

# Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020

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**PURPOSE:** to provide a framework for action to enable the EU to reach its 2020 biodiversity target and set it on the right path to attain the 2050 vision.

**BACKGROUND:** biodiversity loss is the most critical global environmental threat alongside climate change — and the two are inextricably linked.

**Current rates of species extinction are unparalleled.** Driven mainly by human activities, species are currently being lost 100 to 1000 times faster than the natural rate: according to the FAO, 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably; 75% of fish stocks are over-exploited or significantly depleted and 75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost worldwide since 1990.

An estimated **13 million hectares of tropical forests are cleared each year** and 20% of the world's tropical coral reefs have already disappeared, while 95% will be at risk of destruction or extreme damage by 2050 if climate change continues unabated.

In the EU, **only 17% of habitats and species and 11% of key ecosystems protected under EU legislation are in a favourable state.** This is in spite of action taken to combat biodiversity loss, particularly since the EU 2010 biodiversity target was set in 2001.

**The EU mandate:** in March 2010, EU leaders recognised that the 2010 biodiversity target would not be met despite some major successes, such as establishing Natura 2000, the world's largest network of protected areas. They therefore endorsed the long-term vision and ambitious headline target proposed by the Commission in its Communication 'Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010'.

- **2050 vision:** by 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides — its natural capital — are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.
- **2020 headline target:** halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

**The global mandate:** the tenth Conference of the Parties (CoP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Nagoya in 2010, led to the adoption of a global Strategic Plan for biodiversity 2011-2020, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation (ABS Protocol), and a strategy to mobilise resources for global biodiversity. The EU 2020 biodiversity strategy responds to both mandates, setting the EU on the right track to meet its own biodiversity objectives and its global commitments.

**CONTENT:** this strategy is aimed at **reversing biodiversity loss and speeding up the EU's transition towards a resource efficient and green economy.** It is an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and in particular the resource efficient [Europe flagship initiative](#).

The 2020 Biodiversity strategy includes **six mutually supportive and inter-dependent targets** that respond to the objectives of the 2020 headline target. Each target is broken down into a package of actions designed to respond to the specific challenge addressed by the target.

**Target 1: Conserving and restoring nature:** to halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status so that, by 2020, compared to current assessments: (i) 100% more habitat assessments and 50% more species assessments under the Habitats Directive show an improved conservation status; and (ii) 50% more species assessments under the Birds Directive show a secure or improved status.

**Target 2: Maintaining and enhancing ecosystems and their services:** this target incorporates the global target agreed by EU Member States and the EU in Nagoya to restore 15% of degraded ecosystems by 2020.

**Target 3: Ensuring the sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fisheries:**

- **Agriculture:** by 2020, maximise areas under agriculture across grasslands, arable land and permanent crops that are covered by biodiversity-related measures under the CAP so as to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and to bring about a measurable improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by agriculture and in the provision of ecosystem services as compared to the EU2010 Baseline, thus contributing to enhance sustainable management.
- **Forests:** by 2020, Forest Management Plans or equivalent instruments, in line with Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), are in place for all forests that are publicly owned and for forest holdings above a certain size (to be defined by the Member States or regions and communicated in their Rural Development Programmes) that receive funding under the EU Rural Development Policy so as to bring about a measurable improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats that depend on or are affected by forestry and in the provision of related ecosystem services as compared to the EU 2010 Baseline.

**Target 4: Ensuring the sustainability of fisheries:** the aim is to achieve Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015. Achieve a population age and size distribution indicative of a healthy stock, through fisheries management with no significant adverse impacts on other stocks, species and ecosystems, in support of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020, as required under the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#).

**Target 5: Combating invasive alien species:** by 2020, Invasive Alien Species and their pathways are identified and prioritised, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and pathways are managed to prevent the introduction and establishment of new IAS.

**Target 6: Addressing the global biodiversity crisis:** the EU has pledged to meet the international 2020 biodiversity goals and objectives agreed to under the CBD. This requires taking action within the EU, but also at global level since the EU derives significant benefits from global biodiversity and is at the same time responsible for some of the loss and degradation that occurs beyond its borders, notably due to its unsustainable consumption patterns. Through this strategy, targeted efforts will strive to alleviate pressure on biodiversity emanating from the EU while contributing to greening the economy in line with EU priorities for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The EU will also need to meet specific COP10 commitments relating to resource mobilisation and implement the Nagoya Protocol on ABS if it is to continue to lead international biodiversity policy.

**Follow-up:** this strategy provides a framework for action to enable the EU to reach its 2020 biodiversity target and set it on the right path to attain the 2050 vision. It will be subject to a **mid-term review in early**

**2014**, so that results can feed into the preparation of the EU's fifth National Report as required under the CBD. The targets and measures will be reconsidered as new information becomes available and progress is made on the objectives set in the strategy.

Because many of the actions taken today to safeguard biodiversity and enhance our natural assets will take a long time to bring about real improvements, implementation of this strategy needs to begin now for the EU to meet its 2020 headline target.