocols for the prevention and monitoring of deforestation, mostly by connecting it to territorial and socio-biological diversity and to their right to a free, prior and informed consent to large-scale projects and investments.

But the real issue goes beyond just making things 'greener' or more sustainable, as advocated by the EU and its supporters. The prevailing narrative of the EUDR still assumes that food systems must stay connected to commodity chains, and that simply making them 'greener' will suffice.



The law is missing a critical point. Instead of encouraging meaningful and place-based solutions, the EU expects farmers and communities in the South to spend their entire lives producing for its market, locking us into the same harmful system built on centuries of extraction and exploitation.

Europe's contribution to global deforestation and forest degradation cannot be improved with the goal of maintaining the high levels of global import and export of food commodities that have long contributed to insecurity for local farmers and communities in the South. This only reinforces an outdated system rooted in colonialism, where profit still comes before food security and justice.

So, despite its intention to combat deforestation, the law could actually worsen the problem, reinforcing unsustainable practices and deepening inequalities?

It seems so. The problem seems to be deeper and to lie in the failure to address systemic issues tied to deforestation, land deprivation, and food insecurity.



When the root causes of deforestation are dismissed, it is not only deforestation and forest degradation that are allowed to continue, but also deeper inequalities at the heart of the system.

To make progress, we need to rethink how we understand food systems. We need to open spaces of reflection vis-à-vis the future of the global food system, with particular attention to the visible tensions between local food security and global trade.



Territorial markets can be supported so that local communities and regions are better connected and less vulnerable to global markets

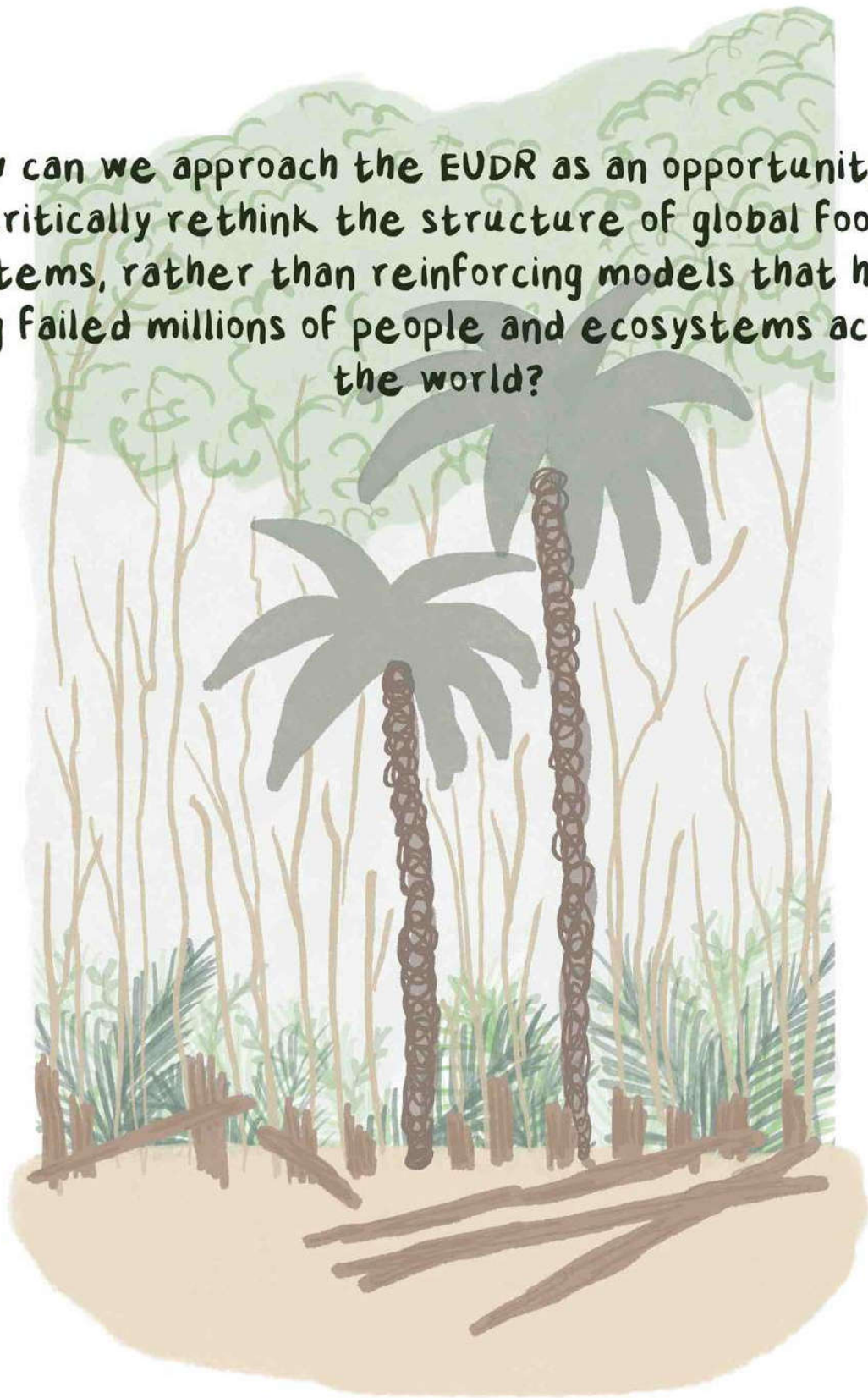


And, any serious attempt to challenge deforestation should be supported by policies, actions and financial means to promote regional and local self-sufficient food systems.



So, the real question here might be:

How can we approach the EUDR as an opportunity to critically rethink the structure of global food systems, rather than reinforcing models that have long failed millions of people and ecosystems across the world?



This graphic novel was released within the scope of the
EPICC research project.

Further resources are available on the EPICC website,
here:



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