Agriculture/ Land Use

How much longer will we continue to feed a broken food system?

After experiencing the worst summer drought in 500 years and an unusually warm October, EU policymakers should be determined to make the Green Deal a success. The only way to make this happen is to tackle – once and for all – our food system, which is economically, socially and environmentally unsustainable, from the sowing of the plants we eat or feed, to the animals we farm, to our consumption patterns.

Lab-grown meat: when will it hit the shelves?

After much anticipation, the US has just approved the sale of lab-grown meat. But it's one of only a handful of countries to do so. Positive News speaks to the CEO of a company pioneering this innovation, on when it might appear on European plates.

Prioritising sustainable food and farming systems in the fertiliser strategy

For the EU to maintain credibility as a climate leader at COP27, its upcoming Fertiliser Strategy must advance the sustainable farming agenda, not subsidise its fertiliser industry.

Air Quality

Premature deaths due to air pollution continue to fall in the EU, more efforts needed to deliver a toxic-free environment

Europe's air quality keeps improving and the number of people dying early or suffering illness due to air pollution is in decline. However, according to European Environment Agency's (EEA) analysis, air pollution is still the largest environmental health risk in Europe, and more ambitious measures are needed to meet the health-based guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Biodiversity/ Nature

Nature restoration: Contributions to tackling climate change

What are the key contributions that the proposed nature restoration regulation can make to mitigating and adapting to climate change? The proposed EU regulation for nature restoration offers a unique opportunity to tackle both biodiversity loss and climate change through an integrated approach. Restoring ecosystems is essential to safeguard their carbon storage and enhance their sequestration capacities as well as increasing resilience and adaptability to the impacts of climate change. This policy brief highlights the key contributions that the proposed regulation can make to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

How to increase the use of nature-based solutions in urban areas?

Nature-based solutions (NBS) offer multiple benefits to address urban sustainable-development problems, especially related to climate change and biodiversity loss. However, NBS implementation in cities still faces barriers. This study identifies key interventions – or 'stepping stones' – for promoting NBS use in cities. In combination, these can form pathways to normalise and 'mainstream' (or integrate) NBS in urban settings.

IUCN leads development of a new manual for the management of invasive alien species in the EU, incorporating animal welfare

Led by IUCN, a manual to support EU Member States and other stakeholders with incorporating animal welfare into their management of invasive alien species (IAS) of Union concern has been published.

Large-scale study indicates wild bees are just as effective as honey bees for commercial apple pollination

New research suggests that the standard practice of using managed honey bees to pollinate commercial apple orchards may in fact be unnecessary – wild bees may be just as effective, and produce better quality fruit.

Circular Economy

[European Circular Economy policy overview](#)

The EU has been pursuing a transition to a circular economy in earnest since the launch of the first EU Circular Economy Action Plan in 2015. In March 2020 the European Commission adopted a new Circular Economy Action Plan. Although a number of circular economy initiatives have been put forward, further steps are still needed to achieve a full circular economy transition in the EU.

[Fast fashion: common reasons garments are discarded](#)

Can clothing be more sustainable? A new study identifies the top causes of garment failure and suggests possible solutions, informed by industry professionals. Despite widespread awareness of the importance of sustainable consumption and the environmental impact of the clothing industry, poor quality, short-lived clothing continues to come to market on a huge scale. A highly competitive retail market and offshore manufacturing have reduced the price of clothing, which is now a disposable commodity for many consumers

Energy

[Mapping out space for nature-positive renewables](#)

Renewable transition: EU repowering plans propose to accelerate renewable energy by dodging environmental safeguarding. But while the transition to solar and wind energy is urgent, biodiversity protection is just as crucial. This apparent shortcut endangers the energy transition rather than supporting it - sound spatial planning must be the answer for nature-positive and people-centric renewables rollout.

Forestry/ Woodland

[Climate change: warming may extend some tree growing seasons and compensate for reduced carbon uptake during drought](#)

A Swiss experiment on two tree species indicates that global warming may lead to extra carbon uptake in some trees due to an extended growing season. This effect may compensate for reduced growth during dry periods. The researchers suggest that carbon uptake will likely be enhanced in some species, in particular, though the exact mechanisms that trigger earlier leaf-out (when the leaves first appear) and delayed leaf fall are unknown.

Freshwater/ Water

[Extreme decentralisation of water production: environmentally sustainable and economically feasible?](#)

Water from 'off-grid' supply and treatment systems for individual buildings may be cheaper to supply than water from conventional systems, new research suggests. These decentralised systems also cut water consumption by continuously recycling wastewater onsite. Current centralised systems for supplying and cleaning water are increasingly considered inefficient and unsustainable.

Governance

[EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy new website](#)

The EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the largest European movement of local authorities committed to climate neutrality and resilience, has launched a fully revamped website on the EUROPA domain. It provides more details about the towns and cities that have signed up to the initiative, their local plans and actions, and the progress that individual cities are making on their path towards climate neutrality. Other sections include financing opportunities and a series of case studies that offer examples of best practices and lessons learned.

Health

[Heatwaves, spread of infectious diseases due to climate change growing health threats to Europeans](#)

Unprecedented heatwaves — as seen this year — are the greatest direct climate-related health threat to Europe's population. Heatwaves already account for numerous deaths and illnesses. This burden is set to increase without more climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Heat-health action plans, urban

greening, better building design and adjusting working times can contribute to better protect the most vulnerable groups in society, according to a European Environment Agency (EEA) report

[Exposure to chemicals from plastic and other sources: a possible causal factor in obesity?](#)
Do chemicals, including environmental contaminants, contribute to obesity? A review looks at the evidence with implications for policy and research. A growing number of studies indicate that certain endocrine-disrupting chemicals may be important causative factors – primarily when exposure occurs during early development.

Marine
[Commission proposes action to fully harness the potential of algae in Europe for healthier diets, lower CO2 emissions, and addressing water pollution](#)
The Commission recently adopted the Communication ['Towards a strong and sustainable EU algae sector',](#) a pioneering initiative to unlock the potential of algae in the European Union. The Communication proposes 23 actions to create opportunities for the industry to help it grow into a robust, sustainable and regenerative sector capable of meeting the growing EU demand. The EU is one of the biggest importers of seaweed products globally, and the demand is expected to reach €9 billion in 2030, especially in food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and energy production.

[Questions and Answers on EU Algae Initiative - Why do we need an EU Algae Initiative?](#)
A growing global population, the depletion of resources, environmental pressures, and the impact of climate change require a different approach to food and economic systems. For this to happen, it is essential to develop new and sustainable ways of feeding a rapidly growing global population. The [EU Algae Initiative](#) aims to contribute to that by making wider use of the vast and too little used resource that is the seas and the oceans – currently the source of only up to 2% of human food, despite covering over 70% of the Earth's surface.

Planning
[Using blue-green infrastructure in cities increases regional habitat connectivity and benefits biodiversity](#)
Global urbanisation is increasing and negatively impacting on the quality, connectivity and ecosystem functioning of natural spaces. Local infrastructure interventions, such as existing blue (aquatic), and green (terrestrial) infrastructures for storm-water management and climate adaptation – can also aid biodiversity in human-dominated landscapes. This study of the Swiss lowlands used amphibian monitoring and species distribution data as well as connectivity modelling, to find key landscape elements of regional importance and local opportunities for urban blue-green infrastructure that could help enhance habitat connectivity.

[Bat-friendly cities: urban planning recommendations from new citizen science study](#)
Cities can effectively support bat populations when urban planners and conservationists create the right ecological conditions, concludes a new study from Germany. The researchers, who collaborated with citizen scientists to monitor Berlin's bats, recommend minimising artificial light at night and creating good access for bats to forest patches and water bodies.

Plastics
[Modelling a microplastic-free Black Sea: strategies to lower waste from feeder rivers](#)
The semi-enclosed Black Sea is fed by multiple European and Asian rivers which carry microplastic pollution. This research aims to find the most effective strategy to lower microplastic (MP) pollution in the sea, by modelling different riverine MP pollution-reduction scenarios for 2050. These scenario insights can inform policy development, to aid realisation of a zero-pollution future for the Black Sea.

Transport
[Can Polluter Pays principles in the aviation sector be progressive?](#)
If carefully designed and implemented, imposing additional environmental taxes on the aviation sector can have progressive distributional results and create positive welfare effects for the majority of EU households.