



Agriculture/ Land Use

[A new era for UK trade: Setting environmental standards for the agri-food sector](#)

The UK is now developing its own trade policy outside the EU. This means there is a need to re-evaluate the UK's approach to environmental standards in trade, including relating to agri-foods. As the UK negotiates free trade agreements (FTAs) with partners such as Australia, New Zealand and the US, attention turns to the implication of these new trade agreements influencing the sustainability within the UK, and also more broadly globally.

[Agroecology: the answer to Europe's agricultural, social and environmental challenges](#)

The European Committee of the Regions has put forward a comprehensive set of measures to foster agroecology in the EU. Agroecology reduces the carbon footprint of agriculture, fosters the recovery of biodiversity, restores soils fertility, prevents air and water pollution and increases the economic and social resilience of farms with healthy and accessible food.

Biodiversity

[Biomarker study shows health effects of fungicide on honeybees, including DNA damage](#)

New research finds that a common agricultural fungicide can have toxic effects on honeybees at standard concentrations. This study uses a biomarker method to identify cell and chemical changes in honeybees after exposure to one fungicide, one toxic metal and one toxin known to cause genetic damage; with such changes indicating stress on their biological functions. This method has not previously been used to show these effects in honeybees after exposure to fungicide and highlights the potential for further research using biomarkers.

[Could rethinking predator management protect Europe's ground-nesting birds?](#)

Ground-nesting bird populations are more likely to be in decline than any other European bird species, finds a recent study, with 74% showing evidence of a long-term drop in numbers. The study analyses whether predation by generalist species helps to explain the widespread declines of ground-dwelling birds (such as waders, wildfowl and gamebirds) across Europe. It highlights a potential role for predator management in achieving conservation objectives, and points towards possible effects of different habitat management strategies in Britain, Ireland and Europe.

Circular Economy

[Circular economy: MEPs call for tighter EU consumption and recycling rules](#)

The European Parliament adopted comprehensive policy recommendations to achieve a carbon-neutral, sustainable, toxic-free and fully circular economy by 2050 at the latest. The adopted report is a response to the Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan. Binding 2030 targets are needed for materials use and the consumption footprint, covering the whole lifecycle of each product category placed on the EU market, MEPs stress. They also call on the Commission to propose product-specific and/or sector-specific binding targets for recycled content.

Climate Action

[Greenland: Global Warming Hotspot and Environmental Frontline](#)

As rapidly increasing temperatures in the Arctic cause the ice to recede in Greenland, there is an international scramble to exploit the resources under the thawing ground. Environmentalists are concerned about the severe repercussions of this emerging plunder.

[Time To Free Fashion From Fossil Fuel Addiction](#)

Do synthetic fibres reign supreme in your wardrobe? A new report has charted the two-decade takeover of our clothing by fossil-fuel derived fibres, in particular polyester. Textiles are used in a variety of products

such as clothing, carpets, and furniture, but it is the fashion sector that represents the largest consumption of textiles, accounting for more than 70% of the global textiles market as of 2019. Today, polyester can be found in more than half of all textiles.

[Carbon levy on EU imports needed to raise global climate ambition](#)

To raise global climate ambition and prevent ‘carbon leakage’, the EU must place a carbon price on imports from less climate-ambitious countries, say Environment MEPs. The resolution underlines that the EU’s increased ambition on climate change must not lead to ‘carbon leakage’ as global climate efforts will not benefit if EU production is just moved to non-EU countries that have less ambitious emissions rules.

Covid-19/ Build Back Better

[The Solution is in Nature](#)

The science is clear: the biodiversity crisis, the climate crisis and the health crisis are interdependent. Political leaders from across the world, representing 80+ countries and the European Union, have also recognised this connection in the Leaders’ Pledge for Nature.¹ Climate change accelerates the destruction of the natural world through extreme weather events such as droughts, flooding and wildfires. Biodiversity loss and unsustainable use of nature, driven by intense anthropogenic activities, in turn, reduce resilience to and further drive climate change. But just as the crises are linked, so are the solutions.

[Nature-based solutions and their socio-economic benefits for Europe’s recovery](#)

This briefing provides an overview of the wide range of socio-economic benefits that nature-based solutions can achieve alongside addressing the intertwined climate change and biodiversity loss crises. The briefing highlights the central role these solutions can play in achieving the EU’s 2030 commitments and describes the obstacles that have so far prevented their wider integration into EU policy. It also identifies recommendations to enhance their uptake.

[Mental health and the environment: Bringing nature back into people's lives](#)

This briefing by IEEP and ISGlobal explores how European policies and the COVID-19 recovery efforts can better reflect the impact of the natural environment on people’s mental health. Access to nature can have immensely positive effects on people’s mental health, according to a growing body of evidence. Likewise, environmental degradation, including climate change and pollution, poses a serious threat to our emotional state and well-being.

[UN members must recognise a healthy environment as a fundamental human right](#)

EEB - The UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) ended with yet more dithering. Our governments must work together to codify international laws and regulations that recognise the human right to a healthy environment, protect the climate and restore biodiversity.

Deforestation

[Diminishing the EU’s deforestation footprint: The where and the how](#)

Under the European Green Deal, the EU has pledged to minimise its contribution to deforestation and forest degradation around the world and to promote the consumption of goods from deforestation-free supply chains. But what will that mean in practice?

Marine

[Impact assessments for deep-sea mining should recognise possible extent of hard rock habitats](#)

A recent sonar-, sampling- and photography-based survey reveals that the Atlantic deep seafloor may host more biological diversity than previously thought, due to the presence of large amounts of exposed hard rock — a type of habitat that supports a variety of marine life that is uncommon in flat, sediment-covered plains. A new research agenda focusing on these habitats could therefore help inform impact assessments for sustainable extraction of resources from the seafloor, while identifying deep-sea marine ecosystems that may be vulnerable to exploitation.

Plastics

[Plastics: mitigating their environmental, health and human rights impacts](#)

A new global governance regime for plastics is needed to mitigate their environmental, health and human rights impacts. The problems with plastics - Cheap, light, moldable and durable, plastics have been the source of significant industrial, trade, sanitation and health progress since they started being manufactured at a large scale in the 1950s. The flip side is the exponential growth of plastics production and use, along with their devastating impacts on the environment, wildlife and people. It is anticipated that the support for a new legally binding global agreement governing the entire life cycle of plastics will be reflected by the world's environment ministers at the upcoming UNEA meetings (UNEA 5-1 meeting in February 2021 and UNEA 5-2 in February 2022), and that the new plastics regime will make it possible to start turning off the plastic tap.

[European cities have circular plans for plastic](#)

The idea of a circular economy for plastic waste is taking shape in three European cities, including two ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) Members. Citizens in these municipalities in Spain, the Netherlands and Romania will be the first to benefit from real improvements in waste collection, transport, sorting and recycling.

[EU Microplastic Ban Just Closer, With Major Loopholes](#)

EEB - The EU will stop firms adding microplastic to almost all products. Great. But as the process moves forward this week, some glaring industry-sponsored loopholes stand out.

Renewables

[New website supports community energy and the uptake of renewable energy solutions](#)

The ongoing energy transition is not only facilitating the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, but also helping us rethink how energy is produced and distributed. Local energy networks – an important alternative to traditional top-down distribution models – are gaining importance, and have great potential in our future energy system.

Other

[Screening of websites for 'greenwashing': half of green claims lack evidence](#)

The European Commission and national consumer authorities released the results of a screening of websites ("sweep"), an exercise carried out each year to identify breaches of EU consumer law in online markets. This year, for the first time ever, the sweep focused on 'greenwashing', the practice by which companies claim they are doing more for the environment than they actually are.