



Dear Avocado Retailers and Importers:

The rapid growth of the U.S. avocado market has fueled deforestation, water theft, and violence in Mexico — and pushed one of North America's most iconic species closer to extinction.

Research by Climate Rights International has linked avocados grown on illegally deforested land to importers that supply major U.S. grocery stores — exposure that has already brought lawsuits and shareholder challenges.

Most avocados consumed in the United States come from Mexico. In ten years, more than ten football fields of forest a day have been cleared to grow more avocados — including nearly 2,400 acres in Michoacán's Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, the overwintering home of monarchs that migrate as far as 3,000 miles to reach it. Monarch numbers have fallen 90% over three decades, and continued forest loss threatens the survival of a species now proposed for Endangered Species Act protection.

The damage extends well beyond the butterflies. Avocado orchards consume enormous quantities of water, draining aquifers and worsening drought for communities across the region. And as U.S. demand turned avocados into “green gold,” it drew organized crime, corruption, and violence into Mexico’s avocado-growing highlands. Indigenous communities and local residents who defend their forests and water have been threatened, attacked, and killed — most recently Roberto Chávez, an environmental defender, was shot dead in Michoacán in April 2026.

In May 2026, the Supreme Indigenous Council of Michoacán — representing traditional authorities from 80 Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities — issued a [public pronouncement](#) to the avocado industry, including international buyers. Its message was unequivocal: do not buy deforestation, do not buy stolen water, do not buy avocados from orchards tied to environmental or territorial conflict. The Council warned that genuine environmental due diligence must be based on objective evidence of what is actually happening on the ground.

There is now a way to meet that standard.

Guardián Forestal is an independent Mexican NGO with a [satellite-based monitoring system](#) that screens avocado orchards for recent deforestation and unresolved environmental violations. With the support of the Michoacán government, Guardián Forestal uses this system to administer the Pro-Forest Agriculture (PFA) certification program, certifying packinghouses that source only from orchards free of land cleared since 2018. Because PFA relies on satellite imagery and geospatial analysis, its findings are objective and verifiable.



The program is already working at scale: packinghouses responsible for more than 90% of Mexican avocado exports to the United States are now PFA certified. Guardián Forestal's screening has blocked 2,900 orchards tied to deforestation from certified supply chains.

This progress is a significant achievement — but the work is not yet complete. As long as some packinghouses remain outside the system, orchards flagged for deforestation may still reach lucrative U.S. markets. Only when the entire industry is covered will the market for avocados grown on deforested land be fully closed and the incentive to clear forest removed at its source.

U.S. retailers have the power to finish the job. In its 2025 sustainability report, Costco committed to reducing deforestation in its avocado supply chain, including by engaging with suppliers around the Guardián Forestal program. **We urge you to follow Costco's lead. Concretely, you should immediately adopt a corporate policy requiring all your avocado suppliers to use the Guardián Forestal monitoring system and source only from PFA-certified packinghouses.**

PFA provides independent due diligence that's critical to ensuring your supply chain is free of avocados grown on recently deforested land. The federal government recently announced a "zero-deforestation" program, which could help reduce deforestation by placing mandatory requirements on exporters. However, it will rely on administrative determinations by government officials, and it was created with APEAM, the main avocado industry association, whose members are among the producers whose compliance it would evaluate.

PFA should remain your own due diligence standard, alongside whatever the federal program requires of exporters.

There's no reason to wait to adopt a corporate policy for your avocado supply chain. PFA is a proven program with widespread support among packinghouses and informed consumers — the packinghouses that supply the large majority of avocados exported to the United States are already certified. A policy requiring PFA certification will provide assurance to you and your customers about the integrity of your avocado supply chain. It will also help advance your corporate sustainability and human rights goals and values.

We urge you to act now to ensure the avocados you sell are not driving deforestation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, or violence in Mexico. By adopting a policy immediately, you can help stop avocado-related deforestation before the monarchs return to their vulnerable overwintering grounds.

Sincerely,



Center for Biological Diversity
Acterra: Actions for a Healthy Planet
Advocates for Snake Preservation
Alliance for the Wild Rockies
Better Food Foundation
Black Veg Society
Brighter Green
Center for Food Safety
Church Women United in NY State
Climate Communications Coalition
Climate Writers
Compassionate Living
DC Environmental Network
DC Veg Week
Dogwood Alliance
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Endangered Habitats League
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Fauna Films
Fish Defender
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Food Empowerment Project
Food & Water Watch
Forests Forever
Friends of Merry Meeting Bay
Friends of the Earth, U.S.
Green REV Institute
Green State Solutions
Heartwood
In Tune to Nature
Institute for Future Food Systems
John Muir Project
Malibu Monarch Project
Mighty Earth
People & Pollinators Network
Plant Based in the Burbz
Pollinator Friendly Alliance
Pro-Animal Future
Resource Renewal Institute
Rewilding Institute
RepaSur Global
Rowan Food and Farm Network
Save the Monarch Butterfly



SEED Strategies for Ethical and Environmental Development

Sequoia Forest Keeper

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