

Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020

European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 (2011/2307(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled ‘Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020’ (COM(2011)0244),
- having regard to the 2050 vision and the 2020 headline target adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government in March 2010,
- having regard to the Environment Council conclusions of 21 June and 19 December 2011 on the ‘EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020’,
- having particular regard to the outcome of the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in particular the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi targets, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation, and the strategy to mobilise resources for global biodiversity,
- having regard to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS),
- having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled ‘The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future’ (COM(2010)0672), and to the Commission’s proposals for CAP reform after 2013,
- having regard to the communication from the Commission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions entitled ‘A Budget for Europe 2020’ (COM(2011)0500), together with the supporting documents,
- having regard to the Strategic Financial Framework 2014-2020,
- having regard to the ‘Composite Report on the Conservation Status of Habitat Types and Species as required under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive’ (COM(2009)0358),
- having regard to its resolution of 21 September 2010 on the implementation of EU legislation aiming at the conservation of biodiversity¹,

¹ OJ C 50 E, 21.2.2012, p. 19.

- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2010 on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013² and its resolution of 23 June 2011 on ‘the CAP towards 2020: meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future’³,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working paper entitled ‘Financing Natura 2000 – Investing in Natura 2000: Delivering benefits for nature and people’ (SEC(2011)1573),
 - having regard to the study entitled ‘The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)’⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Regional Development, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Fisheries (A7-0101/2012),
- A. whereas the EU failed to achieve its 2010 biodiversity target;
 - B. whereas the United Nations has declared 2010-2020 the Decade on Biodiversity;
 - C. whereas biodiversity is essential to the existence of human life and the well-being of societies, both directly and indirectly through the ecosystem services it provides – for example, the benefits generated by the European Union’s Natura 2000 network of protected areas alone are estimated to be worth EUR 200-300 billion, with a total of about 4.5 to 8 million full-time equivalent jobs being supported directly from visitor expenditure in and around these sites;
 - D. whereas biodiversity loss is currently reducing global GDP by 3 % each year;
 - E. whereas nearly 65 % of the habitat types and 52 % of the species listed in the Annexes to the Habitats Directive have an unfavourable conservation status;
 - F. whereas 88 % of fish stocks have been fished beyond their maximum sustainable yield;
 - G. whereas the EU’s borders have already been breached by more than 11 000 alien species, at least 15 % of which are invasive and detrimental to biodiversity;
 - H. whereas farmers play a vital role in achieving the EU’s biodiversity objectives; whereas in 1992 initial impetus was given to incorporating biodiversity protection into the common agricultural policy (CAP), and whereas the 2003 reform subsequently introduced measures such as cross-compliance, the single

² OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 103.

³ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0297.

⁴ <http://www.teebweb.org>

farm payment (decoupling) and rural development, which have benefits for biodiversity;

- I. whereas payment for ecosystem services (PES) is a promising, innovative financial tool for biodiversity conservation;
- J. whereas habitats and species are threatened by climate change; whereas nature conservation and biodiversity are crucial to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;

General remarks

1. Deplores the fact that the EU failed to meet its 2010 biodiversity target;
2. Welcomes and supports the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, including all its targets and actions; takes the view, nevertheless, that some actions may have to be strengthened and specified more clearly, and that more concrete measures should be deployed in order to ensure effective implementation of the strategy;
3. Stresses the urgent need for action, and the need to give higher political priority to biodiversity in order to meet the EU's 2020 headline target for biodiversity and global biodiversity commitments; emphasises that, with adequate financial resources and political will, the tools exist to halt the loss of biodiversity; emphasises that the preservation of biodiversity is a collective challenge that should be addressed with the commitment and participation of numerous interested parties;
4. Welcomes the Commission communication on Biodiversity 2020, and Notes that climate change, biodiversity loss, threats from invasive species and overconsumption of natural resources are transnational and transregional challenges which affect every EU citizen, whether living in an urban or a rural area, and that urgent action is needed at every level of government – local, regional and national – in order to mitigate these effects;
5. Invites the Member States, therefore, to integrate the strategy into their plans, programmes and/or national strategies;
6. Takes the view that the biodiversity safeguards contained in existing EU law must not be weakened;
7. Stresses that the new strategy must not fail as well; calls on the Commission, therefore, to provide Parliament with two-yearly progress reports in which the Council and Commission elaborate on the state of play;
8. Emphasises that the real test of the EU's commitment to achieving the biodiversity target – and the real key to this issue – is not the new strategy, but rather the forthcoming reforms of the common agricultural and fisheries policies and the Multiannual Financial Framework; points out, further, that the inadequate degree to which biodiversity protection was integrated into other EU policies caused the failure of the first strategy;

9. Takes the view that the difficulties encountered in meeting the target set for 2010 call for an in-depth review of the methods applied to date; maintains that strategic studies covering all the factors that may affect protected areas must be carried out, and that these studies should be incorporated into urban planning and be accompanied by educational and information campaigns on the importance of local natural resources and their conservation;
10. Stresses that biodiversity loss refers not only to species and habitats but also to genetic diversity; calls on the Commission to develop a strategy for the conservation of genetic diversity;
11. Notes that our natural heritage is a major ecological asset which is fundamental to human well-being; takes the view that all Member States should cooperate and coordinate their efforts in order to ensure more effective use of natural resources and avoid net losses in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services in both rural and urbanised areas;

Targets – mainstreaming biodiversity in all EU policies

12. Highlights the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity protection and conservation in the development, implementation and funding of all other EU policies – including those on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, regional development and cohesion, energy, industry, transport, tourism, development cooperation, research and innovation – in order to make the EU's sectoral and budgetary policies more coherent and ensure that it honours its binding commitments on biodiversity protection;
13. Underlines that the EU Biodiversity Strategy should be fully integrated into the strategies for the mitigation of, and adaption to, climate change;
14. Recalls that the precautionary principle constitutes a legal basis to be applied in all legislation and decisions affecting biodiversity;
15. Stresses that protecting, valuing, mapping and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services is essential in order to meet the goals of the Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider, as part of specific measures, presenting a timetable for mapping and assessing ecosystem services in the EU which will enable targeted and efficient measures to be taken to halt the degradation of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
16. Emphasises that the loss of biodiversity has devastating economic costs for society which until now have not been integrated sufficiently into economic and other policies; urges the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to value ecosystem services and to integrate these values into accounting systems as a basis for more sustainable policies; takes the view that any economic model that disregards the proper preservation of biodiversity is not viable; also stresses that actions to restore ecosystems and biodiversity have significant potential to create new skills, jobs and business opportunities;

17. Stresses the need to carry out a thorough assessment of the negative impact on biodiversity of different sectors of the economy;
18. Emphasises that the biodiversity strategy is part of the Resource-Efficient Europe flagship initiative, and recalls that regional policy plays an essential role in ensuring sustainable growth through the actions it supports to tackle climate, energy and environmental issues;
19. Maintains that a significant number of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic (transmissible among wildlife, domestic animals and humans), and recognises that trade in wildlife and changes in land use and management may lead to new or modified interfaces among humans, domestic animals and wildlife that could favour disease transmission and loss of biodiversity; stresses that integrating biodiversity strategies into animal health, animal welfare and trade policies is paramount;
20. Takes the view, however, that thorough environmental, economic and social impact assessments may be needed in cases where data are lacking;

Conserving and restoring nature

21. Emphasises the need to halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature conservation legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status at EU level; stresses that this should take the form of an improvement in at least one of the parameters for conservation status defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive, without any deterioration in the other parameters;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to undertake to adopt integrated strategies in order to identify each geographical area's natural values and the features of its cultural heritage, as well as the conditions necessary for maintaining them;
23. Emphasises that biodiversity objectives need to be implemented through concrete action in order to be effective; regrets that, in spite of the action taken to combat biodiversity loss, in the EU only 17 % of habitats and species and 11 % of key ecosystems protected under EU legislation are in a favourable state; calls on the Commission to analyse, as a matter of urgency, why current efforts have not yet succeeded and to consider whether other, potentially more effective instruments are available;
24. Stresses that, in order to establish a clear pathway to achieving the 2050 vision, at least 40 % of all habitats and species must have a favourable conservation status by 2020; recalls that, by 2050, 100 % (or almost 100 %) of habitats and species must have a favourable conservation status;
25. Expresses concern at the increasing deterioration of essential habitats, such as wetlands, which should be treated as a priority and addressed by means of urgent measures that actually correspond to the special protection status granted to them by the EU;

26. Recognises that infrastructure-building, urbanisation, industrialisation and physical intervention in the landscape in general are among the most significant drivers of the fragmentation of ecosystems and habitats; calls on local, regional and national governments, in the context of their planning regulations and implementation measures and within the framework of their competences, to consider these factors – which pose a threat to ecosystems and habitats – in their planning and development projects on both a large and a small scale; recognises the pressures and need at local and regional level to provide substantial economic development, and recommends that local and regional authorities be mindful of striking a balance between development and the need to protect biodiversity and natural habitats; supports further reform and use of regional and local development policies in order to deliver biodiversity benefits and halt further loss of habitats, especially in times of economic and financial crisis;
27. Supports stepping up the use of environmental impact assessments (EIAs), sustainability impact assessments (SIAs), strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) and other instruments in order to take account of biodiversity loss and the effects of climate change in regional and local decision-making; points out that all regions will benefit from projects that promote climate change mitigation and the protection of biodiversity loss, including less developed regions;
28. Urges the Member States to ensure that the process of designating Natura 2000 sites is finalised by 2012 in line with Aichi Target 11; deplores greatly the delay in designating marine sites; is concerned about the reintroduction of hunting in the Danube Delta and its possible negative impact on biodiversity; calls on the Commission to verify that Member States are implementing Article 7 of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC⁵), particularly with respect to hunting;
29. Highlights the urgent need to step up efforts to protect oceans and marine environments, both through EU action and by improving international governance of oceans and areas beyond national jurisdiction;
30. Urges the Member States to meet the legal deadline for the development of management plans or equivalent instruments for all Natura 2000 sites, as stipulated in Articles 4 and 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC⁶);
31. Believes that better cross-border cooperation could have significant benefits when it comes to meeting the Natura 2000 objectives; highlights the need for closer cooperation between European, national, regional and local authorities with regard to protecting biodiversity and natural resources; underlines, in this connection, the opportunities offered by cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation with a view to tackling biodiversity loss, and believes that making better use of the potential of territorial cooperation and of exchanges of information, experience and good practice would contribute significantly to achieving that aim; points out that the inclusion of biodiversity-related priorities in regional macrostrategies is an important step towards restoring and preserving biodiversity;

⁵ OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7.

⁶ OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7.

32. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure proper conservation of the Natura 2000 network through adequate funding for those sites; calls, in particular, on the Member States to develop binding national instruments in cooperation with the different stakeholders, through which they define priority conservation measures and state the relevant planned source of financing (whether from EU funds or Member States' own budgets);
33. Takes the view that the enforcement of EU legislation, in particular on the environment, must be improved;
34. Invites the Commission, in view of the vast differences between Member States with regard to the implementation of the Natura 2000 legislation, to provide further clarification or guidance where necessary, based on best practices; also asks the Commission to provide guidance or share best practices for the management of areas adjoining Natura 2000 sites;
35. Calls on the Commission to increase its capacity to process and investigate effectively complaints and infringements connected with the proper implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives, and to develop adequate guidance for the Member States with regard to monitoring on-the-ground implementation of those directives; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to incorporate measures to enhance the implementation and joint enforcement of the Birds and Habitats Directives into its current work on improving the implementation and inspection of environmental legislation; considers it essential, in the light of its resolution of 20 November 2008 on the review of Recommendation 2001/331/EC providing for minimum criteria for environmental inspections in the Member States⁷, to strengthen the EU Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL), and urges the Commission to report on possible ways of doing so, including the feasibility of establishing an EU environmental inspection force, and to present a proposal for a directive on environmental inspections;
36. Supports the Commission initiative regarding training programmes for judges and prosecutors; stresses, however, that the Commission and the Member States should ensure that such training programmes are also available to professionals dealing with Natura 2000 sites, e.g. regional and local authorities responsible for law enforcement and other administrative bodies responsible for implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives;
37. Considers it necessary to have digitised, accessible maps containing accurate information about the principal natural resources, protected areas, land uses, water bodies and areas at risk, in order to facilitate compliance by regional and local authorities with environmental legislation, especially that relating to biodiversity;
38. Notes the limited public awareness in the EU of the importance of biodiversity conservation and the severe environmental and socio-economic costs associated with its loss; stresses the need for a more comprehensive communication strategy in line with Aichi Target 1;

⁷ OJ C 16 E, 22.1.2010, p. 67.

39. Welcomes the intention of the Commission and the Member States to launch a major communication campaign for Natura 2000 by 2013, to improve the application of EU environmental protection provisions and to foster the coexistence of environmental protection, sustainable economic growth and social development as equal, non-contradictory principles; calls, to this end, for the promotion of successful projects and the dissemination of information to the public on the feasibility of environmentally benign economic development in important natural and cultural heritage areas such as those belonging to the Natura 2000 network;
40. Stresses the need to organise biodiversity awareness and information campaigns for all ages and social categories, on the understanding that awareness campaigns for children and adolescents who are deeply concerned about this topic should be organised first and foremost in the school setting; takes the view that education and professional training, particularly in farming, forestry and related sectors, should concentrate more on the role of biodiversity;
41. Recognises that NGOs have an important role to play in biodiversity protection by contributing to the decision-making process, taking action on the ground and raising public awareness;
42. Recommends extending governance to the mobilisation of citizens, and also to non-profit organisations and economic actors, with the emphasis, in the case of the latter, being on integrating biodiversity into company strategies; recognises the value and knowledge of, and the work done by, the voluntary and community sector in protecting biodiversity, and asks regional and local governments to involve such groups in planning and consultation for projects, by establishing partnerships between authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations;
43. Recognises the great importance of maintaining a close relationship with local actors and the direct managers of the land in question, and therefore encourages the Commission to make greater efforts in this regard, paying attention to the experience and special knowledge that these actors can contribute when drafting legislation, with a view to ensuring the good condition of the habitats that are home to the biodiversity we wish to preserve in the EU;
44. Maintains that one reason we have failed to reverse the continuing trend of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation globally is our incomplete understanding of the complexity of biodiversity and the interactions of its components with one another and with the living environment, including the value of biodiversity for current and future human generations; reiterates that biodiversity science is the necessary backbone for any kind of policy implementation;
45. Stresses, therefore, the need to invest more in research *on* biodiversity, including in relation to one or more of the relevant ‘societal challenges’ addressed by Horizon 2020, so as to avoid fragmentation of research policy; takes the view that such an increase in funds for biodiversity research could be achieved within the overall existing means, given the low take-up; believes, on the one hand, that research could give us a better understanding of biodiversity

and its importance for all aspects of human activities, and, on the other, that it will contribute, through innovative concepts, to new and improved policies and management and development strategies;

46. Stresses the need for a multidisciplinary and transboundary research approach when it comes to biodiversity, which is inherently connected to fields such as ecology, genetics, epidemiology, climate science, economics, social anthropology and theoretical modelling; emphasises the need for science-based policies in the sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources, especially in the economically and socially vital sectors of agriculture, fisheries and forestry;
47. Considers it essential that available scientific data on biodiversity, examples of best practices for halting biodiversity loss and restoring biodiversity, and information on nature-based innovation and development potential be more widely known and shared among policy-makers and key stakeholders, and that the relevant ICTs play a crucial role in delivering new opportunities and tools; welcomes, therefore, the fact that the Commission has set up the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform, and encourages it to develop the Platform further and promote greater cooperation between administrations and businesses in the EU, including SMEs;
48. Calls for the Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) web portal to be made available in all the official EU languages, so as to contribute to data and information sharing;

Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services

49. Notes the requirement under the CBD to restore 15 % of degraded ecosystems by 2020; regards this as a minimum, however, and wishes the EU to set a considerably higher restoration target reflecting its own more ambitious headline target and its 2050 vision, taking into account country-specific natural conditions; urges the Commission to define clearly what is meant by 'degraded ecosystems' and to set a baseline against which progress can be measured;
50. Urges the Commission to adopt a specific Green Infrastructure Strategy by 2012 at the latest, with biodiversity protection as a primary objective; underlines that this strategy should address objectives relating to urban as well as rural areas, inter alia in order better to fulfil the provisions of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive;
51. Deplores the fact that the development of the Commission's Green Infrastructure Strategy is planned only for 2012, while energy and transport corridors have already been identified in the European Infrastructure Package proposal; calls on the Commission, therefore, to accelerate work on the Green Infrastructure Strategy and to ensure that the proposed Target No 2 is achieved; agrees that synergies between energy, transport and ICT projects should be maximised in order to limit the negative impact on biodiversity, and that only actions which comply with EU law and are in line with the relevant Union policies should receive EU funding;

52. Emphasises that the creation of natural environments should not be limited to designated areas alone, but should also be encouraged in different places – for instance in cities, along highways and railroads and at industrial sites – in order to develop a truly green infrastructure;
53. Urges the Commission to develop an effective regulatory framework based on the ‘No Net Loss’ initiative, taking into account the past experience of the Member States while also utilising the standards applied by the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme; notes, in this connection, the importance of applying such an approach to all EU habitats and species not covered by EU legislation;
54. Calls on the Commission to devote particular attention to species and habitats whose ‘functions’ are of priceless economic value, since efforts to preserve biodiversity in the future will be directed at those areas that will produce economic benefits over a short period of time, or be expected to do so;
55. Recognises that biodiversity and ecosystem services provide significant non-monetised benefits to industries and other economic actors; invites organisations representing the private sector to put forward proposals on how best to preserve and restore biodiversity on a meaningful scale;
56. Recognises the need to promote green infrastructure, eco-innovation and the adoption of innovative technologies in order to create a greener economy, and calls on the Commission to draw up good practice guides in this area; urges the Commission, the Member States and local and regional authorities to take account of the recommendations made in the TEEB study, which is intended as a useful advisory tool for local and regional policy-makers, administrators and managers; underlines the need to expand and intensify training for beneficiaries of the Structural and Cohesion Funds, and for local, regional and national governments, in dealing with the complex European and national legislation aimed at protecting nature and increasing awareness of the importance of biodiversity loss; invites the Commission to put in place technical assistance mechanisms designed to promote knowledge at regional and local level with regard to implementation-related problems;

Agriculture

57. Recalls that over half of the EU’s territory is managed by farmers, that farmland delivers important ecosystem services and has considerable socio-economic value, and that funding for the CAP represents a significant part of the EU budget; stresses that the CAP is not confined to the aim of food provision and rural development, but is a crucial tool for biodiversity, conservation, mitigation of climate change, and maintenance of ecosystem services; notes that the CAP already includes measures aimed at environmental protection, such as decoupling, cross-compliance and agri-environment measures; considers it regrettable, however, that these measures have so far failed to halt the overall decline in biodiversity in the EU and that farmland biodiversity is in continued decline; calls, therefore, for a reorientation of the CAP towards the provision of compensation to farmers for the delivery of public goods, since the market is

currently failing to integrate the economic value of the important public goods agriculture can deliver;

58. Emphasises the connection between water management and biodiversity as an essential component for sustaining life and for sustainable development;
59. Stresses the need to move from a means-based approach to a results-based approach in order to assess the effectiveness of the instruments applied;
60. Calls for the greening of Pillar I of the CAP in order to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in the wider farmed landscape, improve connectivity and adapt to the effects of climate change; welcomes the Commission's CAP reform proposal, which provides for a 'greening' of the CAP through the allocation of Pillar I payments to a package of basic good practices applied at farm level, including crop rotation and diversification, permanent pasture and a minimum 'ecological focus area'; underlines that such greening measures need to be workable and must not create unnecessary bureaucracy; reiterates its call for area-based support for the Natura 2000 network under the direct payment scheme; believes that resource-efficient, environment- and climate-friendly agricultural practices will ensure both the sustainability of agricultural businesses and long-term food security, and recognises that the CAP should play a significant role in achieving this;
61. Calls for 'greening' practices to be geared to agricultural diversity in the various Member States, taking into account, for example, the specific situation of Mediterranean countries, which is not addressed by the proposed thresholds in relation to the diversification of crops and land of ecological importance; notes that assembled crops, permanent crops (olive groves, vineyards, apple orchards) and rice crops are some examples of practices that should be compatible with 'greening', given the high ecological and conservation value of some of these agricultural systems;
62. Maintains that assistance to public and private actors working to protect forest biodiversity in terms of species, habitats and ecosystem services must be increased under the new CAP, and eligibility extended to areas connecting Natura 2000 sites;
63. Calls for all CAP payments, including those made from 2014, to be underpinned by robust cross-compliance rules which help to preserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, covering the Birds and Habitats Directives (without watering down the current standards applicable from 2007 to 2013), pesticides and biocides legislation and the Water Framework Directive⁸; calls for simple and transparent rules for those affected;
64. Calls for a strengthening of Pillar II and for drastic improvements in all Member States to the environmental focus of that pillar and to the effectiveness of its agri-environmental measures, including through minimum mandatory spending on environmental measures – such as agri-environmental measures, Natura 2000 and forest environment measures – and support for High Nature Value and

⁸ Directive 2000/60/EC, (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000, p. 1).

organic farming; underlines that the environmental measures under the two pillars should be mutually reinforcing;

65. Acknowledges the critical report of the European Court of Auditors on agri-environment schemes; notes that very limited environmental objectives have been met with the EUR 22.2 billion available for 2007-2013; urges the Commission to ensure that future agri-environmental subsidies are approved only under strict environmental criteria;
66. Draws attention to the fact that the increase in demand for agricultural fuels and the consequent intensification of pressure for their production in developing countries are threatening biodiversity, particularly in developing countries, owing to the degradation and conversion of habitats and ecosystems such as wetlands and forests, among others;
67. Takes the view that the inspection of agricultural practices should be strengthened in order to prevent biodiversity loss; maintains, in particular, that discharges of slurry should be controlled and even prohibited in the most sensitive areas in order to preserve ecosystems;
68. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to explore the phenomenon of land abandonment in some parts of Europe, supporting the targeted maintenance of biodiversity and avoiding desertification whilst providing new socio-economic opportunities for rural development; stresses, however, the need to respect existing land ownership; also underlines that European farmers play an important role as ‘guardians’ of the landscape;
69. Warns that various species and habitats which are highly valued from a conservation perspective, including those protected by EU legislation, are dependent on agri-environmental systems in which the presence of human beings is a key factor; highlights, in this connection, the importance of halting and reversing land abandonment; advocates increased support for small and medium-scale farming, family-based farming and extensive farming, which promote proper conservation of natural resources;
70. Calls on the Commission, in the context of the new CAP reform, to step up its efforts in support of agricultural sectors which make a proven contribution to preserving biodiversity, and in particular the bee-keeping sector; points out that wild and domesticated insects such as bees account for 80 % of the pollination of flowering plants, and that the decline with which they are threatened represents an enormous challenge for our societies, whose agricultural production, and therefore food, depends in large part on the pollination of flowering plants; stresses, therefore, that particular attention should be paid to apiculture in the measures to be taken to protect biodiversity;
71. Emphasises the importance of halting and reversing the reduction in species diversity and crop varieties, which leads to an erosion of the genetic basis on which human and animal nutrition depends; advocates the need to promote the use of traditional agricultural varieties specific to certain regions; calls for appropriate legislation and incentives for the maintenance and further

development of diversity in farm genetic resources, e.g. locally adapted breeds and varieties;

72. Stresses the need for more effective cooperation at European level in the field of scientific and applied research regarding the diversity of animal and plant genetic resources in order to ensure their conservation, improve their ability to adapt to climate change, and promote their effective take-up in genetic improvement programmes;

Forestry

73. Calls for specific action with a view to achieving Aichi Target 5 , whereby the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, should be at least halved by 2020 and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation significantly reduced;
74. Calls on the Commission, once the study on the impact of European consumption on deforestation has been completed, to follow up its findings with new policy initiatives addressing the types of impact identified;
75. Calls on the Member States to adopt and implement forest management plans taking account of appropriate public consultation, including effective measures for the conservation and recovery of protected species and habitats and related ecosystem services;
76. Urges the Member States and the Commission to encourage the adoption of forest management plans, inter alia through rural development measures and the LIFE+ programme; stresses the need for forest management plans to include special biodiversity measures, notably specific measures for the conservation of protected species and natural habitats in order to improve their status, both within and beyond Natura 2000 areas;
77. Urges the Member States to design their forestry policies in such a way as to take full account of the importance of forests in protecting biodiversity, in preventing soil erosion, in carbon sequestration and air purification and in maintaining the water cycle;
78. Urges the Member States to ensure that forest fire prevention schemes in their forest management plans include ecosystem-based measures designed to make forests more resilient to fires;

Fisheries

79. Welcomes the Commission's proposals for the reform of the CFP, which should guarantee the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the application of updated scientific information serving as the basis for long-term management plans for all commercially exploited fish species; emphasises that only by securing the long-term sustainability of fish stocks can we ensure the economic and social viability of the European fisheries sector;
80. Stresses that no one country can deal with the problem of biodiversity loss, particularly in marine ecosystems, and that the Member State governments must

cooperate and coordinate their efforts more effectively in order to address this global issue; emphasises that strong implementation of biodiversity policy benefits both society and the economy;

81. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement marine protected areas in which economic activities, including fishing, are subject to strengthened ecosystem-based management, making it possible to reconcile preservation of the environment with the practice of sustainable fishing;
82. Stresses that there are still large gaps in knowledge regarding the state of marine ecosystems and fisheries resources, and calls for increased EU efforts in the area of marine research;
83. Requests the Commission and the Member States to consolidate their efforts in collecting scientific data on fish populations, where these are deficient, with the aim of offering more reliable scientific advice;
84. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to cooperate with a view to establishing a 'European coastguard' in order to boost common monitoring and inspection capacity and ensure enforcement;
85. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to ensure that catches fall below Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) levels by 2015, and to take ecological considerations into account when defining MSYs; stresses, therefore, that a lack of adequate scientific data should not be used as an excuse for inaction, and that in such circumstances fishing mortality rates should be decreased on a precautionary basis; recalls the legal obligation – as set out in the Marine Framework Strategy Directive (MFSD)⁹ – to ensure that all commercially exploited fish stocks are within safe biological limits by 2020;
86. Points out that the commitment to maintain or restore fish stocks, by 2015, to levels above those able to produce the MSY, as provided for in the CFP reform package proposed by the Commission, was endorsed by heads of state and government at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002;
87. Underlines that fisheries management should contribute to achieving favourable conservation status pursuant to the Birds and Habitats Directives and achieving the objective of Good Environmental Status (GES) under the MFSD; stresses that long-term management plans should be based on multiple species rather than single species, taking account of all aspects of fish populations – in particular size, age and reproductive status – in order better to reflect an ecosystem-based approach, and that strict timelines for their development should be set;
88. Stresses that the new CFP and all subsequent measures adopted by Member States must be in full compliance with Directives 92/43/EEC, 2009/147/EC and 2008/56/EC;

⁹ Directive 2008/56/EC, (OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19).

89. Stresses that the aim of eliminating discards of less valuable target species and by-catches of protected non-target species, including cetaceans, sea turtles and sea birds, should be incorporated into the CFP and implemented as a matter of urgency; stresses, moreover, that the new CFP should include a clear obligation to release non-target species with a high chance of survival;
90. Points out that measures aimed at eliminating discards of juvenile and under-sized fish or catches beyond quota should be designed in such a way as to avoid providing any perverse incentives for the landing and commercialisation of discards;
91. Underlines that targets and timelines should be set for the reduction of overcapacity so that a net reduction in fleet capacity can be pursued;
92. Notes that the biodiversity of the marine environment is being seriously jeopardised by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) and stresses that cooperation between the Member States and third countries should be strengthened in order to combat such IUU fishing;
93. Notes that the establishment of fisheries reserves (areas in which fishing activities may be banned or restricted) is a particularly effective and cost-efficient measure with a view to achieving the long-term conservation of fish stocks; calls on the Member States and the Council, in this connection, to designate fisheries reserves and stipulate the management rules to be established therein, with a particular focus on nursery grounds or spawning grounds for fish stocks;
94. Calls on the Commission to develop reliable indicators of environmental sustainability, including marine and coastal sustainability, in order to assess the degree of progress towards the overall goal of protecting biodiversity;

Invasive alien species

95. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that measures are taken to prevent both the entry of new invasive alien species into the EU and the spread of currently established invasive alien species to new areas; calls, in particular, for clear guidelines under the CAP Rural Development Regulation in order to ensure that afforestation does not harm biodiversity and to prevent the provision of financial support for the planting of invasive alien species; underlines the need for ambitious strategies and up-to-date inventories both at the EU level and in the Member States; takes the view that these strategies should not focus solely on those species considered to be a 'priority', as suggested in Target 5 of the Biodiversity Strategy; encourages the Commission, with a view to enhancing the knowledge base, to support similar activities to those supported under the DAISIE (Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe) project;
96. Urges the Commission to come forward in 2012 with a legislative proposal which takes a holistic approach to the problem of invasive alien plant and animal species in order to establish a common EU policy on the prevention,

monitoring, eradication and management of these species and on rapid alert systems in this area;

97. Recognises that prevention is more cost-effective and environmentally desirable than measures taken once an invasive alien species has already been introduced and become established; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to give priority to preventing the introduction of invasive alien species, as supported by the hierarchical approach to such species adopted in the CBD;
98. Underlines the need to ensure that trade in threatened species – included in the Red List drawn up by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature – is subject to increased restrictions and, in particular, strict regulation; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to monitor and report regularly on imports of exotic and non-native species and to ensure full implementation of the Zoos Directive¹⁰; requests the Commission to assess and make proposals for a ban on wild-caught animals for the pet trade;
99. Calls on the Commission to take note of existing national strategies and action plans and ensure that island habitats receive proportionate consideration in the upcoming Invasive Alien Species Regulation;

Climate change

100. Recalls the inter-linkages between biodiversity and the climate system; is mindful of the significant negative impact of climate change on biodiversity, and underlines the fact that biodiversity loss inherently exacerbates climate change on account of the degradation of the carbon sink provided by the natural environment; emphasises the urgency of biodiversity protection, inter alia as a means of mitigating climate change and preserving natural carbon sinks;

International dimension

101. Urges the Commission to propose legislation to implement the Nagoya Protocol so that the Union can ratify the Protocol as soon as possible;
102. Underlines that, given the global nature of biodiversity and ecosystem services and their crucial role in meeting global sustainable development objectives, the EU strategy must also step up EU efforts to avert biodiversity loss and thereby contribute more effectively to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015;
103. Takes the view that marine biodiversity conservation needs to be addressed at the highest level at the Rio+20 summit to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012;
104. Welcomes the UN General Assembly resolution of 6 December 2011 aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the world's fisheries¹¹, which stresses that urgent efforts are needed to achieve sustainable use of the world's oceans and seas;

¹⁰ Directive 1999/22/EC, (OJ L 94, 9.4.1999, p. 24).

¹¹ A/RES/66/68.

105. Welcomes the plan – presented in November 2011 – developed by four UN agencies (UNESCO, FAO, UNDP and IMO) to encourage countries to renew their commitment to limiting the degradation of the oceans and dealing with threats such as overexploitation of fisheries, pollution and biodiversity decline;
106. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to continue promoting a common approach to nature conservation throughout the EU, welcomes the Commission's acceptance that it needs to cooperate with the Member States to ensure the effective protection of biodiversity in the EU's outermost regions and overseas countries and territories, which host more endemic species than the entire European continent; wishes to see the strengthening of the specific instruments for safeguarding and protecting biodiversity there, particularly the BEST (Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and Territories) preparatory action supported by Parliament since 2011 and providing proper financing for the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU's outermost regions and overseas countries and territories;
107. Calls on the Commission and the Member States strictly to implement and enforce multilateral environmental agreements, including (but not limited to) the CITES Convention and the CMS;
108. Calls on the Commission and the Member States effectively to mainstream environmental sustainability in their relations with third countries and as part of global processes such as the Millennium Development Goals;
109. Urges the Commission to enhance the contribution of EU trade policy to conserving biodiversity, and therefore supports its proposal to include a chapter on sustainable development in all new trade agreements which lays down substantial environmental provisions relevant to the trade context, including biodiversity goals;
110. Recognises the increase in illegal international trafficking of species covered by the CITES Convention; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to work to increase the capacity of Interpol in this respect and to prioritise the issue of illegal wildlife trade in bilateral discussions with third countries;
111. Recognises that the EU is a top importer of wildlife and that it influences biodiversity conservation in other parts of the world through its policies and commercial activities; calls on the EU to take measures to reduce the negative impact of EU consumption patterns on biodiversity by incorporating initiatives relating to sustainable agriculture and wildlife trade in all trade agreements;
112. Calls on the Rio+20 Earth Summit to make concrete progress on innovative and independent sources of finance for biodiversity protection in developing countries, and insists that the EU and its Member States be proactive in achieving results in this regard;
113. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to 'biodiversity proof' EU development cooperation in order to prevent biodiversity loss, taking into

account the fact that people on the lowest incomes are the most dependent on ecosystem services;

114. Acknowledges that it is necessary to achieve an economy based on sustainable energy sources in a cost-effective way without compromising biodiversity objectives, and that such an economy could contribute towards achieving these objectives; deems it necessary, in this context, to introduce further safeguards regarding the sources, efficiency and quantity of biomass used for energy; calls on the Commission, also in this context, to clarify as soon as possible what effect biofuels have on biodiversity, including the impact of indirect land use, and calls for the establishment of effective sustainability criteria for the production and use of all biofuels, including solid biomass;

Financing

115. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify all existing environmentally harmful subsidies, according to objective criteria, and calls on the Commission to publish, by the end of 2012, an action plan (including a timetable) on how to phase such subsidies out by 2020 in line with the Nagoya commitments;
116. Emphasises the importance of mobilising both EU and national financial support from all possible sources, including the creation of a specific instrument to finance biodiversity, and of developing innovative financial mechanisms – in particular habitat banking in conjunction with offsetting – in order to reach the targets set in the area of biodiversity;
117. Stresses the need to increase the budget for research focusing on the environment and biodiversity under the next Research Framework Programme, in a manner proportionate to the huge needs and challenges associated with tackling both biodiversity loss and climate change, in order to help close identified knowledge gaps and support policy;
118. Calls on the Commission to review whether the current regulatory regime adequately incentivises strategies to enhance biodiversity, and to propose cost-effective solutions to shift spending on biodiversity from bureaucracy towards protection and enhancement;
119. Agrees that well-designed, market-based instruments aimed at internalising the external costs of consumption and production activities to the environment can contribute to achieving the objective of halting biodiversity loss if combined with incentives for green investment within the sectors concerned;
120. Welcomes the Commission's launch of the Business and Biodiversity Platform with a view to engaging the private sector in the biodiversity agenda;
121. Urges the Commission to report to Parliament and the Council on options for the introduction of payments for ecosystem services, taking into account the role of biodiversity conservation;

122. Calls on the Commission and the Member States fully to implement and fund the new Strategy for Biodiversity to 2020 by ensuring that every EU funding measure is consistent with biodiversity and water protection laws;
123. Stresses the imperative need to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) supports efforts to achieve the six targets set out in the Biodiversity Strategy, and that funding for the LIFE programme is stepped up; emphasises the need to focus on corporate social responsibility projects which promote biodiversity;
124. Notes, furthermore, that the enormous economic value of biodiversity offers a worthwhile return on the investment in its conservation; calls, therefore, for an increase in funding for nature conservation measures;
125. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to ensuring adequate financing of the Natura 2000 network, to ensure that at least EUR 5.8 billion per year is provided through EU and Member State funding; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate funding is made available through various EU funds (for example the CAP funds, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, the cohesion funds and a strengthened LIFE+ fund), with better coordination and coherence between these funds, inter alia through the concept of integrated projects, thereby improving transparency for the different regions in receipt of EU funding; calls for the EIB to be involved in developing innovative financial instruments and technical and advisory services for co-financing projects relating to biodiversity;
126. Expresses its disappointment with the proposed allocation for the new LIFE programme, which, despite its remarkable success over two decades, continues to receive an insignificant share of the EU budget; takes the view that the challenges addressed in the biodiversity and nature conservation plan call for a substantial increase in the funds allocated to the LIFE programme;
127. Notes with concern that the number of projects financed under the LIFE+ programme each year is below the indicative allocation in various Member States; invites the Commission to assess the reasons for this under-implementation and where necessary to propose changes to the rules governing the programme, particularly as regards co-financing levels;
128. Recognises the importance of green public procurement, and believes that more attention should be focused on its use, especially by public authorities in receipt of EU funding; recommends that the authorities responsible for the management and control systems created in the Member States to manage structural and cohesion funding should support projects which provide for such procedures;
129. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to invest in the protection and restoration of biodiversity under the Cohesion Fund in the 2014-2020 funding period; also recommends considering the potential of Natura 2000 for local economies and labour markets;
130. Recognises that the 'green economy' is a means of generating skills and employment, and calls for it to be supported with funding which will help build

capacity at a local level and build on local and traditional knowledge in the fight to protect biodiversity; highlights the fact that approximately 30 % of the total allocations for cohesion policy for 2007-2013 are available for activities with a particular impact on sustainable growth; encourages the Member States, and especially local and regional authorities, in the context of halting biodiversity loss, to be more active and step up their efforts to invest in natural capital, and to use regional policy funding for natural risk prevention as an element in the preservation of natural resources and in adaptation to climate change, particularly with a view to the 2014-2020 programming period;

131. Encourages the Member States to make full use of the possibility of realigning current operational programmes to the Europe 2020 sustainable growth objectives by reconsidering investment priorities for projects, and urges them to deploy the available resources more effectively;

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132. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.