

Environmental News, Research & Analysis (ENRA)

July 2021

Agriculture/ Land Use

[Exploring the benefits of biocontrol for sustainable agriculture](#)

In creating a sustainable and healthy food system, reducing the pressure on the environment is key. As a non-chemical and targeted input, biocontrol can offer a systemic and balanced solution for sustainable agriculture. This new report explores the benefits of biocontrol and the role it could play in the implementation of the European Green Deal.

[Towards sustainable agriculture: study identifies biodiversity-friendly alternatives to conventional wheat crop management](#)

As intensive agriculture is associated with large-scale impacts on biodiversity, ecosystem services, food security and human health, it is important to shift to more sustainable, yet highly productive, farming practices. A study now assesses such practices in wheat, evaluating agricultural-management strategies at the field and landscape scales. The findings suggest that biodiversity-enhancing practices can support natural pest predation without use of agrochemicals — and that controlling pests and weeds by agrochemical means is less relevant than expected for final crop productivity.

[What is left for environment and climate in the new CAP?](#)

EU farm ministers approved the provisional deal reached with the European Parliament on the new CAP reform. The following assessment looks at the six fundamental issues identified by IEEP as essential for keeping the green ambition of the future CAP alive.

[Ambitious green farming requirements can lead to higher environmental benefits, study shows](#)

A new study by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the Commission shows how the choices farmers make to adopt voluntary green practices are affected by how much they are already obliged to contribute to the environment.

[Commission welcomes political support by Member States to improve the protection of bees](#)

A clear majority of Member States have supported the Commission's proposal for a protection goal of 10% at the AGRIFISH Council, following a political discussion at the request of the European Commission. The 10% threshold supported by the Ministers will now be taken into account by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to finalise the Guidance Document.

Air Quality

[EU wants to ban new fossil-fuel cars from 2035](#)

The European Commission's proposal would effectively ban the sale of petrol and diesel cars and lorries in the EU from 2035, as part of its massive 'Fit-for-55' package. Green groups welcomed the proposal as a "turning point" for the auto industry, but many are asking for interim targets to ensure carmakers ramp up production of emissions-free vehicles sooner.

Biodiversity

[Restoring the natural link between biodiversity and climate](#)

We have a decade to tackle the climate crisis and repair nature. In [the European Parliament's biodiversity report](#), its position on the [EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#), MEPs called for legally binding targets to restore 30% of the EU's territory on land and sea.

[Citizen promotion of pollinator-friendly practices and activities across EU Member States](#)

To reverse the decline of pollinators, stakeholders across the EU need to take up pollinator-friendly practices. In support of the EU Pollinators initiative, IEEP has surveyed what is being done for

pollinators in all Member States and has produced guidance to promote best practice for agricultural managing authorities, farmers, farm advisors, and citizens.

[Bee health: new data hub goes live](#)

The EU Bee Partnership (EUBP) has unveiled a [new online data platform](#) that will play a crucial role in efforts to protect bee and pollinator health. The prototype platform is a ground-breaking tool that will bring together and visualise harmonised data related to bees and other pollinators.

Climate Action

[European Council endorses new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change](#)

EU member states have endorsed a new climate adaptation strategy. The Council approved conclusions endorsing a new strategy that outlines a long-term vision for the EU to become a climate-resilient society that is fully adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change by 2050.

[EU poised to begin handing out €17.5bn green transition fund](#)

EU member states gave the final approval to the €17.5bn Just Transition Fund, intended to support currently fossil fuel-dependent regions to green their economies. This initiative is part of the efforts the EU is taking towards achieving climate-neutrality by 2050.

[Life on a farm: Nature-based solutions to the climate challenge](#)

A [recent webinar](#) co-hosted by IEEP and the Mission of Canada to the EU discussed efforts being undertaken in Canada and the EU when it comes to adopting nature-based solutions in agriculture.

Circular Economy

[Commission provides guidance for harmonised application of Single-Use Plastic rules and advances on monitoring of fishing gear](#)

The European Commission has provided guidance on the EU rules on single-use plastics and adopts an Implementing Decision on the monitoring and reporting of fishing gear placed on the market and waste fishing gear collected. These rules aim to reduce marine litter from single-use plastic products and fishing gear and promote the transition to a circular economy with innovative and sustainable business models, products, and materials.

Energy

[Commission proposes new Energy Efficiency Directive](#)

The European Commission has published a [proposal for recasting the EU Directive on Energy Efficiency](#), aimed at further stimulating EU efforts to promote energy efficiency and achieve energy savings in the fight against climate change. This initiative forms part of the Commission package of proposals “[Delivering on the European Green Deal](#)”, with a view to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and the ultimate objective of becoming climate neutral by 2050. It interlinks with a number of other proposals, notably the revised [Renewable Energy Directive](#), the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and the new Social Climate Fund, and the revision of the Effort Sharing Regulation.

[Green homes: Resource sufficiency is key to achieving climate neutrality](#)

Europe must go beyond energy efficiency and recognise the need for resource sufficiency in the real estate and housing sectors. The time is ripe for a holistic policy framework that serves people and the planet.

Forestry/ Woodland

[Trees at the edge: species respond differently to climate changes at hot and cold range edges](#)

As our climate changes, concern is rising over how plant species will adapt in terms of their geographical distribution (or range). Research has identified conflicting patterns in species performance, especially at the outer edges of their ranges, casting doubt on our ability to accurately predict the impacts of climate change. A study assesses 27 European tree species to identify how

populations' performance can change at their range edges, and how this response differs between the 'hot and dry versus the 'cold and wet' edges of each species.

[More trees for the climate](#)

Learn more about Woodland Trust's initiative to green the UK. They are giving away hundreds of thousands of trees to schools and communities. UK-based organisations can apply to get their delivery in November.

Freshwater/ Water

[Sewer leakage: first nationwide estimate of pollution leaking from urban systems, Germany](#)

Sewer systems are a potentially major source of urban groundwater pollution; water can leak through structural faults (or 'exfiltration' - i.e. through fractures or intruding tree roots) and be absorbed by surrounding soil, which can introduce nutrients, suspended solids and microbes into nearby water bodies. Estimating sewer leakage and exfiltration is important for effective management of urban waste-water systems, says a new study that explores sewer leakage at the national scale in Germany.

Governance

[High-level expert group ESIR urges to strengthen key ecosystems in the post-pandemic economy](#)

In three Focus Papers, the independent [ESIR expert group](#) provides 'deeper dives' into the [role of nations, regions and cities, universities](#), and [global value chains](#) as key ecosystems in the post-pandemic economy and society. The papers build on and complement ESIR's second Policy Brief '[Transformation post-COVID: Mobilising Innovation for People, Planet and Prosperity](#)'.

[Political agreement on the Aarhus Regulation: Commission welcomes increased public scrutiny of EU acts related to the environment](#)

The Commission welcomes the provisional political agreement reached yesterday between the European Parliament and the EU Member States in the Council on amending the Aarhus Regulation that will allow for increased public scrutiny of EU acts affecting the environment.

Plastics

[Time for EU law to mainstream reusable bottles and containers](#)

In a position paper published on 12 July, ECOS – Environmental Coalition on Standards – asked the European Commission to create EU legislation and standards to establish common reusable packaging formats and systems to make reuse and refill the norm.

[Microplastic pollution has soared in Spanish seagrass habitats over the last 40 years](#)

Seagrass meadows are an important coastal habitat in the Mediterranean. However, these sites are accumulating tiny particles of plastic pollution (known as microplastic particles, or MPPs). A study explores soil-core samples to establish the amount of microplastic pollution present from 1930 to the present day in several seagrass meadows along the Spanish coast, some of which are close to suspected sources of agriculture-related plastic pollution.

Sustainable Development

[Building on nature: Area-based conservation as a key tool for delivering SDGs](#)

Protected and conserved areas benefit sustainable development and can be effective tools to deliver SDGs around the world. This pioneering, action-oriented guidance demonstrates how the designation and effective management of protected and conserved areas can benefit sustainable development, playing a key role in delivering the SDGs and supporting the 2030 Agenda globally.

[Statement by Commissioner Gentiloni on the 2021 report on Sustainable Development in the EU](#)

Over the last year, the pandemic has dominated the headlines and our work here at the European Commission. Yet in parallel we have continued to focus on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals across all our policies, including the European Green Deal, the Digital Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan. The reforms and investments supported through NextGenerationEU will also make a major contribution to achieving the SDGs in the EU.