

Debate Pack
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Biodiversity Loss

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1 Biodiversity loss – summary

The biosphere, upon which human life on the planet depends, is being altered to an unparalleled degree across the world according to [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5](#) published in 2020. The report concluded that “[nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history](#) and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating” with one million species under threat.

The [five identified drivers for this biodiversity loss](#) by the UN panel of scientific advisors are in order of importance: changes in land and sea use, climate change, pollution, direct exploitation of natural resources and the impact of invasive species.

This global biodiversity loss is also reflected in the state of nature in the UK. The UK has been highlighted as having some of the lowest biodiversity in Europe and the Western world. [Researchers have concluded](#) “while countries such as Canada and Finland have 89.3 and 88.6% of their biodiversity left intact, the UK only has 50.3% remaining.”

1.1 UK International obligations

The global response to this biodiversity crisis is the international [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#). The UK, together with 195 other countries is a party to the CBD. Originating from [the Rio Earth Summit in 1992](#), the convention has three aims:

- The conservation of biological diversity
- The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources

Progress to date in meeting the CBD’s aims has been limited. The Convention agreed a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 which aimed to halt biodiversity loss by 2020. However, no nation was able to meet the 20 [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#) for 2020 set out in the Plan. Targets were broken down into 60 separate elements to monitor overall progress. Of those, [seven were achieved and 38 showed some progress](#). The target to halve the loss of natural habitats was not met.

The [final assessment of progress \(PDF\)](#) set out all the areas that would need to be addressed together for global biodiversity loss to be reversed by 2030:

1. Enhanced conservation and restoration of ecosystems

2. Climate change mitigation
3. Action on pollution, invasive alien species and overexploitation
4. More sustainable production of goods and services, especially food
5. Reduced consumption and waste.

Montreal-Kunming Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

The Framework, [also referred to as the Biodiversity Plan for Life on Earth](#), was agreed in December 2022 at COP15 of the CBD, as a successor to the 2011-2020 Plan. Governments agreed [4 goals for 2050](#):

- **Goal A: Protect and restore**, where “the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems are maintained, enhanced, or restored, substantially increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050”.
- **Goal B: Prosper with nature**, to ensure “biodiversity is sustainably used and managed and nature’s contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, are valued, maintained and enhanced”.
- **Goal C: Share benefits fairly**, where “the monetary and non-monetary benefits from the utilization of genetic resources [...] are shared fairly and equitably, including, as appropriate with indigenous peoples and local communities”.
- **Goal D: Invest and collaborate** with the aim of “progressively closing the biodiversity finance gap of \$700 billion per year”.

Targets set for 2030

It also included [a set of new 23 targets for 2030](#). These included a target of achieving effective conservation and management of at least 30% of land and sea, (with an emphasis on biodiversity and ecosystem function and services) up from 17% and 10% respectively, by 2030. It also includes a target of restoring 30% degraded terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine ecosystems by then, together with reducing the net loss of the most intact ecosystems to zero.

As set out in the agreement, updated “national biodiversity strategies and action plans” will be the main vehicle for implementation of the Framework.

The UK Government, together with the devolved administrations, set out the aim in February 2026 of [publishing its strategy and action plan by May 2024](#), in advance of the next Conference of the Parties, COP16, taking place in Columbia in October.

2 Measuring UK biodiversity loss

Reliable recording of species prevalence and habitat condition in the UK is relatively recent, with most regular records starting around 1970. This means the extent of nature depletion in the UK is not reflected by current indicators alone, as the baseline for the data is relatively recent and does not account for any losses before that date. For example, 1970 is the baseline year for the State of Nature report 2023 and for many of the UK Biodiversity Indicators.

The Natural England report, [Lost life: England's lost and threatened species, published in 2010](#), identified “nearly 500 animals and plants that have become extinct in England – practically all within the last two centuries”.

2.1 State of Nature Report 2023

The [State of Nature Report 2023](#) is a collaboration in data collection by many different conservation and research organisations, together with Natural England, and [one of four produced since 2013](#). The reports give trends of up to 50 years of data on the state of the UK's biodiversity. Some of the 2023 report's key findings were:

- Average abundance of 753 terrestrial and freshwater species has fallen by an estimated 18% since 1970. 38% of species had strong/moderate decreases, 27% strong/moderate increases and 35% showed little change.
- Average flowering plant distributions have fallen by 16% since 1970. 54% of species decreased in distribution and 15% increased. The average distributions of mosses and liverworts have fallen at a slightly faster rate over this time, but lichens have increased this century.
- Abundance indicators for commercial fish stocks increased at the end of the last century but have fallen back since then and show little change compared to their early 1990s baseline.
- There was an average decline in seabird abundance of 24% between 1986 and 2019, however, these estimates have a relatively larger margin of uncertainty.
- UK seal numbers have increased since their disease-related population crash in 2002 and are now close to pre-2002 level overall, but there is some regional variation.

- 16% of all species in Great Britain (where sufficient data is available) are threatened with extinction.

Responding to the publication of the State of Nature Report 2023, Dr Pete Brotherton, Director of Science for Natural England, [set out the “four big on-the-ground changes” that would speed up nature recovery](#):

- Improve the quality of our protected sites on land and at sea [...] too many are currently in poor condition.
- Create more, bigger and messier places for wildlife. Our wildlife needs more space, and we know that many species can benefit from habitats that are quick to create such as ponds, scrubby habitats and un-trimmed hedgerows.
- Reducing pollution on land (notably pesticides and excess fertilisers) and reducing the pressure on marine environments [...] more wildlife-friendly farming, forestry and fisheries.
- Targeted species recovery action [...].

2.2

UK Biodiversity Indicators

UK wide and national biodiversity indicators are published annually as official government statistics. They are [currently under review](#), with only some updated in 2023, to take into account new goals, targets and headline indicators agreed under the Montreal-Kunming GBF.

The Joint Nature Conservation Committee published its most recent [UK Biodiversity Indicators](#) in November 2023. The data across 52 measures covering 24 indicators found:

- 52% of measures assessed showed an improvement over the long term, 33% showed a short-term improvement.
- 33% of measures assessed showed a decline in the long term, 36% showed a decline in the short term.

Most of the indicators showing a decline were in the ‘safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity category’ and are included in the following table.

Short-term progress is normally assessed over five years. Long-term progress is over the longest time period available, in all the indicators in the table this is for more than ten years.

Mixed progress on UK biodiversity			
Indicators for habitats, priority species, animals and expenditure			
	Long term change	Short term change	Latest data
Total extent of protected areas on land	↑	↔	2023
Total extent of protected areas at sea	↑	↑	2023
Condition of A/SSSIs	↑	↔	2023
Relative abundance of priority species	↓	↔	2021
Distribution of priority species	↔	↔	2018
Farmland birds	↓	↓	2022
Woodland birds	↓	↓	2022
Wetland birds	↓	↓	2022
Wintering waterbirds	↑	↓	2021-22
Butterfly populations -widespread species	↔	↔	2022
Butterfly populations -specialist species	↓	↔	2022
Distribution of pollinating insects	↓	↔	2022
Bat populations	↑	↑	2022
Area under agri-environmental schemes	↑	↑	2022
Public expenditure on UK biodiversity	↑	↑	2021/22
Non-govt. spending on UK biodiversity	↑	↑	2021/22

Key: ↓ Deteriorating
↔ Little or no overall change
↑ Improving

Source: JNCC, [UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023](#) (November 2023)

2.3

Outcome Indicator Framework data for England

The government publishes an [Outcome Indicator Framework](#) which contains 66 indicators, alongside its [Environment Improvement Plan](#) (see section 3.1 below for further details on the Plan). This framework sets out progress on protecting [natural capital assets](#). The aim is to show “the condition of these assets, the pressures acting upon them and the provision of services or benefits they provide” based on long, medium and short-term trends.

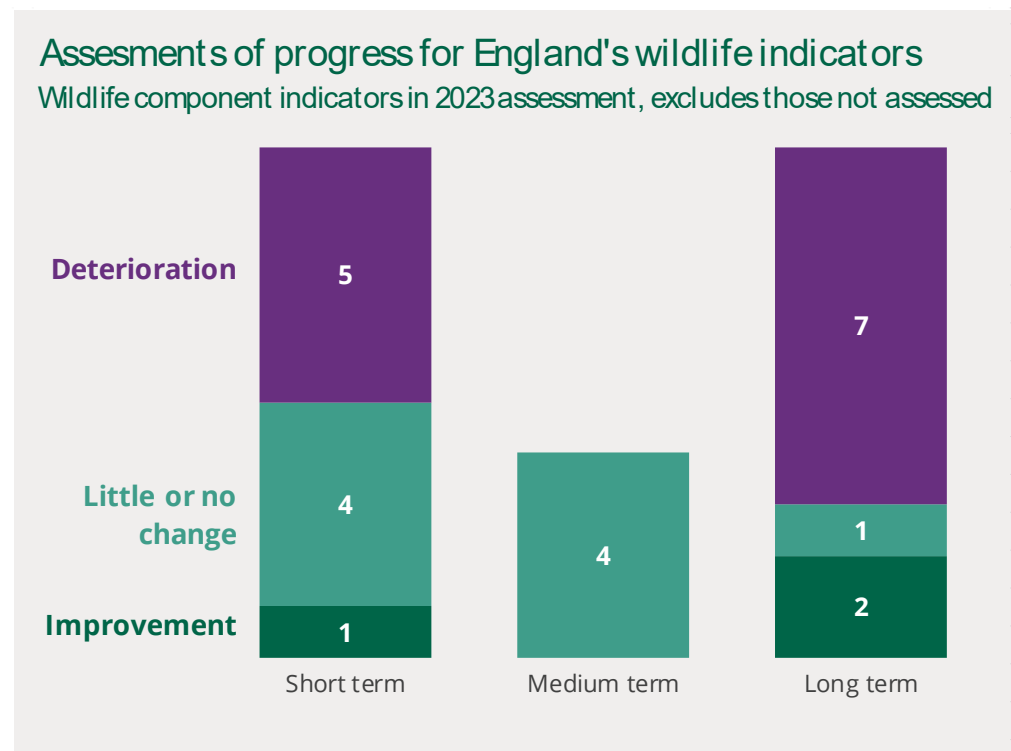
The general approach used in these indicators is that short term is the most recent five years of change, medium term is up ten years of change

and long term the whole time series (normally 11 years of change or more).

Wildlife

There are seven indicators within the [wildlife theme](#) of the government's [Outcome Indicator Framework](#). These cover the relative abundance and distribution of different species, area of woodland, condition of protected sites and habitat indicators. Many of these indicators have different component parts and there are a total of 14 component indicators within the wildlife theme. The latest assessment was published in 2023.

Progress on relatively large numbers of the wildlife component indicators has not been assessed. This could either be because the indicator is still in development, its time series isn't yet long enough, or it is in a format not appropriate for assessing trends. The chart below gives a summary of progress across the component indicators which have been assessed.



Source: Source: Defra, [25 Year Plan Outcome Indicator Framework -Wildlife](#)

There were clearly more wildlife indicators which showed deterioration than those showing improvement in both the short and long term. Fewer medium-term assessments were made and all were 'little or no change'. There was an assessed deterioration in both the short and long term for the following component indicators:

- Abundance of wild birds in woodland and farmland

- Relative abundance of priority species
- Distribution of priority species
- Change in the distribution of pollinators

There are 940 species on the [priority species list in England](#). These are species that have been highlighted as being of conservation concern for a variety of reasons, including rapid decline in some of their populations.

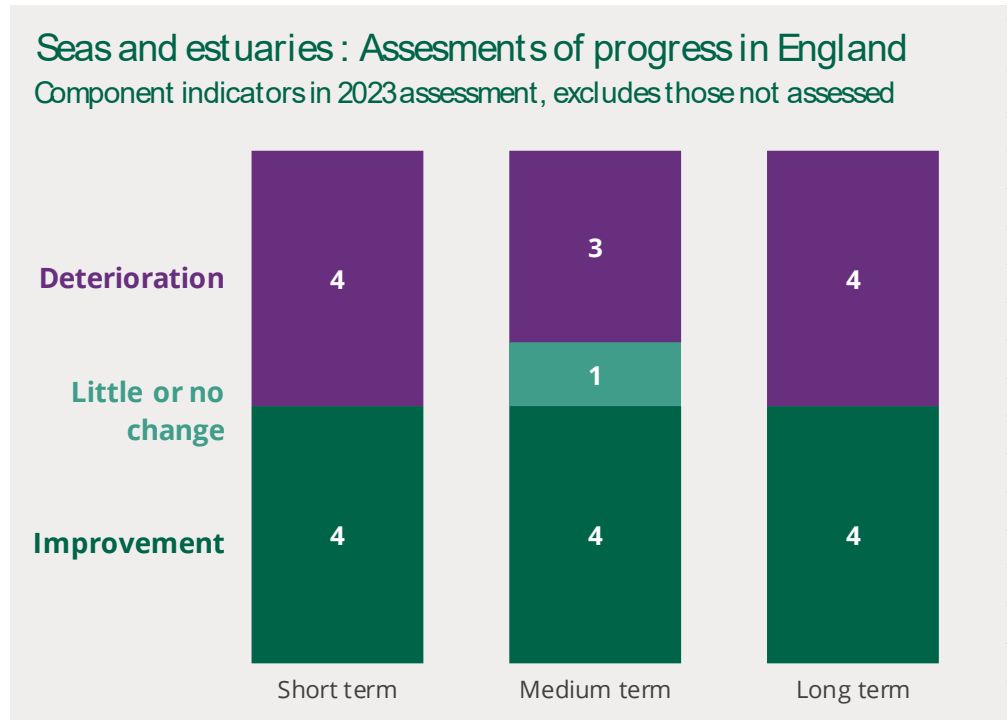
There was short and long-term improvement in the abundance of bats and a long-term improvement in the area of woodland.

There has been and a long-term deterioration in the condition of [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSIs), the main nature designation for conservation on land. The poor condition of SSSIs is something that campaigners such as Wild Justice have focused on, specifically [to what extent they are being regularly assessed](#). The Office of Environmental Protection, whose role is to provide independent oversight of the government's environmental progress, issued a [call for evidence on protected nature sites in England and Northern Ireland](#), including SSSIs in February 2023.

Seas and estuaries

There are 11 indicators within the [seas and estuaries theme](#) of the [Outcome Indicator Framework](#). These cover fish, shellfish marine mammals and seabird populations, the condition of different marine habitats and litter. As with the wildlife indicators some have different component parts and there are a total of 22 component indicators within the seas and estuaries theme.

The chart below gives a summary of progress across the component indicators which have been assessed.



Source: Defra, [25 Year Plan Outcome Indicator Framework -Seas and estuaries](#)

There was a broadly consistent pattern in the short, medium and long-term assessments with equal, or nearly equal numbers showing an improvement as showing a deterioration. Three component indicators showed an improvement across all three time periods:

- Abundance of harbour seals in the North East of England
- Atlantic grey seal pup production in both the North East and South East of England

Three component indicators showed deteriorating trends across all time periods:

- % of marine bird species achieving relative breeding abundance targets in the Greater North Sea
- % of marine bird species achieving relative non-breeding abundance targets in both the Greater North and the Celtic Seas.

Abundance of harbour seals in the South East showed a deteriorating short- term, but improving long-term trend. The percentage of marine bird species achieving relative breeding abundance targets in the Celtic Seas had a deteriorating long-term, but an improving short-term trend.

3 Biodiversity Policy in England

The UK Government has produced a number of action plans and strategies on biodiversity with the aims of meeting the targets set out in the Convention of Biological Diversity.

Although meeting international targets is the responsibility of the UK Government, addressing biodiversity loss is a devolved matter. This section focuses on policy in England. [The Scottish Government is currently updating its biodiversity strategy](#) post 2020. The Welsh Government published a [Nature Recovery Action Plan in 2015](#), also in the process of being updated. The Northern Ireland Government published its [Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020](#) in 2015, and reported on progress in 2021.

A UK [Biodiversity Action Plan 1992-2012](#) was published in 1994. This was followed by [Biodiversity 2020](#), a strategic plan for biodiversity in England, published in 2011. This set out its mission as:

To halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

The broader government aims for improving the environment were set out more recently in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#), published in 2018. This included a commitment to publish a new strategy for nature, building on the existing strategy.

In addition, the Government committed in September 2020 [to protect 30% of UK land by 2030](#) as part of the UK's commitment to the [Leaders Pledge for Nature](#). It would do so by designating and protecting 4,000 km² of new land in England.

Following this, [the Environment Act 2021](#) included several new policies aimed at improving biodiversity in England including:

- A 10% biodiversity net gain requirement for development (which [was implemented in January 2024](#))
- A target on species abundance for 2030
- A requirement for [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#) led by local authorities and the creation of a [Nature Recovery Network](#)

3.1 Legally binding environmental targets

Under the Environment Act 2021, the government proposed a number of further 2042 targets for biodiversity in its [consultation on environmental](#)

[targets](#), which closed in June 2022. They were [published in December 2022](#) and included the following commitments on nature and biodiversity:

- Halt the decline in species populations by 2030, and then increase populations by at least 10% to exceed current levels by 2042.
- Deliver net zero ambitions and boost nature recovery by increasing tree and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050.
- Restore 70% of designated features in our Marine Protected Areas to a favourable condition by 2042, with the rest in a recovering condition.

These targets are now set out in [The Environmental Targets \(Biodiversity\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#) and [The Environmental Targets \(Woodland and Trees Outside Woodland\) \(England\) Regulations 2023](#).

The Government published [an Environment Implementation Plan](#) in January 2023, as a five yearly update to the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Plan provides [for a set of interim targets](#) to support the statutory longer-term targets and to help track progress:

- To restore or create 140,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 31 January 2028, compared to 2022 levels.
- All SSSIs will have an up-to-date condition assessment by 31 January 2028.
- 50% of SSSIs to have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.26% of land area (equivalent to 34,000 hectares) by 31 January 2028.

[Several other areas](#) where the government had taken action in England were highlighted in a written parliamentary response from February 2024:

- Publication of an [indicative “30by30” map \(PDF\)](#) setting out the areas that count or could potentially count towards meeting targets in England. This was part of a policy paper published on December 2023 setting policy for [Delivering 30by30 on land in England](#).
- [£15million funding for nature recovery for Protected Landscapes](#) (National Landscapes and National Parks) and a [new Rainforest Strategy](#) with of £750,000 funding, for Cumbria and the South West.
- A commitment to deliver [Marine Net Gain \(MNG\)](#) aimed at ensuring that developments at sea also deliver measurable benefits for nature.

- Action to protect features from damaging fishing activities in in [existing MPAs in England](#) by the end of 2024.

An article by Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, in April 2024 set out further detail of the [measures that have been implemented with the aim of driving nature recovery in England](#).

3.2 Farming

A Chatham House report, supported by the UN Nations Environment Programme [Food system impacts on biodiversity loss](#) states that the global food system is the primary driver of biodiversity loss with “agriculture alone being the identified threat to 24,000 of the 28,000 (86%) species at risk of extinction”. The report explained the reasons for this:

Intensive farming has a range of negative consequences for the health and quality of soils, air, water sources and natural ecosystems. Partly, this arises from the use of inputs such as pesticides and nutrients, and partly it is a function of the prevalence of ‘monocultural landscapes’ in which there is little opportunity for nature. In turn, the loss of biodiversity and soil fertility leads to a need to intensify agriculture further.

To address the impacts [the report concluded](#) that more land needed to be protected and set aside for nature and that there is “a need to farm in a more nature-friendly, biodiversity-supporting way, limiting the use of inputs and replacing monoculture with polyculture farming practices”.

Environmental Land Management Schemes

Some [69% of the UK land area](#) is farmed and farming practices are key to biodiversity maintenance and recovery. Improving biodiversity is one of the key aims of new agricultural support schemes being introduced in England, following the UK’s departure from the EU and its [Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\)](#).

Under the [Agriculture Act 2020](#), a [new farm support policy](#) is being rolled out in England [from 2021-27](#). Its focus is on paying farmers for ‘public goods’ such as environmental improvements rather than payment for farming an area of land.

Farmers can now sign up for new schemes under the [Environmental Land Management \(ELM\) scheme](#) such as the Sustainable Farming Initiative (SFI). [Defra states](#) that SFI agreements are delivering against its [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) targets, around carbon, soils and species abundance.

The existing agri-environment schemes under CAP in England, [Countryside Stewardship \(CS\)](#) and [Environmental Stewardship \(ES\)](#) will

continue and are being developed as schemes to support local nature recovery.

In addition [Landscape Recovery schemes](#) support farmers and land managers who want to take a “large-scale, long-term approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land”. It funds landscape-scale projects (over 500 hectares) through bespoke, long-term agreements.

As of 1 April 2024, there were [55,000 agri-environment agreements](#). There were 34,900 CS agreements, 6,200 ES agreements and 13,900 SFI 2023 agreements. To date [56 schemes have received funding](#), involving 700 farmers and landowners and covering 200,000 hectares across England.

This funding sits along other funding streams such as the [Farming in Protected Landscapes \(FIPL\)](#) scheme which provides funding for nature recovery and climate mitigation in National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) and National Parks.

4 Parliamentary material

4.1 Debates

Westminster Hall debate - [Global Ocean Treaty](#)

HC Deb 25 April 2024 | Vol 748 c367WH-

Commons debate - [Food Security](#)

HC Deb 21 March 2024 | Vol 747 c1121-

Westminster Hall debate - [Neonicotinoids and other Pesticides](#)

HC Deb 5 March 2024 | Vol 746 c276-

Lords debate - [Sustainable Farming Incentive: Species Management and ELMS](#)

HL Deb 25 January 2024 | Volume 835 c905-

Westminster Hall debate - [Hedgerows: Legal Protection](#)

HC Deb 24 January 2024 | Vol 744 c109-

Westminster Hall debate - [Climate change and biodiversity](#)

HC Deb 8 February 2023 | Vol 727 c357WH-

4.2

PQs

Wildlife: Conservation

Asked by: Lord Mendelsohn

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of animal population decline in other countries on the UK, following the WWF's Living Planet Report 2022 which showed that worldwide animal populations have declined by 69 per cent since 1970.

Answering member: Lord Benyon | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK is susceptible to impacts from animal population decline worldwide through global impacts on food supply and the increasing emergence and transmission of diseases. For example, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Pollinators Assessment showed that 35% of global crop production volume depends on animal pollination, while the IPBES Workshop report on Biodiversity and Pandemics showed that over 30% of emerging disease events are caused by land-use change and its impacts on wildlife. Healthy ecosystems are also vital for mitigating and adapting to climate change, thus animal population declines may also exacerbate the climate impacts felt by the UK, as set out in the UK's Climate Change Risk Assessment. The UK Government with others continues to support the work of the IPBES and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to further understand these global impacts.

A recently published report from the Green Finance Institute, entitled 'Assessing the Materiality of Nature-Related Financial Risks for the UK', with direction from Defra and others, showed that about half of all UK nature-related risk comes from overseas, through supply chains and financial exposures. It showed that the combination of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation could lead to major economic shocks leading to UK Gross Domestic Product being up to 12% lower than it may otherwise have been by the 2030s (even lower when combined with climate impacts).

HL Deb 26 April 2024 | PQ HL4037

Food Security

Asked by: Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville

My noble Lords, the food security report identifies climate change and biodiversity loss as the greatest threat to UK food security. Therefore, will the Government's upcoming Farm to Fork summit include

representatives from environmental organisations working on climate change and biodiversity?

Answered by: Lord Douglas-Miller

I thank the noble Baroness for her question. As she will know, the upcoming Farm to Fork summit is the second one we have held, and the National Farmers' Union requested that we implement this as an annual event. I forget the exact statistics but at the last one, over 70 representatives from the wider industry, across the entire supply chain, were in attendance, along with food producers from across the whole UK. The intention is to grow that at our next summit, which is in the spring.

HL Deb 26 March 2024 | Vol 837 c570

Food Security

Asked by: Baroness McIntosh of Pickering

My Lords, will my noble friend join with me in paying tribute to and celebrating the work of our farmers in putting food on our plates, in particular the livestock producers on the hills, and tenant farmers especially? Will my noble friend take this opportunity, against the backdrop of increasing challenges to self-sufficiency, to give farmers and consumers alike an undertaking that any imported food and agricultural products will meet the same high animal welfare and environmental standards as those produced in this country?

Answering member: Lord Douglas-Miller

I thank my noble friend and entirely agree with her on the issue of supporting our farmers and congratulating them on the work they do. I quite accept the premise that a significant change is going on in the agricultural sector. It was clearly signalled when we transitioned away from the common agricultural policy and focused farming on delivering both food production and environmental goals through ELMS. It is entirely understandable that farmers have concerns about this transition, as it requires them to reappraise how they use the entirety of their land. We are guiding and supporting farmers with new technology, new science and improved productivity to not only produce and maintain high quality food but to enrich our soil, reduce pollution and help reverse biodiversity loss.

HL Deb 26 Mar 2024 | Vol 837 c570

Convention on Biological Diversity

Asked by: Reed, Steve

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress his Department has made on the agreements made at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15).

Answering member: Rebecca Pow | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK played a leading role at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in securing agreement to a historic package of measures to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Our priority for COP16 and beyond is to drive global delivery of these agreements both at home and abroad, by working closely with our international partners.

Since COP15, we have worked internationally to drive delivery of the Kunming Montreal targets, including by:

- announcing an initial contribution of £10m to the newly-established Global Biodiversity Framework Fund;
- launching the Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) competitive grants programme under the UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund, which will run until 31 March 2029 and provide up to £60m to support innovative proposals from local coastal communities and organisations that aim to deliver marine protection and poverty reduction outcomes; and
- committing to lay in Spring 2024 forest risk commodity legislation which will require UK-based operators to ensure that the regulated commodities used in their supply chains were produced in compliance with local laws relating to land ownership and use.

Domestically we have:

- driven forward the global commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, publishing a new map to show what areas could count in the delivery of “30by30”, which will ensure our most important places, at the core of nature’s recovery, are protected for our iconic species to thrive;
- announced £15million new funding to accelerate nature recovery across our most cherished Protected Landscapes, and a new Rainforest Strategy backed by £750,000 funding to protect the delicate and globally rare temperate rainforest habitats found across the Southwest and Cumbria;

- reaffirmed our commitment to deliver Marine Net Gain (MNG), ensuring that developments at sea also deliver measurable benefits for nature; and
- established a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) covering 38% of our waters, with sites protecting 40% of English waters. We are now focusing on making sure our MPAs are effectively managed for nature, with the aim to have management measures to protect features from damaging fishing activities in English MPAs by the end of 2024.

The four nations of the UK are working together and aim to publish a UK-wide revised NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan) by May 2024, ahead of CBD COP16.

HC Deb 19 February 2024 | PQ 13728

Convention on Biological Diversity

Asked by: Blake, Olivia

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will set out the Government's priorities for the 2024 Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 16).

Answering member: Rebecca Pow | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The UK played a leading role at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in securing agreement to a historic package of measures to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Our priority for COP16 and beyond is to drive global delivery of these agreements both at home and abroad, by working closely with our international partners.

We have a number of priorities for COP16. These include supporting a global review of those National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans which will have been published by the time of the COP, in order to assess the extent to which the world is on track to meet the commitments made at COP15; finalising the details of the global mechanism for the sharing of benefits arising from the use of Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on genetic resources; and increasing the mobilisation of resources from all sources to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally, including through the newly-established Global Biodiversity Framework Fund, to which the UK has already made an initial contribution of £10million.

HC Deb 09 February 2024 | PQ 11661

Biodiversity Loss

Asked by: David Simmonds

What steps his Department is taking to help reverse biodiversity loss.

Answering member: The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow) | Department: Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

This Government have created a whole framework for restoring nature through our legally binding Environment Act 2021 targets, which include our world-leading commitment to halt the decline of species by 2030. We are accelerating action towards that through our environmental improvement plan. It is a shame I was not asked about this by the shadow Minister, but we have restored an area of wildlife habitats the size of Dorset, we have a network of marine protected areas, 5 million trees were planted last year, we have 55-plus landscape—

HC Deb 01 February 2024 | Vol 744 c972

Agriculture: Biodiversity

Asked by: Davies, Geraint

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to conserve UK agrobiodiversity to prevent (a) genetic erosion and (b) species extinction.

Answering member: Mark Spencer | Department: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

We are already implementing a set of targeted schemes to improve the environment and productivity. Investing in the natural environment will help us reduce future risks related to the loss of biodiversity. In 2024 in our combined Sustainable Farming Incentive and Countryside Stewardship Scheme offer we are introducing new and updated actions to further support species recovery and management.

We are addressing conserving agrobiodiversity through our commitments to conserve genetic resources on under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Activities to protect and conserve livestock genetic resources also include encouraging sustainable breeding programmes through Zootechnical

legislation, monitoring populations of pedigree livestock including native breeds which are published in an annual UK National Breed inventory and protecting eligible native breeds at risk from culling during notifiable disease outbreaks.

The Government recognises the important role local abattoirs play in supporting native breed farmers and the wider rural economy. In December 2023 Defra launched the £4 million Smaller Abattoir Fund to boost the sustainability and efficiency of red meat and poultry smaller abattoirs across England.

To conserve plant genetic resources for food and agriculture Defra funds three plant gene banks, the national collections for fruit, vegetables and peas, which conserve and provide access to plant genetic material.

In situ conservation of forest genetic resources has started to be delivered by voluntary designation of 17 gene conservation units by the Woodland Trust. Ex situ conservation of forest genetic resources has been achieved through both seed banking and by clone banks. The UK National Tree Seed Project, led by Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has conserved seed collections of the UK native trees from populations across the UK. Forest Research and the Future Trees Trust have set up and manage clone banks for improved forestry material.

HC Deb 16 January 2024 | PQ 7736

5

News and further reading

Guardian

9 May 2024

[Biodiversity loss is biggest driver of infectious disease outbreaks, says study](#)

Carbon Brief

2 May 2024

[COP16: Tracking country pledges on tackling biodiversity loss](#)

University of Oxford press release

26 April 2024

[Landmark study definitively shows that conservation actions are effective at halting and reversing biodiversity loss](#)

Greenpeace

26 April 2024

[Can granting legal 'personhood' to nature stem biodiversity loss?](#)

University of York press release

25 April 2024

[Climate change set to take over as key driver of biodiversity loss by 2050, experts warn](#)

University of York press release

7 March 2024

[Loss of nature costs more than previously estimated, according to new study](#)

European Environment Agency

19 January 2024

[Biodiversity: state of habitats and species](#)

Wildlife Trusts

15 January 2024

[Could the general election provide the much-needed boost for our beleaguered natural world?](#)

Guardian

29 November 2023

['A biodiversity catastrophe': how the world could look in 2050 – unless we act now](#)

State of Nature Partnership

[State of Nature report 2023](#)

Natural England blog

29 September 2023

[State of Nature](#)

NFU

28 September 2023

[NFU responds to new State of Nature report](#)

Greenpeace

[Biodiversity loss: a beginner's guide](#)

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[The Nature Imperative: How the circular economy tackles biodiversity loss](#)

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[The UK's footprint on global biodiversity](#), HC 674 2021-22

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