

# Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010

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In May 2006, the Commission adopted a communication on "Halting Biodiversity Loss by 2010 and Beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being". The Communication underlined the importance of biodiversity protection as a pre-requisite for sustainable development, as well as setting out a detailed Action Plan to achieve this.

Biodiversity is now higher on the EU political agenda than ever before. The Spring 2008 European Council restated its commitment to strengthening efforts aimed at halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and beyond, and highlighted the essential role of Natura 2000 in achieving this objective.

This **mid-term assessment** shows the progress made since June 2006 and outlines the most important activities which have been undertaken by the EC and its Member States to implement the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Despite the fact that the 2006 Biodiversity Communication was well received and that there is some progress in delivery of the EC Biodiversity Action Plan, it is highly unlikely - on the basis of current efforts - that the overall goal of halting biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010 will be achieved. This will require significant additional commitment by the European Community and the EU Member States over the next two years, if the EU is even to come close to its objective.

At the global level, biodiversity loss is disastrous, with ecosystems frequently being degraded to the point where natural processes are disrupted, resulting in severe economic and social impacts. New issues, such as expansion of the agricultural sector to meet increasing demand for food, and the emergence of alternative market outlets such as biofuels, have emerged as major challenges.

The **EU biodiversity policy framework will need to be further strengthened**, as there are still important gaps, such as addressing invasive species. There is also a need to put in place an effective legal framework for the conservation of soil structure and functions. Integration of biodiversity considerations into other sectoral policies remains a key challenge. There is also a need to develop valuation systems for ecosystem services, relevant to different policy sectors.

The Commission will continue to closely monitor the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan with a view to providing a comprehensive assessment at both Community and Member State levels in 2010.