



What's New?

[COP15 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD), held on 9-20 May in Abidjan, under the theme 'Land. Life. Legacy: From scarcity to prosperity', adopted 38 decisions to improve drought resilience, reduce land degradation and invest in land restoration efforts, including to:

- accelerate the restoration of one billion hectares of degraded land by 2030 through improved data collection, monitoring, and reporting;
- boost drought resilience by improving a new partnership model for large-scale integrated landscape investment programmes;
- improve national policies and early warning, monitoring, and assessment, in particular as related to sand and dust storms and drought;
- establish an Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought for 2022-2024 to support a shift from reactive to proactive drought management;
- improve women's involvement in land management by ensuring secure land tenure and collecting gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought;
- ensure greater synergies among the 3 Rio Conventions, incl. in the implementation of these treaties through nature-based solutions and target-setting at the national level;
- strengthen the participation of civil society organizations and youth.

New commitments adopted during the COP include:

- the [Abidjan Call](#) issued by the Heads of State and Government attending the Summit;
- the [Abidjan Declaration on Achieving Gender Equality for Successful Land Restoration](#), which emerged from the Gender Caucus;
- the [Land, Life and Legacy Declaration](#), incl. the Abidjan Legacy Programme, a comprehensive and innovative approach to fight against deforestation through forest restoration, aiming to restore 20% of the Ivorian forest cover by the end of the decade, worth USD1.5 billion (of which €500 million from the EU).

Other initiatives launched during the COP include:

- the [Business for Land Initiative](#), to showcase commitments made by participating companies towards land degradation neutrality, both in supply chains and corporate social responsibility activities; and
- the [Sahel Sourcing Challenge](#) to enable communities growing the Great Green Wall to use technology to monitor progress, create jobs, and commercialize their produce.

- **Wheat prices climbed to new highs** in May. Since January, European wheat prices have jumped 74% and benchmark palm oil futures went up 24%. Pressure on markets and burden on vulnerable countries increased with India's decision to ban wheat exports and U.S. government's reporting that their global production yields will post a decline for the first time in several years.

- Vice-President Josep Borrell announced that [the EU will support over 70 partners in boosting output and resilience and sustainability of their food systems](#) to increase their food capacity in the medium term.
- UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched a [Crisis Response Initiative](#) on 11 May, to ensure that small-scale farmers in high-risk countries can **produce food** over the next few months to feed their families and communities, while reducing the threat to future harvests.
- [Some changes agreed upon in COP26 have been derailed](#) by the war in Ukraine and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, especially in the areas of climate financing, phasing out coal, ramping up electric car production and halt global deforestation. Alok Sharma, the UK's president of COP26, returned to Glasgow on 15 May to say that [current crises should increase world leaders' determination to honour the Glasgow climate pact](#). Every country must respond to the call to revisit and strengthen their NDCs, and they must do so in 2022.
- [The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program \(GAFSP\) announced on 16 May its decision to scale up its ambition on climate](#). Now, all projects from this US\$2 billion multilateral financing platform will support, enhance, and/or align with national or global agricultural climate strategies and commitments to combat climate change, and project design will be informed by climate vulnerability analyses.
- The heatwave scorching India and Pakistan has been made 30 times more likely by the climate crisis, according to scientists. [Temperatures in Pakistan have skyrocketed](#), reaching over 50°C in some areas, while in India, the mercury rose to 46°C. Extreme temperatures and low rainfall since mid-March have caused human and animal deaths, crop losses, forest fires, and cuts to power and water supplies.
- [Vanuatu's push for the international court of justice to protect vulnerable nations from climate change](#) has received the backing of 1,500 civil society organisations from more than 130 countries, as it heads toward a crucial vote at the UN General Assembly later this year. In 2021 Vanuatu announced its intention to seek an advisory opinion by the international court of justice on the rights of present and future generations to be protected from climate change
- [USAID released its 2022-2030 climate change strategy](#) end of April, incl. 6 pillars: mitigation, natural and managed ecosystems, adaptation, through the President's Emergency Plan for Adaptation and Resilience (PREPARE) initiative aiming to help 500 million people improve their climate resilience; climate finance –mobilising USD150 billion in public and private finance; country support, aligning with climate plans in at least 80 countries by 2024; critical populations, to help marginalised groups achieve meaningful participation and active leadership in climate action.
- In the context of the **Sustainable Energy for All Forum** held on 17-19 May, side meetings led to 11 governments (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) agreeing on the importance of articulating a collective position as a bloc of African countries on the just and equitable energy transition.
- The foreign secretary, Liz Truss unveiled on 16 May [UK's new aid strategy](#), including a cut in UK aid going to multilateral bodies from 40% of the budget to 25% by 2025. Other priorities are climate finance and humanitarian aid, set at £3bn over the next three years. Africa remains a priority for the UK together with the Indo-Pacific. The paper did not give a date for when the UK will return its overall aid budget to 0.7% of GNI. The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has said he expects it won't be before 2024-2025.
- Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida laid out a [plan to issue "green transition" bonds](#) worth 20 trillion yen (USD157 billion) to help finance investment to achieve a carbon-neutral society.
- [India plans to reopen more than 100 coal mines](#): recovery from the pandemic and the current heatwave boost fuel consumption and air conditioning use, prompting the government to step up imports and Coal India to ramp up production to address supply shortages –in the world's third biggest GHG emitter.

NEW

- On 18 May, the Commission adopted **an energy package** addressing the hardship and global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine including:
 - The **REPowerEU Plan**, puts forward a set of actions to save energy, diversify supplies, substitute fossil fuels by accelerating Europe's clean energy transition and smartly combine investments and reforms.
 - The **'EU Save Energy' Communication** aiming to achieve immediate energy savings through voluntary choices and to accelerate and strengthen structural, mid- to long-term energy efficiency measures.
 - The **Communication on Short-Term Energy Market Interventions and Long-Term Improvements to the Electricity Market Design**, 'a course for action' to tackle the impact of sustained high energy prices and the possibility of a disruption to the supply of Russian gas, as well as to optimise the functioning of the European electricity market to face future price volatility and make it fit for the future decarbonised energy system, with an increasing share of renewables in electricity production.
 - **The EU external energy engagement strategy** aiming to:
 - strengthen EU energy security, resilience and open strategic autonomy by diversifying the EU's energy supply and boosting energy savings and efficiency;
 - accelerate the global green and just energy transition to ensure sustainable, secure and affordable energy for the EU and the world;
 - support Ukraine and other countries that are directly or indirectly affected by the Russian aggression;
 - build long-lasting international partnerships and promote the EU clean energy industries across the globe.

COMING SOON

- **The Nature protection package**, expected on 23 March, has been postponed. It will include:
 - A revision of EU rules on the **Sustainable use of pesticides**, as a follow up of the Farm to Fork Strategy
 - Nature restoration targets (Protecting biodiversity), focused on the EU
- Council Conclusions on Biodiversity are expected to be adopted soon (still under the French Presidency).
- **Joint Communication on international ocean governance**, planned for June 2022.
- Zero pollution package, incl.:
 - A revision of the Regulation on classification, labelling and packaging (Q2)
 - Revised lists of surface and groundwater pollutants for integrated water management (Q2)
 - A revision of EU ambient air quality legislation (Q3)
- Plastics package, incl.:
 - Policy framework for bio-based, biodegradable and compostable plastics (Q2)
 - Restriction on microplastics (Q4)
 - Measures to reduce the release of microplastics in the environment (Q4)
- Circular Economy Package II, incl.:
 - Review of the Packaging and packaging waste directive;
 - Proposal for a Regulation on substantiating environmental claims using the Product/ Organisation Environmental Footprint methods
 - Review of the Urban Wastewater Treatment directive

- Climate measures package, incl.:
 - A review of EU rules on fluorinated greenhouse gases (Q2)
 - EU framework for harmonised measurement of transport and logistics emissions (Q4)
 - A review of the CO2 emission standards for heavy-duty vehicles (Q4)
 - Carbon removal certification (Q4)

New Reports

In its annual [Global Food Policy Report “Climate Change & Food Systems”](#) published on 12 May, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) highlights the interactions between food systems and climate change. Food systems contribute substantially to greenhouse gas emissions (34%) and other environment issues, and in turn climate change is already reducing agricultural yields and disrupting food supply chains. By 2050, climate change is expected to put millions of people at risk of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. IFPRI’s recommendations include:

- Food production, distribution, and consumption practices must all be adapted to climate change to better support rural livelihoods and provide healthy diets for all.
- Significant GHG mitigation can be achieved in the agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU) sector by reducing nitrous oxide emissions, esp. from fertilizers and methane emissions from paddy rice and enteric fermentation produced by cattle and other ruminants.
- On the demand side, shifting food consumption toward healthy diets (i.e. without the excessive consumption of highly processed foods and red meats prevailing in ‘advanced’ countries) would have a much lower ecological footprint. This change should be promoted via national dietary guidelines or via the use of standards, certification and labelling.
- Improving value chain efficiency and facilitating trade can help reduce price volatility and food loss. Technology innovations can also accelerate sustainable food systems transformation e.g. in irrigation, cold chains and drying technologies, as well as digital ones incl. with data use or e-logistics.
- Governance through integrated landscape approaches has potential to achieve sustainable use of land, water, forest, and energy resources, incl. via multi-stakeholder platforms and the inclusion of vulnerable groups, while expanding social protection programmes.
- Financial flows and incentives need to be reoriented to support sustainable food production and consumption.

- Chatham House issued on 24 May a new research paper on [‘Sustainable agriculture and food system’](#), an urgent topic given the high contribution of agriculture to global warming, deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil degradation and the emergence of disease, but little consensus among policymakers on how to move towards sustainability. The paper seeks to clarify the debate by examining **two distinct versions of sustainability**: ‘sustainable’ intensification and land sparing, versus agro-ecology and land sharing.
- The [2022 Global Report on Food Crises](#) was released on 4 May by the Global Network Against Food Crises, an international alliance which includes the EU, FAO, and WFP. It shows that:
 - Levels of hunger surpassed all previous records in 2021, with close to 193 million people acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 53 countries and territories, an increase of nearly 40 million people compared to 2020.
 - The outlook for global acute food insecurity is expected to deteriorate further due to the war in Ukraine and its repercussions on global food, energy, and fertilizer prices and supplies, with as many as 181 million people forecast to be in crisis or worse in 41 out of the 53 countries and territories surveyed.
- The [UN Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2022 ‘Bridging the finance divide’](#) released on 12 April highlights the finance divide which leaves developing countries unable to respond to crises and invest in sustainable development. About 60% of LDCs and other low-income countries are now assessed at a high risk of or in debt distress –twice as much as in 2015. This is worsened by the Ukraine conflict

through higher energy and commodity prices, renewed supply chain disruptions, higher inflation coupled with lower growth, and increased volatility in financial markets. The report recommends 3 sets of actions:

- Taking urgent measures to address financing gaps, rising costs of borrowing and heightened debt risks, incl. a need to increase public financing. The international community should work to reduce borrowing costs and volatility from commercial sources and address debt overhangs to reduce debt burdens.
 - Aligning all financing flows with sustainable development and climate action.
 - Enhancing transparency and information to strengthen the ability of countries to manage risks and use resources, in line with sustainable development.
- The '[Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022: Our World at Risk: Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future](#)' issued in May by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, highlights that the climate emergency and the systemic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic point to a new reality. The best defense against future shocks is to transform systems now, to build resilience by addressing climate change and to reduce the vulnerability, exposure and inequality that drive disasters. GAR2022 calls for action to measure what we value, design systems to factor in how human minds make decisions about risk, and reconfigure governance and financial systems to work across silos and design in consultation with affected people.
- According to a new [Climate Update 2022-2026](#) issued by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on 9 May, there is a 50:50 chance of global temperature temporarily reaching 1.5°C threshold in next five years. Other findings of the report include:
- The Arctic temperature anomaly, compared to the 1991-2020 average, is predicted to be more than 3 times as large as the global mean anomaly.
 - Compared to the 1991-2020 average, predicted precipitation patterns for 2022 suggest an increased chance of drier conditions over southwestern Europe and southwestern North America, and wetter conditions in northern Europe, the Sahel, north-east Brazil, and Australia. There is an increased chance of wetter conditions in the Sahel, northern Europe, Alaska and northern Siberia, and drier conditions over the Amazon for the May to September 2022-2026 average, as well as increased precipitation in the tropics and reduced precipitation in the subtropics, consistent with the patterns expected from climate warming.
- The latest [Global Land Outlook](#) released by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification recalls that **4 planetary boundaries out of 9 have already been exceeded** –climate change, biodiversity loss, land use change, and geochemical cycles, increasing the risk of widespread, abrupt, or irreversible environmental changes. Up to **40% of global land has already been damaged**, mainly through modern agriculture, with an additional area the size of South America by 2050 if nothing is done. The report recommends:
- Setting land restoration as a priority and integrate it with emission reduction, addressing food insecurity and water scarcity while shifting to more sustainable production and consumption, as well as with accelerated transition to a regenerative, circular economy that reduces waste and pollution.
 - Responsible, inclusive governance and land use planning will be key to protecting healthy and productive land and recuperating biodiverse, carbon-rich ecosystems to avoid dangerous tipping points.
 - Transforming food systems to make sustainable and resilient, as they are responsible for 80% of deforestation, 70% of freshwater use, and are the single greatest cause of terrestrial biodiversity loss.
 - Safeguarding land rights and redirecting investment and incentives.
 - Activating the land restoration agenda in the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.
- DG RTD report on '[The vital role of nature-based solutions in a nature positive economy](#)' addresses the potential economic benefits of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) and the challenges facing Nature-Based Enterprises (NBE). The report profiles some of the economic activities where NBE are engaged in the delivery of NBS – generating new jobs and skills, innovations, and wider economic impacts through a nature-based approach. It examines market trends and needs, incl. knowledge gaps, as well as international perspectives on how NBS can be the backbone of a nature positive economy, incl. some case studies. It also highlights the need for standards on NBS, for measurement and valuation, as well as for stronger regulation combined with incentives for change and awareness raising to drive market demand for NBS. Investment and financing frameworks should also be developed to cover that area.

- **Replacing 20% of the world's beef consumption with plant-based microbial protein could halve deforestation** over the next three decades, according to a [study published in the journal *Nature*](#) on 4 May, while a 50% replacement would lead to a 82% cut in deforestation by 2050. Additionally, scientists point out that the food systems cause 1/3 of global greenhouse gas emissions, with ruminant meat production being the single largest source. Shifting to a plant-based diet would also reduce water use and eutrophication related to the livestock sector, while having health benefits for populations.
- A new [study published in *Nature*](#) sheds light on how '**Climate change increases cross-species viral transmission risk**'. Scientists predict that species will aggregate in new combinations at high elevations, in biodiversity hotspots, and in areas of high human population density in Asia and Africa, driving the novel cross-species transmission of their viruses an estimated 4,000 times.
- A [study published in *Science*](#) on 28 April warns that **global warming threatens marine biota with losses of unknown severity**. The study quantifies global and local extinction risks in the ocean across a range of climate futures. With accelerating greenhouse gas emissions, species losses from warming and oxygen depletion alone become comparable to current direct human impacts within a century and culminate in a mass extinction rivaling those in Earth's past. Polar species are at highest risk of extinction, while local biological richness declines more in the tropics.
- In a global review on '[Pollution and health: a progress update](#)' published on 17 May in the journal *Lancet Planetary Health*, scientists warn that **pollution is responsible for one in six deaths across the planet**, incl. from contamination of air by fine particulate matter and ozone, freshwater pollution, contamination of the ocean by mercury, nitrogen, phosphorus, plastic, and petroleum waste, poisoning of the land by lead, mercury, pesticides, industrial chemicals, electronic waste, as well as radioactive waste.
- A review published in May in the journal *Biochemical Pharmacology* on '[Establishing causal links between chemical exposures and obesity](#)' shows that **environmental chemicals worsen the global obesity epidemic**.

Calendar



Upcoming

- **30 May - 2 June:** [EU Green Week](#)
- **2-3 June:** UN conference '[Stockholm+50: a healthy planet for the prosperity of all –our responsibility, our opportunity](#)'.
[Side-events](#) will include: the transformation of agri-food systems, Water Alignment, the CODES Action Plan for a Sustainable Planet in the Digital Age, Mayors' dialogue on targeting Zero Waste, Nature-based Restoration, a Roadmap to a Nature Positive Economy, Financing Circularity: for a sustainable recovery and green jobs, Action towards Marine Plastic Pollution, the global kick-off of the EAT-Lancet 2.0 Commission, Investing in the Amazon's future: Empowering indigenous communities as natural custodians.
- **5 June:** [World Environment Day](#) and [World Environment Day Brussels: La Fête de l'Environnement](#)
- **6-9 June:** Second International [High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028](#), in Dushanbe
- **8 June:** [World Oceans Day](#)
- **14 June:** World Bioeconomy Forum roundtable on "[Corporate Leaders and the Financial World](#)", focusing on forest industry leaders, and discussing the topic "What role does the forest industry play in climate change mitigation?"
- **21-22 June:** European Development Days (EDD) under the theme 'Global Gateway: building sustainable partnerships for a connected world'. The event will bring together high-level participants from around the world to take stock of progress on the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy.
- **26-30 June:** [World Urban Forum 11](#) (WUF11), Katowice, Poland (unhabitat.org)
- **5 July:** UNEP Youth and Education Alliance - [YEA! Global Summit](#)

- **5-18 July:** UN [High-level political forum on sustainable development 2022](#)
- **18-23 July:** [Inaugural IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress](#)
- **7-9 September:** [World BioEconomy Forum 2022](#), with talks on climate and climate mitigation
- **5-7 October:** 9th OECD Forum on Green Finance and Investment, virtual conference



Past

- **28 April:** [UN High Level Meeting – Review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda](#), New York
- **2 May:** FAO [XV World Forestry Congress](#) in South Korea
- **9 May:** [15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD COP 15\)](#) in Côte d'Ivoire
- **9 May:** [UN Forum on Forests – 17th session](#) - New York
- **9-20 May:** [COP15 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD) in Abidjan
- **19 May:** [Sustainable Energy for All Forum](#) in Kigali
- **21-26 May:** [Global Land Forum](#)
- **20 May:** [World Bee Day](#)
- **21 May:** [LIFE programme 30th anniversary](#)
- **22 May:** [International day for biological diversity](#)

Training and e-learning

Trainings, webinars, e-learning

- INTPA Academy course on '[Sustainable Food Systems for better Nutrition: The key to achieving SDG 2](#)'
- FAO International Technical Webinar '[How can policy monitoring support better decision making in agrifood systems?](#)'

Still available if you did not have the opportunity to follow them:

- The [E-course on Circular Economy](#) (5 modules)
- 5 Webinars on "**Greening EU Cooperation**" for the second part of the year! More info soon.

Tools available

- The [Land Matrix](#) is an EU-funded open-access platform on land monitoring acquisitions (LSLAs). It promotes transparency and accountability in decisions over LSLAs in low- and middle-income countries by sharing data at global, regional, and national level.
- The [Nature Benchmark](#) launched end of April by the World Benchmarking Alliance aims to examine how the impacts of business contribute to stable and resilient ecosystems which enable humanity and nature to co-exist within planetary boundaries. The benchmark assessments will measure and track corporate performance towards a nature-positive future by measuring how companies are reducing their impact and even regenerating ecosystems. It will measure 1000 influential companies across 22 industries, to incentivise them to adopt a nature-positive strategy that leaves no one behind.
- DG INTPA issued a video on [forest partnerships](#), to explain this new and holistic EU approach to support sustainable forest management in partner countries.
- The [Salinity Association Group Index \(SAGI\)](#) is a novel tool to assess salinity and monitor the salinisation of fresh-water habitats, which is a growing threat to biotic communities. The aim of this tool is to protect the biodiversity and ecosystem services and goods associated with these systems.

Green tip #10 – Take a step!

On Earth Day, the Commission [officially joined the EU Climate Pact](#), pledging to make its operations climate neutral by 2030. And in May, the “[Act for the Green Transition](#)” campaign was launched.

- You can “take a step” to improve your carbon footprint both at the office and at home: [16 steps are proposed](#), including flying less, switching your energy, greening your money, eating seasonal and eating more plant-based food.
- On [the Count-us-in page](#), you can announce how you want to contribute, inspire others to follow the actions you propose.
- The [Vélomai campaign](#) is nearly finished, but you can still shift to this greener mobility mode whenever you feel like taking the step!
- If you want to discover greener, more sustainable recipes as well as many practical tips, check out the [EU Staff for Climate Cookbook](#).

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