

The Nature Restoration Law sets out binding targets to restore all degraded ecosystems in the EU by 2050, based on the evidence that nature restoration can increase ecosystem resilience, capture and store carbon, prevent and reduce the impacts of natural disasters, and provide health and economic benefits for society.

The **proposal is currently being negotiated the EU Parliament and will be voted on 15 June**, in the European Parliament Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). The negotiations and public debates are now focusing mainly on the topic of food security, particularly in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine and fears of reduced food production and shortages.

MEPs and Civil Society Organisations discussed the Nature Restoration Law and the benefits that such law could bring, during a policy debate organised by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP), with MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen and with the support of the European Parliament “Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”.

In this context, IEEP, together with Think Sustainable Europe members (IEEP’s network of sustainability think tanks) convened this timely policy debate. IEEP and TSE are committed to engaging with policymakers to support a science-informed and transparent debate around the Nature Restoration Law, which is regarded as a core element of the European Green Deal. IEEP and the Ecologic Institute published a series of policy briefs on the benefits of nature restoration to inform policymakers of its crucial importance.

In her opening remarks, **MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen** (EPP) highlighted that we were living “a historical moment for the EU and humanity, to define the place of humans on the planet and how destructive they can be”, as well as the fact that, under current costs of global economy, “no farming or forestry system is going to survive”. MEP Pietikäinen also pointed out how crucial the timing is, and that the proposal needs to pass now.

Irina Levinsky (Nature Restoration Lead at European Environment Agency - EEA), set the scene to participants, observing that 50% of all species in Europe depend on healthy ecosystems and their restoration, including agricultural habitats for food production. The State of nature in the EU 2020 report found that 80% of protected habitats in the EU are in poor condition, and that agricultural habitats do not fare better. Restoration of habitats leads to healthier ecosystem services which reduce the consequences of natural disasters and ensure persistence of genetic diversity. Some restoration measures such as peatland restoration also contribute to climate change mitigation, carbon sequestration, flood sequestration and restoration of biodiversity.

The policy debate continued with a roundtable discussion, moderated by Evelyn Underwood,

IEEP Head of the Biodiversity programme with interventions by MEP Jutta Paulus (Greens), Sabien Leemans (WWF), and by Niall Curley (Copa-Cogeca) and Daniel Voces (Managing Director, Europêche), respectively representing policymakers, civil society organisations and stakeholder groups (farmers and fishers). The debate focused on the opposition campaign led by EPP and supported by some stakeholder organisations such as Copa-Cogeca and Europêche, which according to MEP Jutta Paulus is based on a “lot of myths” and unsubstantiated claims.

The stakeholder representatives insisted that they did not reject biodiversity protection measures in general but the Nature Restoration Law proposal itself, which Niall Curley called a “bad law” with no dedicated funding to support those who implement the restoration measures and which will have an impact on food security. This statement was backed by Daniel Voces who listed the burdens fishers face such as competition for space, energy prices and inflation. Sabien Leemans however argued that nature restoration is critically needed to halt [biodiversity](#) loss and fight climate change. It will also support European farmers who are already paying for the devastating impacts of **climate change**, brought by the [floods in Italy](#) and droughts in Spain.

In his closing remarks, **MEP Cesar Luena** (S&D), rapporteur of the proposal at the European Parliament, pointed out that inter-groups’ negotiations have been intense and resulted in the inclusion of most of the requests by his political counterparts within the Parliament. He also underlined some of the key additions made to the proposal presented by the Commission (such as the inclusion of food security in the law’s subject matter). MEP Luena concluded by mentioning that since many substantial and innovative policies have been recently approved effectively and quickly, he hopes that we can pass this new nature law as the next step in the 70 years of EU construction.

Source: IEEP