



30.1.2015

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS

**Subject: Petition No 2036/2013 by C. J. (German), on putting an end to peat-digging**

### 1. Summary of petition

The petitioner considers that peat-digging should be banned, inter alia because it reduces the habitat available to various species of flora and fauna and therefore damages biodiversity. The petitioner also considers peat-digging to be a serious environmental problem because it releases large amounts of carbon dioxide. The petitioner asks the European Parliament to put an end to the practice.

### 2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 7 August 2014. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

### 3. Commission reply, received on 30 January 2015

The risk of peat lands releasing large amounts of greenhouse gases when drained and dug is acknowledged by the Commission and by a variety of international fora.

The guidelines of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>1</sup> (IPCC) show that the emission factor linked to this problem is very high. The FAO<sup>2</sup> mentions that "Peatlands and

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpplulucf/gpplulucf\\_files/Chp3/App\\_3a3\\_Wetlands.pdf](http://www.ipcc-nggip.iges.or.jp/public/gpplulucf/gpplulucf_files/Chp3/App_3a3_Wetlands.pdf) and [http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session37/Doc\\_8b\\_Rev\\_2\\_Accepted\\_Report\\_Wetlands.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session37/Doc_8b_Rev_2_Accepted_Report_Wetlands.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/an762e/an762e.pdf>

organic soils cover only 3 percent of the world's land area but contain 30 percent of its soil carbon (Parish et al., 2008. Drained peatlands, which make up 0.3 percent of the world's land cover, emit almost 6 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Joosten, 2009a)."

The IPCC guidelines also provide an accounting framework and within the EU, Decision No 529/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2013 on accounting rules on greenhouse gas emissions and removals resulting from activities relating to land use, land-use change and forestry and on information concerning actions relating to those activities,<sup>1</sup> provides the basis for accounting the carbon fluxes related to peatlands.

For farm peatlands (grassland and cropland), the Common Agricultural Policy and its cross compliance requirements set down good agricultural and environmental practices which must be followed to ensure the sustainable management of all soils including peatland areas.

However it is the Member States that lay down in detail the measures taken to implement the good agricultural and environmental condition referred to in Article 94 of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013<sup>2</sup>, on the financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy.

Financial support to protect and rewet peatlands is available through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) 2014-2020 and via the Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE) 2014-2020. It is up to the Member States, which are now preparing their ESIF programmes, to decide whether to design and implement peatland protection measures funded by the EU. The Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of those programmes however, does not include a specific indicator that would allow to collect systematic data specifically on peatland protection or restoration in those operational programmes, as such actions are included in broader thematic categories.

Peatland which is part of the Natura-2000-network according to the Habitats Directive<sup>3</sup> has to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status. Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Natura-2000-site but likely to have significant effect thereon, like for example industrial peat digging, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives related to 'peatland'<sup>4</sup>.

## Conclusion

While peatlands could be a high emission source when not properly protected and managed, they only represent a very small percentage of total EU land. The risk is acknowledged by the EU through a variety of legislation the implementation of which is subject to national law/decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013D0529&from=EN>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/de/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R1306&from=en>

<sup>3</sup> Richtlinie 92/43/EWG des Rates vom 21. Mai 1992 zur Erhaltung der natürlichen Lebensräume sowie der wildlebenden Tiere und Pflanzen (ABl. L 206 vom 22. Juli 1992, S. 7).

<sup>4</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1992L0043:20070101:DE:PDF>

<sup>4</sup> Habitat types 7110 to 7320 according to Annex I of the Habitat Directive.