

## Environmental News, Research & Analysis (ENRA)

*April 2021*

### ***Agriculture/ Land Use***

#### [Pesticides in food: latest figures published](#)

The latest report on pesticide residues in food in the EU is now available, giving a snapshot of residue levels found in a basket of products widely consumed in the EU. A total of 96,302 samples were analysed in 2019, 96.1% of which fell within legally permitted levels. For the subset of 12,579 samples analysed as part of the EU-coordinated control programme, 98% were within legal limits. The EUCP analysed samples randomly collected from 12 food products – apples, head cabbages, lettuce, peaches, spinach, strawberries, tomatoes, oat grain, barley grain, wine (red and white), cow's milk and swine fat.

### ***Air Quality***

#### [Clean Air Action Group launches new campaign](#)

The Clean Air Action Group has launched a campaign to stop household waste incineration in Hungary and Romania. The campaign follows the findings of a new report stating that the illegal burning of solid waste in households exposes the population to serious health risks.

#### [Air pollution, what solutions?](#)

Traffic, agriculture, heating, there are many sources of air pollution. France Nature Environnement share their best solutions to tackle them.

### ***Biodiversity***

#### [Strengthening conservation and restoration through the Species Threat Abatement and Recovery metric](#)

A new tool – the Species Threat Abatement and Recovery metric – promises to help practitioners assess the potential for conserving threatened biodiversity, and set site scale or landscape scale targets compatible with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Strategy. This ground-breaking approach is now being applied to forest landscape restoration projects with promising results.

#### [People in Nature: Understanding how communities use biodiversity](#)

People in Nature (PiN) provides an assessment framework to aid project development through an understanding of community uses of biodiversity. PiN is an approach to systematically identify and document the value and uses (material & cultural) of biodiversity – identifying where in the landscape the benefits can be found and understanding how these benefits are realised and distributed.

#### [Transforming crop and timber production could reduce species extinction risk by 40%](#)

Ensuring sustainability of crop and timber production would mitigate the greatest drivers of terrestrial wildlife decline, responsible for 40% of the overall extinction risk of amphibians, birds and mammals, according to a paper published in Nature Ecology & Evolution. These results were generated using a new metric which, for the first time, allows business, governments and civil society to assess their potential contributions to stemming global species loss, and can be used to calculate national, regional, sector-based, or institution-specific targets.

### ***Climate Action***

#### [Nature-based solutions should play increased role in tackling climate change](#)

Working with nature and enhancing the role of ecosystems can help reduce the impacts of climate change and increase climate change resilience. Such an approach can deliver multiple benefits,

including lowering pressures on biodiversity, improving human health and well-being, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building a sustainable economy, according to a recent European Environment Agency (EEA) report.

#### [Towards a new era of tracking climate expenditure?](#)

Governments around the world have pledged huge sums toward recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, this recovery funding aims to build back better by addressing the climate crisis. But how do governments count public spending toward climate action?

#### [Recovery Plans: Eu's Carbon Pricing Momentum](#)

The debate on green taxation has taken centre stage with the European Green Deal and the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. Lessons at national level show that carbon taxes can speed up the transition if ambitiously and strategically designed at a wider European level.

#### [Commission welcomes provisional agreement on the European Climate Law](#)

The Commission welcomes provisional agreement between the co-legislators on the European Climate Law. As one of the key elements of the European Green Deal, the European Climate Law enshrines the EU's commitment to reaching climate neutrality by 2050 and the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

### **Circular Economy**

#### [Resilience And The Circular Economy](#)

This blog provides an explanation of the term 'circular economy', followed by a brief assessment of its role in addressing the triple planetary crises, improving public health, and boosting economic growth. The paper concludes with an analysis of circular practices in EU and Irish policy contexts.

### **Covid-19/ Build Back Better**

#### [Reduced environmental impact, new green jobs: Exploring the outcomes of Italy's renewable energy plan](#)

Transitioning energy production from a dependence upon fossil fuels to renewable energy sources (RESs) promises to reduce environmental impacts while aiding economic growth. A study explores the benefits of implementing the Italian government's renewable energy plan, which includes installing photovoltaic (PV), hydroelectric, wind, and geothermal infrastructure from now to 2040.

#### [COVID-19 cases may rise in cool, dry, wind-free areas with high air pollution, suggests Italian study](#)

Weather variables and air pollution may favour COVID-19 pandemic transmission, leading to a higher number of deaths, finds a new study conducted in Northern Italian cities during the first lockdown of 2020, when all non-essential activities ceased. The researchers paired data on COVID-19 patients in intensive care units (ICUs), in Milan, Trento and Florence, alongside weather variables and air pollution data for the first wave of the pandemic to establish if the water content of the air (humidity), temperature or air pollution<sup>1</sup>, were positively or negatively correlated to the high numbers of COVID-19 patients in ICU admissions.

### **Energy**

#### [Overcoming The Hidden Environmental Costs Of Solar Energy](#)

Our efforts to harness the sun's energy to power our future may require up to 5% of the territories of some countries, a new simulation finds. This could have significant direct and indirect environmental side effects, including habitat loss and deforestation.

#### [Giant offshore wind projects to be built in Ireland's seas](#)

Ireland's plans for developing offshore wind are starting to take real shape with two new large projects in the pipeline. The Moneypoint and Codling wind farms would between them bring nearly 3 GW of offshore wind capacity to the Emerald Isle's coasts in the next decade. Offshore wind will play a

significant role in Ireland's decarbonisation. According to its National Energy & Climate Plan, Ireland aims to develop 5 GW of offshore wind by 2030.

### ***Forestry/ De-Forestation***

#### [On the EU's plate every day: deforestation and natural destruction](#)

The EU is responsible for 16% of 'imported' tropical deforestation, writes Anke Schulmeister-Oldenhove, the senior forest policy officer at the WWF European Policy Office, and one of the lead authors of the recent WWF report *Stepping up: The continuing impact of EU consumption on nature*. Will the new deforestation EU law live up to its promises?

### ***Freshwater***

#### [Nearly 5700 Northern Hemisphere lakes may be ice-free within this century](#)

Frozen freshwater lakes provide ice to support human transportation, refrigeration, food harvest and recreation. This ice also influences key environmental factors; crucially, it minimises lake evaporation rates, moderates summer water temperatures and curtails toxic algal blooms. However, freshwater-lake ice cover is decreasing under climate change. A study estimates how many lakes in the Northern Hemisphere will permanently lose ice cover within this century, and identifies those most at risk of becoming ice-free.

### ***Governance***

#### [Achieving no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services: Key principles and best practices](#)

This guidance document provides key principles and best practices to mitigate the negative impacts of human activities on nature, and to achieve no net loss or, ideally, net gains in biodiversity and ecosystem services.

### ***Justice***

#### [Protect environmental defenders](#)

European non-governmental organisations joined forces to protect environmental defenders. The coalition named CASE united in recognition of the threat posed to public watchdogs by Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). They work to expose legal harassment and intimidation, protect the rights of those who speak out, and advocate for comprehensive protective measures and reform.

### ***Plastics***

#### [Waste pickers role in plastic pollution reduction: the ones we cannot leave behind](#)

In countries characterized by unstable waste management systems, the informal sector plays a critical role in the recycling processes, especially in regards to plastic waste. Informal waste recycling often consists of urban poor and marginalized social groups who find a source of income and survival in waste picking. Their activity is characterized by unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low or irregular incomes, long working hours and lack of access to information, markets, finance, training and technology.

### ***Sustainable Development***

#### [Are we on track for a sustainable Europe?](#)

A new report by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and GlobeScan identifies the challenges to the European Green Deal's implementation and provides policy recommendations for addressing them, based on insights from nearly 300 sustainability experts. The European Green Deal Barometer, launched on Thursday 29 April at an online conference, builds on the Think2030 survey, an expert consultation of nearly 300 sustainability experts from governments and regulators, NGOs, academia, research institutes and the private sector.