

## Feedback to the Climate Law Proposal

01 May 2020

Wetlands International welcomes the initiative to achieve EU Climate neutrality by 2050. We agree on the fact that the natural sink of forests, soils, agricultural lands and wetlands should be maintained. While suggesting to invest in research to consider other wet ecosystems like marshes and wetlands as carbon sink, we would like to stress the need to **prevent further damage to existing carbon megastores, staged reduction of emission from currently damaged peatlands and restore targeted peatlands to maximise C-sequestration**<sup>1</sup>. **Wetlands and peatlands** are our greatest allies in the fight against climate change.

Peatlands occur in all EU Member States (except Malta), often covering approx. 10% of the land. They are particularly rich in organic matter, and when kept wet, are the most effective long-term **carbon store** and sink among all terrestrial ecosystems on the planet. **When peatlands are drained, they become net carbon emitters instead of active carbon stores.** The EU is globally the second largest emitter of **greenhouse gases** from drained peatlands (220 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq/year). This is equivalent to circa 5% of the total EU greenhouse gas emissions. **99% of EU's peatland emissions** are caused by **16 of the 28 EU Member States**<sup>2</sup>. The largest peatland emitters in the EU are Germany, Finland, United Kingdom, Poland, Ireland, Romania, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Netherlands. In most of these countries, drained peatlands are responsible for more than **25 % of total emissions from agriculture.**

### *We propose the following roadmap to accelerate climate action*<sup>3</sup>

Peatland hotspot countries, global conventions, climate funds, the private sector and civil society need to collaborate in order to kickstart action to curb the alarming emissions from peatland oxidation. **The EU should lead this process.**

- Hotspot analysis shows which countries should take action to reduce national peatland emissions.
- An online Global Peatland Hotspot Atlas, detailed for country and regions, makes visual the carbon stocks, emissions of peatlands and risks associated with drainage.
- International collaboration mobilises and targets finance through involving funding agencies, countries, expert organisations, private sector and civil society to identify actions and start peatland conservation, restoration and sustainable management.
- Capacity building and upscaling of national priority actions, through setting up standards and developing new approaches and methods for conservation, restoration and sustainable management of peatlands is achieved through integration in national agendas and investment plans.

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<sup>1</sup> in line with UNCCD 'Land-degradation neutrality: Prevent, Reduce and Reverse principles

<sup>2</sup> **"PEATLANDS IN THE EU. COMMON AGRICULTURE POLICY (CAP) AFTER 2020"**, 2020, Greifswald Mire Centre, Wetlands International and the National University of Ireland, Galway

<sup>3</sup> **Briefing paper: accelerating action to Save Peat for Less Heat!** 2018, Wetlands International

- A transformation pathway to reach net zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050 with the following legally binding targets for land use activities on peatlands<sup>4</sup> and large scale implementation via major programmes through public-private partnerships and involvement of civil society for:
  1. Conservation of intact peatlands
  2. Restoration of degrading peatlands
    - **Cropland on drained peat:** by 2030 stop all cropland use on drained peat soils;
    - **Grasslands on drained peat:** by 2030 raise water levels to ≤ 30 cm below the surface and on at least 15% to the surface. By 2040 raise water level to surface in 60%, and by 2050 on 100%;
    - **Forestry on drained peat:** by 2030 50% rewetted, by 2040 an additional 25% and by 2050 the remaining 25%;
    - **No new reclamation:** by 2025 no new development, including roads and airports;
    - **Road construction in peatlands:** by 2040 restore hydrology on all peatlands crossed by roads;
    - **Floodplain and coastal peatlands:** by 2030 restore conditions for peatland ecosystems in 15% of initial distribution; 30% in 2040 and 50% in 2050;
  3. Phasing out of unsustainable drainage-based land-use
  4. Facilitating transition to alternative, sustainable use of rewetted peatlands (paludiculture)
  5. Establishing compensation and economic diversification funding to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of land use changes on existing livelihoods and businesses.

**Wetlands International – European Association** is an Association of 10 NGOs from 6 European countries, working together to raise awareness about wetland ecosystems and to advocate the sustainable use of wetlands for people and nature, in particular by linking science, policy and practice.

Wetlands International – European Association was established in September 2013 as an Association under Dutch law (*vereniging*). In accordance with the Articles of Association, Wetlands International – European Association is a not-for profit organisation managed by its member organisations. The members are European NGOs united in their shared objective, also reflected in the Articles, to sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity. Our members determine our strategic direction and policy positions, and use the Association as a platform to influence European policies and their implementation nationally, through exchange of information and experience, awareness raising, lobbying and advocacy, and policy implementation.

Wetlands International – European Association is part of Wetlands International, the only global not-for-profit network dedicated to the conservation and restoration of wetlands such as lakes, marshes and rivers. Our vision is a world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide

**CONTACT:**

Lea Appulo, Policy and Advocacy Officer Climate and DRR, [lea.appulo@wetlands.org](mailto:lea.appulo@wetlands.org)

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<sup>4</sup> Exemplary transformation pathway for Germany:

[https://greifswaldmoor.de/files/images/pdfs/201908\\_Broschuere\\_Klimaschutz%20auf%20Moorb%C3%B6den\\_2019.pdf](https://greifswaldmoor.de/files/images/pdfs/201908_Broschuere_Klimaschutz%20auf%20Moorb%C3%B6den_2019.pdf)  
(In German)

