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Circular Future for Rural Areas

Policy Brief

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Soil Health

Under the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030, part of the European Green Deal, in July 2023 the European Commission presented a **new EU soil strategy for 2030**, with the aim of having all EU soil ecosystems in a healthy condition by 2050. To achieve this objective, on 5 July 2023 it tabled a proposal for a soil monitoring and resilience directive, laying down **measures for monitoring and assessing soil health, based on a common definition of what constitutes healthy soil, for managing soils sustainably, and for tackling contaminated sites**. The EU Parliament adopted its position at first reading. MEPs voted a more cautious position than the Envi Commission's proposals. Parliament voted to exclude raw material deposits from the definition of soil.

It added **flexibility for monitoring and assessing soil health**, allowing Member States to apply the soil descriptors that best illustrate the soil characteristics of each soil type at national level. Parliament decided not to retain the mandatory timeline proposed in the ENVI report for upgrading soil status. It voted to remove Member States' obligations to define sustainable soil management practices, regularly assess the effectiveness of the measures taken, and review and revise them if necessary. It therefore also **deleted the proposed list of sustainable soil management principles**. Parliament deleted the proposed provisions on penalties. **Conclusions: it is unlikely we will see significant legislation relative to soil health in this Parliamentary term (until 2029).**

Bioeconomy Strategy

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CAP

The last Bioeconomy Strategy was issued in 2018 and is due for revision in 2025.

This will probably be delayed until 2026.

The strategy **should go hand in hand with a Biomass Strategy**, in our opinion, to create a level playing field for the use of biomass both for energy as well as for materials, to help defossilise some sectors of our economy such as the chemical industry.

We have time to work this year on **formulating ideas and alliances** with other groups.

The CAP will be renegotiated in 2025 and is a **Commission priority**. Working groups are being formed across the DGs. The **first proposals** for reform will be known **April/May**. The reform will be based largely on the Strategic Review of Future of EU Agriculture delivered on September 4th, 2024, to the President of the Commission by an independent panel involving associations, industry and NGOs and which made 14 recommendations to change the CAP when it comes for renegotiation before implementation in 2027. **It is important all groups give their opinions when consultations arise.**

Integration of short supply chains

Logistical Module
Pre-Treatment
Real time monitoring of biomass conditions

Vegan protein
Adhesives



Feed
Bio fertilisers
Bio herbicides
Bio lubricants



Bio plastics
Cosmetics



Nature Restoration Targets

Regulation, part of the Biodiversity Strategy

An ambitious law was approved in June 2024, and now we shall see how this is implemented. By mid 2026 EU countries should present plans to the Commission showing how they will achieve the targets. They are:

Targets based on existing legislation (for wetlands, forests, grasslands, river and lakes, heath & scrub, rocky habitats and dunes) - improving and re-establishing biodiverse habitats on a large scale, and bringing back species populations by improving and enlarging their habitats

Pollinating insects – reversing the decline of pollinator populations by 2030, and achieving an increasing trend for pollinator populations, with a methodology for regular monitoring of pollinators

Forest ecosystems – achieving an increasing trend for standing and lying deadwood, uneven aged forests, forest connectivity, abundance of common forest birds and stock of organic carbon

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Urban ecosystems: no net loss of green urban space and tree cover by 2030, and a steady increase in their total area from 2030

Agricultural ecosystems: increasing grassland butterflies and farmland birds, the stock of organic carbon in cropland mineral soils, and the share of agricultural land with high-diversity landscape features; restoring drained peatlands under agricultural use

Marine ecosystems: restoring marine habitats such as seagrass beds or sediment bottoms that deliver significant benefits, including for climate change mitigation, and restoring the habitats of iconic marine species such as dolphins and porpoises, sharks and seabirds.

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River connectivity – identifying and removing barriers that prevent the connectivity of surface waters, so that at least 25 000 km of rivers are restored to a free-flowing state by 2030

For farmers it presents great opportunities and also challenges as much land will be set aside for nature regeneration.

Forging **robust rural bio-communities**

Organisational Module

Capacity building and cooperation international workshops

Environmental assessment

EU Pillars

Policy and Standards

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Production of **value-added bio products**

End products validation

ITALY

Sunflower
Cardoon
Safflower

SPAIN

Potato

DENMARK

Rapeseed

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