



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss





EU internal action

Overview and challenges

Europe's nature is in decline, with more than 80 % of protected habitat types assessed as being in poor condition ⁽³⁸⁾. Drivers for this decline include changes in land and sea use, the direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution, and invasive species. While both the EU's forest area and terrestrial protected areas have expanded slightly, pressures on biodiversity continue to intensify. The expansion and intensified use of agricultural land and the doubling of urban areas since 1992 have come at the expense of forests, wetlands and grasslands.

The global situation is equally bleak for biodiversity. However, the EU land area at risk of severe soil erosion by water has shrunk slightly since 2010 and the chemical condition of freshwater has improved.

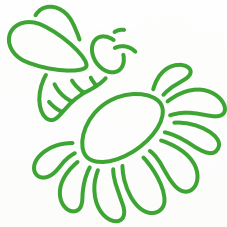
In response to these challenges, the COP-15 of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in December 2022, with four goals and 23 targets to be achieved by 2030. Parties committed themselves inter alia to protecting 30 % of land and inland water and 30 % of coastal and marine areas, restoring 30 % of degraded ecosystems, significantly increasing the area of natural ecosystems, addressing land- and sea-use change through 100 % of spatial planning, reducing the rate of introduction and establishment of invasive alien species

by 50 %, and reducing by half food waste as well as excess nutrients lost to the environment and overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals. Harmful incentives must be identified by 2025 and reduced by USD 500 billion per year thereafter. Biodiversity financing from all sources has to increase to USD 200 billion, including a USD 30 billion increase of international biodiversity financing by 2030. To track progress, a monitoring framework was adopted, including an initial set of 27 headline indicators to be reported by all Parties.

Key initiatives

As a key pillar of the European Green Deal, the [EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) aims to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 by establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas, by implementing an ambitious EU nature restoration plan and by tackling global biodiversity challenges. The Commission's proposal for a Nature Restoration Law calls for binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems, particularly those with the most potential to capture and store carbon. The revised EU pollinators initiative addresses the decline in pollinators. The Birds Directive and the EU Habitats Directive respectively aim to protect all wild bird species and their habitats and to ensure the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic habitat types as well as animal and plant species.

⁽³⁸⁾ See Figure 3.4 page 41 in State of nature in the EU — European Environment Agency (europa.eu).



2030 targets and trends at EU level

Target and policy reference

Legally protect and effectively manage at least 30 % and strictly protect at least 10 % of the EU's land area

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)

Reverse the decline of pollinators by 2030

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)

[EU pollinators initiative](#)

Increase the degree of connectivity in forest ecosystems with a view to creating and integrating ecological corridors

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#) and [8th EAP monitoring framework](#).

Strictly protect all primary and old growth forests

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)

[EU forest strategy for 2030](#)

Reach no net land take by 2050

[EU soil strategy for 2030](#)

Plant at least 3 billion new trees in the EU, in full respect of ecological principles, by 2030

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)

Make significant progress in remediating contaminated soil sites by 2030

[EU biodiversity strategy for 2030](#)

[EU soil strategy for 2030](#)

Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world by 2030

[EU soil strategy for 2030](#)

Trends 2015 – 2023

From 2015 to 2021 data available seem to suggest an increase in protected area coverage. Percentage of terrestrial protected areas have increased from 19.7 % to 26.4 %, however, parts of this increase might be due to improved data-availability. The progress has slowed down in recent years, but the EU seems nevertheless to be on track to meet its 30 % target by 2030.

In recent decades, European wild-insect pollinators such as bees, butterflies, hoverflies and moths have dramatically declined in occurrence and diversity in Europe. Many species are also on the verge of extinction. According to the European Red List, around one in three bee and butterfly species has a declining population, while around one in ten are threatened with extinction.

The average degree of connectivity in forest ecosystems decreased from 72.64 % in 2000 to 72.43 % in 2018 for the EU27.

The trends from 2000 to 2018 are stable at EU27 level but are quite different at national level. For example, Spain showed the highest decrease in connectivity, of 3.1 %, while Latvia had an increase of 2.1 % in the same period.

Primary and old growth forests cover about 3 % of total EU forest area. They are vital for their rich biodiversity, their capture and storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and provision of critical ecosystem services.

Despite a reduction in the last decade (land take was over 1000 km²/year between 2000-2006), land take in EU28 still amounted to 539 km²/year between 2012-2018.

By April 2023, more than 10.6 million trees were planted as part of the 3 Billion Trees Pledge.

In 2016 (latest available data), 1.38 million potentially contaminated sites were registered on an estimated total of 2.8 million. 115 000 contaminated sites were remediated in the EU. Based on current projections, at least 166 000 additional sites are expected to need risk reduction measures or remediation.

During the period 2000-2021, on average 4.5 % (ca. 146,000 km²) of the EU was affected annually by droughts due to low precipitation, high evaporation and heatwaves. The extent of intense drought impacts showed increasing tendency in the EU indicating worsening ecosystem conditions

Target and policy reference

Ensuring forest restoration and reinforced sustainable forest management for climate adaptation and forest resilience by 2030

[EU forest strategy for 2030](#)

Trends 2015 – 2023

The EU share of forests slightly increased by 0.9% between 2015-2018. Over 2013-2018, only about 14% of forest habitats were in good conservation condition, although forests experienced the most improvement. Only about 2% of the forests are considered undisturbed by man, but almost 24% of forests are in areas protected for the conservation of biodiversity and landscape, considerably more than several decades ago. The share of forests designated for landscape and for biodiversity conservation has increased by 8% and 65% respectively in the last 20 years.

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 15 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat's monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs.

The [EU forest strategy for 2030](#) sets out concrete actions to improve the quantity and quality of EU forests and strengthen their protection, restoration and resilience. It includes a roadmap outlining how to achieve the commitment of at least **3 billion additional trees**, including through clear criteria for tree planting, counting and monitoring. The Deforestation Regulation seeks to ensure that products, whether sourced in the EU or from non-EU countries, sold on the EU market do not contribute to global deforestation, thereby aligning EU internal and external policy.

The EU soil strategy for 2030 sets out concrete measures to protect and restore soils and ensure they are used sustainably, with a target to ensure that by 2050 all soils in the EU are healthy. It also includes a medium-term objective for 2030 focusing on combatting desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, which are increasingly affecting the European continent.

Europe's [common agricultural policy \(CAP\)](#) sets requirements to protect utilised agricultural areas against soil erosion. The common agricultural policy has the potential to mitigate the negative impacts of unsustainable farming management and contribute to halting biodiversity loss. The EU [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) aims to make food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly, and contribute, among others, to reversing the loss of biodiversity.

Selected enablers

The EU biodiversity strategy announces ambitious spending targets: at least EUR 20 billion per year should be unlocked for spending on nature; a significant proportion of the 30% of the EU budget dedicated to climate action will be invested on biodiversity and nature-based solutions and under Invest EU, a dedicated natural-capital and circular-economy initiative will be established to mobilise at least EUR 10 billion over the next 10 years, based on public/private blended finance.

Compared to the 2014-2020 period, where the EU's biodiversity-related expenditure reached EUR 85 billion (or 8%

of its overall expenditure), the EU budget 2021-2027 is projected to allocate EUR 112 billion thanks to the mainstreaming of biodiversity throughout the EU programmes, with the ambition of reaching annual spending levels of 7.5% in 2024, increasing to 10% in 2026 and in 2027. A new tracking has been developed to track biodiversity expenditures in EU's multiannual financial framework (for most instruments), as well as tools to help Member States apply sustainability proofing across EU funds and programmes, in line with the Green Deal pledge to Do No Significant Harm (DNSH).

The [LIFE Programme](#) is the EU's key funding instrument for environmental and nature conservation projects, with a budget of EUR 5.4 billion for the period 2021-2027. The LIFE sub-programme for Nature and Biodiversity plays an important role in restoring and safeguarding the condition of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

For example, since 1992, 363 LIFE projects have restored thousands of peatlands through rewetting across Europe. In Belgium, 40% of peatlands have been restored and in Lithuania, the conservation status of degraded bogs has improved thanks to LIFE. LIFE projects have supported both restoration work on the ground and measures to encourage paludiculture, apply innovative financial mechanisms and enhance the benefits provided by peatland ecosystems for health and wellbeing, carbon storage, water filtration and storage, flood protection, recreation and biodiversity habitat. Furthermore, LIFE projects under Circular Economy and Quality of Life, Climate Mitigation and Adaptation and other sub-programmes contribute to developing tools and solutions that also benefit biodiversity. LIFE agricultural projects develop good practices for soil protection and conservation, technologies and decision support tools for farmers. Through over 200 environment and climate projects, the LIFE Programme is helping make the transition to a food system that is fair, sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly – key components of the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy.

Under the 2021-2027 Cohesion policy, the programmed contribution to the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 reaches 6% (EUR 16.6 billion) of the ERDF, CF and



JTF total allocation. This substantial increase compared to the 2014-2020 period reflects the renewed commitment to the protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity.

Under Horizon Europe there is a commitment to dedicating EUR 1.6 billion to support R&I under the 2021-2022 work programme and €1.7 billion under the 2023-2024 work programme in the area of protection and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. Examples of projects recently launched include:

- ▶ ‘SUPERB’: the largest-ever funded forest research project allocating more than EUR 90 million for protection, restoration and sustainably managed forests.
- ▶ ‘PantEOn — A Multi-Scale Earth Observation Indicator System for Land Degradation Assessment of Transitional Mediterranean Climates’: The project aims to obtain evidence about the long-term evolution and regime-shifts due to climate change of the functional and structural properties of Mediterranean ecosystems. This evidence is crucial for the identification of ecosystem resilience thresholds & the development of land degradation indicators.
- ▶ ‘B4EST — Adaptive BREEDING for productive, sustainable and resilient FORESTS under climate change’: B4EST’s goal is to increase forest survival, health, resilience and productivity under the impact of climate change on forest vulnerability, while maintaining genetic diversity and key ecological functions, and fostering a competitive EU bio-based economy.

Another example is the project ‘Framework for assessment of effectiveness of biodiversity conservation measures in Estonia’ supported by the Technical Support Instrument under the call for 2021. The project aims to provide the Estonian Environmental Board with a methodology to assess

the effectiveness of their biodiversity conservation measures. The support measures focus on the development of a methodology and testing it on 20 natural protected sites, the provision of a management plan to support the implementation of the methodology, capacity building for conservation specialists and a roadmap for the digitalisation of processes.

The EU Knowledge Centre for Biodiversity works to enhance the knowledge base, facilitate its sharing and foster cross-sectorial policy dialogue for EU policy making in biodiversity and related fields.

Stakeholder engagement

The EU delivers on SDG 15 in a collaborative approach. For example,

- ▶ The EU Biodiversity Platform is an operational steering group between the Commission, the Member States and stakeholders for the coherent and coordinated implementation of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030.
- ▶ The EU Business @ Biodiversity Platform provides a forum for dialogue and policy interface to discuss the links between business and biodiversity at EU level. Its around 300 members include businesses from a broad variety of sectors and countries, EU trade associations, NGOs, public authorities, governments and international organisations. It supports the integration of biodiversity and natural capital into decision-making process of a critical mass of businesses and financial institutions, for example through natural capital accounting, a methodology for the quantitative measurement of ecosystem services and their values and their incorporation into the accounting systems of a company).

Multi-level approach

SDG delivery implies ambitious action at all levels. Good practices in implementing SDG 15 include:

The Forest Carbon Farms pilot project implemented by the Polish State Forests between 2017 and 2026 concerns new practices in forest management to support CO₂ sequestration, accumulation, and issuing of carbon credits. Operationalisation of the implementation version of the carbon forests project is planned for 2022-2035. As of 2022, the additional amount of CO₂ sequestered by the pilot project is over 936 thousand tonnes of organic carbon, equivalent to 1 tonne of CO₂ that will be accumulated in forests and soil.

At local level, Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, banned pesticide use and encourages the use of plants that are suitable for pollinators. It has 2 100 hectares of protected areas and is creating two green corridors (14 km and 9 km) for animals to move between different green areas. The city promotes biodiverse landscaping to citizens and city developers with a plant



catalogue which rates 900 plants according to their value for pollinators. New parks and neighbourhoods come with embedded communal food growing possibilities. In 2022 Tallinn had 129 educational gardens in schools and kindergartens.

EU external action

Global trends

Terrestrial ecosystems are under immense pressure. The main direct drivers of [biodiversity loss](#) – changes in land and sea use, overexploitation, climate change, pollution, and invasive alien species – are making natural biodiversity disappear quickly. Deforestation, forest degradation and the overall extinction risk of species in selected taxonomic groups are increasing at alarming rates. In 2020, the proportion of forest area in the total land area stood at 31.2%. In the last two decades, the world lost 100 million ha of forest area, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa and LAC. Over the same period, the Red List Index, which measures extinction risk of major species groups and serves as an indicator of the state of global biodiversity, deteriorated by 10%.

On the other hand, at global level, progress has been made on safeguarding sites to improve biodiversity, which is a key requirement for environmental sustainability. Between 2000 and 2020, the protected area coverage of terrestrial and freshwater key biodiversity areas increased from 29% to 42%. Similarly, increased efforts are made to halt land degradation and accelerate the restoration of degraded land. As of July 2021, commitments to land restoration are estimated at 1 billion hectares. In November 2020, the G20 launched an initiative to restore 50% of all degraded land by 2040.

Internal/external coherence including policy coherence for development

Under the European Green Deal (EGD), the EU committed to supporting the achievement of SDG 15 both internally and in partner countries. Relevant internal actions, as well as European consumption, potentially have an impact on the use of terrestrial ecosystems, deforestation, biodiversity and land degradation in partner countries.

Deforestation, of which 90% is provoked by the expansion of agricultural land, is a main driver of climate change and biodiversity loss. The EU contributes to deforestation in non-EU countries by consuming a significant share of products associated with deforestation and forest degradation. As a matter of policy coherence, and in line with the EU's responsibility in ending deforestation and forest degradation, the EU is finalising its work on a [Regulation on deforestation and forest degradation free supply chains](#), which will guarantee that products bought, used, consumed or exported by the EU do not contribute to global deforestation and forest degradation, whether legal or illegal. The mandatory due diligence rules for companies wanting to place these commodities on the EU market are accompanied by dialogue in all the relevant bilateral and multilateral fora, such as the Cocoa Talks with West African countries, and, where needed, by development cooperation funds.



To address illegal logging and improve forest governance, the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) is a mechanism whereby partner countries can issue licenses that guarantee that their timber products meet the EU timber regulation requirements, after having signed Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA) to improve governance and regulatory frameworks leading to greater transparency and accountability, as well as sustainable forest management. VPAs have so far been signed with 5 African, 2 Southeast Asian and one Central American country, with the system being fully operational so far only for timber from Indonesia. In addition, at the UNCCC COP27 the EU signed five Memoranda of Understanding for Forest Partnerships, the new and holistic EU cooperation framework for joint work on forests in the framework of the global gateway strategy, aiming for sustainable forest management, job creation through the value chains, reduction of deforestation, and facilitating trade in legal and sustainable wood products between partner countries and the EU.

Increased internal biodiversity ambition led the EU to integrate the High Ambition Coalitions in view of the negotiation of a global agreement at CBD COP-15. The EU pledged to double its external financing for biodiversity, representing EUR 7 billion between 2021 and 2027 to support partner countries in the implementation of the new global targets. This will notably materialise through flagship initiatives such as NaturAfrica, which promotes a landscape approach that works for biodiversity and land resources, drawing inspiration from the internal Natura 2000 network. Furthermore, the recently established EU Knowledge Centre on Biodiversity, in charge of tracking domestic progress against the EU biodiversity strategy 2030, will also support a global knowledge platform which will track progress against the global agreement.

The EU also strengthened its response to another major driver of global biodiversity loss, the illegal trade of species, by revising in 2022 the [EU wildlife trafficking action plan](#) to scale up enforcement measures, resulting in more seizures and prosecutions. The EU has provided substantial funding for capacity

building and international action against wildlife trafficking in support of local communities and platforms for international action against wildlife trafficking, such as the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime.

Pollution of land and water, notably from hazardous pesticides and chemicals, is another main driver of biodiversity loss. The EU strengthened its internal policies, notably through the farm-to-fork and chemical strategies, which will both have consequences outside of the Union. More specifically, compliance with EU sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) and food safety standards is fundamental for partner countries, as agricultural products, fish, and timber account for a large share of the traded goods. In addition, SPS systems that protect human, animal and plant health are critical to any agricultural value chain, and have a positive impact on domestic, regional and international trade. The 2020 chemicals strategy for sustainability sets the objective to ensure that hazardous chemicals banned in the EU are not produced for exportation; and the zero pollution action plan set an EU integrated vision to achieve by 2050 a toxic-free environment within and outside the EU borders.

More generally, the [evaluation of the EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#) recognised that although the strategy is in line with Agenda 2030 and relates to various interlinked SDGs (14, 15, 12, 13), a more integrated, coherent approach to supporting biodiversity and sustainable development in EU external action could have brought even more synergies and benefits. The evaluation highlights the centrality of natural capital in societal wellbeing and prosperity, and thus achievements in relation to water, climate and life on land and underwater are a precondition for the achievement of all other SDGs.

EU and Member States financial support for SDG implementation and results

There are two main sources of information to track support for SDG 15. As with other SDGs, EU support for SDG 15 can

be estimated where this specific SDG field is marked in projects reported to the OECD-DAC. In addition, the OECD biodiversity and desertification markers can be used to identify measures that contribute to SDG 15 (although also actions related to other SDGs such as 14). The assessments made in preparing this Review indicate that there is scope for greater consistency between these complementary and related reporting tracks.

In 2021, EU institutions reported to the OECD commitments for EUR 4.3 billion in projects contributing to SDG 15. A significant share of the EU contribution is accounted for by projects that target SDG 15 as the main SDG. These projects also contribute to other interlinked SDGs, with the most important ones being SDG 5, SDG 12 and SDG 13. The EU also contributes to SDG 15 through projects targeting the SDG as a significant objective, highlighting the cross-cutting nature of SDG 15. This SDG has been mostly associated with interventions where the main SDG was SDG 2, SDG 8, SDG 13 and SDG 16. In terms of results of the selected assistance ⁽³⁹⁾, a total of 75 million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems are under protection with EU support, while for 69 million hectares EU support contributed to the sustainable management of such ecosystems in the period 2018-2021.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021 contributed EUR 8.7 billion to SDG 15. EU and Member States flows to SDG 15 in 2021 predominantly focused on projects in Africa (44%), Asia (17%) and America and the Caribbean (15%). EU and Member States flows to SDG 15 also have a strong global component (15%). Some of the funding for SDG 15 is accounted for by contributions to global funds. In the case of SDG 15, the most relevant global fund is the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) which has dedicated biodiversity and land degradation windows. Since the GEF was launched in 1991, EU and Member States have contributed approximately EUR 10.6 billion to the fund (46% of all contributions received).

As to the OECD desertification and biodiversity markers, which another source of information to track support for SDG 15, the EU and the 27 Member States reported to OECD EUR 8.2 billion in commitments for projects targeting desertification and biodiversity in 2021. Projects targeting desertification or biodiversity as a significant objective contributed EUR 5.8 billion to this figure, while the remainder is accounted for by projects with desertification or biodiversity as the main objective.

Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

The European Green Deal contains an external dimension which explicitly refers to key strategies such as the biodiversity strategy 2030, the farm to fork strategy or the EU forest

strategy for 2030. Through these strategies, the EU is stepping up its engagement with non-EU countries, at global, regional and bilateral level, to make progress towards SDG 15. In this context, the main EU priorities are to:

- ▶ Support partner countries across the world to achieve the new global targets adopted in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, fight environmental crime, and tackle the drivers of biodiversity loss.
- ▶ Promote the concept of forest partnership to address in an integrated way the several challenges forests are facing and develop innovative and sustainable financing to support forests in partner countries.

The EU further prioritised environmental (and climate) resilience in the funding allocation for disaster preparedness for the period 2021-2024, ensuring that humanitarian action contributes to environmental resilience.

The EU has also developed specific actions such as the NaturAfrica initiative, contributing to the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package designed to protect wildlife and key ecosystems while creating economic opportunities in green sectors and better livelihoods for local populations using the 'landscape approach'. NaturAfrica aims to improve the livelihood of 65 million people, sequestering up to 21 billion tons of carbon, stabilising 3 million km² of land and ensuring water security.

In the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, continuous EU actions on land restoration and alternative livelihoods development support the African-led Great Green Wall initiative, to which the EU has pledged over EUR 700 million/year in 2021 in support of Global Gateway objectives under the Africa-Europe Investment Package. The EU will support a mosaic of bottom-up initiatives to reverse land degradation, sequester carbon and support small-scale farmers and food entrepreneurs to make agri-value chains more resilient. As an example, one million hectares of degraded land will be restored across 8 countries under the regreening Africa programme, notably through the application of agroforestry and farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR). In fact, the Regreening Africa initiative is now close to fulfilling its goal of restoring 1 million hectares of degraded land and reaching 500 000 households with sustainable land management and agro-ecological techniques that improve their livelihoods.

Further, the EU provides support to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) with the aim of linking networks of small-scale farmers and their institutions to global and regional mechanisms involved in research and innovation for crop diversity so that PGRFA materials and data, knowledge gained, and lessons learned are

⁽³⁹⁾ For the methodology on results, see the same section under SDG 2.

exchanged in both directions. The visibility of PGRFA innovations for food systems will serve for evidence-based policy and planning, with particular emphasis on equity, resilience and promoting cooperation at different levels.

The EU is mainstreaming biodiversity across all its interventions; for example, in the food systems area, the promotion of integrated and agro-ecological approaches contributes to the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, including agro-biodiversity.

The EU Member States are also a key source of funding for the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) which focuses on biodiversity protection, nature restoration, pollution reduction and climate change response in developing countries. EU Member States have contributed approximately half of the USD 22 billion in contributions received by the GEF. Through grants and blended finance, the GEF has mobilised another USD 120 billion in co-financing for more than 5 000 national and regional projects. In addition, it has supported 27 000 community-led initiatives through its Small Grants Programme.

Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In relation to SDG 15, in Papua New Guinea, a Team Europe initiative jointly assessed needs and identified the forestry-climate change-biodiversity-renewable energy nexus, with a particular focus on environmental governance and the generation of sustainable jobs and growth, as a critical area for PNG's development where Team Europe can be the partner of reference. This action contributes to Global Gateway and several SDGs (including 15, 13, 8 and 16). Support will be provided for mapping and data, governance and policy development, capacity development, infrastructure, investment promotion, policy/political dialogue and awareness and mobilisation.

The Team Europe initiative Green Deal in the Lao PDR brings the EU, its Member States and other partners together to contribute to Global Gateway objectives and to pursue several SDGs (including 2, 15 and 13) through the support areas with high potential for climate-adaptation and mitigation action, including farm to fork (e.g. agriculture, value chains, food safety, nutrition), forest partnership (e.g. forest restoration, biodiversity, livelihoods, watershed management) and complementary areas (such as infrastructure and connectivity, energy, tourism and green cities).

The EU and its Member States are proposing to support Cambodia with a TEI for sustainable landscapes, forests and agriculture, in line with the country's plan to make agriculture the main driver for economic recovery. This TEI, with an indicative support amount of EUR 375 million (including blending operations), will contribute to Global Gateway objectives and pursue several SDGs (including 2 and 15) by supporting a more

sustainable use of natural resources, combining protection and increased incomes for the rural population.

The Team Europe initiative 'Alliance verte: un partenariat pour les hommes, la nature et une économie' verte in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will contribute to Global Gateway and a range of SDGs (including SDG 15, 8 and 5) by promoting a fair green economy and the protection of biodiversity in priority areas at country and regional levels, joining EU existing efforts with those of 6 Member States already active in protected areas, biodiversity and sustainable forests. Private sector development and the role of women will be at the centre of this initiative.

In the Pacific Islands region, the multi-donor Kiwa Initiative, which supports the use of nature-based solutions for climate resilience by preserving biodiversity, launched its first project in 2021 aiming to establish an agro-ecological farms network. The Voice for Mekong Forest project, implemented by RECOFTC, worked to promote forest governance in several Mekong countries bringing together stakeholders from Lao, Thailand and Vietnam, and has supported the drafting of legal texts to regulate community forests.

In the context of its humanitarian actions, the EU has supported Bangladesh in providing Rohingya refugees with access to liquefied petroleum gas for cooking while supporting reforestation efforts in and around the camps to restore deforested land, and has supported Djibouti, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda with a project that will promote ecosystem restoration and sustainable forest management for enhanced energy access and livelihood resilience in displacement settings.

Together with Austria, the EU supports the development of sustainable mountain tourism & organic agricultural production in Georgia by working with local authorities and public and private sector stakeholders to improve small and medium enterprises' capacities, scale up their activities and improve the business environment, as well as create new income opportunities in the two growth sectors of mountain tourism and organic agriculture.

In North Macedonia, the EU promoted the sustainable use of natural resources and improved the management of protected areas in an inclusive, professional and sustainable way. The programme was implemented in partnership with UNDP, the management authorities of protected areas, municipalities and local civil society organisations, in 24 locations in protected areas, some of which will be future NATURA 2000 sites. In total, 241,755 ha of protected areas today benefit from improved management.

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually reinforcing and coordinated to ensure complementarity and impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives,

EU Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 15. By means of illustration, under the Sahel climate programme, Belgium will help to make about 10 000 hectares of land fertile again through investments in better rainwater storage and in planting trees.

Looking ahead

Key EU policy instruments related to SDG15 are under development. As set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Commission proposal for an EU Nature Restoration Law, under negotiation, sets the target to restore 20 % of EU land and sea areas by 2030. This will also provide the basis for the EU to deliver on the restoration target set by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. As a follow-up to the EU Soil Strategy, a proposal for an EU Soil Health Law is under preparation, to be published in 2023 with the aim to ensure healthy soils by 2050. A legislative proposal on Sustainable Food Systems, also envisaged for adoption in 2023, aims to accelerate and facilitate the transition to sustainable and resilient food systems. As a follow-up to the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, an Integrated Nutrient Management Action Plan is being finalised for adoption. It will also contribute to the 50 % reduction target set at global level. As part of the implementation of the EU Forest Strategy, the Commission will publish in 2023 its proposal for a Forest Monitoring and Planning Law to provide a comprehensive picture of the state and use of forests in the EU and facilitate forest planning and forest policy decision-making.

The Commission intends to publish an assessment of progress in the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 in March 2024. The report will provide an overview of implementation efforts, gaps and challenges, and reflect on the effectiveness of EU biodiversity governance. In 2023, the Commission intends to publish a fitness check of the polluter pays principle. In addition, the EU will continue to work on the EU Regulation on deforestation-free supply chains, to ensure that key goods placed on the EU market will no longer contribute to deforestation and forest degradation in the EU and elsewhere.

The Commission will work with the Member States to step up implementation of the Regulation on Invasive Alien Species and other relevant legislation and international instruments. The aim is to ensure that the introduction and establishment of alien species in the EU environment is minimised and where possible is eliminated, while established invasive alien species are managed.

In 2022, the Commission proposed legislation on ecosystem accounting with the goal of producing national and EU-wide

The aim is to support sustainable local solutions and protect existing eco-systems, including the Great Green Wall project. By combating desertification, local communities can continue to ensure their food security in the longer term.

ecosystem accounts in the second half of the decade. Ecosystem accounts measure the condition of ecosystems alongside their extent and the ecosystem services they provide to society and the economy. The ecosystem services covered by the proposed legislation include wood and crop provision, pollination of crops, the removal from the atmosphere and storage of carbon, and nature-based tourism. The EU proposal is fully aligned with the UN standard [SEEA-EA](#). As one of several monitoring systems, the accounts will also feed into EU's reporting under the new COP-15 monitoring framework. Setting up a system of ecosystem accounts is the EU contribution to the SDG Target 15.9: to integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, and accounts, with the indicator (Indicator 15.9.1: defined as implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting).

The Commission will continue to work on the implementation of COP15 commitments in accordance with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including to protect 30 % of land, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030, restore degraded ecosystems and reduce pollution risks to biodiversity.

On the external side, the EU will continue to take determined action to accelerate the implementation of SDG 15 globally, including through the roll-out of a range of multiannual indicative programmes with partner countries where terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity a shared priority. A tangible contribution to SDG 15 (and other interlinked SDGs) will be the deployment of the Global Gateway strategy and its dedicated regional investment plans at regional and national level, to be undertaken in a Team Europe approach. In the framework of the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, the Commission will support African partners through the deployment of initiatives such as NaturAfrica and the African-led Great Green Wall initiative.

In addition, the minimum environmental requirements and recommendations for EU-funded humanitarian aid operations come into force in 2023. These will promote the sustainable management of forests in and around humanitarian settings, the restoration of degraded land and the halting of biodiversity loss in humanitarian contexts.