



*September/ October 2022*

## ***Agriculture/ Land Use***

### [Agrifood Brief: Ivory towers](#)

To live in an ivory tower is an expression meaning a state of privileged seclusion or separation, out of touch with the real world. The phrase is mostly used in relation to the world of academia – but Brussels is certainly no stranger to the accusation. And it was this phrase that sprung to mind when visiting farms last week in the Czech Republic.

### [Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027: The Commission approves the first CAP strategic plans](#)

The European Commission has approved the first package of CAP strategic plans for seven countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. This is an important step for the implementation of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on 1 January 2023. The new CAP is designed to shape the transition to a sustainable, resilient and modern European agricultural sector.

### [New book reveals factory farming a threat to humanity as big as climate change](#)

Taking its title from a chilling warning made by the United Nations that the world's soils could be gone within a lifetime, "Sixty Harvests Left" uncovers how the food industry threatens our world. Sixty Harvests Left takes us behind closed doors and into the boardrooms of industrial agriculture, investigating the dark side of food production. It confronts 'Big Ag', whose mega-farms, chemicals and animal cages are sweeping the countryside and jeopardising the very air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the nature we treasure. It spotlights the pioneers who are battling to bring landscapes back to life, in a world where wildlife, hens, pigs and people thrive by protecting the very thing that our civilisation is built on: soil.

## ***Biodiversity/ Nature***

### [Building the knowledge and capacity on Nature-based Solutions in the Western Balkans](#)

An IUCN team of experts has delivered a set of training events aiming to facilitate experience sharing, strengthen knowledge, and sensitise decision-makers, planners, and practitioners on the role of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for climate change adaptation and increased community resilience. The workshops covered the fundamentals of the NbS approach, pathways for mainstreaming NbS into decision-making and policy processes, stepwise guidance on the planning, design and implementation aspects for effective NbS interventions, monitoring, evaluation and verification, overview of financial and investment opportunities and mechanisms suitable for NbS, and guidance on designing strategies for sustainability and upscaling. Governance, economic benefits, gender, social inclusion and justice were cross-cutting topics addressed throughout the workshops.

## ***Circular Economy***

### [EU wastes more food than it imports, says new report](#)

European Commission faces pressure to set legally binding targets to tackle food waste scandal.

The EU wastes more food than it imports, damaging EU food security amid the cost-of-living crisis, shows a new report from environmental organisation Feedback EU.

### [Recycling residential building materials: opportunities and limitations](#)

Reusing materials from existing buildings (or 'urban mining') has been proposed as a means to reduce demolition waste, raw material consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. This study models the opportunities for urban mining in the Netherlands under practical constraints, up to the year 2050. The researchers find a limited potential for recycled materials to meet demand and reduce emissions. They highlight priority areas that could improve possible outcomes.

### [The 'right to repair': Addressing spillovers in the electrical and electronic equipment sector](#)

This briefing maps out some of the principal spillovers that may be associated with the introduction of the 'right to repair' in the EEE sector in particular, including implications for job creation, labour standards and

the role of social economy actors in the repair economy, as well as possible rebound effects both inside and outside the EU, and sets out some initial policy recommendations to address them.

## **Climate Action**

### [Scientific Linkages Between Climate Change and \(Transboundary\) Crop Pest and Disease Outbreaks](#)

Transboundary and transoceanic expansion of pest and disease ranges have been exacerbated by international trade and travel. Climate change, habitat destruction and biodiversity losses have facilitated the establishment of major agricultural pests and diseases in previously inhospitable environments.

### [Natura 2000 sites with management plans are most effective at helping waterbirds adapt to climate change](#)

A major role of protected areas is to provide species with opportunities to shift their distribution in response to climate change. This study looks at key characteristics of Natura 2000 sites to assess their influence on the speed at which water-bird communities react to rising temperatures. The researchers report that sites designated under the EU's Birds Directive, and with a management plan, are most effective at facilitating climate change adaptation.

## **Energy**

### [Commission adopts first list of renewable energy cross-border projects](#)

The European Commission has established the first list of renewable energy cross-border (CB RES) projects under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The list marks the start of the implementation of the window of the CEF Programme, dedicated to renewable energy and decarbonisation.

### [California set to ban fossil fuel cars by 2035](#)

All new cars sold in California by 2035 will have to be zero emission under plans set to be adopted by the state this week, as the biggest economy in the United States drives a nationwide fossil fuel evolution.

Proposals to be debated by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) will formalise targets set by Governor Gavin Newsom – and will likely prod other US states in the same direction.

### [In focus: Solar energy – harnessing the power of the sun](#)

Solar power is a cheap, clean, modular and flexible energy source. It is currently one of the cheapest renewable energies on the market and the most accessible one for European households. In 2020, 5.2% of the EU's total electricity production came from solar energy. Based on current market trends, it has the potential to meet up to 20% of the EU's electricity demand by 2040.

## **Forestry/ Woodland**

### [Why forest biomass must not be counted as 'renewable' energy](#)

MEPs have taken a brave and principled stand by calling for an end to forest biomass counting toward renewable energy targets; for the sake of our forests, nature, and a livable climate. Achieving the EU's goal of net-zero emissions by 2050 will require a massive effort to protect and restore forests that take CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. Currently, however, a large part of the EU's renewable energy comes from burning trees and other wood for fuel, which emits [more CO<sub>2</sub>](#) per unit of energy than burning fossil fuels and releases forest carbon into the atmosphere – the opposite of what is needed if we are serious about addressing climate change.

## **Freshwater**

### [Semi-natural conditions promote ecological recovery of urban streams](#)

Freshwater ecosystems in urban areas face a variety of pressures and are often significantly degraded. This study considers the potential for recovery of invertebrate communities in urban streams based on 12 years of data from a city in Lower Saxony, Germany. The researchers report that streams with natural features and good water quality tended to recover well, given suitable climatic conditions.

## **Governance**

### [How deliberative and participatory processes can save democracy from itself](#)

Think of a democracy. We imagine the electoral system, popular voting and a triumphant sense of human progress, whereby our collective political choices create a system that meets citizens' needs. But in the 21st

century, it seems clear that elections—the cornerstone of any representative democratic system—are not enough. Once every couple of years, citizens exercise a democratic right to vote in the mainstream political arena, but this does not seem to generate results that complement a complex society. Instead, this has generated scepticism towards mainstream politics. Not only does this put democracy in imminent danger but, in order to save it, we must rethink it so as to regain people’s trust in politics.

#### [UK/EU divergence in environmental regulation: The case of the EU Industrial Emissions Directive](#)

The 2010 EU Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) is one of the cornerstones of pollution control in the EU establishing a regulatory regime covering industrial activities that may cause pollution (to air, water and waste). The European Commission is proposing to amend the directive, which may cause legal divergence between the EU and UK. However, it is important to consider how industry is regulated in practice beyond the legal texts and compare this in the UK and in different EU member states.

### **Green Growth**

#### [Factors promoting green growth include access to information on funding opportunities](#)

Encouraging businesses to adopt more sustainable practices is a key element in EU environment policy. This study looks at a range of factors that influence the uptake of such measures by small- to medium-sized enterprises across the EU. The researchers report that having information on funding opportunities promotes green growth and recommend public-private partnerships as an appropriate funding model.

### **Marine**

#### [High seas biodiversity will have to wait - UN negotiations for a high seas biodiversity treaty come to a halt.](#)

On Friday night, 26 August 2022, the negotiations for a new treaty to protect life in the ocean were suspended. A few days more might have achieved an agreement, but time ran out. When a new date is set, it is hoped that the momentum will continue and an agreement will be concluded to address conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in all areas that lie beyond national jurisdiction.

### **Plastics**

#### [The plastic pollution crisis](#)

Plastics only began to be produced in large quantities following the second world war – but plastic pollution has since become one of the most serious threats humanity faces. By 2015, 60% of all plastic ever produced had become plastic waste, and in today’s world, plastic waste is ubiquitous – it’s in the air, in the soil, in freshwater, and in the sea.

### **Sustainable Development**

#### [Think Sustainable Europe](#)

The idea generator behind the Think2030 platform, Think Sustainable Europe (TSE) is a pan-European network of sustainability think tanks, led by IEEP, and including BC3, the Ecologic Institute, the Green Tank, IDDRI, IISD, SEI, WiseEuropa, TMG, CENSE, Energia Klub, the Sustainable Development Foundation and AMO. The network aims to provide policymakers across the continent with sound, science-based analysis and recommendations.

### **Transport**

#### [Decarbonizing the EU’s road and construction sectors through green public procurement](#)

The practice of green public procurement (GPP) is mostly voluntary in Sweden and the Netherlands. While a patchwork of targets and tools exist to support procurers, interviewees say that standardization of GPP rules, as well as added capacity and resources, would help increase the uptake of more environmentally friendly actions in the road and construction sectors.

### **Well-being**

#### [COVID-19 and the environment: links, impacts and lessons learned](#)

Since early 2020, the disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), known as COVID-19 (first detected at the end of 2019), has hit societies worldwide, unsparingly, causing massive impacts on people’s lives: our health, activities, livelihoods, societies and economies.