

Environmental News, Research & Analysis (ENRA)

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Agriculture/ Food

[Spain views carbon farming as a climate solution](#)

Spain seeks to maintain carbon in soils destined for agriculture in its strategy against climate change with the support of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, producers demand more funds to compensate for their efforts. The Spanish government and autonomous regions are negotiating a plan to implement the new CAP, which they will send to Brussels before the end of the year.

[French farmers endorse carbon farming but highlight transition costs](#)

With its low carbon strategy, the French government aims to green agriculture through the development of carbon sequestration in soils. French farmers salute the strategy but call for stronger aids for the transition to be financially sustainable.

[Agriculture left out of the Global Methane Pledge at COP26](#)

Countries joining the Global Methane Pledge have committed to reducing global methane emissions by at least 30 percent from 2020 levels by 2030. But there is a lack of attention on emissions from the agriculture sector, although they account for most of the global methane emissions.

[Pathways towards a legislative framework for sustainable food systems in the EU](#)

European food systems are not sustainable. In light of forthcoming proposals for a new EU legislative framework for sustainable food systems, this paper sets out the challenges that this should address and maps out ways it could be achieved.

[Questions and Answers on the EU Soil Strategy](#)

Air Quality

[Winter is coming... and so is smog](#)

Winter is coming and we will soon hear more alarming stories about smog. Air pollution continues to have a significant impact on the health of European citizens, particularly in urban areas. The European Environment Agency estimates that long-term exposure to poor air quality is responsible for over 400,000 premature deaths in Europe every year [based on data from Air quality in Europe – 2020 report, European Environment Agency, Luxembourg, 2020], a number that is twice the size of the population of the city of Brussels.

[Methane Emissions Observatory launched to boost action on powerful climate-warming gas](#)

To support further progress on fulfilling the Paris Agreement, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with support from the European Union launched a new Observatory to drive global action on reducing methane emissions. The [International Methane Emissions Observatory](#) (IMEO) was launched at the G20 Summit, on the eve of the COP26 UN climate conference in Glasgow. IMEO will bring global reporting on methane emissions to an entirely different level, ensuring public transparency on anthropogenic methane emissions. IMEO will initially focus on methane emissions from the fossil fuel sector, and then expand to other major emitting sectors like agriculture and waste.

[Ireland joins Global Methane Pledge signatories](#)

The Global Methane Pledge was unveiled in September with a small number of subscribers and has since gathered support, with many joining in the past week. Ireland will join the nearly 90 countries that have signed up to a US-EU-led initiative to cut methane emissions by 30% of 2020 levels by 2030.

The Global Methane Pledge was unveiled in September with a small number of subscribers and has since gathered support, with many joining in the past week. While many of the world's largest methane emitters have signed up to the pledge, there are notable exceptions. China, Australia, India and Russia are among those yet to come on board.

Biodiversity

[Global biodiversity indices: used to inform policy decisions — but are they robust and accurate?](#)

Global biodiversity indices are essential tools for summarising and communicating broad trends in environmental change (such as biodiversity loss), and to support global conservation policy decisions. However, few indices have been evaluated for their capacity to report on biodiversity change, such as declines in threatened species, which could result in misleading information for conservation policy. This study uses decision science to evaluate nine biodiversity indices.

[New IUCN publication shows how protecting nature supports human development](#)

Protected and conserved areas always contribute to the conservation of nature – but additionally, they are valuable for human livelihoods, health and well-being, through the services that healthy ecosystems provide. In many cases, the reason for their existence is precisely because they are so valuable to people. Well-governed and well-managed protected areas are among the most effective tools for maintaining ecosystems – such as forests, natural grasslands, coastal areas and freshwater wetlands – and their associated ecosystem services.

Circular Economy/ Waste

[NGOs urge the EU to save unsold goods from destruction](#)

Tonnes of unsold or returned products are destroyed every year by producers and online retailers. This comes at a high cost for people and nature, and contradicts EU environmental targets. NGOs are calling on the European Commission to end such wasteful outrage.

[Commission adopts new limits for some of the most harmful chemicals in waste](#)

The European Commission has adopted a proposal to protect human health and the environment from some of the most harmful chemicals in waste - Persistent Organic Pollutants. The proposal tightens the limits for these chemicals in waste, preventing them from re-entering the economy.

Climate Action

[Emissions rebound after COVID shutdowns](#)

The abrupt decline in global carbon-dioxide emissions during the COVID-19 pandemic, caused by government-mandated lockdowns, will be all but erased by the end of this year. A consortium of scientists predicts that carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels will rise to 36.4 billion tonnes — an increase of 4.9% — in 2021 compared with last year.

[Climate ambition and justice: A compass for the CBAM design](#)

The EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) proposal, as it currently stands, is legally sound but requires to be improved through a more rapid phase-out of free allowances and the mobilisation of revenues for climate justice.

[Top climate scientists are sceptical that nations will rein in global warming](#)

A Nature survey reveals that many authors of the latest IPCC climate-science report are anxious about the future and expect to see catastrophic changes in their lifetimes.

Covid-19

[New report: 'Climate Action in the Post-COVID-19 world: Insights from EU-funded projects on how to build forward better'](#)

The recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change could not have been clearer about the urgent need to act on the climate crisis if we want to save the planet and ourselves. The

COVID-19 pandemic has been a stark reminder that our well-being depends on the health of the planet; the recovery strategies offer a once-in-a-century opportunity for a genuine paradigm shift towards a society that respects planetary boundaries.

Energy

[Five key policies to unlock the socio-economic benefits of renewable energy in all regions](#)

According to a new semi-systematic literature review conducted by IEEP, supported by five case studies, the single most important factor in unlocking local and regional socio-economic benefits of renewables is the degree of ownership of the resources within the region. This is a robust finding across many types of regions, technologies, and research methodologies.

[Fit for 55 package: Energy from renewable sources](#)

The Commission is proposing a new directive to amend the 2018 directive on the promotion of energy from renewable sources. This initial appraisal of the Commission's impact assessment on the proposal finds that the impact assessment draws a clear logic between the problems, their drivers, the objectives and the policy interventions under consideration. However, the vast amount of work which must have gone into such an assessment is to some extent impaired by the inconsistent, unclear presentation of options and the equivocal identification of preferred options. Also, the IA is not clear as to how it ultimately settles on the specific target of 40%. While the IA was clearly an extremely complex exercise and appears to be based on reliable data, analysis and modelling, different choices as to its organisation and presentation would have likely considerably improved the IA's clarity and readability and its ability to support the policy choices made in the proposal.

Forestry/ Woodland

[Commission report on forest fires: climate change is more noticeable every year](#)

The Joint Research Centre of the Commission has presented the 21st edition of its Annual Report on Forest Fires in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, covering 2020. After the worst year to date in 2019, 2020 was another year in which fires burnt large areas of natural land in Europe. Despite the increased level of preparedness in EU countries, about 340,000 hectares (ha) were burnt in the EU in 2020 - an area 30% larger than Luxembourg.

[European Commission Factsheet on Deforestation](#)

Freshwater/ Water

[Drinking water: Commission refers IRELAND to the Court of Justice of the European Union over unsafe drinking water](#)

The Commission has decided to refer Ireland to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failure to comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive (Directive 98/83/EC). The Directive requires Member States to ensure that water intended for human consumption is wholesome and clean. It requires that drinking water is free from micro-organisms and parasites, and from substances which could pose a potential danger to human health.

[Novel nitrogen hazard tool better identifies agricultural groundwater pollution potential](#)

Researchers evaluate a 'nitrogen-input hazard index tool' in a Spanish groundwater basin declared a nitrate-vulnerable zone. The tool aids risk analyses of agricultural activities in vulnerable areas — where groundwater is susceptible to nitrate pollution — an environmental concern as it can endanger human water supply, and negatively impact aquatic ecosystems.

Funding

[Boosting Europe's green transition: Commission invests €1.5 billion in innovative clean tech projects](#)

The Commission has launched the second call for large-scale projects under the Innovation Fund, one of the world's largest programmes for the demonstration of innovative low-carbon technologies, financed by revenues from the auction of emission allowances from the EU's Emissions Trading

System. With a budget of €1.5 billion it will finance breakthrough technologies for renewable energy, energy-intensive industries, energy storage, and carbon capture, use and storage.

[Green Budgeting: Towards Common Principles](#)

This paper presents common elements of green budgeting, main underlying principles. It reviews the different tools and provides examples from the EU Member States. It is joint work of the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Governance

[Commission decides to register new European Citizens' Initiative on environmental protection](#)

The Commission has decided to register a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) entitled 'Call to Action – Environmental protection in all policies'. The organisers of the initiative call on the Commission to propose a legal act with the aim of ensuring that Member States take into account environmental considerations when adopting national measures. As the ECI fulfils the necessary conditions, the Commission considers that it is legally admissible.

[Commission invites cities to express their interest to become part of European Mission "100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030"](#)

The Commission has launched a call for expression of interest addressed to cities to join the European Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. The objectives of the mission are to achieve 100 climate-neutral and smart European cities by 2030 and to ensure that these cities act as experimentation and innovation hubs to enable all European cities to follow suit by 2050.

Marine

[Seagrass meadows: policy recommendations for protection from shellfishing activities](#)

Intertidal seagrasses (i.e. those living between the low- and high-water tide marks) are of high ecological and economic value, yet human pressures such as fishing for shell and leisure walking may have reduced their distribution globally. In this study, researchers quantified the impact of shellfishing activities on seagrass meadows in the Oka estuary (Basque Country, northern Spain). The research highlights the risk that trampling and digging pose to seagrasses and proposes measures for their future conservation.

Planning

[U.S. President Biden, European Commission President von der Leyen and UK Prime minister Johnson announce Commitment to addressing climate crisis through infrastructure development](#)