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Agriculture/ Land Use

[Commission under pressure to ease rules on nitrates use in farming](#)

The European Commission is under increasing pressure to ease rules on nitrate use in farming allowing the use of processed manure in sensitive areas to help cope with rising fertiliser prices. While the Commission says it supports the proposal in principle, it must be handled with care. The Ukraine war has skyrocketed fertiliser prices, leaving the EU agrifood sector vulnerable and throwing the bloc's dependency on third countries for crucial inputs, such as natural gas, critical raw materials and chemical fertilisers, into sharp relief.

[The movement gaining momentum: Save Soil](#)

Save Soil is a global movement launched by Indian spiritual leader Sadhguru to address land degradation and advocate for healthy soil. The initiative was presented on 5 April at the United Nations in Geneva by the Isha Foundation and supported by the WHO, UN SDG lab, and IUCN. The Isha Foundation, an IUCN Member, launched the 'Journey to Save Soil' in London on 21 March, setting its founder Sadhguru off on a 100-day motorcycle journey through 26 countries to raise awareness about soil degradation and advocate for bringing organic matter back to agricultural processes.

[40 projects willing to advance the restoration of soil health in Europe](#)

40 was the total number of projects submitted to the Mission Soil call with a deadline of 24 March. Evaluations are set to begin with twelve projects expected to be funded.

[Fertiliser closed periods can mitigate multiple pollution risks](#)

Nitrogen-based agricultural fertilisers can cause water and air pollution. Measures under the EU Nitrates Directive aim to control some of these through specific 'closed periods', when fertiliser use is limited. This study assesses how effectively closed fertiliser periods across Europe in 2019–20 mitigated the highest risk periods for pollution from nitrate, organic material, nitrous oxide and ammonia. The researchers conclude that measures to control nitrate pollution can reduce other risks

[Environmental degradation: Impacts on agricultural production](#)

This briefing reviews existing evidence on the impact of environmental degradation on European food availability in the long run, if food systems are to remain as they are. It focuses on climate change, biodiversity loss and soil degradation.

Air Quality

[United Nations' science panel issues starkest warning yet to urgently cut global emissions](#)

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has published its latest report, setting out the action we need to take to put a brake on global warming, avoid irreversible impacts on our planet and meet the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of this century.

[Industrial emissions: Modernising EU rules for the green transition](#)

The new rules on industrial emissions will guide large European industry to meeting the Zero Pollution ambition by 2050. EU rules on industrial emissions currently cover over 30,000 large industrial plants and over 20,000 intensive livestock farms.

Biodiversity

[The vital role of nature-based solutions in a nature positive economy](#)

The European Commission Directorate-General for Research & Innovation has just released a new independent report on the role of nature-based solutions in the transition towards a nature positive economy. This report is a first step in addressing knowledge gaps in the potential economic benefits of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and the challenges facing Nature-Based Enterprises (NBE).

[A 'life zone' model of climate change predicts widespread ecosystem change](#)

Climate models are crucial to understanding likely future conditions under climate change, however, their implications for individual ecosystems are often unclear. This study uses high-resolution data to model areas with similar plant and animal communities – or 'life zones' – under historic, current and future scenarios, and to analyse change across these periods. The researchers report that with 'business as usual' carbon emissions, over 40% of the earth's land area could experience a change in life zone by 2080.

Circular Economy

[Circular economy plan crucial but another missed opportunity on just transition](#)

Commenting on the publication of the European Commission's first circular economy package, ETUC Confederal Secretary Ludovic Voet said: "This is another missed opportunity to integrate a just transition in a much-needed climate policy. "Accelerating the shift to a circular economy is an opportunity to fight climate change, reduce our environmental impact and create new jobs while reducing our dependency on Russia.

Climate Action

[EU Building Policies Need Built-In Climate Ambitions](#)

The Energy Performance in Building Directive (EPBD) holds the key to meeting climate goals set by 'Fit for 55' as well as energy independence goals set by 'REPowerEU'. However, the current file needs beefing up to be ready for the challenge, write Bich Dao and Gonzalo Sánchez.

Education

[Restoring the planet through nature education for the leaders of the future](#)

The foundation for upscaling the use of Nature-based Solutions lies in creating awareness and strengthening knowledge about the natural world early in life and throughout our education. While awareness of the benefits of nature for human health is spreading, there seems to be a clear need to increase the attention for nature in school education and curricula of universities, business, and professional training, to restore the connection between people and the biodiversity and ecosystems that surround us.

Energy

[The road to green hydrogen certification – and the potholes to be avoided](#)

As Europe looks to renewables to help it break free from Russian fossil fuels, the EU must ensure it comes up with robust criteria for green hydrogen and learn from the certification of biofuels

[Deep geothermal can deliver energy independence of Europe](#)

The proposals to ban the import of Russian oil and start a rapid diversification from Russian gas are still the subject of a heated debate in many European capitals. However, after only two months of the barbaric Russian invasion in Ukraine, the nexus between global security and local access to sufficient resources of green, renewable energy has been quickly understood by politicians and their constituents alike.

[Time to get serious about energy efficiency](#)

Rather than focus exclusively on alternative supplies to Russian energy imports, the EU can and should push for a radical improvement in energy efficiency with bolder policies on building renovation, argues Jessica Stromback the CEO of Joule Assets, a US-based company facilitating innovative financing for energy efficiency and renewables projects.

Freshwater

[Taskforce launched to protect freshwater biodiversity through harmonized macroinvertebrate sampling](#)

Less than 1% of the Earth's surface is covered by freshwater, yet freshwater ecosystems hold a disproportionately large amount of the world's species and genetic diversity. At the same time, these ecosystems and species are under threat from human activities. To contribute to halting this biodiversity decline, a new task force of the IUCN Species Survival Commission has been formed and will support bioassessment based on benthic freshwater macroinvertebrates through the standardization and coordination of sampling protocols across countries.

Governance

[Digitalisation, sustainability and environmental justice](#)

IEEP hosted an online discussion forum for civil society to explore topics related to environmental justice and digitalisation. This is a summary of the discussion. The so-called “twin transitions” of digitalisation and sustainability are frequently cited as priorities at the EU level. In recent years the environmental impact of digitalisation, as well as its potential uses as a tool for a cleaner environment have been increasingly on the agenda. However, the environmental justice implications are still rarely discussed, both in terms of environmental rights and the differential effects of these technologies.

Health

[Improving access to urban green spaces to reduce health inequalities](#)

The associations between the state of the environment and human health are profound and well-documented. However, it is clear from a number of studies that access to green spaces is not equitable.

Marine

[Green Deal: EU announces €1 billion worth of commitments to protect the ocean](#)

At the [Our Ocean Conference \(OOC\) in Palau](#), the EU renewed its pledges towards international Ocean governance. Presenting a list of [44 commitments](#) for the 2020-2022 period for an amount of almost €1 billion, the EU has brought forward its most important commitments ever offered during an Our Ocean Conference, in terms of value.

Plastics

[Revised rules on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods](#)

The Commission is currently revising rules to allow the use of recycled plastics in food contact material applications, which will repeal legislation dating back from 2008. The revision should provide additional clarity, including rules for operators and competent authorities, as well as provisions on which types of plastics (other than PET) may be recycled and used in food sensitive applications.

Sustainable Development

[EU body sets out draft sustainability disclosure standards](#)

Companies will have to set a much broader range of sustainability targets under draft new European Union reporting standards, environmental impact body CDP said on 3 May. Authorities across the world are writing reporting standards to combat greenwashing, or companies exaggerating their green credentials to attract investors, who have poured trillions of dollars into sustainable assets.

[Making sustainable products the norm in Europe](#)

Our current ‘take-make-replace’ economic model depletes our resources, pollutes our environment, damages biodiversity and drives climate change. It also makes Europe dependent on resources from elsewhere. This is why the EU is moving to a circular economy model, based on more sustainable products.

[Enhancing sustainability in EU Free Trade Agreements: The case for a holistic approach](#)

This report takes stock of the current status of the EU trade policy and proposes a set of recommendations for EU bilateral trade to make a positive contribution to sustainability globally. IEEP aims to contribute to the debate on the review of the European Commission's 15-points action plan to implement FTA TSD Chapters.