

Environmental News, Research & Analysis (ENRA)

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Agriculture/ Land Use

[European Green Deal: Commission presents actions to boost organic production](#)

The European Commission has presented an Action Plan for the development of organic production. Its overall aim is to boost the production and consumption of organic products, to reach 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030, and to increase organic aquaculture significantly.

Biodiversity

[Why We Must Protect Nature](#)

While more attention is given to the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems at EU and global level, many still understand 'nature' as something separate from us. If we really want to address the accelerating depletion of the natural world, we must understand that we are an integral part of it. The understanding that biodiversity and the health of ecosystems supporting our life are in drastic decline is beginning to be accepted by a wider public. Yet, the gravity of the problem for human society has still not dawned on most people, with business-as-usual largely unchallenged in many critical areas.

[Ecosystem restoration goals: study highlights need for global priority areas and collective effort](#)

Restoring global ecosystems is an urgent priority in efforts to conserve biodiversity and stabilise our planet's climate. However, the costs and outcomes of ecosystem restoration differ markedly by location and habitat type. A recent study has developed a multi-criteria cost-benefit approach to identify priority areas for optimal restoration of terrestrial cropland and pastureland back to natural ecosystems, considering the outcomes of biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and cost minimisation.

Chemicals

[Council approves conclusions on the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#)

The European Council has endorsed a new chemicals strategy setting a long-term vision for the EU chemicals policy. The strategy aims to achieve a toxic-free environment with a higher level of protection of human health and the environment, while strengthening the competitiveness of the EU's chemicals industry. In its conclusions, the Council asks the Commission to implement the actions laid down in the strategy, including targeted amendments to streamline EU chemicals legislation, substituting and minimising substances of concern, and phasing out the most harmful chemicals for non-essential societal uses.

Climate Action

[European Commission and IEA pull together for net-zero](#)

Both organisations call on the world's leading economies to pave the way for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions within a generation, with the energy sector playing a crucial role. The Commission and the International Energy Agency have joined forces to underline the essential contribution of the energy sector to achieving a climate neutral economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, reaching net-zero by mid-century is required to keep global warming within 1.5 degrees and stay on the safer side of the Paris Agreement. Energy systems are at the core of this effort and they are highly interconnected with mobility, buildings, industry and land use sectors.

[Building a Climate-Resilient Future - A new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#)

The European Commission recently adopted a new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change, setting out the pathway to prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change. While the EU does

everything within its power to mitigate climate change, domestically and internationally, we must also get ready to face its unavoidable consequences.

Covid-19/ Build Back Better

[Delivering a sustainable, durable, and inclusive recovery for Europe](#)

Beyond immediate health concerns, the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown measures taken in response to it have seen EU GDP and employment go down by 11.4% and 2.7% respectively in the second quarter of 2020. This has exacerbated existing social and regional inequalities. These impacts have also occurred at a time when the EU already faced growing pressures from climate change and environmental degradation, large public debt burdens in some countries and European citizens re-evaluating the benefits of EU membership. However, recovering from this major economic crisis also provides the EU with the opportunity to accelerate the decarbonisation of the economy and to put in place the foundations for a durable, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable recovery.

[IUCN initiative urges governments to invest in nature as part of their recovery from the global pandemic](#)

The IUCN has called on governments to channel investments towards nature and nature-based solutions as part of their economic recovery packages to address the ongoing pandemic. The impacts from the pandemic have exacerbated poverty and environmental challenges, according to IUCN State Members participating in two separate virtual events hosted by IUCN in March. To ensure that government stimulus packages responding to the pandemic are robust and fit for purpose in the long term, the IUCN Nature-based Recovery initiative aims to ensure that at least 10% of overall investments in stimulus packages are channelled to nature, nature-based solutions and interventions that add value to nature.

[COVID-19 fallout undermining nature conservation efforts - IUCN publication](#)

The pandemic has significantly impacted nature conservation around the globe, including job losses among protected area rangers, reduced anti-poaching patrols and environmental protection rollbacks, according to a collection of new research papers published by IUCN in a special issue of PARKS, the journal of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

Energy

[Commission welcomes agreement on the Connecting Europe Facility to fund greener, more sustainable transport and energy networks, and digitalisation](#)

The European Commission welcomes the agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) proposal, worth €33.7 billion, as part of the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027. The Connecting Europe Facility programme supports investment in Europe's transport, energy and digital infrastructure networks. It will support the twin green and digital transition, by contributing to the ambitious targets for the European Green Deal and the Digital Decade.

[A Climate Neutral Economy Needs Sustainable Batteries](#)

Some of Europe's largest green networks have urged ministers to make durable, repairable and low-carbon batteries the norm. Environment ministers met recently to kick off discussions about, among other issues, the much-awaited revision of the EU's Battery Regulation. From transport and energy storage to smartphones, the revision has the potential to reduce the environmental impact and downsize the risks of our increasingly electrified and digital economy.

Freshwater

[Sharing the benefits from river basin management: from theory to practice](#)

Worldwide, water resources are shared between different stakeholders for multiple uses. With water resources becoming scarcer yet users increasing, management of shared water resources can be

challenging. Stakeholders in water use and extraction often represent varied interests, drawn from different sectors and levels from local to national to regional scales in the riparian countries. The question is how can joint decision-making processes for shared water resources management yield better and more sustainable benefits across different scales and stakeholders?

[Nanoplastics may reduce efficacy of constructed wetlands for water treatment](#)

Water bodies absorb the nitrogen released by human activity and must, therefore, be protected against nutrient overloading (or eutrophication), which can cause significant environmental damage. Constructed wetlands (CWs) are widely used as an eco-friendly treatment method for this; however, the efficacy of CWs may be affected by the presence of emerging contaminants in wastewater. This study explores how nanosized particles of polystyrene plastic (nanoplastics) affect nitrogen removal in CWs.

[One-third of freshwater fish face extinction, warns new report](#)

A new report 'The World's Forgotten Fishes' reveals the extraordinary variety of freshwater fish. This variety accounts for over half of all the world's fish species and is essential to the health of the world's rivers, lakes and wetlands and well-being of societies and economies across the globe. Yet, freshwater fish are under ever increasing pressure with one in three threatened with extinction, according to the new report published by 16 global conservation organizations.

Health

[How to keep Europeans healthy and safe in a changing climate?](#)

European countries are facing increasing threats from climate change, including extreme weather events and infectious diseases. A new briefing by the Lancet Countdown and the European Environment Agency (EEA), published on the European Climate and Health Observatory, draws attention to health impacts of climate change in the European Union (EU) and suggests key actions to address them.

[Antibiotics: even low levels found in the environment might drive resistance](#)

Researchers behind a new literature survey of antibiotic levels in the environment call for regulators to recognise antimicrobials as pollutants and to regulate them similarly to other hazardous substances — for which environmental limits, reference standards and treatment protocols have been set.

Marine

[Plastic in the ocean: The facts, effects and new EU rules](#)

Find out key facts about plastic in the ocean with our infographics, as well discover their impact and how the EU is acting to reduce plastic litter in the seas, Society. The results of today's single-use, throw-away plastic culture can be seen on sea shores and in oceans everywhere. Plastic waste is increasingly polluting the oceans and according to one estimation, by 2050 the oceans could contain more plastic than fish by weight.

Transport

[Motorised transport: train, plane, road or boat — which is greenest?](#)

Train travel remains overall the most environmentally friendly mode of motorised passenger transport in Europe — in terms of greenhouse gas emissions — as compared to travelling by car or plane, according to two transport and environment studies published by the European Environment Agency. Traveling by plane, train or automobile: the most environmentally sound choice may not always be clear. The latest annual Transport and Environment Report 2020 (TERM) addresses the issue assessing the value of travel by train and plane, amid efforts to put in place the European Union's green deal. The European Green Deal includes the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emission from transport by 90% by 2050 compared with 1990. Shifting to more sustainable transport can make an important contribution to reaching this objective. For passenger transport, a shift from air to rail travel can play a key role, the report says.