



Green Deal: pioneering proposals to restore Europe's nature by 2050 and halve pesticide use by 2030

Brussels, 22 June 2022

Today, the Commission adopted pioneering proposals to **restore damaged ecosystems and bring nature back across Europe**, from agricultural land and seas, to forests and urban environments. The Commission also proposes to **reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% by 2030**. These are the flagship legislative proposals to follow the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies, and will help ensure the resilience and security of food supply in the EU and across the world.

The proposal for a **Nature Restoration Law** is a key step in avoiding ecosystem collapse and preventing the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Restoring EU wetlands, rivers, forests, grasslands, marine ecosystems, urban environments and the species they host is a crucial and cost-effective investment: into our food security, climate resilience, health, and well-being. In the same vein, the new rules on **chemical pesticides** will reduce the environmental footprint of the EU's food system, protect the health and well-being of citizens and agricultural workers, and help mitigate the economic losses that we are already incurring due to declining soil health and pesticide-induced pollinator loss.

Nature restoration law to repair damage done to Europe's nature by 2050

The Commission is today proposing the [first-ever legislation that explicitly targets the restoration of Europe's nature](#), to **repair** the 80% of European habitats that are in poor condition, and to **bring back nature to all ecosystems**, from forest and agricultural land to marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems. Under this proposal for a Nature Restoration Law, legally binding **targets for nature restoration in different ecosystems** will apply to every Member State, complementing existing laws. The aim is to cover at least **20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030 with nature restoration measures**, and eventually extend these to all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050.

The law will **scale up** existing experiences of nature restoration measures such as rewilding, returning trees, greening cities and infrastructure, or removing pollution to allow nature to recover. Nature restoration does not equal nature protection and does not automatically lead to more protected areas. While nature restoration is necessary in protected areas as well due to their increasingly poor condition, not all restored areas have to become protected areas. Most of them will not, as restoration does not preclude **economic activity**. Restoration is about living and producing together with nature by bringing more biodiversity back everywhere, including to the areas where economic activity takes place like managed forests, agricultural land and cities for example.

Restoration closely involves and benefits all parts of the society, it has to be done in an inclusive process and it has [particularly positive impact](#) on those who directly depend on healthy nature for their livelihood, including farmers, foresters and fishers. Investment into nature restoration **adds €8 to €38 in economic value for every €1 spent**, thanks to the ecosystem services that support **food security, ecosystem and climate resilience and mitigation, and human health**. It also increases nature in our landscapes and daily lives, with demonstrable benefits for health and wellbeing as well as cultural and recreational value.

The Nature Restoration Law will set **restoration targets and obligations** across a broad range of ecosystems at land and sea. Ecosystems with the greatest potential for **removing and storing carbon** and preventing or reducing the impact of **natural disasters** such as floods will be the top priorities. The new law builds on existing legislation, but covers all ecosystems rather than being limited to the Habitats Directive and Natura 2000 protected areas, aiming to put all natural and semi-natural ecosystems on the path to recovery by 2030. It will benefit from substantial EU funding: under the current Multiannual Financial Framework, **around €100 billion** will be available for biodiversity spending, including restoration.

The targets proposed include:

- Reversing the decline of **pollinator populations** by 2030 and increasing their populations from there on,
- No net loss of **green urban spaces** by 2030, a 5% increase by 2050, a minimum of 10% tree canopy cover in every European city, town, and suburb, and net gain of green space that is integrated to buildings and infrastructure,
- In **agricultural ecosystems**, overall increase of biodiversity, and a positive trend for grassland **butterflies, farmland birds**, organic carbon in cropland mineral **soils and high-diversity landscape features on agricultural land**.
- Restoration and rewetting of drained **peatlands** under agricultural use and in peat extraction sites,
- In **forest** ecosystems, overall increase of biodiversity and a positive trend for forest connectivity, deadwood, share of uneven-aged forests, forest birds and stock of organic carbon,
- Restoring **marine habitats** such as seagrasses or sediment bottoms, and restoring the habitats of iconic marine species such as **dolphins and porpoises, sharks and seabirds**,
- Removing river barriers so that at least 25 000 km of rivers would be turned into **free-flowing rivers** by 2030.

To help deliver on the targets while keeping flexibility for national circumstances, the law would require Member States to develop **National Restoration Plans**, in close cooperation with scientists, interested stakeholders and the public. There are specific rules on **governance** (monitoring, assessment, planning, reporting and enforcement) – which would also **improve policymaking** at national and European levels, making sure authorities consider together the related issues of **biodiversity, climate and livelihoods**.

The proposal delivers on a key element of the [European Green Deal](#): the [Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) commitment for Europe to lead by example on reversing biodiversity loss and restoring nature. It is the EU's key contribution in the ongoing negotiations on a **post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** to be adopted at the Convention on Biological Diversity COP15 in Montréal from 7 to 15 December this year.

Strong rules to reduce the use of chemical pesticides and ensure more sustainable food systems by 2030

Today's proposal to reduce the use of chemical pesticides translates our commitment to halt biodiversity loss in Europe into action. The proposal will help building sustainable food systems in line with the [European Green Deal](#) and the Farm to Fork Strategy, whilst ensuring lasting food security and protecting our health.

Scientists and citizens are increasingly concerned about the use of pesticides and the build-up of their residues and metabolites in the environment. In the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe citizens specifically requested to address the use and risk of pesticides. However, the **current rules** of the [Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive](#) have proven to be **too weak** and have been unevenly implemented. Also, insufficient progress has been made in the use of Integrated Pest Management as well as other alternative approaches. Chemical pesticides harm human health and cause biodiversity decline in agricultural areas. They contaminate the air, the water and the wider environment. The Commission is therefore proposing **clear and binding rules**:

- **Legally binding targets at EU and national level** to reduce by 50% the use and the risk of chemical pesticides and the use of the more hazardous pesticides by 2030. Member States will set their own national reduction targets within defined parameters to ensure that the EU wide targets are achieved. **Strict new rules on environmentally friendly pest control:** New measures will ensure that all farmers and other professional pesticide users practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM), in which alternative environmentally methods of pest prevention and control are considered first, before chemical pesticides may be used as a last resort measure. The measures also include mandatory record keeping for farmers and other professional users. In addition, Member States have to establish crop-specific rules identifying the alternatives to be used instead of chemical pesticides.
- **A ban on all pesticides in sensitive areas.** The use of all pesticides will be prohibited in places such as urban green areas, including public parks or gardens, playgrounds, schools, recreation or sports grounds, public paths and protected areas in accordance with Natura 2000 and any ecologically sensitive area to be preserved for threatened pollinators. This new rules will remove chemical pesticides from our proximity in our everyday lives.

The proposal transforms the [existing Directive](#) into a **Regulation which will be directly applicable in all Member States**. This will tackle the persistent problems with weak and uneven

implementation of existing rules over the last decade. Member States will have to submit to the Commission detailed **annual progress and implementation reports**.

Supporting the transition:

A package of key policies will support farmers and other users, with the transition to more sustainable food production systems, including:

- New Common Agriculture Policy rules to ensure that farmers are **compensated for any costs** related to the implementation of the new rules for a transition period of 5 years;
- Stronger action to increase the range of **biological and low risk alternatives** on the market;
- Research and Development under EU's **Horizon programmes** in support of new technologies and techniques, including precision farming and
- An **Organic Action Plan**, to deliver the Farm to Fork pesticide targets.

The transition will also be supported by the proposal on farm sustainability data, and by market developments in relation to **precision farming** such as sprayers using geospatial localisation and pest recognition techniques.

Delivering globally:

In line with its policy for sustainable pesticide use, the Commission will soon propose, for the first time ever, a measure that follows up on its commitment to take account of **global environmental considerations** when deciding on **maximum residue levels in food**. Imported food containing measurable residues of prohibited substances should, over time, not be marketed in the EU. This will contribute to a virtuous circle and encourage third countries to also limit or prohibit the use of these pesticides, already banned in the EU.

Concretely, the Commission will soon consult Member States and third countries on a measure reducing to zero the residues of thiamethoxam and clothianidin, two substances known to contribute significantly to the worldwide decline of pollinators. These are substances no longer approved in the EU. When the measure is adopted, imported food containing measurable residues of these two substances may – after certain transitional periods - no longer be marketed in the EU.

Members of the College said:

Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Frans **Timmermans**, said *"We humans depend on nature. For the air we breathe, for the water we drink, for the food we eat – for life. Our economy also runs on nature. The climate and biodiversity crises are threatening the very foundation of our life on Earth. We have been making progress on tackling the climate crisis, and today we add two laws that represent a massive step forward in tackling the looming ecocide. When we restore nature, we allow it to continue providing clean air, water, and food, and we enable it to shield us from the worst of the climate crisis. Reducing pesticide use likewise helps nature recover, and protects the humans who work with these chemicals."*

Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: *"Europeans are clear: they want the EU to act for nature and bring it back to their lives. Scientists are clear: there is no time to lose, the window is closing. And clear is also the business case: every euro spent for restoration will bring us at least eight in return. This is what this landmark proposal is about, restoring biodiversity and ecosystems so that we can live and thrive together with nature. It is a law for all people in Europe and for the generations to come, for a healthy planet and a healthy economy. It is a first of its kind globally, and we hope that it can inspire high international commitment for the protection of biodiversity in the upcoming COP15."*

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, stressed: *"It is time to change course on how we use pesticides in the EU. This is about the health of our citizens and our planet. Through this proposal, we are delivering on our citizens expectations and on our commitments in the Farm to Fork Strategy to build a more sustainable and healthy food production system. We need to reduce the use of chemical pesticides to protect our soil, air and food, and ultimately the health of our citizens. For the first time, we will ban the use of pesticides pesticide in public gardens and playgrounds, ensuring that we are all far less exposed in our daily lives. The Common Agricultural Policy will support farmers financially to cover all costs of the new rules for a period of 5 years. No one will be left behind."*

Next steps

Both proposals will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council, in line with the ordinary legislative procedure. Following adoption, the impact on the ground will be gradual: nature restoration measures are to be in place by 2030, while the pesticides targets should be reached by

2030.

As such, there is no direct relation to the immediate impacts of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. These proposals will strengthen Europe's resilience and food security in the medium term, as as pollinator populations will become healthier and more abundant, soil erosion will decrease and water retention will improve, and our natural environment will become cleaner and increasingly toxic free. It will also reduce farmers' dependency on expensive inputs, such as chemical pesticides, supporting affordable food for all Europeans.

Background

Healthy and resilient ecosystems are the backbone of our well-being and prosperity, providing food, clean water, carbon sinks and protection against natural disasters, including those caused by climate change. Over half of global GDP depends on nature and the services it provides, and more than 75% of global food crop types rely on animal pollination.

Despite its importance, [Europe's nature is in alarming decline](#) with more than 80% of habitats in poor condition. Wetlands, peatlands, grasslands and dune habitats are the worst affected. In Western, Central and Eastern Europe wetlands have shrunk by 50% since 1970. 71% of fish and 60% of amphibian populations have declined over the last decade. Between 1997 and 2011, biodiversity loss accounted for an estimated annual loss of €3.5–18.5 trillion.

The impact assessment for the Nature Restoration Law has shown that the **benefits of nature restoration** far outweigh the costs. The economic benefits of restoring peatlands, marshlands, forests, heathland and scrub, grasslands, rivers, lakes, marine and alluvial habitats, and coastal wetlands are estimated to be greater than the costs by eight times.

The proposal on the **sustainable use of pesticides** replaces the Sustainable Use [Directive 2009/128/EC](#) (SUD) which aimed to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides in the EU by reducing the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment and promoting the use of IPM. The [main actions](#) in the Directive related to training users and distributors, inspecting pesticide application equipment, prohibiting aerial spraying, and limiting pesticide use in sensitive areas. Various reports highlighted weaknesses in implementation of the Directive, with the result that there was insufficient reduction in the use and risk of pesticides.

Citizens from across Europe and across various walks of life [recommended during the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) a 'drastic reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in all types of farms' and 'the development of sustainable agriculture, including the respect for nature and the workers'. With today's package, the Commission answers to five proposals and eight specific measures recommended by citizens.

For More Information

[Questions and Answers on Nature restoration](#)

[Factsheet on Nature Restoration Law](#)

[Factsheet on Biodiversity and resilience](#)

[Brochure: Restoring nature](#) (existing projects in Member States)

[Questions and Answers on Pesticides](#)

[Factsheet on reducing the risk and use of pesticides in Europe](#)

[Factsheet on more sustainable use of pesticides in Europe](#)

[Factsheet on supporting farmers to reduce the use of chemical pesticides](#)

[Interactive educational experience: Pollinator Park](#)

IP/22/3746

Press contacts:

[Adalbert JAHNZ](#) (+ 32 2 295 31 56)

[Stefan DE KEERSMAECKER](#) (+32 2 298 46 80)

[Daniela STOYCHEVA](#) (+32 2 295 36 64)

[Anna WARTBERGER](#) (+32 2 298 20 54)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)

Related media

 [Photo competition of DG "Agriculture and Rural development" \(3\)](#)