



Vote for our planet

An environmental vision for the 2009-2014 European Parliament



A clear and popular role for Europe

The numerous challenges Europe faces appear divergent. But many economic problems are closely linked to the environment. Often at their root is the unsustainable way in which we use our finite natural resources.

Evidence shows that Europe's citizens support a strong role for the European Union on the environment, and that they seek leadership and change.

An environmental Parliament

Europe has been leading the world in environmental ambition. Members of the European Parliament –MEPs– have been foremost in turning that ambition into policy. But the planetary crisis we are experiencing today requires consistent action in all fields of European policy.

We are using double the planet's available resources. Across the globe millions of livelihoods are threatened by the collapse of ecosystems and the loss in diversity of life, or 'biodiversity'. Yet the EU is likely to miss its own target to stop biodiversity loss by 2010. Ambitious policy and budgetary reform are now needed.

MEPs are uniquely placed to lay out a European vision for a low carbon economy and for restoring ecosystems. This will provide society with the services we depend upon and the protection we need in times of climate change.

The current economic storm presents an opportunity to re-orientate Europe towards greater sustainability and resource efficiency. The economic opportunities are with those who move first.

This manifesto presents BirdLife International's vision for reform.



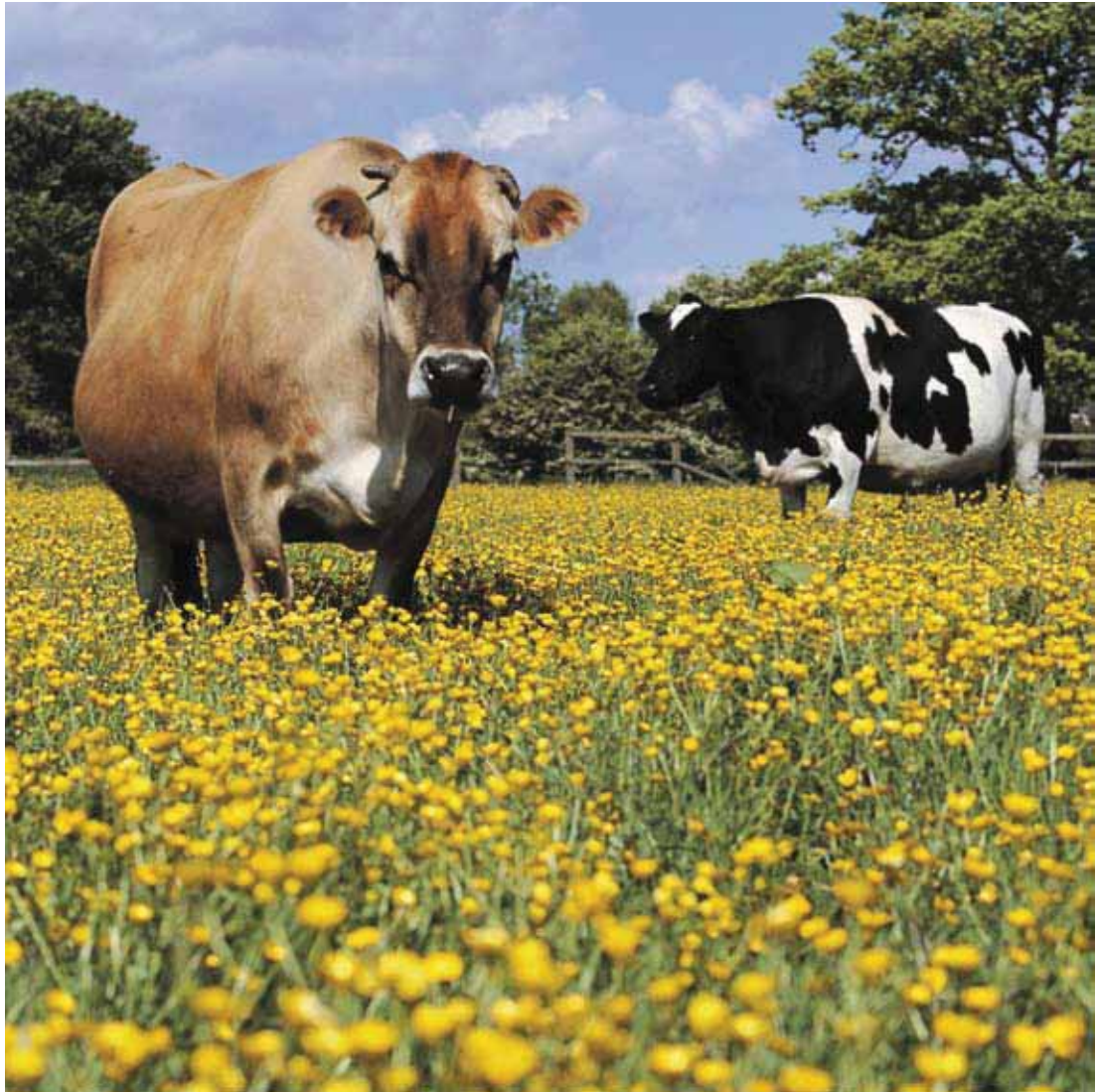
Restore our ecosystems

The natural environment benefits society. The services provided by our ecosystems – such as food, clean water and fertile soils – underpin all economic activity. 'Biodiversity', the web of life on this planet, is essential for these services to function. Yet it is likely that the EU will comprehensively fail to meet its own target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Perversely, many EU policies are accelerating that loss, while funding for biodiversity remains sorely lacking. An ambitious commitment is now needed to turn the tide for the conservation of nature and lay out a rescue plan for our ecosystems.

MEPs should:

- Adopt a target for 2020 that goes beyond halting the loss of biodiversity to championing the recovery of habitats and species in the EU. At its heart should be the key role of biodiversity in combating climate change.
- Build on and strengthen successful EU biodiversity policies such as the visionary Natura 2000 network of protected areas and the Birds and Habitats Directives.
- Ensure that the many EU policies that impact and damage biodiversity are reformed to secure the environmental services upon which society depends.
- Ensure at least €3-4 billion per year is dedicated from the EU budget to protect and manage the Natura 2000 network as the backbone of the EU's ecosystems. Land managers should be fairly rewarded for these critical public goods.

Scientists do not exaggerate in suggesting we are causing the 6th great planetary extinction of species, the last of which caused the extinction of the dinosaurs.



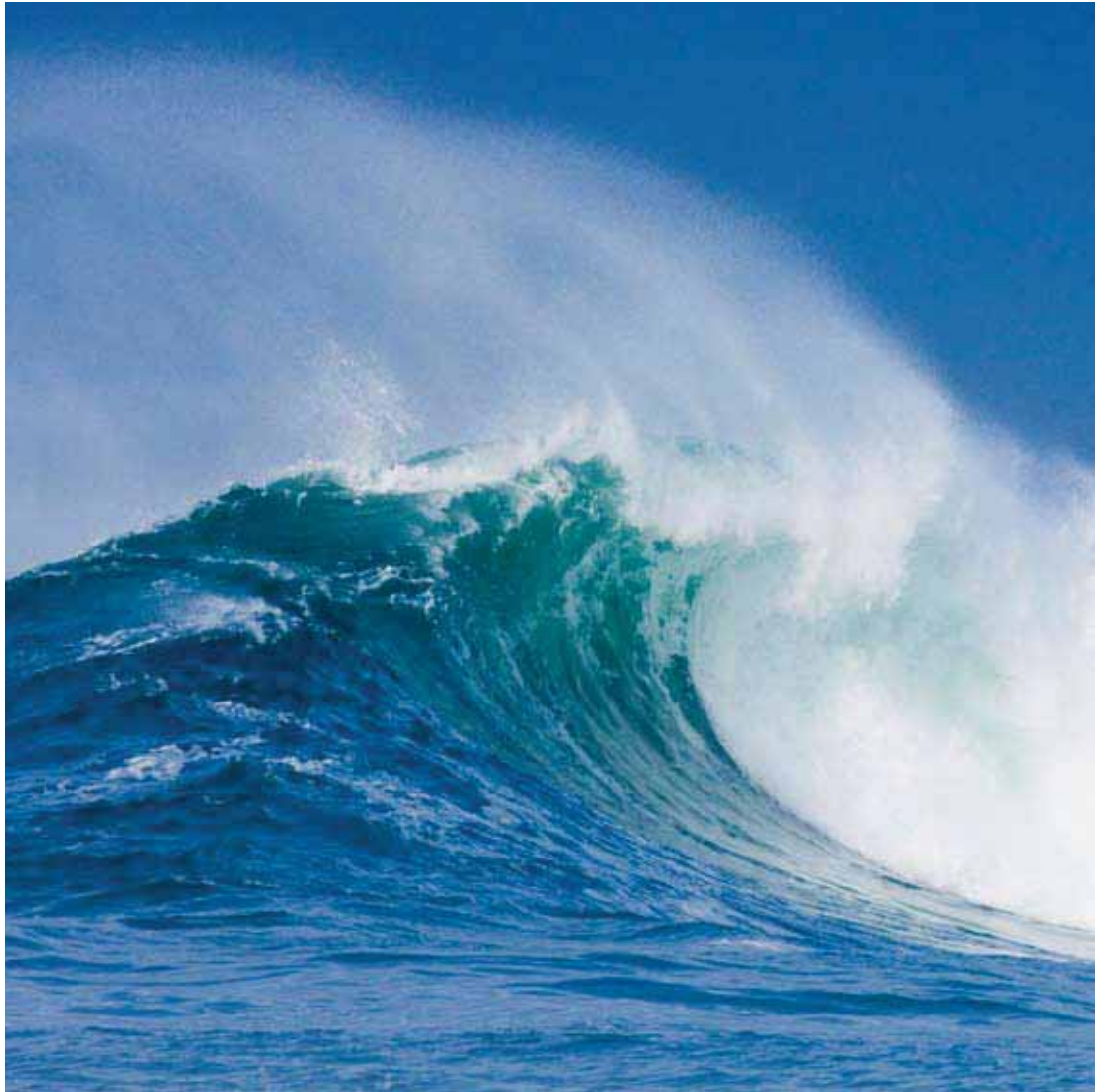
Healthy food and a healthy rural environment

The European countryside faces huge challenges: biodiversity loss, climate change, a water crisis and degradation of soils. At the same time the need to maintain food production is as strong as ever and land is coming under new pressure from the production of biofuels and biomass to generate energy. To ensure a sustainable future for Europe we urgently need a different Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). We need a fair and transparent system that rewards farmers for the delivery of public goods, rather than wasting money on untargeted subsidies. We need a new pact between citizens and farmers that fully recognises the essential role land management and food production play in society.

MEPs should:

- Reform the CAP by clearly linking any public payments to the delivery of public goods.
- Secure a sufficient EU budget for the conservation and management of natural resources and biodiversity in the wider countryside.
- Support marginal farming systems that perform vital environmental roles.
- Make the price of farm products and farm inputs reflect both environmental harm and environmental benefit.

Caring for our water, soil and biodiversity is key for long term food security and the stability of ecosystems.



Preventing climate chaos

The evidence is overwhelming. If Europe and the world do not act now on climate change, societies worldwide, including ours and those of our children, will face unprecedented disaster, far outweighing the current economic crisis. Climate change is likely to cause the extinction of many of the world's species. To-date Members of the European Parliament have often recognised this need and have been at the vanguard of ambitious climate policies. The next five years will make or break our approach to climate change. MEPs have the power -and the responsibility- to take action.

MEPs should:

- Press for an ambitious global climate change agreement at the December 2009 Copenhagen climate summit. The EU should commit to a 40% greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2020 (based on 1990 levels) - at least 30% to be achieved through domestic action.
- Ensure we reach the EU's 2020 target of 20% renewable energy without harming the environment upon which we depend. As part of this, the EU's environmentally damaging 10% biofuels target should be scrapped, and all bioenergy properly assessed for its environmental impact and benefit.
- Give political momentum to a robust climate change adaptation strategy, so far neglected. At its heart, the strategy should identify diverse and healthy ecosystems as a key weapon in the fight to adapt to a changing climate.
- Champion a strong and comprehensive carbon financing regime to stop the destruction of tropical forests, which harbour a large part of global biodiversity alongside extensive carbon stores.

Biological diversity is our natural ally in the fight against climate change.



Productive and healthy seas

The seas around European coasts are among our finest natural assets, home to some of the world's greatest populations of seabirds. Despite recent improvements on paper, marine wildlife faces many threats. 88% of European stocks are overfished and thousands of seabirds continue to be caught and killed by European fishing boats. This gives a clear indication of the failure of current fisheries policy. Yet healthy seas, exploited sustainably, in a manner that is in tune with nature, would be rewarded with productive fish stocks and a greater resilience to climate change. MEPs need to engage in the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy to be finalised by 2012.

MEPs should:

- Demand urgent completion of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas in the marine environment in order to protect key areas for marine wildlife.
- Help drastically cut the size of the EU fishing fleet as there are too many boats for too few fish.
- Ensure the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy is guided by the environmental objectives of the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Demand that the Commission legislates immediately to stop the slaughter of seabirds as by-catch. To work, this will need a robust system of data collection and control.

Our seas have long been forgotten, the time is right to ensure their conservation.



BirdLife International / European Division

BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The BirdLife Partnership operates in more than 100 countries and territories worldwide. BirdLife International is represented in 42 countries in Europe and is active in all EU Member States.

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The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way. We belong to BirdLife International. <http://www.rspb.org.uk>

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