

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (ENRA)

NIEL's monthly roundup of the latest international research information and policy analysis relevant to Northern Ireland.



Agriculture



Air Quality



Biodiversity



Circular Economy



Climate Action



Economic Growth



Energy



Environmental Justice



Food



Freshwater



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Planning



*Sustainable
Development*



Transport



Woodland/Forestry



NIEL MEMBER RESEARCH & REPORTS

- ❖ NIEL have launched the RESIL RISK Northern Ireland 2023 [report](#) outlining insights into public perceptions of climate risks and adaptation strategies. The survey is a repeat of the 2022 survey with the addition of a question/response options to gauge public attitudes to local food and farming.
- ❖ The National Trust - A Climate for Change: Adaptation and the National Trust
Read the [report](#) to find out more about how we're looking after places of nature, beauty and history in a changing climate.

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Agriculture

[Innovative carbon farming initiatives: recent and ongoing projects across the EU](#)

This report presents an overview of ongoing and recently completed EU projects which promote innovation in carbon farming. It focuses on initiatives funded by Horizon Europe and a smaller selection of programmes financed through other sources of public funding and private sector initiatives. Through an analysis of a sample of over 50 projects, this report offers insight into the efforts being made to accelerate the adoption of more sustainable agricultural practices across the EU.

[Benefits of organic fertiliser and crop rotation for beetles and soil-dwelling creatures](#)

Farmers could boost ecosystem services on their cropland by practicing traditional diversification methods that support arthropods, suggests a new study from Sweden. The researchers found that cropland treated with organic fertiliser, and which included perennial ley (legumes and grasses for feed or fallow) in the crop rotation, had more soil-dwelling creatures than cropland treated with mineral fertiliser.

[Anti-worm drug used by farmers on livestock detected in Scottish red foxes, *Vulpes vulpes*](#)

Red foxes are ingesting closantel, a veterinary drug. A study suggests that it is useful to monitor red foxes for veterinary residues in the environment as they are at risk of developing drug-resistant parasites. Contamination of the environment by veterinary medicines is a concern because of its impact on wild animals and because of the possible development of drug-resistant parasites.

[EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe': €90 million for 17 new projects to support healthy soils](#)

The European Commission will invest €90 million in 17 new research projects contributing to the EU Mission: 'A Soil Deal for Europe'. These projects will work on restoring and protecting soil health for the sustainable production of healthy food, protecting biodiversity, building climate resilience, and contributing to the European Green Deal objectives.



Air Quality

[Air pollution to blame for one-fifth of the global burden of newborn health disorders](#)

In 2019, exposure to small particle air pollution (PM2.5) caused one-fifth of the global burden of neonatal disorders. New research suggests the impact from ambient (outdoor) pollution is rising – especially in lesser developed regions. Neonatal disorders bring a huge economic and medical burden; of the 135 million infants born globally in 2019, 2.42 million (1.79%) died within 28 days of birth.

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Biodiversity

[Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures \(OECMs\): 1st edition](#)

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are sites outside protected areas that deliver effective and long-term in situ conservation of biodiversity. Biodiversity conservation may be the primary objective of the site, a secondary objective of a site that is managed for other purposes, or it may be an unintended consequence of the way the site is managed. OECMs may be governed and managed by governments, private entities or Indigenous peoples and local communities, or a combination of these. This tool guides an assessor through three steps to apply eight criteria which determine if a site qualifies as an OECM as set out under the Convention on Biological Diversity.



Circular Economy

[Sorting through the trash talk to solve Europe's packaging waste crisis](#)

Packaging waste: As new evidence makes the case for reusable packaging, opposition to waste prevention and reuse appears increasingly untenable for policy makers working on one of Europe's most lobbied files of this political term: the new law to curb packaging waste.

[Distance and communication style affect usage of a battery disposal scheme](#)

Various factors influence participation in recycling actions. This study of a battery disposal scheme reports higher participation where households are near drop-off points and where information about wastage is provided using metaphors. Safe and sustainable disposal of technical and electronic waste is important as it can contain hazardous substances including lead, mercury and acids.

[Protecting environment and health: Commission adopts measures to restrict intentionally added microplastics](#)

The European Commission has taken step to protect the environment by adopting measures that restrict microplastics intentionally added to products under the EU chemical legislation REACH. The new rules will prevent the release to the environment of about half a million tonnes of microplastics. They will prohibit the sale of microplastics as such, and of products to which microplastics have been added on purpose and that release those microplastics when used. When duly justified, derogations and transition periods for the affected parties to adjust to the new rules apply.



Climate Action

[Three reasons to ban climate neutral claims now](#)

Misleading consumers: From food to clothing and flights, more and more products and services are sold as climate neutral, but these claims are too often just greenwashing. Here are three reasons why the new EU law to empower consumers should ban them now.

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Economic Growth

No new stories this month



Energy

[Wind-powered shipping is back as a quiet revolution sweeps the seas](#)

A sail-powered freighter is the latest attempt to clean up the shipping sector. Electric ferries are also taking to the waves, but the route to a cleaner future is long. Cutting edge yacht racing technology has been brought to modern day cargo shipping in a bid to cut the sector's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

[Investing in new nuclear is 'bad for the climate', green advocates say](#)

New nuclear is less cost-competitive than wind, solar or electricity storage options and hinders investments in renewable energies that could otherwise be deployed much faster, according to a peer-reviewed commentary published in the scientific journal Joule.



Environmental Justice

[Upholding Communities' Rights In The Raw Materials Rush](#)

In March 2023, the European Commission proposed the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) with an aim to boost the domestic production of materials deemed critical to the green and digital transition, thus reducing dependency on other countries. Setting too much store by this autonomy drive would be naïve, since the EU only has limited reserves of these materials in its territory. And yet, the Commission looks ready to dismiss communities' concerns in the name of getting ahead. In this article, we consider how environmental rights, such as those enshrined in the Aarhus Convention, can ensure the race for raw materials doesn't derail the just transition.



Food

[A united call for Sustainable Food Systems in the EU](#)

Food for thought: Our current food systems are at a crossroads. They cause exorbitant emissions, hurt farmers and farm workers, harm people's health and wreck biodiversity. And all while enormous agro-industry enriches itself more than ever. We need a change. And the European Commission promised one too, in the Sustainable Food Systems Law - a cornerstone of the EU Green Deal's 'Farm to Fork' strategy. We are not alone in demanding the Commission fulfils this pledge: read on to see why farmers, consumers, businesses and scientists are calling for the same.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS, RESEARCH & ANALYSIS (ENRA)[Meat, spices and stimulants are key contributors to Vienna's 'biodiversity footprint'](#)

A key driver of global biodiversity loss is land use, which involves converting or modifying natural ecosystems to produce biomass for human consumption. A new study explores how land used to supply biomass to Vienna impacts biodiversity.

**Freshwater**[Reducing pollution in EU groundwater and surface waters](#)

- Human health and natural ecosystems to be better protected from pollutants
- Updated lists of chemical pollutants that need to be monitored and controlled
- New legislation is part of EU's zero pollution ambition by 2050

The European Parliament has adopted its position on reducing groundwater and surface waters pollution and improving EU water quality standards. MEPs want the EU watch lists - which contain substances posing a significant risk to human health and the environment - to be updated regularly to keep pace with new scientific evidence and new chemicals. They also want a subset of specific PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, also known as "forever chemicals") as well as the PFAS total (parameter which includes the totality of PFAS with a maximum concentration) to be added to the lists for both groundwater and surface water pollutants. Several other substances, including microplastics and antimicrobial resistant microorganisms, should also be added to these lists as soon as suitable monitoring methods identified.

**Marine**[Mussels exposed to polyester microfibres in seawater grow at a slower rate than unexposed mussels. This study examines whether cotton microfibres could have same impact](#)

Polyester microfibres in seawater have been found to slow the growth of juvenile mussels by 36%. Understanding how these ocean pollutants impact shellfish could inform regulatory measures in areas such as textile design. Microfibres of plastic and cotton are ubiquitous in the sea worldwide, and are known to be readily ingested by a range of marine organisms.

**Planning**[From ore to omen: mining's environmental and social wake-up call](#)

Better mining: Mining activities that cause severe environmental and social harm have increased globally over the last 20 years. Affected communities around the world have proactively identified strategies to prevent the continuation of these negative mining effects. Representatives from affected communities travelled to Geneva to participate in the UNEA Global Consultation. These community representatives urged the UNEA and its member states to ensure Indigenous peoples living near extraction projects have the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

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[The new book "Peace with Nature: 50 Inspiring Essays on Nature and the Environment" was launched in Singapore](#)

This book is a must-read for all who love nature and the environment. It contains 50 inspiring essays written by Singaporeans and friends who share their perspectives, expertise and experience –as scientists, lawyers, economists, engineers, bankers, government officers, and civil society– all linked by a love for nature, for the environment, and for Singapore.



Sustainable Development

[Questions and Answers on the Adoption of European Sustainability Reporting Standards](#)

Problems in the quality of sustainability reporting have knock-on effects. It means that investors lack a reliable overview of sustainability-related risks to which companies are exposed. Investors increasingly should be made aware about the impact of companies on people and the environment and their plans to reduce such impacts in the future. This knowledge will help them to meet their own disclosure requirements under the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation ([SFDR](#)).



Transport

[State aid: Commission approves €1.5 billion French measure to support ProLogium in researching and developing innovative batteries for electric vehicles](#)

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €1.5 billion French measure to support ProLogium Technologies ('ProLogium') in researching and developing a new generation of batteries for electric vehicles. The measure will contribute to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU battery strategy.



Woodland/Forestry

[Coppicing deciduous woodland promotes diversity of spider species](#)

Field data from a Czech woodland shows how a coppicing regime affects spider diversity over time, providing evidence to suggest the effectiveness of this declining practice for enhancing woodland biodiversity. Coppicing is a traditional woodland management activity that involves cutting mature trees at the base and allowing them to regrow, with multiple trunks, from the stump.