Agriculture

[Has public sector spending on organic food changed farming methods in Sweden?](#)

To mitigate the biodiversity loss driven by conventional intensive agriculture, EU policymakers are increasingly encouraging Member States to incentivise farmers to go organic. In 2006, the Swedish government introduced a Green Public Procurement (GPP) policy to encourage farmers to convert to organic practices. This study analyses the performance of the GPP and, according to the researchers, is the first to examine if its application has succeeded in increasing the amount of organic farmland in Sweden.

[ESAD: Multi-stakeholder platform on the future of EU agricultural R&I](#)

To help shape the future of public agricultural research and innovation in the EU, IEEP has created a dialogue platform bringing together key stakeholders from diverse sectors and interest groups. Focusing on the EU's research and innovation (R&I) programme Horizon Europe, and its predecessor Horizon 2020, the aim of the European Sustainable Agriculture Dialogue (ESAD) is to provide evidence on how public agricultural R&I can effectively support the achievement of the SD Goals and the EU's key post-2020 environmental objectives.

Air Quality

[Environmental pollution causes one-in-eight deaths in EU](#)

Poor environmental quality contributes to one in every eight deaths of Europeans, according to a new report by the European Environment Agency (EEA) on Tuesday (8 September). As a result, in the EU, it is estimated that over 20 million healthy 'life-years' are lost annually because of diseases linked to environmental pollution, most notably cancer, heart disease, pulmonary disease and stroke.

[After Covid-19, let's go back to clean air](#)

In April this year, as countries went into lockdown, many got to see and experience a rare occurrence: clear blue skies. In many European cities, the lockdown allowed city dwellers to see, smell and feel much cleaner air. In Paris, the air was cleaner than any time during the past 40 years, and the inhabitants of Milan reported being able to clearly see the nearby Alps.

Biodiversity

[Conserving dead trees/ increasing tree cavities in woodlands may bring benefits for common bat species](#)

Using products from sustainably managed woodlands in place of fossil fuels, concrete and steel can help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, but it is crucial to understand how harvesting affects biodiversity. This study looks at the effects of thinning (selective tree removal) on bats and insects in UK woodlands. It finds that thinning may bring benefits for a few common bat species but recommends that operations retain old woodland characteristics, such as tree cavities, to avoid impacting rare or reliant species.

Circular Economy

[New Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy in Ireland published](#)

The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy fulfils the commitment in the Programme for Government to publish and start implementing a new National Waste Action Plan. This new national waste policy will inform and give direction to waste planning and management in Ireland over the coming years.

Climate Action

[Number of climate cases increase in Europe, so does the pressure to step up climate action](#)

People around the world keep turning to the courts as politicians fail to deliver anything close to the necessary level of climate action. The Portuguese children's case filed today with the European Court of Human Rights, is the most recent one in Europe that is trying to hold European countries accountable for their failure to deliver urgent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy

European Green Deal: New financing mechanism to boost renewable energy

The European Commission has published the rules for a new EU Renewable Energy Financing Mechanism, to apply from the start of 2021. This Mechanism will make it easier for member states to work together to finance and deploy renewable energy projects – either as a host or as a contributing country.

Commission publishes assessment of National Energy & Climate Plans

The Commission has adopted an assessment of the EU-wide impact of Member State National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) for 2021-2030. It comes in parallel with the Commission's proposals for an ambitious Climate Target Plan to reduce EU greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. It also echoes the EU's increased climate ambition announced in the State of the Union speech by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Funding

€104 million to achieve a climate neutral food system, improve knowledge of oceans, and empower citizens to move to a greener Europe

Four topics for applications opened 22nd September: two in the areas of sustainable food and better-known oceans, and two in the area of empowering citizens to move to climate neutral Europe. All four are part of the European Green Deal call. The deadline to apply is 26 January

Governance

The Dead Letter Of EU Environmental Law

For the past two years, the European Environmental Bureau investigated, studied, interviewed and exposed limits or gaps between the theory and reality of EU environmental legislation. Marie-Amélie Brun investigates how the EU's world-class environmental laws are failing to protect nature sufficiently because of poor implementation.

IUCN Standard to support global action on invasive alien species

IUCN today launch a global standard for classifying the severity and type of impacts caused by alien species, known as the Environmental Impact Classification for Alien Taxa (EICAT). This tool will alert scientists, conservation practitioners and policy makers to the potential consequences of invasive alien species, guiding the development of prevention and mitigation measures.

Plastics

EU microplastics ban set to make a growing problem worse

The world is being smothered by a growing cloud of toxic plastic particles, which the EU has pledged to ban. But the typical cast of powerful industrial polluters has secured a loophole that excludes nano, the most dangerous form of microplastic.

Better awareness of biodegradable, compostable plastics disposal would help tackle Europe's plastics problem

Biodegradable, compostable and bio-based plastic products like shopping bags, packaging or drinking cups are being increasingly promoted as greener solution than traditional plastic products for consumers. But how environmentally-friendly are they? A European Environment Agency (EEA) briefing says clearer labelling and better public awareness will improve the correct disposal of these plastics so that they don't end up doing more harm than good.

Sustainable Development

A toolkit demonstrates how to build liveable, 'human-scale' cities

Cities in Europe and beyond who are looking to overcome the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on human wellbeing can now consult a toolkit to guide their sustainable urban transition. The toolkit shares tips about designing and managing urban spaces with people in mind, and putting citizens' wellbeing at the centre of sustainable development strategies.