July/ August 2022

Agriculture/ Land Use

[Everyone at the Table: Transforming food systems by connecting science, policy and society](#)

A high-level expert group was established by the European Commission in Feb 2021 to explore the needs, gaps and options to strengthen the international science- policy interface for food systems transformation. The recommendations of the expert group are meant to both inspire and inform stakeholders on how to strengthen international science-policy interfaces for improved food systems governance. Food system transformation is needed more than ever as shown by the current food crisis triggered by Russia's war on Ukraine and the challenges linked to climate change.

[Reducing European fertiliser and feed dependency through the CAP](#)

This brief reviews how far EU Member States' CAP Strategic Plans address dependence on fertilisers and animal feed, and how action in this area could be stepped up before the Plans are approved by the European Commission.

[Study identifies models necessary to provide accurate advice on the use of fertilisers to EU farmers](#)

In May the European Commission published the findings of a study related to the implementation of the Farm Sustainability Tool for Nutrients (FaST). FaST is a digital agriculture tool that can be operated on smartphones, tablets and computers. It will combine existing data with manual input from farmers to provide customised recommendations on crop fertilisation through a nutrient management plan, which will have economic and environmental benefits for farmers and society at large.

[Increased training, advice and innovation projects for EU farmers in 2014-2020 thanks to the CAP](#)

The number of farmers receiving advice and having access to training in the EU increased in the period 2014-2020 compared to 2007-2013, according to the evaluation of the CAP's impact on knowledge exchange and advisory activities. The CAP introduced a number of instruments and measures to support knowledge exchange, advice and training on innovation and technology, cross-compliance and environmental sustainability.

Air Quality

[CO2 emissions from energy use up by more than 6% in 2021](#)

In 2021, when most of the COVID-19 containment measures were lifted by the EU Member States, carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from fossil fuel combustion in the EU (mainly oil and oil products, natural gas, coal and peat) increased by 6.3% compared with the previous year. CO_2 emissions from energy use are a major contributor to global warming and account for some 75% of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions in the EU. Climate conditions (e.g. cold/long winter or hot summer), economic growth, size of the population, transport and industrial activities are some factors that influence emissions.

Biodiversity

[Aquatic insect biodiversity loss in lowland streams: agricultural pesticide pollution may be a significant cause](#)

Potential adverse effects of agricultural pesticides on non-target ecosystems and species is an environmental concern in Europe and globally. This study established evidence on the relevance of pesticides in water bodies in relation to other stressors — providing further understanding on the environmental implications of agrochemical use on biodiversity in European lowland streams.

[Nature Restoration Law and Commission's proposal](#)

Press conference by Executive Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioners Kyriakides and Sinkevičius on the Nature Restoration Law and the Commission's proposal to halve the use of pesticides by 2030

Circular Economy

[Circular economy in the construction industry: policy, practice and potential for progress](#)

The promotion of a circular economy is key to the European Green Deal – and the construction industry is a high priority. This study considers key factors in this transition, based on interviews with a range of stakeholders from five European countries. It looks at how policy instruments and market-led initiatives apply different strategies, how well these achieve sustainability goals, and what is needed to increase uptake in applying circular-economy principles to the building sector.

[Simply the Best: How to Make a Circular Economy Work for Buildings](#)
EU thinkers and policy makers love to talk about Best Practice. As Europe looks for ways to cut carbon emissions in a circular economy, it is important to remember that "practice" here doesn't mean rehearsal. It means action. It means finding the [best real-life examples of circular, energy efficient building practices](#) and making them an everyday reality.

Climate Action

[Dutch coast sees rapid rise in sea levels](#)
Sea levels along the Dutch coast are rising rapidly, scientists from the Delft University of Technology have found. Scientists from TU Delft gathered measurement data from tidal stations between Delfzijl and Vlissingen and found sea levels to be rising rapidly. According to their findings, published by NL Times the rapid yearly increase in sea levels has been happening since the 1990s as levels have since been increasing at approximately 2.7 millimetres each year. In the 70 years before the 1990s, sea levels rose between 0.5 to 1.5 millimetres per year.

[Who is beyond Europe's climate walls?](#)
Forced migration: Floods and wildfires are increasing. They are three times more likely to force people to flee their homes than conflict. Yet, the world's largest greenhouse gas emitters spend twice as much money to arm their borders than on climate finance. Is Europe building climate justice or climate walls?

[118 regions and local authorities join the EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change](#)
The European Commission has announced the first 118 regions and local authorities that will participate in the [EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change](#), the so-called Mission Adaptation, which will support the [European Green Deal](#) and the EU [Climate Adaptation Strategy](#). These regions and local authorities will signed the Mission Charter at the Committee of the Regions' first [Forum of the EU Mission Adaptation to Climate Change](#).

[Adding aviation to the Emissions Trading System limited some of the sector's CO2 emissions growth](#)
Aviation is the most carbon-intensive mode of transport. Carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from international aviation must fall by 41–96% by 2050 (against 2005 levels) to meet the Paris Agreement 2°C targets. In 2012 the EU included aviation in its Emissions Trading System (ETS) to promote emissions reduction. While absolute emissions continued to rise, this study finds that they fell in flights covered by the ETS – when compared to those not covered - especially for short-haul flights and low-cost airlines.

Energy

[In focus: Employment in EU's renewable energy sector](#)
Energy coming from renewable sources is essential for "cleaning" the EU's energy system. At the same time, an increased share of renewables in the energy mix will also benefit citizens by creating new job opportunities across various sectors, steering dialogues between communities and presenting opportunities for more equal and inclusive standards in the energy sector.

[How rooftop solar PV can help turn the gas valves off](#)
Citizens' demand for rooftop solar photovoltaics is rapidly increasing, and governments should intervene through incentives and better permitting procedures, writes Seda Orhan, Renewable Energy Campaign Coordinator at Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe, a leading NGO coalition. The new EU Solar Strategy published by the European Commission last week says, "panel by panel, the infinite energy of the sun will help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels", so what is taking so long for EU member states to embrace rooftop solar photovoltaic?

Forestry/ Woodland

[European Council agrees on new rules to drive down deforestation and forest degradation globally](#)

The Council has adopted its negotiating position on a proposal to limit the consumption of products contributing to deforestation or forest degradation. It agreed to set mandatory due diligence rules for all operators and traders who place, make available or export the following products from the EU market: palm oil, beef, timber, coffee, cocoa & soy. Rules also apply to a number of derived products e.g. leather, chocolate and furniture.

Freshwater

[Novel tool for the assessment of salinity in fresh-water habitats](#)

The salinisation of fresh-water habitats is a growing threat to biotic communities. To protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services and goods associated with these systems, effective monitoring is essential. Here, researchers present the Salinity Association Group Index (SAGI), a novel tool for the assessment of salinity in fresh-water habitats. Three case studies demonstrate how SAGI can enhance our understanding of salinity-mediated ecological impacts on aquatic macroinvertebrate communities.

Governance

[Divergence in environmental policy post Brexit: Some initial reflections](#)

The way in which environmental legislation is developed, agreed and then implemented in the UK has changed fundamentally since Brexit. The full consequences of Brexit for environmental policy and law are too early to judge but unquestionably the first signs of divergence are occurring and merits close attention.

[IEEP announces an enhanced focus on UK policy and the appointment of a new Director](#)

While IEEP remains more than ever committed to contribute to the debate and realisation of a strong and sustainable Europe, it recognises that the UK is entering a critical phase in the creation and implementation of key environmental policies and targets. This is occurring within a much stronger devolved framework, with distinctive approaches in the four nations. It is accompanied by increased UK international ambition in relation to climate and biodiversity.

Marine

[Climate-induced shifts in species distribution could impact the management of internationally shared fish stocks](#)

Climate change will affect the distribution of many commercially harvested fish and shellfish species, including stocks that occur across national boundaries and are subject to international management agreements ('transboundary' fish stocks). This study models how the ranges of transboundary stocks are likely to move across national sea boundaries and the high seas. The researchers find that shifts may already be happening and could affect 45% of the world's internationally shared fish stocks by the end of the century.

Plastics

[Illegal delay flattens high hopes for restriction on Microplastics](#)

Illegal delay: The European Commission has delayed the delivery of its flagship restriction on the most preventable form of microplastics by a whole year. The pollution from this delay equals 1.6 billion plastic bottles being released into the environment. Together with the NGO Client Earth, the EEB flagged the illegality of this delay. The Commission reacted.

Sustainable Development

[Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in EU regions - Briefing 30-06-2022](#)

The Sustainable Development Goals were established in 2015 as part of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The signatories adopted a policy framework with 17 goals, addressing issues such as poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, education, gender equality, environment and climate, strong institutions, peace and justice. This is an update of an earlier briefing published in December 2020.

[Commission (Eurostat) publishes 2022 report on Sustainable Development Goals in the European Union](#)

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, published the '[Sustainable development in the European Union — 2022 monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context](#)'.