

Brussels – 20 July 2016

European Commission climate proposals stop one unsustainable use of land but allow another

Today the European Commission published a set of new climate policy proposals to regulate emissions from transport, agriculture, waste, buildings, land use and forests after 2020. BirdLife Europe^[1] welcomes that the Commission confirms closing the door on land guzzling, food based biofuels after 2020 in its communication on the decarbonization of transport but has serious concerns about new incentives for unsustainable land use in the proposals.

BirdLife Europe is concerned that the proposal on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) creates a new impetus for unsustainable use of land in the name of climate change mitigation by strongly incentivizing afforestation without any environmental safeguards.

Afforestation often means intensively managed non-native monoculture plantations which support no biodiversity or might even influence it negatively. For example in Ireland^[2] which has been a strong advocate for afforestation in the climate debates to offset its growing agricultural emissions, afforestation is identified as the second highest threat to EU protected species and habitats.

The Commission proposals allow lowering the level ambition for emission reductions in sectors like agriculture, livestock and transport and off-set them with activities like afforestation. BirdLife welcomes that the offsets from forests created through fake accounting of emission removals have been limited but believes that stronger efforts are needed in all sectors for the EU to be able to live up to its climate commitments in Paris.

Ariel Brunner, Senior Head of Policy, BirdLife Europe stated: *“We need to take care of nature’s carbon stocks and increase carbon removals in an environmentally sound way while at the same time cut emissions in all other sectors. It is not a choice of one or the other. We cannot afford to continue with policies that increase emissions from land and forests with the excuse of climate change mitigation, such as current policies on bioenergy and biofuels.”*

BirdLife Europe endorses the need to cut public support for climate damaging, first generation biofuels in transport as the Commission indicates but calls for a clearer commitment to their swift phase out and for caution with advanced biofuels. The proposed policy on LULUCF won’t be in itself enough to ensure that bioenergy use will reduce

emissions but strict new measures are needed in the energy policies to ensure the sustainability of advanced biofuels as well as the rest of bioenergy. **ENDS**

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Notes:

[1] BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. <http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia>

[2] Publication: Not So Green: Debunking the Myths around Irish Agriculture
http://www.stopclimatechaos.ie/download/pdf/not_so_green.pdf

Key publications:

Briefing note explaining why the LULUCF proposal cannot ensure that bioenergy in the EU reduces emissions: http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/fern_lulucf_briefing_paper.pdf

Joint NGO letter to ensure that the EU 2030 Effort Sharing Decision, the EU's largest climate instrument, is fit for purpose

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/esd_letter_to_commission_commissioners_final.pdf

Joint NGO letter to President Juncker on LULUCF and Starting Point in the non-ETS sectors

http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/starting_point_and_lulucf_juncker.pdf