

EU MATTERS

NIEL's Monthly European Environmental News



Agriculture

[How to increase the uptake of environmentally friendly fertilisers in Germany](#)

Fertilisers have boosted crop yields but at the same time can have negative effects on the environment. This study investigates fertiliser 'eco-innovations', with reduced environmental impact in Germany.

[Dietary changes will help more sustainable agriculture meet increased global food demand](#)

Researchers have assessed how changes in production efficiency and dietary patterns can combine to ensure food supply whilst minimising the global environmental impact of food production. The gain in the production efficiency of agriculture was found to be insufficient to meet future food demand whilst preventing additional environmental burdens, if dietary trends continue to grow based on GDP.

Air Quality

[EU air pollution law approved: now is the time for action](#)

The updated National Emission Ceilings (NEC) directive sets air pollution limits that are expected to halve the health impact of air pollution by 2030, compared to 2005 levels. But this is far from sufficient: even after full implementation of the directive in 2030, around 250,000 Europeans are still likely to die prematurely because of air pollution every year (EEB)

[EU approves new rules for Member States to drastically cut air pollution](#)

The European Parliament and the Council have signed into law the new National Emissions Ceilings (NEC) Directive, based on a Commission proposal that sets stricter limits on the five main pollutants in Europe. It will enter into force on 31 December 2016.

Biodiversity

[Switching to LED street lighting could alter urban bat behaviour](#)

The effect on bats of the replacement of mercury lamps with light-emitting diodes (LEDs) in street lighting has been investigated in a recent study. Artificial light affects bat species differently and the activity of species normally more sensitive to light were affected less by the new LED street lamps than by traditional mercury lamps. Use of LEDs may, therefore, help to reduce the impacts of outdoor lighting on light-sensitive bats, if used at an appropriate level

[Concern over Ecological Focus Areas](#)

The EEB and BirdLife Europe commissioned a study which revealed that 'Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs)' - a flagship Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) nature protection measure - will deliver negligible benefits for Europe's wildlife. This is particularly worrying given the low level of nature on arable landscapes. (EEB)

[Nature dodges bullet: huge public campaign saves EU nature laws](#)

President Juncker and his Commission have today confirmed that the EU's flagship nature laws – the Birds and Habitats Directives – will be saved and not rewritten and weakened, ending two years of uncertainty over the laws' future. They have also called for a plan to better implement these laws. (EEB)

[Commission refers France to the Court of Justice over its failure to protect wild birds](#)

The Commission is taking France to the Court of Justice of the EU for failing to address continued violations of EU legislation on the conservation of wild birds. Member States are obliged to ensure that all



Brexit: Updates on NIEL's EU Policy work after the UK Referendum decision can be found [here](#).

provisions of the Birds Directive are respected, including with regard to deliberate killing or capture. (European Commission)

Climate Change

[The Commission welcomes entry into force of Paris Agreement ahead of UN climate conference](#)

The Paris Agreement legally enters into force 30 days after the EU's ratification pushed it past the threshold to take effect. The historic event comes less than a year after the landmark agreement was adopted and just days ahead of the UN climate conference in Marrakech, Morocco. (European Commission)

[Commission invests over €220 million in green and low-carbon projects in Member States](#)

The European Commission has approved an investment package of €222.7 million from the EU budget to support Europe's transition to a more sustainable and low-carbon future. The EU funding will spur additional investments leading to a total of €398.6 million to be invested into 144 new projects in 23 Member States. (European Commission)

[Making urban neighbourhood more resilient to floods? New assessment tool trialled in Hamburg](#)

A method for assessing urban neighbourhoods' resilience to flooding has been presented in a recent study. The method identifies features of urban landscapes that contribute to three elements of flood resilience: resistance, absorption and recovery. In a German case study, the tool shows that the features which make a waterfront neighbourhood of Hamburg more flood resilient include high bridges, open public spaces and flood-protected basements.

[Sustainable drainage systems: new ecosystem services-based evaluation methods](#)

Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) could be made better for biodiversity and local people with the help of two new evaluation methods presented by a recent study. The methods, which assess the value of SuDS sites for wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, recreation and education, are described by the study's authors as cost-effective, quick and reliable, and could help designers plan and retrofit SuDS that are wildlife-friendly and socially inclusive

[Better predictions of climate change impact on wildlife thanks to genetically informed modelling](#)

The effects of climate change on the distribution of species can be predicted more accurately by considering the genetic differences between different groups of the same species, a new study suggests. The researchers found that a computer model which incorporated genetic information on different groups of a US tree species was up to 12 times more accurate in predicting tree locations than a non-genetically informed model.

Energy

[State aid: Commission authorises UK support to convert unit of Drax power plant from coal to biomass](#)

The European Commission has concluded that UK support for the conversion of one unit of the Drax power station from coal to biomass complies with EU state aid rules. The project will further EU environmental and energy targets without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market

Freshwater

[Spain faces fines for not complying with judgment over poor waste water collection and treatment](#)

The European Commission is taking Spain back to the Court of Justice of the EU for its failure to fully and completely comply with the Court judgement of 2011. Spanish regional authorities must ensure that urban waste water is adequately collected and treated in 17 agglomerations across the country to prevent serious risks to human health and the environment.



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[Understanding the world's surface water: a new interactive tool to guide European and global policies](#)

The Global Surface Water Explorer is a new online interactive mapping tool that will be accessible to everyone and serve to improve European and global policies for example on climate change and water management. (European Commission)

Marine

[International ocean governance: EU's contribution for safe, secure, clean and sustainably managed oceans](#)

The global ocean economy is estimated at €1.3 trillion. Climate change, poverty and food security are some of the global challenges that can be effectively addressed, if oceans are better protected and sustainably managed. (European Commission)

[Ocean acidification—caused by climate change likely to reduce the survival rate of Atlantic cod](#)

The impact of ocean acidification — caused by increased carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions dissolving in sea water — on Atlantic cod larvae has been assessed in a new study. The researchers estimate that, under scenarios which might be reached at the end of the century, ocean acidification could double the mortality rate of cod larvae, reducing replenishment of juvenile fish into cod fisheries to 24% of previous recruitment.

Planning

[Green buildings: researchers call for fuller environmental assessment](#)

Over half of a low-energy building's environmental impact occurred before it was even occupied, a new case study from Italy calculates. The researchers recommend expanding the environmental assessment of buildings from just the operational stage of a building's life, when it is in use, to include production and transport of materials, construction activities and building maintenance. A wide range of environmental impacts should also be considered, they argue, and not just energy use.

Sustainable Development

[Sustainable Development: EU sets out its priorities](#)

The European Commission has set out a strategic approach for achieving sustainable development in Europe and around the world.

Waste

[Tackling marine litter with the circular economy and the EU Plastics Strategy](#)

Plastics are the single most important and visible contributor to marine litter. As a global leader in the production of plastics (around 50 megatonnes per year), the generation of plastic waste (around 8 Mt per year to landfill), and the export of plastic waste (3.4 Mt per year), the EU has a responsibility to lead action on plastic pollution. (IEEP)

[Limits to the circular economy?](#)

In a short space of time the circular economy has been adopted as a framework for delivering sustainable economic growth. In Europe, a net importer of raw materials, this presents an opportunity for creating new markets, new jobs as well as reducing environmental degradation. (IEEP)

[New system to convert food waste into fertiliser for greenhouse use gives potential 95% reduction in CO₂ emissions](#)

A new method of processing food waste into fertiliser has been outlined in a recent study. The process uses a digester system with microorganisms to break down organic waste into fertiliser. The resultant fertiliser was used in a low-energy greenhouse to produce a range of food crops. The method is a potential way to utilise food waste and reduce the energy consumption of food production as part of a circular economy (European Commission)



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