

# Protecting biodiversity: nature restoration targets under EU Biodiversity Strategy

The following recommendations are collated from our partnership network, including inputs from our Bratislava conference:

## 1) General principles

- Restoration of degraded natural ecosystems is essential, though protection of existing ecosystems (particularly forest) should be highlighted as more cost-effective. A point often overlooked.
- There is a need for clear definition-driven targets with 5 yearly assessments to 2050 and compulsory (legally binding) MS plans to achieve these
- Non-intervention and natural processes rather than intervention should be prioritised wherever feasible for management of restored areas, particularly in the 10% strict protection area targets (we recommend c 15% for old growth/primary forests), to maximise climate change mitigation & ecosystem benefit and enable a practical, enforceable and cost-effective approach within budgets likely to be available
- Restoration should be from natural regeneration wherever feasible, particularly within degraded old growth/primary forests
- The 3 billion tree planting initiative should focus on creating natural forest, planted at low ecosystem-friendly not commercial densities, with emphasis on food plants to fast-track biodiversity recovery, with non-intervention once established
- Linkage of the 25,000 km river restoration targets to a river basin scale approach for flood management, including restoration of habitats (particularly forest) in upland watersheds and lowland sinks

## 2) Planning

- Restoration Strategy should include a full range of biogeographic locations, not confined to lower-cost uplands and locations of marginal fertility. Habitat mosaics and ecotones should be emphasised
- Focus on large-scale areas is important to secure integrated ecosystem function, species recovery with sustainable gene pools & territorial space, economies of scale from ecosystem services (eg premium pricing for larger carbon projects, river basin scale planning for flood mitigation), space for species adaptation and translocation
- Connectivity, green and blue, should be planned with ecological corridors of appropriate design, width and species content to ensure achievement of objectives - eg movement of species, integration of gene pools - are properly tuned to local biodiversity requirements
- Use of zonation planning involving core, buffer, transition and corridor elements will reconcile conflicting interests and ensure functional integrity with adjacent productive areas
- CAP Reform should include substantial funding restructure to mitigate climate change, enabling creation of large new areas of carbon-sequestering natural ecosystems and engaging the PES (Payment for Ecosystem Services) agenda. Ecological Focus Areas, tradable at regional level for consolidation, could be one means of achieving this. Capital Buy Out funds could be another

## 3) Support for restoration

- It is important to ensure adequate support for local landholders and communities to incentivise their participation, with reform of compensation systems: appropriate payments, well promoted, readily accessible
- Further funding support should be enabled through full activation of the greatly under-utilised PES agenda - converting economic value into cashflow by promoting best

practice and identifying entities able to achieve it. This implies capacity building for skills including ecosystem service valuation, enterprise implementation and facilitation of funding from projects involving carbon sequestration/storage, flood mitigation, water table stabilisation, ecotourism etc

- For ecotourism, appropriate capacity building and ongoing support can greatly enhance value-added for community based enterprise and general rural economic benefit
- New legal structures for very long-term protection in the private sector, such as easements and freehold/leasehold arrangements, to be more widely promoted
- Link Restoration Strategy to the 25% of Climate Fund budget allocated for nature-based solutions