

THE EU 2030 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

KEY FINDINGS

Following the presentation of the [Communication on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - Bringing nature back into our lives](#) (COM (2020) 380 of 20 May 2020), this briefing note (1) provides background elements on the EU Biodiversity policy, (2) presents the key features of its new strategy and (3) analyses its potential effects on the CAP and the upcoming national strategic plans.

1. BACKGROUND

- In 2011, the EU adopted the **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**, which aimed to halt the loss of biodiversity and [ecosystem services](#) in the EU and help stop global biodiversity loss by 2020.
- As pointed out in the European Parliament's [Resolution on the mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020](#) (February 2016)¹ the **implementation of the Strategy showed progress in many areas, but highlighted the need for much greater effort.**
- **Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse is considered one of the top five threats humanity faces in the next ten years**²: a number of reports have recently warned of a massive and accelerated worldwide erosion of biodiversity³ which notably affects human health, climate change and our food systems; the proportion of livestock breeds at risk of extinction is increasing and for some crops and in some areas, plant diversity in farmers' fields is decreasing and threats to diversity are increasing (as many species that contribute to vital ecosystem services, including pollinators, natural enemies of pests, soil organisms and wild food species are in decline as a consequence of the destruction and degradation of habitats⁴).
- **Europe loses biodiversity at an alarming rate**: the last European Environment Agency's [State and Outlook Report on the European Environment 2020](#)⁵ shows an unfavourable conservation status at 60 % for species and 77 % for habitats and a continuing downward trend in

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0034_EN.html?redirect

² World Economic Forum (2020): <https://www.weforum.org/reports/nature-risk-rising-why-the-crisis-enveloping-nature-matters-for-business-and-the-economy>

³ See in particular the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' 2019 Global Assessment Report: https://ipbes.net/new/c_s/ipbes-global-assessment-preview

⁴ FAO report on Biodiversity for food and agriculture (2019): www.fao.org/cqfa/topics/biodiversity/en/

⁵ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2020/intro>



populations of common birds and butterflies (with the most pronounced declines in farmland birds (32 %) and grassland butterflies (39 %)) and pollinators (bees), which prompted the Commission to launch the first-ever EU initiative for pollinators in 2018⁶.

2. THE EU 2030 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

- Against this backdrop, the Commission, under the supervision of Environment Commissioner Mr. Sinkevicius, presented on 20 May 2020 the **EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy** (as part of the European Green Deal and its Farm to Fork strategy, unveiled on 20 May too⁷), which outlines the **EU ambition for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be adopted at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity due to take place in China in 2021**⁸.
- **This strategy puts forward EU commitments and measures to address the main drivers of biodiversity loss** (changes in land and sea use, overexploitation, climate change, pollution and invasive alien species) with a view to:
 - *protect* nature and increase the coverage and effectiveness of protected areas, building notably on the Natura 2000 network (see point 3.2),
 - *restore* damaged ecosystems, including carbon-rich ecosystems, to good ecological status and enhance the flow of essential services that they provide,
 - *promote* the *sustainable use* of forest, agriculture, marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems;
 - *fully integrate* biodiversity considerations into other EU policies and address EU impacts on global biodiversity.
- More specifically, this new strategy focuses on **two main strands of actions** :
 - **a widened Nature Protection Network** : the strategy proposes to widen the EU network of protected areas to **transform at least 30 % of Europe's lands and seas into effectively managed protected areas**⁹, with 10 % of them strictly protected¹⁰. This Trans-European Nature Network will build upon existing Natura 2000 areas (see point 3.2) and complete them with nationally protected areas.
 - **a far-reaching EU Nature Restoration plan** that includes (see table below):
 - . legally binding restoration targets to be put forward in 2021, as well as a request to Member States to ensure that there is no deterioration in conservation trends and status under existing legislation (Birds and Habitats Directives).
 - . key sectoral commitments by 2030 for agriculture, forests, marine areas and urban/peri-urban areas.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/natureconservation/species/pollinators/index_en.htm

⁷ See points 2.1.6 and 2.1.7 of the communication on the Green Deal.

⁸ The UN Convention Biological Diversity (CBD) was adopted in June 1992 during the Rio "Earth Summit" and meets every two years.

⁹ Today, 26 % of EU's land area is already protected, with 18 % as part of Natura 2000 and 8 % under national schemes ; of EU's seas, 11 % are protected (8 % under Natura 2000 and 3 % by national protection schemes).

¹⁰ As requested by the EP's Environment Committee in a draft resolution adopted on 3 December 2019: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20191203IPR67906/biodiversity-meps-call-for-legally-binding-targets-as-for-climate-change>

EU Nature restoration Plan : key commitments by 2030

1. By 2030, significant areas of degraded and carbon-rich ecosystems are restored; habitats and species show no deterioration in conservation trends and status; at least 30 % reach favourable conservation status or at least show a positive trend.
2. The decline in pollinators is reversed.
3. The risk and use of chemical pesticides is reduced by 50 % and the use of more hazardous pesticides is reduced by 50 %.
4. At least 10% of agricultural area is under high diversity landscape features.
5. At least 25% of agricultural land is under organic farming management, and the uptake of agro-ecological practices is significantly increased.
6. Three billion new trees are planted in the EU, in full respect of ecological principles. 7. Significant progress has been made in the remediation of contaminated soil sites.
8. At least 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers are restored.
9. There is a 50% reduction in the number of Red List species threatened by invasive alien species.
10. The losses of nutrients from fertilisers are reduced by 50%, resulting in the reduction of the use of fertilisers by at least 20%.
11. Cities with at least 20,000 inhabitants have an ambitious Urban Greening Plan.
12. No chemical pesticides are used in sensitive areas such as EU urban green areas.
13. The negative impacts on sensitive species and habitats, including on the seabed through fishing and extraction activities, are substantially reduced to achieve good environmental status.
14. The by-catch of species is eliminated or reduced to a level that allows species recovery and conservation.

- The strategy also **puts forward a new governance framework** requiring Member States to include the EU commitments into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (together with a set of agreed indicators) and building on a whole-of-society approach (notably through sustainable corporate governance) and **estimates the funding needed to implement this strategy at € 20 billion a year (through private and public funding at national and EU level).**

3. THE EU 2030 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND THE CAP

3.1. Biodiversity and Agriculture are strongly interdependent

- **Biodiversity is critical for agriculture** because using multiple species, integrating the use of crop, livestock, forest and aquatic resources and conserving and managing habitat diversity at landscape or seascape scale are key elements in promoting resilience, improving livelihoods and supporting food security and nutrition.

- **Agriculture has, conversely, a major role to play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity**, as many of the drivers that have negative impacts on it, including overexploitation, overharvesting, pollution, overuse of external inputs and changes in land and water management are at least partially caused by inappropriate agricultural practices.

3.2. The impacts of CAP on Biodiversity

- The main EU policy instruments that elaborate the EU objectives on Biodiversity are the **Birds and Habitats Directives** (Nature Directives). Both Directives have a similar set of specific and operational objectives requiring the conservation not just of species but also their habitats, through a combination of site and species protection and management measures supported by monitoring and research.
- A key pillar of these directives for the protection of sites of particular importance to specific listed habitats and species is the definition of special and conservation areas through the **Natura 2000 network, 40 % of which is farmland, which explains why agriculture and the CAP have a key role to play in meeting the EU's biodiversity targets.**
- A report on the impact of the CAP on habitats, landscapes and biodiversity released by the Commission on 27 March¹¹ acknowledges that, due to a lack of data, it is not possible to estimate the net combined impact of the CAP instruments and measures on biodiversity. However, this study also states that **overall biodiversity monitoring evidence indicates that the combined effects of the CAP have not been sufficient to counteract the pressures on biodiversity** from agriculture both in semi-natural habitats and in more intensively management farmland. In the same vein, the 2017 European Court of Auditor's report on the greening of the CAP also pointed to a lack of effect of the ecological focus areas on biodiversity¹².
- **3.3. The CAP post 2020 and the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy**
 - **The quantified objectives to be reached by 2030 (see point 2) will impact Agriculture and the design of the upcoming national strategic plans which will need to reflect an increased level of ambition to reach these targets:**
 - more farmland will be covered by Natura 2000 or nationally protected areas to reach the objective of 30 % of protected areas foreseen by the strategy;
 - at least 10 % of agricultural land shall consist of high-diversity landscape features (buffer strips, hedges, terraces, walls, non productive trees, ponds...);
 - 25 % of agricultural land shall be organically farmed;
 - limitations and reductions in the use of pesticides and fertilizers will become mandatory: the risk and use of chemical pesticides shall be reduced by 50 % and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50%; the losses of nutrients from fertilisers are to be reduced by 50%, resulting in the reduction of the use of fertilisers by at least 20%;
 - afforestation, reforestation, agroforestry and tree planting will be promoted.

¹¹ European Commission, November 2019 : https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/evaluation-policy-measures/sustainability/impact-cap-habitats-landscapes-biodiversity-0_en

¹² See pages 47-50 of the report : https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR17_21/SR_GREENING_EN.pdf

- **These new requirements could possibly translate into the strategic plans as follows :**
 - although the protection of biodiversity is already part of the conditionality requirements foreseen by the draft regulation on strategic plans¹³, additional requirements could be envisaged either under the conditionality standards or in the eco-schemes;
 - allocating a minimum share of Pillar II payments to agri-environment and climate measures , as requested by the EP in its 2018 resolution¹⁴, could better protect biodiversity (including notably organic agriculture, soil health, nutrient management planning for the protection of biodiversity, pollination and genetic diversity in animals and plants and landscapes features);
 - these agri-environment and climate measures could foresee higher Natura 200 payments and be more coherent with the Habitats and Birds Directives, as emphasised by the EP in the above-mentioned resolution¹⁵ (more ambitious measures could include for instance banning ploughing/conversion of permanent grassland in all Natura 2000 sites and on all permanent grassland in the newly defined high nature value farmland);
 - the set of indicators foreseen by the draft CAP Strategic Plan regulation will reflect these new EU targets.
- **A better integration of the EU Biodiversity objectives into the new CAP might however be facing a series of challenges :**
 - the decrease foreseen in the budget for Rural Development in the draft Multi Annual Financial Framework will negatively impact the funding of Biodiversity measures, and notably the Natura 2000 measures (for this reason, some stakeholders advocate that rather than expanding the Natura 2000 areas, the EU's principal priority should be to redouble efforts to achieve the right management of sites already designated¹⁶);
 - opening the possibility that CAP eco-schemes are paid for "all eligible hectares" in a farm or "per livestock unit", as the Council proposes, could transform them into a low-ambition flat-rate payment for all farmers with little effect on biodiversity (thereby replicating the poor biodiversity performance of Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) to date¹⁷);
 - finally, there may be a misalignment of timing, as the ongoing negotiations on the Commission's draft legislative proposals for the CAP post 2020 might be concluded before they can integrate all the requirements and the legal framework foreseen by the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

¹³ See article 11 of draft regulation COM (2018) 392 final and its Annex III, where the Birds and Habitats Directives form part of the statutory management requirements to be respected by all farmers https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/budget-may2018-cap-strategic-plans-annex_en.pdf

¹⁴ European Parliament resolution of 30 May 2018 on the future of food and farming (2018/2037(INI)), point 102 : https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0224_EN.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://ieep.eu/uploads/articles/attachments/947eb8aa-1694-41b1-8037-a4f16a7d2ace/Think%202030%20Biodiversity.pdf?v=63710011292>

¹⁷ Ibid.

Further information

This briefing is available in summary, with option to download the full text, at: <https://bit.ly/3cBf00C>
More information on Policy Department research for AGRI: <https://research4committees.blog/agri/>



Disclaimer and copyright. The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2020.

Research manager: François NÈGRE Editorial assistant: Catherine MORVAN

Contact: Poldep-cohesion@ep.europa.eu

This document is available on the Internet at: www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

IP/B/AGRI/NT/2020-31

Print ISBN 978-92-846-6781-9 | doi:10.2861/27142 | QA-02-20-410-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-846-6782-6 | doi:10.2861/545892 | QA-02-20-410-EN-N