



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

ENVIRONMENT

Sectoral Committee
Weekly Update
17.09.10

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Forest Focus

COM(2010) 430 - REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the implementation of the Forest Focus scheme according to Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 concerning monitoring of forests and environmental interactions in the Community (Forest Focus) – Final report

Regulation (EC) No 2152/2003 (the Forest Focus Regulation) aimed to establish a scheme for long term monitoring of the condition and of the environmental interactions on forests in the European Union. The scheme included the continuation of the existing monitoring networks on air pollution and its impacts on forests, forest fires, their causes and effects and the cofinancing of forest fire prevention activities. It also broadened the scope of EU forest monitoring through the gathering of information on soils, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, climate change effects and protective functions of forests.

This report, together with that drawn up in January 2008, is aimed at understanding how the entire Forest Focus scheme was implemented between 2003 and 2010. The two reports will serve as a basis for reflecting on future monitoring needs and help the consultation process opened in the context of the Green Paper on forest protection and information in the EU as regards how to address forest information in the future.

The Commission's conclusions on the Forest Focus scheme are:

- forest monitoring in the EU has devoted the majority of its financing resources to the intensive monitoring network (Level II).
- Traditional crown condition monitoring has been gathered already for 20 years since EU forests started showing symptoms of acid rain damage. Crown condition can still be considered as a representative and cost effective indicator for the state of forests. Nevertheless, it gives rough information on forest health and it should be complemented with other information on the visible damages.
- Other indicators should be included in future forest monitoring systems, using networks that provide consistent information at EU level.
- Forest soil and biodiversity monitoring should be continued in the future, as they deliver crucial information for EU policy making, but also for contributing to international conventions, such as the UNCCC or the CBD.

The Commission concludes its report by saying that the follow up to the Forest Focus Regulation, the more recent actions under Life+ and the wider issue of forest monitoring will be taken into consideration in the context of the next steps after the Green Paper.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0430:FIN:EN:PDF>



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Biodiversity

Consultation on future options for EU biodiversity policy

Global biodiversity remains under severe threat, with losses occurring at 100 to 1000 times the normal rate. More than a third of species assessed are facing extinction and an estimated 60% of the Earth's ecosystems have been degraded in the last 50 years. In 2001, the EU set itself the target to halt biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010. Efforts to tackle biodiversity loss were subsequently stepped up, and an EU Biodiversity Action Plan was adopted by the Commission in 2006 to accelerate progress. Despite the efforts to date, however, there are clear indications that the EU has not achieved its target. A new approach is therefore required.

The European Commission has launched a web-based consultation to gather input on policy options for the European Union's post-2010 EU biodiversity strategy. Opinions are sought on the existing biodiversity policy, the new approach that the Commission is proposing, farming and biodiversity, the economics of biodiversity, and biodiversity governance inside and outside the EU. The survey asks in particular about areas where current EU legislation is perceived as inadequate or in need of strengthening, and about options for improving the integration of biodiversity policy into other areas. The results will feed into the new strategy which is being developed.

The consultation runs until 22 October 2010.

The consultation can be found at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/biodecline.htm>



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European and International Biodiversity Conferences

A European Biodiversity Conference was held last week in Ghent, Belgium. Delegates attending the conference crystallized their expectations of the international summit to be held at Nagoya in October. They emphasized that only an integrated policy with sufficient resources for co-operation, specific measures, research and communication could hope to succeed in preserving worldwide biodiversity.

Around four hundred delegates travelled to Ghent for the conference on 'Biodiversity in a changed world'. Over three days they debated possible strategies to maintain and increase biodiversity. They formulated their conclusions in the 'Message from Ghent', a European statement to the international Conference of the Parties (COP).

COP10 is the 10th Conference of Parties of the Biodiversity Convention, to be held in October at Nagoya (Japan). Government leaders from around the world will settle a new strategic plan for the preservation and restoration of worldwide biodiversity.

<http://www.eutrio.be/pressrelease/european-statement-biodiversity-summit-nagoya>



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International day for the preservation of the ozone layer - message by the Commissioner for Climate Action

"The Montreal Protocol is an international climate action success story which has put the ozone layer on the road to recovery. However, some alternatives to ozone-depleting substances are themselves very powerful greenhouse gases which contribute to global warming. International action is needed to limit these, as the EU has already done through specific legislation. The Montreal Protocol is the appropriate forum for international action, and will complement the efforts undertaken through the UN climate convention. The EU will continue to work towards this goal and to exploit synergies between the two treaties."

Background

A new EU Regulation on substances that deplete the ozone layer, which implements the Montreal Protocol and in some aspects goes beyond it, was adopted exactly a year ago, on 16 September 2009. It will further contribute to securing the recovery of the ozone layer and also to combating climate change.

Industrial gases called hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) which are powerful greenhouse gases are used as alternatives to certain ozone-depleting substances. This creates the risk that the potential benefit to climate from the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances could be cancelled out or reversed. The EU therefore wants international action taken to control HFCs, which are covered by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The EU believes that, whilst HFCs should not be excluded from the scope of the UNFCCC, the Montreal Protocol, with its relevant expertise and infrastructure, is the appropriate forum for this international action.

The EU has addressed the threat from HFCs through domestic legislation on certain fluorinated greenhouse gases (the 'F-gas Regulation') which focuses on specific measures for individual end-uses and on containing emissions. The Commission is currently looking at options for improving the legislation based on experience to date.

More info:

http://ozone.unep.org/Events/ozone_day_2010/index.shtml

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ozone/index.htm>