



## Agriculture

### [Agri-environmental schemes: how to enhance the agriculture–environment relationship](#)

In the EU, agri-environment schemes (AES) encourage farmers to undertake environmentally friendly practices and are thus vital to the objective of sustainable agriculture. This Thematic Issue looks at some of the impacts that AES have had on European farm ecosystems, biodiversity and farmers

### [Potentially toxic elements in European soils mapped by researchers](#)

A study has mapped levels of chemical elements found in European agricultural soils. In most places, unusually high concentrations are linked to geology. Abnormal concentrations, both too low and too high, could pose an environmental risk. This new data can be used in conjunction with the REACH Regulation and can help identify areas where action may be needed in relation to toxic elements in the environment.

### [Study suggests anaerobic digestion may reduce microplastics in sewage sludge](#)

European policy permits the application of nutrient-rich sewage sludge on agricultural land as a means of recycling. However, contamination of sludge with microplastics may pose a risk to ecosystems. This study looked at the characteristics of microplastics in sewage sludge after three types of waste-water treatment, finding that anaerobic digestion should be explored as a method of microplastic reduction.

## Biodiversity

### [GM risk assessments: the importance of \*in planta\* studies in the sustainable management of GM plants](#)

Assessments of the effects on organisms likely to come into contact with genetically modified (GM) plants have been reviewed. Researchers say such assessments help to understand the potential ecological impacts within the environment and are an important part of the risk assessments for GM plants.

## Climate Change

### [Agriculture has a unique role to play in the EU's efforts on climate](#)

Agriculture, alongside the forest sector, has a unique role to play in the EU's efforts on climate change. In addition to its potential to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through changes in land management, it could increase atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> removal by increasing carbon sequestration in soils, trees and other vegetation.

### [Climate change communications: what next for Europe?](#)

Climate change is a scientific reality, but faces challenges in becoming a social and political one. Despite twenty years of awareness raising and a body of scientific evidence spanning over fifty, public and political engagement on climate change is relatively low. A 2017 poll has found a moderate level of climate change concern with many not recognising the scientific consensus regarding the reality of climate change.

## Energy

### [Renewable-energy can help meet the increased cooling demand in cities due to climate change](#)

Available and emerging renewable technologies suitable for urban environments have been assessed in a recent study. Wind and solar technology can now be integrated into building design, and smart grids and metering can more efficiently manage energy production and demand at a local level. Investing in community-level renewable-energy projects can help meet the future energy needs of towns and cities.

### [A 50% renewable-energy smart-grid solution for the UK](#)

A 50% renewable-energy supply, which is both profitable and secure, is possible for the UK's electricity grid by just 2030 according to a new study. The researchers developed a plan for adapting and operating the UK's



**Brexit:** Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).

electricity grid, designed to be flexibly controlled through smart-grid technology and to overcome uncertainties in renewable-energy supply and demand.

#### [The clock is ticking: new rules set deadline for dirty power plants](#)

The European Commission has published new standards for Europe's most polluting power plants, including many large coal-fired power stations. Plants now have four years to meet the new standards, but more than 80% of coal capacity expected to still be online in 2021 is currently polluting too much.

#### [Nordic countries demonstrate the potential of low-carbon energy policies](#)

How are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden moving towards renewable and lower-carbon energy use? A study suggests the key areas for progress, to ensure Nordic countries meet low carbon goals, include more renewable and decentralised electricity supply, the development of low-carbon transport systems, improved energy efficiency in building design and industrial use of carbon capture and storage.

### **Environmental Justice**

#### [European Commission seeks to block access to justice for EU citizens](#)

EEB claims the European Commission has taken an unprecedented step to attempt to prevent access to environmental justice for its citizens, bluntly rejecting greater public accountability of the EU institutions on environmental questions.

### **Freshwater**

#### [Attempt to weaken farm water pollution rules foiled in Parliament committee vote](#)

MEPs on Parliament's Internal Market committee fail in attempt to push through a bid to relax rules on the use of processed animal manure as a fertilizer in already-polluted areas – despite the fact that excessive spreading of manure runs off fields, contaminating rivers, waterways, and air.

#### [The EU is banning microplastics and a number of problematic chemicals from Ecolabel-carrying products](#)

New rules mean that ecolabel detergents for dishes, laundry and general cleaning will get rid of nasty microplastic and a bunch of problem chemicals.

#### [Separate waste-water treatment of urine could have lower environmental impact than centralised, combined waste-water treatment](#)

Municipal wastewater is a major source of pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment. A recent study suggests that collecting and treating urine separately from other forms of sewage could be a cost-effective way to reduce the harmful effects of pharmaceuticals on the environment, while also providing a source of nutrients for fertilising agricultural crops.

### **Invasive Species**

#### [New tool can help predict the impact of invasive alien species on native flora and fauna](#)

Researchers have developed a new metric to predict the ecological impacts of invasive alien species. The metric was calculated for a number of known invasive alien species and successfully predicted their impact on native species. The tool could be used to help inform the global management of invasive alien species.

### **Marine**

#### [IEEP contributes to UN handbook on economics and management of sustainable oceans](#)

Oceans are a critical part of the Earth's life-support system and vital for the well-being of humanity. Once thought to be never-ending, ocean resources are showing serious signs of decline on a global scale.

### **Waste**

#### [Supermarket food waste — alternative waste strategies can reduce the environmental impact](#)

Researchers have found that bread and meat products made the largest contribution to the environmental footprint of a supermarket but alternative waste strategies, such as using bread waste as animal feed, have the potential to reduce these impacts.

#### [Uncertainty among EU countries on waste proposals threatens transition to a circular economy](#)

Investigation by NGOs exposes divide and doublespeak among EU countries on waste law proposals.



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